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Nordic Wittgenstein Review Symposium on James R. Shaw's *Wittgenstein on Rules: Justification, Grammar, and Agreement*

Introduction

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With this symposium, *Nordic Wittgenstein Review* inaugurates a new section of the journal. The goal of such a symposium is to offer a platform for discussing recent books on Wittgensteinean themes. The format is somewhat standard: the author writes a *Précis* of the book, the commentators provide their interventions, and then the author replies to each commentator. For this first symposium, the book is *Wittgenstein on Rules: Justification, Grammar, and Agreement (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. x +319)*, by James R. Shaw (University of Pittsburgh). The commentators are Oskari Kuusela (University of East Anglia), Alexander Miller (University of Otago), and Hannah Ginsborg (U.C. Berkeley).

Précis of *Wittgenstein on Rules: Justification, Grammar, and Agreement*

James R. Shaw[1]

In my book, I join a long line of exegetes trying to puzzle out what Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* teaches us about two related questions: "what does it take to count as following a rule?" and "what does it take to mean something with words?" My main goal is to disentangle two projects in the text that I would claim are rarely, if ever, adequately distinguished.

The first project concerns our 'justification' for following rules or meaning things by our words – bearing in mind, critically, that the justification at issue is somewhat idiosyncratic and bears no direct relation to, say, the contemporary epistemologist's propositional or doxastic justification. The second project belongs to Wittgensteinean philosophical grammar, and asks after the conditions that influence our application of terms like "means" or "follows a rule".

One thing that makes Wittgenstein's discussion so challenging is that while the two projects are interwoven in his text, they are marked by different guiding questions, presuppositions, and methodologies. As such, it takes tremendous caution to avoid assimilating remarks from one investigation to the other, which can give rise to perplexing tensions, if not outright contradictions.

After separating out these two projects and explaining their relation, I make an application of the resulting reading to Wittgenstein's provocative remarks on human agreement. In part because these remarks dramatically cap off an extended discussion of rules, many commentators have gravitated toward putting human agreement in a strong foundational role. This has led to readings of Wittgenstein as a radical conventionalist, a communitarian, or a non-factualist about meaning that salvages the utility of meaning talk by appeal to community-standards. Rival commentators have noted how such readings conflict with Wittgenstein's remarks on

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philosophical methodology. But spelling out a clear alternative role for human agreement has proved challenging.

My reading does give human agreement a *kind* of foundational significance – specifically, a grammatical one. But I emphasize that in this regard it belongs to a family of interrelated notions among which it is hardly privileged. As such, human agreement cannot support the more radical readings just alluded to. Even so, Wittgenstein was right to single out human agreement in his text because it has a special dialectical significance, for raising a special kind of circularity worry. Very roughly: if we are looking for conditions under which we speak of there being beliefs at all, how could it not be circular to identify acts of agreement – apparently coordination over just such beliefs – among those conditions? Once we appreciate this, we can see that Wittgenstein's controversial remarks on human agreement exhibit a surprising attentiveness to, and plausible treatment of, something like a blurring of the semantics/metasemantics distinction.

After this application, the book turns to an engagement with Kripkensteinean meaning skepticism. I maintain that Wittgenstein never really countenanced such skepticism. Nonetheless, his grammatical investigations may give us the resources to develop an unusual 'naive reply' to the skeptic based on notions like 'regularity' – a reply that to my knowledge is unexplored in the existing literature. I make the case that this reply stands a chance at staving off the distinctively metaphysical aspects of skepticism from concerns of finitude, and also gives us some added insight into the role of the Wittgensteinean notion of a 'form of life'.

Commentary on James R. Shaw, *Wittgenstein on Rules: Justification, Grammar, and Agreement*

Oskari Kuusela[1]

James Shaw's book surprised me in more than one way. The first surprise related to how Shaw, in the first part of the book, illuminatingly takes into account considerations of Wittgenstein's method. This is refreshing in that discussions of Wittgenstein's philosophy still tend to take something like the following form: let's figure out what Wittgenstein's thesis about X is, and then perhaps later, if at all, consider why what he says about X isn't a philosophical thesis of the kind he rejects. To briefly explain why I think this is problematic, Wittgenstein rejects statements about modalities put forward as true/false theses, and the associated notion of necessary truth, as exemplified by theses about what all meaningful instances of language or rule-following must be like. Instead, his grammatical statements, as expressions of non-empirical necessity and possibility, have a different logical function, summed up by the characterization of them as models to be used as objects of comparison (PI §§130–131). The philosophical significance of this seems to me almost impossible to overestimate. Whilst Wittgenstein's reconception of the logical function of philosophical accounts makes them tolerant to exceptions, it nevertheless retains the idea of philosophy as concerned with non-empirical necessity and possibility rather than mere empirical actuality. It also implies the non-exclusivity of philosophical accounts (as opposed to mutually exclusive theses), making it possible to combine them into (what can be called) multidimensional logical or philosophical clarifications, whereby different accounts are used to clarify different features or aspects of complex concepts or of cases subsumed under them. This then makes it possible to do better justice to the complexity of phenomena, whilst also explaining the possibility of simplification without falsification. On Wittgenstein's novel account truth is retained as the goal of philosophy, whilst the possibility is made room for that truth might be more complex than any particular models can represent. (See Kuusela 2008 and 2019 for discussions of Wittgenstein's method.)

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Against this background of how Wittgenstein reconceives philosophical methodology it seems that approaches that ignore his method have no chance of grasping what he says about any specific topics of investigation, such as rule-following. Instead, they are bound to try to reduce his views into one simplistic thesis or another, turning his philosophy into a contradictory mess. By contrast to this trend, I found Shaw's interpretation of Wittgenstein's discussion of rule-following, in terms of (what Shaw calls) the justificatory and constitutive questions, genuinely helpful. Not that Shaw explicitly brings the notion of thesis into the discussion, except very briefly (pp. 154–158). Nevertheless, in the first part of the book Shaw is refreshingly sensitive to what kind of claims Wittgenstein is not making. I also agree on the importance of Shaw's point that Wittgenstein is not trying to establish a foundation for rule-following that would explain and justify its possibility in the manner the accounts that he rejects, for example, the mentalistic and dispositionalist accounts, according to which the right way to follow a rule is fixed by a mental act of meaning or by a disposition to follow a rule in a certain way. It is crucial, in other words, that Wittgenstein is not offering an alternative thesis about the possibility of rule-following in this sense, however exactly we might imagine the details of such a thesis, for instance, that communal agreement fixes how a rule is to be followed, as Kripke has argued.[2] As Shaw explains, Wittgenstein is not trying to justify the possibility of rule-following in the sense of grounding the application of rules or words (pp. 23–24). On this point Shaw is right, I think.

I have more reservations about Shaw's claim that the remarks on rule-following are the "centerpiece" of the *Investigations*, unless this simply means that they constitute an important illustration of his method, introduced in the book by means of examples (PI §133). Relatedly, however, I disagree with Shaw's claim that Wittgenstein's discussion of rule-following only starts at *Investigations* §185 rather than §138 (p. 11). The question regarding the locus of Wittgenstein's discussion is significant in that Shaw's interpretation eclipses the fact that Wittgenstein's example of the rule-following pupil is explicitly introduced as an application of the method of simple language-games (§143). (See Wittgenstein's introduction of this method in PI §§1–8; for discussion of the method of language-games, see Kuusela 2019, chapter 5.) Among other things, this

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[2] See Kuusela 2024 for a critical discussion of Kripke on rule-following and an alternative interpretation that avoids committing Wittgenstein to any theses.

explanation of the method, I take it, is intended to alert the reader to the simplification (idealization) involved in envisaging linguistic meaning as dependent on rule-governed uses of language. (See §§77, 81–83 for Wittgenstein's method of rules as objects of comparison in response to the problem for logical/grammatical clarification that colloquial language is not used according to any definite rules, which raises the question whether and in what sense language use can be described as rule-governed at all.) Instead, Wittgenstein's idealized conception of meaning as dependent on rules serves a methodological purpose: it provides us with a perspicuous simple example that helps to "disperse the fog" surrounding the issue of rule-following and of meaning/intending a rule or a word in a certain way (PI §5). Somehow none of these methodological considerations seem to have registered with Shaw, however, who suggests that Wittgenstein's methods would include what he calls the "family-resemblance methodology" (p. 96). Although I would agree that Wittgenstein doesn't take rule-following to consist of any one thing that is present in all its instances, given that Shaw doesn't explain the workings of the "family-resemblance methodology" in any detail, and Wittgenstein himself never mentions it, this method and its point remain unclear. Here it is also noteworthy how Wittgenstein, in drafting remarks §§89–134 of the Investigations in 1936–7, emphasizes that the notion of family-resemblance isn't what distinguishes his later approach from his early approach: "The concept 'language' is indeed a family, but even if it were not, our current standpoint would still be different from that of the Tractatus" (MS 157a, 48v; see Kuusela forthcoming for a discussion how the notion of family-resemblance falls short of explaining the difference of Wittgenstein's later approach from metaphysical philosophy). Independently of these complexities whose details can be debated, however, the way in which Shaw keeps referring back to remarks before §185 indicates that the discussion of rules from §185 onwards isn't self-contained. This puts Shaw's claim about the locus of the rule-following discussion into a peculiar light. If the rule-following discussion starts as §185, surely it should be possible to discuss it with reference to remarks §185ff. only, contrary to what Shaw actually does. This seems to performatively undermine his claim about the locus of Wittgenstein's discussion.

