

**Kripkenstein and Non-Reductionism about  
Meaning-Facts**

by

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## **Abstract**

In 1982 Saul A. Kripke proposed a reconstruction of the central insights of Ludwig Wittgenstein's remarks on rule-following. The reconstruction prominently featured a sceptical challenge which soon was recognised as a new and very radical form of scepticism. According to the challenge there is no fact of the matter which constitutes meaning. As there is no such fact, the first-person authority people intuitively seem to have concerning what they mean is also baseless. In response to the sceptic, many solutions have been proposed. This thesis is about one family of solutions, according to which facts about meaning are *sui generis* and can neither be reduced to other facts about the world nor to non-semantic facts about the human mind.

The non-reductionist proposals by Colin McGinn and Crispin Wright will be assessed in detail and arguments against both will be introduced. The arguments stem only partially from Kripke himself, some are based on recent literature, others are completely new. The emerging situation will be used as a basis to propose an alternative non-reductionism about meaning-facts.

## **Table of Contents**

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| 1) Introduction.....   | p. 1  |
| 2) A Position Nobody Holds but Everybody Should be Concerned about.. | p.2   |
| 3) Colin McGinn's Non-Reductionism about Meaning-Facts.....          | p. 12 |
| 4) Crispin Wright's Judgement-Dependent Conception of Meaning.....   | p.28  |
| 5) (Yet) Another Non-Reductionism about Meaning-Facts.....           | p.50  |
| Bibliography.....  | p.60  |

## **1) Introduction**

The present thesis is about a sceptical challenge which questions common intuitions about rules and how they are followed. It will be presented as a problem about meaning, but its far-reaching consequences will be noted. I shall begin by introducing the challenge. After that, two responses to the challenge, those by Colin McGinn and Crispin Wright, will be assessed; both feature the intuition that rule-following is based on facts and that those facts are not reducible to sets of facts not directly associated with rule-following. The last section will assemble central results from the assessment of the two proposals and fuse them into an alternative response to the sceptic.

It will be made clear right from the beginning that the philosophical discussions concerning rule-following are vast and that only one strand can be discussed in broad strokes. The strand to be presented here, non-reductionism about rule-following-facts, is nevertheless influential, but its success as a response to the sceptical challenge is controversial. Indeed, Anandi Hattiangadi (2007: 176) writes at the end of her insightful discussion of currently available non-reductionist proposals: 'Though I do not purport to have exhausted all the anti-reductionist possibilities, the foregoing should suggest that the prospect of an anti-reductive solution is woefully bleak.' The present thesis aims at motivating a possible non-reductionism that is a true alternative to the canonical versions.

Ludwig Wittgenstein's remarks are not of prime concern here and that needs justification – after all, he extensively discussed the issue in his later works, the interpretation of which resulted in the topic of the present thesis. A first reason is that the sceptical challenge can be read as independent of Wittgenstein's remarks and it was in fact often treated in

abstraction from its origin. Another reason is that I agree with Norman Malcolm's interpretation of the relevant remarks, but I also agree with Crispin Wright that one should ask for more than is available there. The, as far as I can see, exegetically correct but philosophically not satisfying account is this (Malcolm (1986: 181)):

The philosophical puzzlement over how one is able to follow a rule is repeated in the puzzlement over how one knows how to apply a word. In both cases the ability 'reaches beyond' the original teaching and examples. We go on, all agreeing, following rules and applying words in new cases – without guidance. Other than the past training, there is no explanation. It is an aspect of the form of life of human beings. It is our nature. To try to explain it is like trying to explain why dogs bark.

But that dogs bark when strangers come or something is unusual and that they do not when everything is fine is an integral part of a dog's form of life – and most breeds need no training to do so. Just as dogs do not bark arbitrarily, rational beings do not follow rules arbitrarily. Non-arbitrary rule-following also has its proper circumstances and that is an integral aspect of the form of life of human beings – beyond training.