Relatedly, I would certainly disagree with overblowing the significance of Wittgenstein's rule-following discussion by turning it into a discussion

about the possibility of linguistic meaning in general or of the foundations of semantics, insofar as the latter involves a claim about meaning as always dependent on rules (p. 4). Although Shaw does not explain how he understands terms such as "metasemantics", this kind of claims have recently become a staple in introductions to the philosophy of language, where "Wittgensteinian semantics", which allegedly accounts for meaning in terms of rule-governed use, now figures along with accounts of so-called Fregean or Russellian semantics. I really don't think any such thesis about meaning and/or language as dependent on rule-following can be found in the *Investigations*; Wittgenstein himself is quite clear that meaningful language use is not always a matter of following rules. For example, according to another conception introduced together with the method of language-games at the start of the *Investigations*, language use is embedded in actions and life. This provides us with quite a different model for how linguistic expressions can have an established and determinate uses that involves envisaging language use as intertwined with facts about humans and their environment, such as the capacity of humans to feel and express pain. Importantly, this brings out the sense in which language isn't simply conventional, unlike on the account of its uses as based on rules (cf. PI §492). Similarly, Wittgenstein's account of onomatopoeic uses as iconic recognizes sound as relevant for meaning, whilst sound can play no role when accounting for meaning in terms of rule-governed uses (MS 141, 3; cf. BB, 84–85).

Of course, the view that Wittgenstein is not putting forward a thesis about language and meaning runs contrary to, for example, Kripke's discussion of rule-following which is based on the premise that rule-following can provide the basis of an account of linguistic meaning in general, and which in this capacity directly contradicts Wittgenstein's rejection of theses. In this respect Shaw's way of talking about Wittgenstein as concerned with semantics and metasemantics or the foundations of semantics struck me as unfortunate, obscuring a crucial difference of Wittgenstein's philosophy from the contemporary mainstream of analytic philosophy. Given that the problems of dogmatism and false simplification constitute a key motivation for Wittgenstein's rejection of theses, this is ironic – or maybe simply sad. Or perhaps I am getting Shaw wrong, and he means something else by describing Wittgenstein as engaged in a metasemantical inquiry. In any case, as Wittgenstein emphasizes:

> The point of examining the way a word is used is not at all to provide another method of giving its meaning. When we ask on what occasion people use a word, what they say about it, what they are right to substitute for it, and in reply describe its use, we do so only insofar as it seems helpful in getting rid of certain philosophical troubles. (AWL, 97)

Thus, rather than constituting the basis for a semantical theory, for Wittgenstein attending to the use of words, and perhaps stating rules for their use, is something we need to do as part of the process of addressing philosophical problems. Consequently, such uses are only described to the extent that addressing relevant issues requires it – a point also made in the context of the rule-following discussion in §182 (or on Shaw's interpretation just before the rule-following discussion). Not that one couldn't use ideas from Wittgenstein in the philosophy of language for purposes different from his. But then, why go for a simplistic account of meaning and language in terms of rules, when a much richer account that incorporates several different conceptions of meaning and language use can be found in Wittgenstein?

The biggest surprise waited for me in chapter 10, however. It may be that I'm getting something wrong, given how the discussion in this chapter, which is intended to offer a reply to Kripke's sceptic, seems to contradict the discussion in the first part of the book as well as any lessons from Wittgenstein's rule-following discussion. Indeed, part of my confusion is why anyone would think that Kripke's sceptic ought to be, or could be, responded to in the sceptic's own terms. Wittgenstein, for one, is clear that the presumed paradox of rule following, according to which "no action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be brought into accord with the rule" is a "misunderstanding" (PI §201). If this is right, there's no Kripkean sceptical problem to be responded to in the sceptic's terms, only a confusion whose roots are to be exposed and clarified, and which is to be dissolved by introducing another conception in the context of which the presumed paradox doesn't arise. Wittgenstein's conception of rule-following as a practice is explicitly put forward as offering such an account: "That's why 'following a rule' is a practice" (PI §202).

By contrast, how the Kripkean sceptic is supposed to be able to articulate their meaning scepticism seems one of the oddest bootstrapping operations in the history of philosophy: in order to deny the possibility of

meaning they must somehow manage to communicate this problem meaningfully to the reader, but if there's no meaning, this obviously won't work, and therefore meaning-scepticism is impossible to articulate. In distinction from Kripke, Shaw's take on this, if I understand him correctly, is that in fact the sceptic's meaning scepticism is much more limited and not about the possibility of speaking meaningfully after all. It is merely scepticism about semantic notions such as "intending" or "meaning" (in the sense of intending) (pp. 226–227, 231). Consequently however, it now also becomes unclear why this would still count as scepticism about meaning in the supposedly radical but in fact only self-undermining Kripkean sense. Accordingly, to me Shaw's project of responding to the sceptic sounds more like Davidson's and Dummett's dream of a theory of meaning to be spelt out in non-semantic terms, which would offer a quasi-scientific, metaphysical account of meaning, if it could be made to work. I trust that it's clear in the light of what I have said about Wittgenstein's rejection of theses that this kind of theorizing can't be presented as consistent with his philosophy. Be all this as it may (the issues about Kripke's alleged sceptical problem, Dummett, and Davidson), this seems to be how Shaw's response to the sceptic is meant to work: We merely need to avoid any use of semantic vocabulary, and now we can appeal to regularities in the use of language and rule-following to argue against the sceptic that there are specific ways in which our rules are fixed. Which ways are these? According to Shaw, the simplest regularities which we can recognize as such quite independently of our practices of rule following, for example, that the function of plus is simpler than that of quus. Somehow, he fails to consider the possibility that the notion of the sameness of meaning (synonymy) and doing the same in following a rule might themselves be semantic notions, even though Wittgenstein explicitly flags them as such when characterizing the notion of sameness (of following a rule) as dependent on the notion of a rule. Sameness thus is not something that could provide a justification for how to follow a rule; a justification must appeal to something independent of what is justified. "The use of the word 'rule' and the use of the word 'same' are interwoven" (PI §225). Or as Wittgenstein describes his example of the pupil taught to complete an arithmetic series:

> Then we get the pupil to continue one series (say "+ 2") beyond 1000 – and he writes 1000, 1004, 1008, 1012. We say to him, "Look what you're doing!"

> – He doesn't understand. We say, "You should have added two: look how you began the series!" – He answers, "Yes, isn't it right? I thought that was how I had to do it." —— Or suppose he pointed to the series and said, "But I did go on in the same way". – It would now be no use to say, "But can't you see…?" – and go over the old explanations and examples for him again. In such a case, we might perhaps say: this person finds it natural, once given our explanations, to understand our order as we would understand the order "Add 2 up to 1000, 4 up to 2000, 6 up to 3000, and so on". (PI §186)

So, what is the notion of sameness to which we are meant to be able to appeal to here or in what Shaw calls his "naive reply" (p. 218)? As evident from the preceding quotes, for Wittgenstein sameness in following a rule is not anything independent of the rule to be followed. Notably, this point differs crucially from saying that something is not recognizable as language due to lack of regularity. In such a case, where we contrast certain modes of action or behaviour with language use, we can of course appeal to regularities characteristic of language in order to point out the difference of something else from it, as Wittgenstein does in PI §207, a remark which Shaw refers to in order to support the idea of his response to the sceptic (pp. 217-219). But §207 is making a very different point from e.g. §186, as just explained (contrary to Shaw p. 224). By contrast, Shaw's notion of regularity, or regularities in following particular rules that he presumes to be given independently of those rules, is clearly something metaphysically given, just like David Lewis's notion of the natural which Shaw also brings into the discussion (for reasons obscure to me) (pp. 232–233, 246ff.). Evidently, Wittgenstein would reject appeals to either Lewis's naturalness or Shaw's most uniform regularities, and rightly so, given how these notions in their different ways are parasitic on the notion of a rule and following a rule. (Whilst naturalness is a merely psychological notion, sameness is a logical one.) Indeed, if we could just read out the regularities of rule-following from the facts spoken about, there would be no need for rules in Wittgenstein's sense, and no room for his notion of the arbitrariness of grammar. I can't help but be puzzled. Did the same person write the first part of the book and the second part? Did they not notice how chapter 10 contradicts what was said about Wittgenstein's rejection of the 'justificatory project' in part one? How did they manage to forget the lessons of Wittgenstein's rule-following discussion in the second part of the book? And indeed, why would anyone think that the sceptic requires an answer in their confused terms and that such an answer would

be possible to provide? – Or is it just me who is somehow unable to follow the discussion?

I fail to make any sense of the last possibility. Contrary to Shaw, what counts as a semantic notion is not simply a matter of stipulation, however strong the desire to domesticate Wittgenstein for the purposes of contemporary Kripkean philosophy might be. (As is obvious, I'm clutching on straws in trying to envisage the motives of Shaw's strange philosophical move. Perhaps, to swap the metaphor of straws to something bigger, I have got the wrong end of the stick.)

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Shaw's "naive" response to Kripke's Wittgenstein[1]

Alexander Miller[2]

In his excellent monograph, James Shaw (2023) proposes a novel interpretation of the remarks in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* that have come to be known as "the rule-following considerations" (Wittgenstein 2009: §§185–242). In addition to developing a new interpretation, Shaw argues that the view he attributes to Wittgenstein has the resources to mount a plausible reply to the famous skeptical argument developed in chapter 2 of Saul Kripke's *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Kripke 1982).

Shaw's rich and wide-ranging text will challenge and stimulate serious scholars working on rule-following for years to come. In this note, I only have space to discuss one aspect of Shaw's fascinating treatment. I'll argue that Shaw's Wittgenstein-inspired response to Kripke's Wittgenstein's skeptical argument fails to deal with an important Wittgensteinian concern identified by Saul Kripke and Crispin Wright, before drawing some morals for Shaw's interpretation of Wittgenstein's remarks on rules and the *Philosophical Investigations* generally.

1. Two "Bipartite" Readings

Kripke develops a "bipartite" reading of Wittgenstein on rules, which consists of a skeptical argument followed by a "skeptical solution".

The skeptical argument goes as follows. Suppose that, in general, the meaning of a declarative sentence is given by its truth-conditions. Then, the meaning of an ascription of meaning, such as "Jones means *addition* by '+'", will be given by its truth-conditions. According to Kripke, these

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truth-conditions of ascriptions of meaning have two key characteristics, illustrated by (a) and (b) in:

(1) "Jones means *addition* by '+'" is true iff there is a fact about Jones and/or his speech-community which makes it the case that (a) "z" is the correct response to the query "x+y=?" iff z is the *sum* (and not e.g. the *quum*[3]) of x and y and that (b) Jones *ought to* respond to "+"-queries by producing the sum.

The skeptical argument now considers and rejects a number of candidate meaning-constituting facts (such as dispositional facts, mental images, and so on), and concludes that:

(2) There are no facts about Jones and/or his speech-community capable of satisfying both (a) and (b) in (1).

It follows that:

(3) Ascriptions of meaning, such as "Jones means *addition* by '+'", are systematically false.

According to Kripke, (3) is "incredible and self-defeating" and "insane and intolerable" (Kripke 1982: 60, 71). Kripke's Wittgenstein proposes to avoid (3) by rejecting the supposition that meaning is a matter of truth-conditions, and gives an alternative account of the meanings of declarative sentences in terms of their assertibility-conditions. When applied to ascriptions of meaning themselves, this alternative assertibility-conditional approach yields a form of communitarianism about meaning.[4]

On Shaw's alternative reading (also "bipartite"), Wittgenstein never countenances the skeptical threat encapsulated in (2) in Kripke's reading (Shaw 2023: 5). Rather, Wittgenstein is concerned with two logically distinct questions: a question in semantic epistemology (the "Justificatory Question"), and a question in the foundations of semantics (the "Grammatical Question").

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[3] For *quaddition*, see Kripke 1982: 8–9.
[4] I'm glossing over all sorts of complications in this necessarily ultra-concise summary. For more detail, see chapters 4 and 5 of Miller 2018, Miller 2020, Miller 2022 and Miller and Sultanescu 2022.

The Justificatory Question concerns the "Wayward Child" of *Investigations* §185, who in expanding the series "+2" does as we do up to 1000, but then continues 1004, 1008, 1012, and who is convinced that in doing so he is "going on in the same way". So,

> *The Justificatory Question*: What justification (or reason) did you possess when meaning your words, such that if the Wayward Child were to possess that justification, even they would have continued 1002, 1004, 1006 as you did (Shaw 2024: 70, 2023: 23, modified slightly).

A "trial and error" methodology, in which a gamut of candidate justifications is considered and found wanting, leads Wittgenstein to answer the Justificatory Question: "None". Shaw's Wittgenstein moves on to consider

> *The Grammatical Question*: How do we use expressions like "Jones meant *add 2* by '+2'"? What conditions influence our willingness to say e.g. "Jones meant *add 2* by '+2'" on a particular occasion? (2024: 71; 2023: 71, modified slightly).

The meta-linguistic project of answering the Grammatical Question is purely descriptive, and as befits a study of a family resemblance concept like *meaning* (2023 95-6), deploys a methodology of examining detailed case studies:

> [Wittgenstein's] conclusion from a series of [...] case studies is that there is an assortment of different things that can matter, in different contexts, to how we use semantic terms (the presence of training, the presence of repeated usage, the presence of "ordinary human behaviour", the presence of regularity in usage etc.). But no set of features provides anything like the necessary and sufficient conditions. (2024: 71)

The case studies developed in the course of answering the Grammatical Question dislodge a misconception seemingly presupposed by the project of answering the Justificatory Question, namely, that the "normal" rule-follower has in mind some justification for "going on" as he does in continuing the series that is lacked by the Wayward Child, such that had the child had that justification in mind he too would have continued 1002, 1004, 1006 and so on:

[Wittgenstein] thinks the presupposition of the Justificatory Question (that there is some justification we have that our imagined perverse interlocutor lacks) stands in relationships of mutual support with a tempting misconception of meaning as a "local" event. On this view, criteria for meaning a word in a particular way center around the happenings at the time and place the word was meant. The grammatical investigation aims to dislodge that misconception by bringing to the foreground nonlocal criteria (training that precedes acts of meaning, regularity that extends beyond it, etc.). (Shaw 2024: 71)

2. The "Naive" Reply to Kripke's Wittgenstein

Although Shaw thinks that Wittgenstein never even countenanced the kind of skeptical concern that exercised Kripke, he believes that the notion of *regularity* that emerges in the course of the grammatical investigation (together with its cognates *uniformity*, *sameness*, and *simplicity*) provides resources that can be used to convincingly rebut the Kripkean skeptic.

Suppose that in what are by ordinary criteria good circumstances in which to perform arithmetical calculations, Jones has given answers to "+"-queries involving numbers less than 57 that would be correct on the assumption that "+" denoted addition, but also correct if "+" denoted quaddition. Call this the "core" set of applications . So, we have

Core Applications

"1+1=2", "1+2=3", … ,"17+17=34", … , "21+39=60", "21+40=61", … , "27+53=80", … , "37+54=91", … , "41+55=96", … , "55+55=110", "55+56=111", "56+56=112".

Now consider the series of calculations beyond the singularity in the definition of quaddition, and compare two ways of "going on":

Continuation (A)

57+56=113, 57+57=114, … , 63+57=120, … , 68+56=124, 68+57=125 …

Continuation (B)

57+56=5, 57+57=5, … , 63+57=5, … , 68+56=5, 68+57=5 …

According to Shaw, considerations of regularity and uniformity are crucial in determining which potential continuation corresponds to what Jones means by "+". Which of the two continuations of the core results in the most regular and uniform pattern of use? Shaw claims that "addition is the most regular and uniform continuation of the core" (2024: 74). Intuitively, once we reach the point where numbers greater than or equal to 57 appear as arguments in the calculations, we start doing something different from what we were doing in the core if we proceed as in (B), whereas we continue "doing the same thing" if we proceed as in (A). If we take regularity to have a role to play in the constitution of meaning, then, we can dismiss the skeptic's hypothesis that we (or Jones) mean quaddition: Jones means addition by "+" since "addition is the most regular and uniform continuation of the clearly good applications we make" prior to answering queries that involve numbers greater than or equal to 57(Shaw 2023: 219, emphasis in original). This is the essence of Shaw's "naive" reply to the skeptic, a reply that he describes as "simple, almost trivial, and right before our eyes, but for all that extremely powerful and revealing"(2023: 300). Shaw sees this as a variant – with some important differences (that we'll return to below) – of a reply offered to the skeptic by David Lewis:

> The naive solution is that adding means going on in the same way as before when the numbers get big, whereas quadding means doing something different; there is nothing present in the subject that constitutes an intention to do different things in different cases; therefore he intends addition, not quaddition. We should not scoff at this naive response. It is the correct solution to the puzzle (Lewis 1983: 376, quoted in Shaw 2023: 247).

3. The "Genuine Wittgensteinian Concern" Discerned by Kripke and Wright

In the course of his discussion of candidate meaning-constituting facts, Kripke considers the idea that meaning *addition* by "+" might be a sui generis, primitive and irreducible state "not to be assimilated to sensations

or headaches or any 'qualitative' states, nor to be assimilated to dispositions, but a state of a unique kind of its own" (Kripke 1982: 51).

Kripke rejects this suggestion, describing it as "desperate" and "mysterious": for one thing, (a) it is not an introspectable state, yet "we are supposedly aware of it with some fair degree of certainty whenever it occurs"; for another, (b) it is "a finite object, contained in our finite minds" that has potentially infinite and open-ended normative reach, that in Boghossian's words "contains information about the correct applicability of a sign in literally no end of distinct situations"(Boghossian 1989: 180).

Crispin Wright (1987, 1989) very usefully sharpens this worry. He takes (a) to indicate that the first-person epistemology of meaning is *non-inferential* and *first-person authoritative*. In general, if asked what I mean by a word I do not have to infer the answer from a survey of my behaviour, and in general, my answer stands by default unless you provide some evidence against it. He takes (b) to indicate that meaning *addition* by "+" displays what he calls "disposition-like theoreticity": whether or not I mean addition by "+" at a particular time depends in part of how I use "+" at later times in situations I need not have envisaged. How is it possible for a state of mind to simultaneously display both of these features?

Colin McGinn (1984) reacts to the charges of desperation and mystery-mongering by suggesting that there is in fact no mystery: the intuitive notion of *intention* displays the same combination of features as the allegedly primitive state of meaning *addition* by "+". If you ask me whether I intend to travel to Australia at Christmas, I ordinarily don't have to carry out an inference to give you an answer, and the onus isn't on me to provide evidence for my answer but on any third-party who wishes to dispute it. So for McGinn there's nothing desperate about the non-reductionist proposal.

Wright describes McGinn's suggestion as "about as flagrant an instance of philosophical stone-kicking as one could wish for" (Wright 1989: 113). Without an account of how intention *itself* can possess "the combination of first-person avowability with disposition-like connections to behaviour in circumstances which the avower need not have envisaged" (ibid.) we are no further on. Wright suggests that Kripke's inchoate remarks against non-reductionism point towards "a genuine

Wittgensteinian concern" which McGinn has missed: "the task of achieving an understanding of how [the first-person epistemology of intentional states] is reconciled with their disposition-like theoreticity"(1989: 119).[5]

4. Shaw's Naive Reply Misses the Genuine Wittgensteinian Concern

Although Shaw's reply to the sceptical argument is not a form of non-reductionism or primitivism of the sort criticised by Kripke (Shaw 2023: 101 n.18), the problem that Wright extracts from Kripke's remarks can be deployed against it.

In effect, Shaw faces a dilemma. Suppose, on the one hand, that insofar as judgements about regularity and uniformity relate to the notion of meaning, they too display the combination of first person-avowability and disposition-like theoreticity whose significance McGinn missed. E.g., if Jones judges that continuation (A) of his core applications of "+" is more regular and uniform than continuation (B), that judgement will not ordinarily be the result of inference; and Jones's claim will stand by default in the absence of countervailing evidence that his opinion should be discounted. Moreover, if in his future practice, Jones begins answering "5" to all queries involving numbers greater than or equal to 57 (or some other numerical threshold), we will deem that his judgement that continuation (A) is the most regular and uniform continuation of his core set of uses of "+" was in fact false when he made it. So on this horn of the dilemma the "genuine Wittgensteinian concern" simply re-emerges with respect to judgements about regularity and uniformity, and the sceptical argument remains unanswered.