## **2) A Position Nobody Holds but Everybody Should be Concerned About**

In his book *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, Saul Kripke presented a sceptical challenge and a solution to it, but he is unwilling to directly attribute them to Wittgenstein. He claims to present 'that set of problems and arguments which I personally have gotten out of reading Wittgenstein' (Kripke (1982: 5)). Sometimes, however, he writes as if they actually were Wittgenstein's views. Nevertheless, the challenge is important, Kripke (1982: 7) claims,

for properly understanding Wittgenstein:

The 'paradox' is perhaps the central problem of *Philosophical Investigations*. Even someone who disputes the conclusions regarding 'private language' and the philosophies of mind, mathematics, and logic, that Wittgenstein draws from his [*sic*] problem, might well regard the problem itself as an important contribution to philosophy. It may be regarded as a new form of philosophical scepticism.

In this section I shall only be concerned with the first part of Kripke's book, namely the sceptical challenge. The reason not to include a discussion of the sceptical solution (the second part of the book) and the postscript on the problem of other minds is that a thorough discussion of the exegetical issues they raised in the subsequent literature on the topic, which concern both Wittgenstein and Kripke, would take up too much space. The topic of the thesis does only require the presentation of the first part.

Consider the following sceptical scenario (call it 'Kripkenstein's scepticism'): assume that I want to continue the series '2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12...' for the first time in my life; let's say that I have never continued the series farther up than 12. Let's also say that I perfectly remember other occasions when I have continued similar series. I might consider the case at hand, maybe even with some additional means (*viz.* my digits, heaps of marbles etc.), and write '14' after '12'. This seems to me to be in perfect accord with my past intention to follow the rule '+2'.

Now imagine a sceptic who objects to me that writing '14' is not the correct answer to give, that the correct answer is '15'. I might tell him that, given my perfect memory of how past continuations of the series were made out to be correct, '+2' is the rule for the series and that, according to that rule, '14' was the correct continuation of the series. The sceptic now

tells me that, due to some evil spirit or the influence of a drug, I might be mistaken about how I continued the series in the past. When I thought I continued the series like '2, 4, 6, 8,...' in the past, he says, I actually 'quontinued' the series, which means, for the present case, that one adds 2 up to 12 and after that, one adds 3. According to the sceptic, I now intend to quontinue the series and should write '15'. The challenge is to find a fact about me in virtue of which I intend to continue the series rather than to quontinue it. I intuitively assume that there must be something that guides me and that it must be possible to cite it to justify an entitlement, but its nature and how it actually guides do seem unfathomable and baffling now in the presence of the sceptic. No matter whether I mean to write '14', intend it or believe that it is correct to write '14', the sceptic can always object along the lines presented.

If the sceptic cannot be answered, all that appears to be a form of rule-following in thought, action and talk is to be seen as arbitrary. There is no fact of the matter that settles what is to count as a correct continuation of the series, whether '14' or '15' is the right answer. Thus, not only correctness in following a rule is questionable, the very grasp of rules and their nature is as well.

Given the way the scenario is built, there are specific constraints on answering the challenge. What must a sound reply to the sceptic contain? Kripke (1982: 11) is explicit on this point:

An answer to the sceptic must satisfy two conditions. First, it must give an account of what fact it is (about my mental state) that constitutes my meaning [to continue a series], not [to quontinue it]. [Second,] [i]t must, in some sense, show how I am justified in giving the answer ['14'].

It will be useful to concentrate on meaning for the most part to keep things clear. If we read



the scenario together with Kripke's constraints, the sceptical conclusion (SC) can be defined like this:

(SC)

There is no fact of the matter about what any expression means.

To illustrate these constraints, Kripke presents several ways of answering the sceptic that one might come up with and rejects them. Two of them will be discussed here. The first way of answering is to argue that meaning something is constituted by dispositions. The second is based on proposing that meaning something is a fact *sui generis*, i.e. that it does not need any further fact of the matter to be possible or unambiguous at all.

The first answer (22-37) consists in the refusal to accept that a plausible fact must be an occurrent mental state. Could we not, so the suggestion goes, try a dispositional analysis of the fact that constitutes and justifies my rule-following? According to this proposal, I am correctly continuing the series with '14', because I am disposed to do so. It seems plausible that this might answer the constitutive question – at least if we assume that dispositions are not finite and show us how to continue series infinitely. Even if that assumption is licit, how can I cite my dispositions to justify my answer in the presence of the sceptic? If there is no fact I can present to the sceptic, he might claim that I am mistaken about my dispositions: instead of acting in accord with my disposition to continue the series, he might object, I act in accord with my disposition to quontinue.