Suppose, on the other hand, that Jones's judgements about regular and uniform continuations of patterns of his use of an expression do not display the combination of first-person authority and disposition-like theoreticity. Then, in the absence of an argument that Jones's judgements about what he means don't display the combination (or that it doesn't

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[5] Noting the defeasibility of self-ascriptions of intention doesn't in itself solve the problem: if my self-ascription of an intention at time t is overturned at a later time t+ this doesn't show that I did never in fact possess special authority at the earlier time. I did – it's my self-ascription which is defeasible not the authority I possessed at t – so the problem remains of squaring my possession of that authority at t with the fact that my self-ascription may subsequently be overturned. (Thanks here to John Bishop).

matter whether they do), this suggestion would fail as a defence of the intuitive notion of meaning in the face of Kripke's sceptic's attack.

So, either judgements about regularity display the problematic combination of features or they don't. If they do, the problem identified by Kripke and Wright simply re-emerges. If they don't, it is unclear why they are relevant to our intuitive notion of meaning.

5. The Rejection of Epistemic Constraints?

Applying the "Genuine Wittgensteinian Concern" as outlined above essentially amounts to imposing a substantive epistemic constraint on answers to Kripke's sceptical argument: unless a proposed answer can account for the combination of first-person avowability and disposition-like theoreticity it should be rejected. Shaw considers this matter in a footnote in which he writes: "I think any formulation of skepticism that incorporates substantive epistemic constraints […] can and should be dealt with simply by rejecting the constraints"(Shaw 2024: 79 n.16).

There are a number of reasons why this suggestion might be deemed problematic.

First, we can make an ad hominem point. As noted above, the naive reply offered by Shaw is a variant of a reply offered by David Lewis. Shaw himself rejects Lewis's version of the naive reply. Lewis deploys a theoretically-loaded, metaphysical notion of more or less natural properties[6], whereas Shaw uses purely intuitive ("ordinary" and "mundane") notions of regularity, uniformity and so on (2024: 80). Shaw objects to Lewis's version (2023: 252–3; 2024: 79) on the grounds that our ordinary practice simply ignores this metaphysical notion: considerations of naturalness in Lewis's sense can neither vindicate nor dislodge ascriptions of meaning. So, "it is on reflection straightforwardly and right at its core divorced from our ordinary modes of thinking about meaning" (2023: 252–3). If Wright and Kripke are correct in discerning the combination of first-person avowability and disposition-like theoreticity in our ordinary practice of self-ascribing meaning and intention, any "solution" to the sceptical argument which rules this combination to be irrelevant to the issue would seem to be offering a response similarly "divorced from our ordinary modes of thinking about meaning" and

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[6] The degree of naturalness of a property would depend on the length of a definition of the property in terms of the properties fundamental in physical science (Shaw 2024: 76 n.12).

intention. If Shaw's objection to Lewis is successful, doesn't it give us grounds for retaining a substantive epistemic constraint on answers to Kripke's skeptic?[7]

Second, it is plausible that, depending on the subject matter, some constitutive questions are constrained by epistemic considerations. The idea that the precise relationship between the nature of a fact and human modes of enquiry can vary from subject matter to subject matter is a familiar one from contemporary discussions of truth and realism: e.g., the idea that truth in morals or comedy might be potentially evidence-transcendent to the same extent as truth in physical theory is at least prima facie unappealing (Wright 1992: 8–9). Arguably, the case of meaning is likely to be one in which metaphysical questions are not completely divorced from constraints relating to intuitive epistemology. While the matter is complex, Shaw's proposal to divorce metaphysics from epistemology in the case of meaning looks a little desperate.

Third, even if the notion of a fact in a particular area isn't as a matter of conceptual necessity subject to epistemic constraint (as moral and comic facts are according to the second point immediately above), the philosophical project of attempting to *integrate* one's view of the facts in an area with the intuitive epistemology of that area is perfectly familiar: see e.g. Christopher Peacocke's remarks on "integration challenges" (Peacocke 1999, chapter 1). Indeed, confronting such challenges seems mandatory for anyone aspiring to construct a philosophical *worldview*.[8]

6. Morals for Shaw's Reading of Wittgenstein

As noted above, the second part of the bipartite enterprise that Shaw finds in Wittgenstein involves a "grammatical investigation", a descriptive,

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[7] Shaw (2023: 221) views naive replies as analogous to the replies in terms of simplicity that are criticized in Kripke (1982: 38-9 and n.25). He takes the version in terms of a theoretical notion of simplicity generated within computer science that Kripke rejects in n.25 to succumb to essentially the same objection he levels against Lewis's version of the naive reply, and also to Kripke's objection that the simplicity response begs the question against the skeptic. While the version of the naive view that proceeds in terms of an intuitive notion of simplicity may not succumb to the specific epistemological worry that Shaw takes Lewis's version to face (that it leaves our practice of ascribing meaning potentially beholden to eventualities that are simply not relevant to it), in addition to the worry expressed in §4 above it is unclear why it doesn't succumb to Kripke's worry that deploying it begs the question against the skeptic (for a nice articulation of what I take to be a similar concern, see Sultanescu 2023: n.3).

[8] For the notion of a philosophical worldview, see Miller 2003.

meta-semantic exercise that uses a methodology of case studies to delineate the features that influence our inclinations to say, "Jones means *addition* by '+'" and similar. Let's suppose this is an apt description of at least part of what is going on in *Philosophical Investigations*. Given this supposition, we can take Wright's observations about the first-person epistemology of meaning and its disposition-like theoreticity to be part of a grammatical investigation in Shaw's sense. The story about the non-inferential and first-person authoritative epistemology of meaning and intention is inter alia a story about the conditions in which we are inclined to regard self-ascriptions of meaning as expressive of knowledge. The story about disposition-like theoreticity would appear to mesh cleanly with the parts of the grammatical investigation highlighted by Shaw, in which the *non-local* nature of the criteria governing ascriptions of meaning are delineated (think of Shaw's emphasis on the importance of regularity *that extends beyond acts of meaning at a specific time* (2024: 71)). We can then see the problem of combining first-person avowability and disposition-like theoreticity as stemming from the inclusion within the ordinary grammar of meaning of elements that are not obviously reconcilable. In the passages in the *Investigations* that deal with intention and other psychological states Wittgenstein can be taken to be dealing with this very problem: how is it possible for both of these aspects to be part of the grammar of the relevant states? In general, what is to be done when a grammatical investigation uncovers elements of a linguistic practice that are not obviously reconcilable? Wright goes to some lengths to tease out the problem from the relevant passages: see for example his discussions (1987) of §139, §§151-3, §184, §187, §191, §197. In addition, Wright finds the same problem in passages later in the *Investigations* (§§633–637, §§682–683). Shaw, however, doesn't discuss the later passages, and although he does discuss some of those that appear before §185 (e.g. §131, §159) and some of those within the core rule-following block (e.g. §197) the "Genuine Wittgensteinian Concern" that exercised Wright doesn't come to the fore. What this suggests is that the plausibility of the naive response, such as it is, depends on the lop-sided nature of Shaw's grammatical investigations.

Perhaps the take-away message of this note is that in interpreting the rule-following considerations, we must not lose sight of how they relate to the broader issues in the philosophy of mind that are aired in later sections of the *Philosophical Investigations*, such as the sections on intention

highlighted by Wright (and indeed, in sections prior to *PI* §185, and in sections within Shaw's "core" that don't figure prominently in his exegesis e.g. §191).

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On Shaw's "Naive Reply" to Rule-following Skepticism

Hannah Ginsborg[1]

James Shaw's *Wittgenstein on Rules* offers both a new interpretation of the rule-following sections of the *Philosophical Investigations* and a new solution to the skeptical puzzle about rules and meaning that Kripke attributed to Wittgenstein.[2] Given how much has been written in the last forty-odd years about both the rule-following considerations themselves and about the skeptical problem Kripke claimed to discover in them, this is, in itself, a significant achievement. Moreover, Shaw's careful, thoughtful, and imaginative exploration of Wittgenstein's writings on rules, which includes much ingenious and detailed development of suggestions, examples, and scenarios that are only briefly sketched by Wittgenstein himself, makes for an illuminating and rewarding read whether or not one ultimately agrees with Shaw's conclusions.

My primary focus in this contribution will be Shaw's solution to the skeptical puzzle, which he in fact takes to be entirely due to Kripke, and not at all to Wittgenstein (see e.g. at p. 300). But for reasons that will emerge, Shaw's understanding of the skeptical puzzle is closely tied to his interpretation of Wittgenstein, so I will begin with a sketch of that interpretation. The main innovation in Shaw's approach to Wittgenstein's remarks on rule-following is that he takes them to be, as he writes at the outset, "split between two different but complementary projects […] marked not only by different guiding questions, but different presuppositions and methodologies" (p. 1). The first, justificatory, project seeks, or "feign[s]" to seek, something that could serve as an "extraordinary" justification for our new applications of rules or words: something that could, say, serve to correct the aberrant pupil of *Philosophical Investigations* §185, who finds it natural to continue the sequence "0, 2, 4, 6, 8, …, 1000" by writing "1004, 1008" (p. 38). Wittgenstein's point in pursuing this project is not to provide such a justification, since on his view no such justification is possible, but to

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[2] Shaw 2023, Kripke 1982. Unless otherwise specified, all page references are to Shaw 2023.

show that the project fails. The second, grammatical, project, is, by contrast, pursued in its own right. It aims to discuss the "grammar" of our talk of rule-following, that is to describe the circumstances under which we are willing to say of someone that they are following a rule or using a term meaningfully. We can, albeit with some caveats, think of this project as answering questions about what meaning and rule-following consist in (p. 100). Unlike the justificatory project, it is independent of epistemological concerns. Saying what constitutes, or makes possible, a person's meaning add two by "add two" does not require considering what justification she has for continuing the "0,2,4,6,8...1000" sequence with "1000, 1002" rather than "1004, 1008." Rather, it is a matter of describing features of our practices with expressions like "add two" such as the fact that we come to use them as a result of training, that they are used on multiple occasions, that we typically agree on how to apply them, and that our use of them is regular or uniform.

The distinction Shaw draws between these two projects informs his reading of Kripke's skeptical puzzle. The puzzle begins with what seems to be an epistemological question about justification. Kripke's skeptic challenges my confidence that I ought to answer the question "68+57?" with "125" rather than "5", and he supports his challenge with the hypothesis that, in my previous uses of '+" I meant, not addition, but the function quaddition, which yields the sum for arguments less than 57, and otherwise 5. To answer the skeptic, Kripke claims, I must "cite" a fact that "refute[s]" the skeptical hypothesis (1982: 9), or, as he goes on to put it, a fact that "constitutes" my having meant, or meaning addition (1982: 11, 21, 22). He then goes on to argue, by considering various accounts of what meaning consists in, that this is impossible. We might think that the upshot is epistemological: since I cannot give an account of what it is about me or my past usage that constitutes my having meant addition rather than quaddition, I cannot know that I ought to say "125" rather than "5". But Kripke makes clear that the conclusion of the argument is metaphysical: my failure to cite a fact that constitutes my having meant addition entails that there is no such fact, and that, as a result, "the entire idea of meaning vanishes into thin air" (1982: 22).

Commentators on Kripke's skeptical puzzle have mostly agreed that the conclusion is indeed metaphysical or constitutive, but they have disagreed about the role of epistemic considerations in reaching that conclusion. For some commentators, such as Wright (1984, 1989) and

Zalabardo (1997), it is essential to the skeptical argument that candidate meaning facts be subject to an epistemic constraint: for Wright, that my knowledge must be non-inferential and first-personal; for Zalabardo, that it must be of a kind that can justify my confidence that I ought to say "125" rather than "5." For others, such as Boghossian (1989), epistemic considerations play no role in the argument: the skeptical problem arises simply from the metaphysical difficulty of understanding how it is possible to mean something by our words or follow a rule, independent of any epistemological questions about how we know what we mean or whether we can justify our uses of words. Shaw opts for the second kind of reading. This is in part – and, I suspect, for the most part – because it fits with the distinction between justificatory and grammatical projects that he finds in Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein, on Shaw's reading, separates the question of how my uses of words can be justified (in extraordinary contexts) from the question of what the use of words consists in. The constitutive question can be pursued independently of the justificatory question, and indeed it must be, since the question about justification cannot be answered. So if we want to bring Kripke into "fruitful dialogue" with Wittgenstein (p. 180), we need to strip away from Kripke's argument the considerations relating to justification. Indeed, Shaw suggests, this yields the most charitable reading of Kripke, since the inclusion of epistemic or justificatory considerations results from a mistaken attempt to "shoehorn Wittgenstein's distinct justificatory [...] and grammatical projects [...] into a single problem," an attempt which, moreover, "weaken[s] the skeptical problem, by encrusting it with desiderata that [are] dispensable" (p. 186).

It is against the background of this reading of Kripke that Shaw offers his new solution to the skeptical problem. He takes this solution to draw on resources offered by Wittgenstein, notably on Wittgenstein's remark about a community whose apparent language is too disconnected from their activities to allow us to learn it, that "there is not enough regularity for us to call it 'language'" (*Philosophical Investigations* §207) (p. 215). Drawing on this seeming identification of regularity as a feature of language, Shaw proposes that, to the skeptic's demand that I cite a fact in which my having meant addition by "+" consists, I can reply that it consists (among other things) in my having given a certain set of answers to "+" questions, combined with the fact that addition represents the most uniform or regular continuation of the sequence of those answers.

That is, I can appeal to the features of meaning to which Wittgenstein draws attention as part of his "grammatical" investigation, and specifically to the regularity or uniformity which characterizes meaningful language, since it is that feature which distinguishes my having meant addition from my having meant quaddition. What I meant is addition, not quaddition, in virtue of the fact that giving the sum is a more regular or uniform continuation of the answers I previously gave to "+" questions than giving the quum.

Shaw labels this the "Naive Reply" (p. 218), because it appeals to the naive intuition that saying "125" is doing the same as, or something similar to, what I did in my previous responses, whereas saying "5" is doing something different. (As Shaw points out, the notions of "similar," "same," "regular" and "uniform", which he groups together under the heading of "notions of uniformity," are all closely related.) And it might at first seem that it is a complete non-starter, since we can imagine the skeptic immediately objecting that this is no justification for my confidence that I ought to say "125." The skeptic can concede that addition represents the most uniform continuation of my earlier replies, and, relatedly, that saying "125" is more similar than saying "5" to what I did earlier in response to "+" questions. But, he can ask, how can I rule out that what I meant was the function corresponding, not to the most uniform, but to the most quuniform continuation, or that the response I ought to give now is not the most similar but the most quimilar response to the responses I gave earlier? For all I know, when I used "+" on earlier occasions, what I intended was to go on in the quame way, where going on in the quame way is going on the same way for numbers less than 57 and otherwise saying "5." So my present knowledge that addition is the most uniform continuation of my previous uses is of no help to me in determining what I ought to say now given those uses. However, on Shaw's understanding of the skeptical problem as independent of epistemological considerations, this objection is beside the point. For the objection applies only if we suppose that a satisfactory answer to the skeptic must provide a justification for the correctness of "125." If we dispense with the constraint that the fact of my meaning addition must be something to which I can successfully appeal to justify my uses of "+", then, it seems, there is no obvious reason why that fact cannot be understood as at least partly constituted by the fact that addition is the most regular continuation of the uses of "+" that I previously made.

Does the reply succeed? I do not think it does, and this is largely because I do not think that we can dispense with epistemological considerations in making sense of the skeptical problem. As I read the argument, the core of the problem lies in the skeptic's initial challenge to my confidence that, in light of how I used "+" in the past, my answer to the question "68+57?" should be "125" rather than "5." Kripke assumes that, in order to justify my confidence in the correctness of "125," I need to be able to show that I meant addition rather than quaddition. It is to satisfy this need that I must "cite a fact" in which my having meant addition consists. Since – according to Kripke's extensive argument by elimination – I cannot cite such a fact, it follows that I cannot know that what I ought to say is "125" rather than "5." The claim that there is no such fact as my meaning addition, or indeed of my meaning anything by any word, follows immediately from this lack of knowledge. For if each of my supposed uses of language is a "leap in the dark" (1982: 10, 15) – carried out without the knowledge that it is any more correct than any other use of the expression would be – then my uses do not qualify as meaningful at all.

My primary reason for reading the argument in this thoroughgoingly epistemological way is that, otherwise, I do not see how it can warrant the radical skeptical conclusion that there is no such thing as meaning, as opposed to the much weaker conclusion that we cannot give a satisfactory philosophical account of what meaning consists in. This emerges from reflection on a long-standing criticism of Kripke's skeptical argument, that it is guilty of unargued reductionism.[3] According to this criticism, the skeptic's demand that his interlocutor "cite a fact" in which her having meant addition consists, is, in effect, a demand to provide a reduction of meaning facts, and the cumulative upshot of most of his arguments against the various facts he considers is that such a reduction is not possible.[4] But the impossibility of giving a reductive account of some phenomenon is not in itself reason for denying that the phenomenon exists. This has led many readers of Kripke to propose that we answer the skeptic by maintaining that meaning facts are primitive or irreducible.[5]

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[3] For an early example, see McGinn 1984: 150–152.

[4] The obvious exception is his argument against the proposal that meaning facts are *sui generis*, which he dismisses as "desperate" (1982: 51).

[5] For example Boghossian 1989, McDowell 1998, Stroud 2000, Sultanescu 2024, and Verheggen 2024a.

However, I think that the availability of the non-reductionist response to the argument as standardly construed indicates not so much that the skeptical problem can be solved, but that there is something wrong with the standard construal of the problem. On the standard construal, the non-existence of meaning is apparently supposed to follow solely from the philosophical difficulty of providing an adequate account of what meaning consists in. But it is not clear why the recognition of that philosophical difficulty should lead us to think that, if we are unable to address it, then our supposed uses of language are meaningless. By contrast, on the reading I have offered, the argument works by challenging something that we ordinarily take for granted whenever we use a familiar expression, namely that we are using it correctly, that is, in a way that fits our previous uses and the uses we were taught. The doubt it introduces does not stem from philosophical worries about how to account for the peculiarities of meaning facts, but rather from something that is more immediate, everyday, and visceral: how do I know, each time I use an expression, that I am not going wildly astray in my use; and if I do not know, then how can I claim to understand the expression? As I see it, it is this undermining of the confidence normally associated with our use of language – confidence that we are going on as we ought from previous uses – that generates the threat that there is no such thing as meaning. Of course, the difficulty of accounting for meaning does play a role in the argument, since, at least according to Kripke, it is only by doing so – specifically, by saying what constitutes my having meant addition – that I can ward off the challenge to my knowledge that I should answer "68+57?" with "125" rather than "5." But outside that epistemological context, the difficulty can at most motivate skepticism about the prospects for a satisfactory philosophical account of meaning, and not the kind of skepticism that would lead us to doubt the very existence or possibility of meaning.[6]

I have been arguing that Shaw is mistaken in thinking that Kripke is wrongly "shoehorning together" metaphysical and justificatory considerations. Far from "weakening" the skeptical problem by introducing "dispensable desiderata," the justificatory considerations are,

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[6] I present and defend this interpretation in Ginsborg 2018 and 2024; Miller 2024 offers a multi-faceted critique of it.

on my view, essential to getting the skeptical challenge off the ground.[7] Since, as Shaw acknowledges, the appeal to uniformity or regularity depends on construing the skeptical problem as independent of justificatory considerations, it cannot, as I understand the skeptical dialectic, succeed as a response to the skeptic. I nonetheless find Shaw's "naive reply" response very appealing, and I will try to bring out that appeal by considering how – if we interpret the argument in the epistemological way I have proposed – the skeptic can be answered. On my view, the right way to ward off the skeptical conclusion is to maintain that the skeptic's demand for justification is unfounded. The demand for a justification of "125" is premised on the skeptical hypothesis that I meant quaddition. But instead of trying to rule out the skeptical hypothesis by citing a fact in which my having meant addition consists, we can claim that the skeptical hypothesis is irrelevant to the question of what I ought to say given my previous reponses to "+" signs. Regardless of what I meant in those previous uses, writing "125" is going on the right way from those previous uses and writing "5" is going on wrongly from them. That "125" is a better fit than "5" to the sequence of previous responses to the "+" sign, just as "1002" is a better fit than "1004" to the sequence that the aberrant pupil was shown in connection with the "add two" command, is something that we can know without relying on any knowledge of what we meant by "+" or "add two." So we do not need to appeal to what we meant earlier, or to anything else, to justify our confidence in the correctness of "125". If, as I have argued, the skeptical conclusion follows not from our inability to give an account of what meaning consists in, but from the undermining of our confidence in the correctness of "125", this defuses the skeptical threat.

The appeal here to what I have called "primitive normativity" also makes for a "naive" response to the skeptic, in that it turns on the ordinary, non-philosophical, intuition that saying "125" or writing "1002" is the right way to go on from one's previous behavior or the behavior one has been shown, regardless of what interpretation can be put on that behavior. And that intuition is closely related to the intuition, on which

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[7] This is also the case for versions of the standard interpretation, such as those of Wright and Zalabardo, on which meaning facts are subject to epistemic constraints. It is worth adding that Miller, in objecting to my argument that the standard interpretation fails to motivate the skeptical conclusion (2024, §4), relies on Wright's version of the standard interpretation, so that his critique, even if it is a ground for for rejecting my interpretation, does not support the purely constitutive view favored by Shaw.

Shaw draws in his own response, that saying "125" is doing the same as one did before, or going on in a way that is uniform or regular (or at least more uniform or regular than saying "5" would be). Of course, as we have seen, Shaw puts his "naive" intuition to work in the context of saying what meaning addition consists in, whereas I invoke mine to deny that we need to give an account of meaning addition in the first place. But leaving aside that admittedly significant difference, our approaches are alike, not just in their deliberate naivety, but because of the apparent similarity of the intuitions on which they rely. We see this at *Philosophical Investigations* §185, where Wittgenstein suggests that the aberrant pupil might reply to our correction of him by saying both "Yes, isn't it right? I thought that was how I had [sollen] to do it" and "But I did go on in the same way!" The idea that one is going on in the right way and the idea that one is going on in the same way clearly have an affinity. In fact they are sometimes treated in the literature as if they are interchangeable.[8]

However, the notion of what one ought to write after "0,2,4,6,8....1000" or what fits or is appropriate to that prior sequence, is clearly different from the notion of what counts as doing the same as what one did in writing the sequence: one notion is normative, the other descriptive. That raises a question about how the two notions are related, and in particular, whether one has priority over the other. It might be thought that the second, descriptive, idea is more fundamental: I take "1002" to be the right continuation of the sequence "0,2,4,6,8....1000" because I take writing "1002" to be doing the same as I did before. If that is correct, then the kind of naive reply to the skeptic favored by Shaw, in terms of uniformity, is preferable to a reply in terms of primitive normativity. In fact, the relevant normativity turns out not to be primitive after all, since one's recognition of it depends on the recognition of the fact that one is doing the same. But, although I cannot defend the point adequately here, I think the relation of priority goes the other way around. Very briefly, this is because our grasp on the notion of sameness, and on notions of uniformity more generally, depends on our being able to grasp what is the right thing to do in situations typical of early language learning, when, as children, we are presented with patterns to continue or objects to sort into kinds. Although it would be an oversimplification to say that writing "1002" is doing the same just because it is the correct continuation

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[8] See for example Goldfarb 2012: 73; Child 2011: 123.

of the sequence (in some circumstances, the correct continuation would be to do something different), it is still the case that our capacity to recognize things as the same depends on our capacity to recognize how a given pattern ought to be continued, or what objects ought to be sorted with what. Indeed, grasp of the concept same arguably requires even more than this, since it requires being able to sort together different examples of doing the same (e.g. putting together all the toy cars, and continuing a pattern of dots by making more dots). So although Shaw at one point describes the notion of uniformity as "conceptually basic" – in particular, more basic than addition (p. 225), – there is a case for saying that it is relatively sophisticated, and in particular that grasp of more straightforwardly descriptive concepts like car and red may be more basic, at least developmentally, than grasp of concepts like same and regular.

In conclusion: I have argued against Shaw's naive reply to the skeptical problem on the grounds that it rests on a misconstrual of the problem as purely constitutive rather than essentially involving epistemological considerations. I have also considered, and offered grounds for rejecting, the idea that the core notion of uniformity that Shaw exploits in his reply could still be invoked as a response to the skeptical problem, if that problem is reconstrued as concerned with justification. There is a great deal more I would like to say about Shaw's rich and rewarding exploration of meaning and rule-following in both Wittgenstein and Kripke, but limitations of space preclude further discussion here.

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Replies to Kuusela, Miller, and Ginsborg

James R. Shaw

I thank my commentators for probing and insightful commentary – I could not have asked for better! The predictable downside is that it's impossible to do justice to everything. I'll do my best to hit key points.

1. Kuusela

Kuusela warns against turning the rule-following remarks "into a discussion about the possibility of linguistic meaning in general or of the foundations of semantics, insofar as the latter involves a claim about meaning as always dependent on rules". But what I read into the *Investigations* is a discussion of conditions that can contribute to our willingness to say there is meaningful language in use – something which needn't presuppose meaning is always dependent on rules. I concede that "the connections between meaning and rule-following are ones of mere analogy".[1] I merely presuppose that sometimes questions about what it takes to introduce or follow a rule parallel questions about what it is to mean or understand something by words, and that what one can say about one case will illuminate the other. You can think all this without going in for anything like a "'Wittgensteinian semantics', which [...] accounts for meaning in terms of rule-governed use". I agree with Kuusela that we don't find resources for such a view in the *Investigations*. There's more to Kuusela's worry here, but let me circle back to it.

Kuusela "disagree[s] with [my] claim that Wittgenstein's discussion of rule-following only starts at *Investigations* §185 rather than §138". I am happy to give this claim up. I do try to flag[2] that Wittgenstein introduces the discussion of rules gradually, even laying groundwork in the single-digit sections, with an "important extended strand of considerations beginning at PI §185". Because of this, I concede it is "probably misleading to cast any single set of remarks as 'the' rule-following considerations". My interest in the block leading from §185 is that it represents a "sustained treatment of the topic of following rules that

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[1] Shaw 2023: 9 n.2.
[2] Shaw 2023: 9.

shows much greater focus than anywhere else", arguably responsive to the specific formulation of the case at §185. If Kuusela can agree to that, I'm happy to give up labels.

Of course, Kuusela isn't merely interested in nomenclature. He is especially concerned that the emphasis I lay on my later sections distorts Wittgenstein's methodology by failing to take into account that "the rule-following pupil is explicitly introduced as an application of the method of simple language-games". One worry is that ignoring background simplifications in this method feeds into the idea of linguistic meaning as dependent on rule-governed use. Again, I want to join Kuusela in rejecting that dependence. But another worry is that I am supplanting Wittgenstein's true method with what I call "family-resemblance methodology", where this "method and its point remain unclear".

Kuusela is right to stress that the terminology of "family-resemblance methodology" is not in Wittgenstein's texts. But I merely meant it to reflect a simple idea Wittgenstein stresses: that the only way to clarify the use of a family-resemblance term is through examples.

> How would we explain to someone what a game is? I think that we'd describe games to him [...] §69

> Here giving examples is not an *indirect* way of explaining – in default of a better one. §71

> Isn't my knowledge, my concept of a game, completely expressed in [...] my describing examples of various kinds of game [...] saying that I would hardly call this or that a game, and so on. §75

These remarks suggest a "methodology of supplying case studies as a way of explaining a [family-resemblance] concept" on which "the best we can do to elucidate words expressing family resemblance concepts is to *enumerate cases*, in part to tease out a network of interrelated features that, present in various degrees, influence the application of the term in question".[3] By listing cases, one can reveal the importance of ideas like chance, amusement, and skill to our use of "games", without misleadingly suggesting they contribute to necessary and sufficient conditions. If "meaning", etc. are family resemblance terms – as Wittgenstein seems to

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[3] Shaw 2023: 95–6.

say – it would seem that the only way to elucidate them is to use this method of giving examples.

A special instance of this is the method of "contrast cases" (again, my terminology) which "involve[s] imagining pairs [...] or groups of cases, in which the presence of various features is stripped away, or modulated, so as to illuminate the role they play in undergirding attributions of [a] relevant term".[4] (Note that in §75 that we can elucidate "game" by listing *non*-games.) I think the textual evidence that Wittgenstein is engaged in this method with respect to terms like "means", "follows a rule", etc. is exceedingly strong.

What is the point? The thought is that *some* philosophical confusions might be rectifiable through the foregoing method – especially by bringing to light the significance of features easy to overlook. Here is an example: there is a temptation – fostered by surface usage – to think of the language of meaning as reporting mental acts whose significance is derived from (spatio-temporally) local features. When we don't find those features, we can be tempted to concoct mysterious versions of them (in the 'mind'), or speculate they must somehow be hidden (in the brain). Carefully chosen contrast cases can bring to light non-local features that influence the application of the language, to the point of eroding the thought that these are mental acts to begin with. This clarifies the usage in ways that can dispel felt mysteries or unhappy starts in trying to properly understand it. (This strikes me as being in line with the remark Kuusela cites from *AWL*, 97.)

Perhaps this doesn't get to the heart of Wittgenstein's later approach and aspects of his methodology are left out here. Kuusela certainly presents important textual evidence for this. Still, I don't yet see why it can't be an important part – one of philosophy's several methods (§133d). If so, it is a part worth clarifying. Many sympathetic commentators feel perplexed at what they take to be an evasiveness in Wittgenstein's refusal to give even a hint of a positive account of rule-following.[5] Subsuming certain remarks under the heading of the foregoing methodology elucidates what limited positive work they can accomplish.

I liken the work here to that in contemporary metasemantics (bringing back Kuusela's Original worry) and sometimes cast Wittgenstein as

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[4] Shaw 2023: 147.
[5] See especially Shaw 2023: 102.

'addressing' questions in that domain. I'm hoping some of Kuusela's resistance to this is traceable to the unclarity that he identifies in how I use the word. I describe the semantics/metasemantic distinction as "roughly, the distinction between the content of an expression and the factors that ground the expression's bearing the content that it does".[6] That is vague, but deliberately so. I want a formulation neutral enough to capture commonalities linking contemporary questions in the philosophy of language with Wittgenstein's work. If Wittgenstein is doing what I say, then he is addressing the concerns moving philosophers to look for the grounds of meaningful expression – albeit by quite different means. Is Wittgenstein 'doing metasemantics'? Not if it is marked by assumptions that linguistic meaning is grounded in rules, or that we require necessary and sufficient conditions for meaningfulness, etc. But there is a way of freeing the task of that domain from such presuppositions. So-freed, the methodology to address the concerns is just the one Wittgenstein uses.

Kuusela is surprised, given where I start, that I end up taking Kripke's skeptical worry seriously. Isn't it self-defeating? True. But the interest of the case is that we seek grounds for meanings that satisfy certain natural constraints and come up empty handed. That can be confusing! How did we end up in this absurd place? Was it the constraints? Did we overlook a possible ground of meaning? Do meanings have no grounds? As I read him, Wittgenstein is supposed to give us clarity in this domain by giving us resources to dispel the confusion. Kuusela has worries about how that plays out, but I'm running out of space, and will have to hope some answers surface in replies to my other commentators.

2. Miller

Miller, drawing on Wright's criticism of McGinn, highlights two features that an adequate response to the skeptic should account for.

> (a) First-person epistemology of meaning is non-inferential and first-person authoritative;
>
> and
>
> (b) meaning addition by "+" displays disposition-like theoreticity.

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[6] Shaw 2023: 128.

Miller stresses that I cannot dismiss the epistemic constraint in (a), especially given my ambitions on Wittgenstein's behalf. Indeed, both conditions are directly connected with the ordinary modes of talking about meaning that Wittgenstein is beholden to respect.

On this we agree. In fact, before I try to address the issue, let me exacerbate it. If Wittgenstein is right, *far* more things could be packed into the statement (b). Whether and what one means could depend on things like being part of pattern of regular usage, having been trained in a certain way, and so on. And these combine in myriad forms that preclude stating conditions for meaning in an exhaustive and informative way. How could a state of mind sensitive in such a complex way to such features have the epistemic profile of (a)?

To deal with the question we must undo presuppositions that create a sensed tension. Things in category (b) (including dispositions)[7] belong to the grammar of "means addition by '+'". But (a) concerns justification, broadly construed. And a central lesson of the rule-following sections is that keeping these separate is critical to understanding how minimal-justification or justification-free use of language functions. (a) involves such use – just now the use of "means".

Start with a simpler case. Imagine a child who has perfectly learned the word "even" and is developing the series of evens. How can they continue *that* series *correctly*, past 64, say? If this is question about justification in Wittgenstein's sense, the answer *can* be: by merely speaking or writing "66", in the right circumstances, without appealing to anything. Those circumstances may include things like their possessing a disposition to categorize evens using "even". But it is not as if, to correctly continue the series *as* the series of evens, one has to *consult* one's dispositions, or verify or hypothesize one has them, and so on. That would be to confuse the grammatical role played by the dispositions with a justificatory role which they plainly do not play.

These ideas would hopefully be familiar to someone who had read the book. But to approach Miller's concern we now have to ask: what are the grammatical criteria for mastery of the word "meaning", and especially for evincing knowledge of one's word meanings? I cannot treat all ways to evince such knowledge here. But here is a simple case: one can say how, as one means a word, it is correctly applied.

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[7] Shaw 2023: Ch. 10.

Suppose I am teaching our child, who still knows their evens, the meaning of "meaning". I ask "now, as *you* mean the word 'even', will this count?" showing the numeral "66", say. The child (stably) says "no." Here, I would be tempted to conclude: the child hasn't understood the word "meaning" yet. The situation is similar to one in which I show the numeral "66" (in normal conditions, etc.) and ask if it is even. If a (presumably different) child were to (stably) say "no", I would be tempted to say they hadn't yet understood the meaning of "even".

Considering many cases like this can motivate the idea that it is a grammatical criterion, given other circumstances, for mastery of "meaning" – to *mean* meaning, by "meaning" – roughly that one's dispositions to attribute first-personally 'that one means a word in such a way such that x is an instance' line up with one's dispositions to apply that word to x. It can be part-criterial for our saying that one has mastery with the word "means" that one be disposed to use it in that way.

Now we have two grammatically criterial dispositions: that associated with "even", and a partly linked disposition associated with "as I mean...". Note that one needn't consult *either* disposition when correctly using "as I mean 'even'...". This is no more necessary, to get its usage up and running, than it is necessary to consult one's dispositions to apply "even" before using it to correctly categorize even numbers. Indeed, for similar reasons, there is no reason one need consult *anything* when describing what one means by one's own words – for all we've said, one may simply speak in the right circumstances.

Note that we now have proto-versions of (a) and (b) in place. The first-person characterizations of meaning I described can be non-inferential, in that they do not require consulting anything before their speaking. They are 'authoritative' in at least this sense: when we consider an agent who we are willing to grant mastery with the relevant words – the competence allowing us to say they are talking about the meanings of their words at all – their exhibited, warranted judgments about the extension of the meanings of their words, in normal circumstances and for the clearest cases, will line up with the extensions of those words as they mean them.

The conditions of their competence, alongside other normal circumstances, constitute a background that will warrant their self-attribution, and privilege it, even if it is made without justification (in

Wittgenstein's sense). And this is all so, even though the extensions of the words whose meanings are self-attributed are in part settled, as per (b), by the agent's dispositions.

This is a 'toy case.' There are more ways to evince one's knowledge of the meaning of one's words, and more complexity to even that limited case. But hopefully the general strategy is roughly clear. Instead of filling in the example, let me discuss how it operates.

It may help to see what is going on as (*merely*!) analogous to a familiar move of causal externalists. In an externalist setting, the first-person epistemology of meaning typically remains non-inferential and first-person authoritative. "If [a speaker is] asked what [they] mean by a word" – let's say a Spanish speaker is asked what they mean by "agua" – "[they] do not have to infer the answer from a survey of [their environment]".

But, meaning water by "agua" displays what we might call causal-source theoreticity: whether or not someone means water by "agua" depends on whether their uses have the right causal connection to water. How is it possible for a state of mind to display both features?

A *component* of a familiar resolution says: the causal conditions that help make the use of "agua" about water are among the very conditions that help make the *belief* that the use of "agua" is about water, *itself* about water. (Just as the causal conditions that make a photograph into one of water can be the selfsame conditions that make a photograph of *it* into a photograph of a photograph of water.)

The technique here is to ensure the metasemantics governing the 'higher-order' judgments (about what one means) inherits features from the metasemantics of the first-order pronouncements (about water). That's roughly the same idea pursued by the 'grammatical inheritance' strategy I sketched – even if the nature of the inheritance differs from the externalist case in significant ways. Generally, dispositions that can help make one into a person who expresses facts about meaning with "means" tend to link with preexisting dispositions that (say) help make one mean evenness by "even" and apply it correctly, without needing justification, into dispositions that help make one into a person who reliably self-attributes meaning evenness by "even", also without needing justification.

Note that the strategy – whether or not it works in either case – is available precisely by keeping metasemantic or grammatical criterial features cleanly separate from justificatory ones. The separation eases the

tension between the justificatory statuses in (a) and the grammatical or metasemantic criteria that appear in (b) or the externalist's theory.

Miller joins Wright in thinking McGinn's attempt to salvage primitivism by appeal to analogies with intentions merely shifts a bump in the rug, given by a perceived tension between (a) and (b). I am happy to pile on. Miller worries that my appeal to notions of uniformity again merely moves the bump along a different dimension. I agree that notions of uniformity won't help with that problem. Questions of why judgments about *them* patterned like (a) and (b) would resurface, just as Miller suggests. But notions of uniformity are merely the grammatical features that help us come to grips with certain concerns about finitude and error. The problem Miller stresses should be dealt with in a different way, along something like the lines suggested above.

But (to pick up another concern of Miller's): does that strategy fit with my claim that "any formulation of skepticism that incorporates substantive epistemic constraints [...] can and should be dealt with simply by rejecting the constraints"? Aren't I backpedaling and giving new tools to cope with epistemic constraints on the grammar of "meaning"?

Distinguish two ways of thinking of 'epistemic constraints' in this context. On the first, grammatical features for "meaning" must be selected *so that they* (the grammatical features) satisfy certain epistemic constraints (e.g., being first-personally accessible). On the second, grammatical features must be selected so that we respect existing epistemic practices.

Miller is, I hope, stressing the second idea, and I would not dispute it. What I want to emphasize is that we should dispense with the first. We should dispense with the idea that the features arising in a grammatical investigation of "meaning" must ahead of time be bound by any substantive epistemic constraints. Not only is the approach above consonant with that rejection. It precisely functions *through* it.

Looking back, I see that some of what I say in my book could be ambiguous between the two ways of 'rejecting epistemic constraints'. Let me clear things up: we must respect existing epistemic practices as we investigate the grammar of "meaning". But Wittgenstein strongly emphasizes the ways in which those practices are often marked by the presence of thin or non-existent justifications. To that extent, once we

have engaged in the Justificatory Investigation, the way to respect the practices is precisely to keep aspects of them from *governing* features selected in philosophical grammar. That gives precisely the latitude we need to respect the most puzzling features of our epistemic practices. It is in this respect that I would stand by my claim that "[i]f Kripke were imposing substantive epistemic [...] constraints on the search for meaning-constituting facts [...] the first step would just be to rehearse the relevant portions of the Wittgensteinean Justificatory Investigation."[8]

A note on the *Investigations*. Miller, following Wright, sees asymmetries between first-person epistemology and third-person criteria in several domains including rule following as a genuine concern for Wittgenstein. I agree. Not every aspect of those asymmetries is treated in my work, and that is a shortcoming of it as an overview of the entire swath of the rule-following sections.[9] If Kripke's Wittgenstein picks up on these concerns as well, confronting aspects of the skeptical problem will go beyond what is said in my book in substantial ways, as revealed above. That would be a further extent to which Miller's criticism would be on target.

That said, as I emphasize in the book, the Justificatory Project is inherently first personal, the Grammatical third-personal.[10] The sketch above springboards precisely from their separation. My sense is that the separation clears the ground for treating first person/third-person asymmetries more generally in a satisfactory way. In connection with this, I think we will understand Wittgenstein much better if we see some of his early steps into these topics using the methodological distinctions I highlight.

3. Ginsborg

Ginsborg, like Miller, worries about my evasion of epistemic concerns in engaging the meaning skeptic. In particular, she worries that my reply to the skeptic leaves us with "no justification for my confidence that I ought to say '125' " (in answer to: "what is the value of '68+57' as I meant '+' in the past?").

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[8] Shaw 2023: 184.

[9] Though see my hedge at Shaw (2023: 3) about "only [...] scratching the surface of most of the themes explored in [the rule-following] remarks".

[10] Shaw 2023: 98.

As above, I want to dig in my heels on rejecting epistemic constraints governing the grammatical criteria for "meaning", while selecting those criteria to respect existing justificatory practices. In keeping with this, I'll suggest the Naive Reply already gives us resources to answer the above concern about justification.

First, I need to flag something that may represent a deeper point of contention between myself and Ginsborg, but that I cannot resolve here. She frames the key questions to be addressed not merely using the epistemic language of justification, but *normative* language (especially "ought"). I'm not sure if she thinks this language is essential to framing the *question* at issue. But I would resist that idea.

If the skeptic asks about my justification for what I *ought* to say (in answer to such-and-such a question given my past use), I will ask what "ought" means here. Is it "ought, all things considered"? Then their question is resolutely normative. But its answers may not tell us about meanings. Perhaps I ought to answer "42" (an inside joke to lighten the mood). Perhaps I ought to say nothing and leave because I have dishes to do. There's nothing that conceptually ties the question's answer to meanings.

The skeptic could instead mean "do I have justification for what I ought to reply, *in order to give a reply that gives a value for '+' as I meant it in the past*?" That's a question whose answer must tell us about meaning. But its normative language is dispensable. The question is equivalent to "do I have justification for what reply gives the value for '68+57' as I meant '+' in the past?" in which such language disappears. This question is no more normative than "do I have justification for what reply would conform with the most 'schregular' continuation of my past uses of '+'?" for some 'bent' notion of 'schregularity.' The main difference is that the former is about meaning, the latter is not.

The only question I understand as relevant to the skeptic's discussion is the one freed of normative language, so I'll focus on that. This question still contains the ineliminable epistemic language of justification. And purging the normative language doesn't rule out that the *answer* to the question must invoke normative concepts – I wouldn't want to presuppose that at the start.

One thing I take Ginsborg to be claiming is that if we *merely* supply an answer to questions of constitution – roughly, how meaningful uses of

language could arise from non-semantic facts – a properly formulated version of the skeptic's attack may still go through because certain epistemic questions have been left unaddressed. So let me help myself, for the sake of argument, to the idea that the Naive Reply addresses mere questions about constitution, and see what justificatory concerns remain.

The Naive Reply aims to give an elucidation of the conditions under which expressions are meaningful and which meanings they have. The elucidation conveys conditions under which a relation of a certain sort holds between uses of language and candidate meanings. For neutrality, let's call the relation which it characterizes the NR-relation. In assuming we have constitutive grounds of the right form, I assume the skeptic grants that the NR-relation is one undergirded by non-semantic facts. Consider:

(A) The NR-relation relates my past uses of "+" to the addition function.

(B) The NR-relation is the meaning relation.

To dispute (A) would again challenge the Naive Reply as supplying a *possible* set of constitutive grounds for meaning. If the skeptic disputes (A), we are just back to debating constitutive, and not epistemic, questions.

Note that if I can show, in the dialectic with the skeptic, that I am (sufficiently) justified in believing (A) and (B), I would show how I am justified in believing that "125" gives the value of "68+57" as I meant "+" in the past, since (A) and (B) entail that. So if the skeptic wants to say I lack justification for my confidence in the value I supply, they must say I lack justification for either (A) or (B).

But: to deny I have justification for (A) is to deny I am presently justified in believing that 'core' usage of "+" aligned with addition in the past, or that addition is the most regular continuation of that core usage.

To deny the first is to deny that I am justified in believing things like that my teachers in grade school taught me to use "+" by giving values that align with addition; or that I generally, after effort, gave such sums; or that I was disposed to give sums in response to queries about "+" for many further values; and so on. The skeptic could try to deny I know that. But they would become a skeptic about memory – and meaning skepticism would lose its independent interest.

To deny instead that I am justified in believing that addition is the most regular continuation of that core usage is bizarre. This claim about regularity is not a contingent claim. It's a claim relating a finite and an infinite series – something a bit more like an *a priori* mathematical fact. As such, this is not a claim that would ordinarily need much, if anything, by way of justification. Recall that the skeptic grants me ordinary, present linguistic usage, *including* the language of uniformity. The skeptic (especially bracketing constitutive concerns) *agrees* that the addition function is the most regular continuation of my past usage, just as they agree with me about the values of the addition function. Asking for a justification about my judgment of regularity is a bit like asking for a justification for why 2+2 is 4, while granting that 2+2 *is* 4. I suppose I could show the skeptic examples of regular patterns to give them a feel for the concept of regularity. But many judgments of regularity are justificatorily basic. If the skeptic pursues this path, skepticism about meaning to would rely on something similar to skepticism about knowledge of elementary mathematics. Again, this does not seem like an independently interesting form of skepticism.

That leaves the skeptic denying I am justified in believing (B). This is essentially to deny that I know what I (*presently*) mean by "meaning" well enough to tell when something is a good explanation of it, or that something is an instance of it. Maybe the skeptic wants to eventually *convince* me of that. But they can't fruitfully use it as a premise! What would justify that idea? I don't see how Kripke's discussion could give us reason to think this if the skeptic can't secure the doubt *by means* of establishing worries about constitution.[11] On this path, skepticism about the existence of meaning facts relies (as a premise!) on a skepticism about whether we can tell what we presently mean. This is close to making meaning skepticism outright circular.

I would add that this account of an answer to the residual question about justification not only gives us *some* coherent answer, but one with intuitive merits. Suppose that someone gave you compelling evidence that your past core usage of "+" *didn't* line up with addition, but instead with multiplication. Perhaps they reveal that you recently had brain trauma that would make you liable confuse the similar symbols "+" and "×" – even

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[11] I suppose the skeptic could give first/third-person asymmetries as some grounds for doubt – but see the reply to Miller.

in memory. If you were convinced of this, wouldn't it be natural to abandon the thought that you meant addition by "+" in the past, and instead accept that you must have meant multiplication? The thing to write down now (*if* you wanted to write what is in accord with past meaning) would be 3876. (Note this information needn't influence what you think you were *presently* meaning by "+" – probably addition.)

It might be surprising, given my emphasis on Wittgenstein's own insistence that we often need no justification to follow rules or mean things by our words, and given my reply above to Miller, that *here* I set up a substantive reliance on memory. In this way, I may well break from Ginsborg when she says "we do not need to appeal to what we meant earlier, or to anything else, to justify our confidence in the correctness of "125"" But the skeptic's question (unlike the one I focus on from Wittgenstein) appeals to *past* meanings. And the epistemology of those meanings is more prone to reliance on justification, often from memory. The complete retrograde amnesiac said yesterday they wanted to go to the "bank". What accords with their usage, as they meant it – a financial institution, or a river-edge? Note it's not even enough for the amnesiac to learn about their global pattern of past applications of the orthographic/phonetic type "bank" – as that will just push us back to the question of which of two usages (two *meanings*) this single utterance of "bank" was part of. They need to regain their memories or, failing that, seek evidence as a third-person investigator would (evidence of their past dispositions, say). If they can't do either, they can't answer the skeptic's question as applied to *this* instance of past usage. That's no ground for skepticism! They just lack access to needed justification showing what their past usage bears the NR-relation to.

I've focused on defending the Naive Reply and its appeal to notions of uniformity. But Ginsborg notes there are important similarities between judgments of uniformity and the judgments of primitive normativity she would prefer to wield against the skeptic. Judgments of primitive normativity (if they exist and are correct) might have a similar – if not stronger – anti-skeptical punch. But, as was perhaps already clear from my temptation to purge the skeptic's question of normative elements, I'm suspicious of the nature of such judgments. I would rather get by without them if I can. And I don't yet see why I can't.

Notes on Contributors

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