There are various strategies for discovering suitable facts, analysable in dispositional terms. Cognitive dispositions ordering stimuli could be at work. Biological dispositions determining survival strategies which might already have been important for our ancestors may have their share as well. Or genetically encoded linguistic dispositions can be seen as

constituting a language faculty that does the job. An analysis of dispositions along these lines requires the reducibility of meaning-facts or intentional facts to the sort of facts that empirical research in the cognitive sciences, biology, or theoretical linguistics produces. Unfortunately, it is way beyond the scope of the present thesis to discuss this.<sup>1</sup> But it might be worthwhile to consider an objection by Kripke to this sort of strategy.

If meaning something is determined by dispositions, there seems to be no right or wrong. Whatever I say, I was disposed to say so and that cannot be incorrect unless there is a substantial notion of being 'incorrectly disposed'. But then it seems plausible to assume a standard for what I ought to say or do which is independent of the individual dispositions that determine it. This idea requires an example.

Consider a man who is disposed to miscalculate when certain conditions are given. Suppose these conditions are: 1) he slept less than 3 hours the night before; 2) the calculations involve numbers which are unusually large; 3) he is quite ill. It is clear that the man ought not to write wrong answers, but it is also clear that he is well disposed to do so whenever the conditions are actually given. The man is obviously disposed to calculate incorrectly. But if this is right, dispositions cannot account for what one ought to do and a reduction of normative properties to dispositional properties is not to be had without further justification. On this view, dispositions cannot explain, when applied to the sceptical scenario, why I should answer '14' rather than '15'. If this example is not substantially mistaken about the notion of disposition that could be used to answer the sceptic, suggesting any dispositional solution seems to change the topic. In order to appear promising at all, it must, first and foremost, substantially revise the notion of normativity and assimilate it to dispositions or

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<sup>1</sup> Hattiangadi (2007: ch.5) discusses dispositionalism in detail and forwards compelling arguments against such strategies. She also criticises Kripke's arguments against them.

dispense with the notion of normativity altogether. Failing to do this right at the beginning is tacit evasion.

The dispositionalist can however hold that dispositions only govern rule-following under some specific conditions. Each disposition then has its normal or optimal conditions, under which they do not backfire. One could then simply say that in the case above, the man does not act under normal or optimal conditions and that the example only rules out a very crude dispositionalism. What can be said against this more sophisticated dispositionalism?

Kripke (1982: 26-8) takes it to be obvious that the gap between what one ought to do and what one will do is impossible to bridge. Whatever one ought to do is determined for an infinitude of cases while what one is disposed to do is not. He takes the claim to be clear, as my disposition to calculate correctly, for example, does not reliably determine that I will correctly solve problems which exceed a certain level of complexity (or involve infinitely many steps). That this is also a necessary feature of the more sophisticated notion of disposition, however, is not obvious. But if it is wrong, we still need an account of how citing my dispositions can justify my answer in the presence of the sceptic. Furthermore, introducing a standard for what is to count as normal or optimal conditions for the dispositions in question can be seen as introducing a normative standard: the dispositions ought not to backfire under those standard or optimal conditions. Given the considerations presented here, it is not conclusive whether a dispositionalist cannot live up to the task, but postponing a thorough discussion of the issue is, I hope, already well enough motivated.

Let's turn to the second answer. Kripke (1982: 41-2) is aware that the way he presents the challenge one might feel talked into assuming 'a reduction of the notions of meaning and intention to something else'. This is also why a reduction to dispositions seemed *prima facie*

plausible. He conjectures that, in contrast, somebody might claim that meaning or intending to follow the rule '+2' was an irreducible fact about how the series is to be continued – a fact that has its own special *quale* which is directly knowable through introspection. But how could that, if true at all, be used against the sceptic? After all, he could claim that I am mistaken about the quality that correctly continuing the series had in the past and nothing would have been gained by assuming such an irreducible fact. Responding to this further claim must involve insisting on the first-person authority one has about what the special *quale* feels like and whether it obtains. In other words, a substantial notion of introspection must be introduced. But how could this justify what I ought to say to anybody apart from myself? Furthermore, would this not lead to a counterintuitive notion of meaning-facts?

The idea, however, that there is an irreducible fact that constitutes my meaning to continue a series and that such a fact justifies in the sense required can take better forms. Introspection need not play a role. Most of the present thesis will be concerned with how such a *sui generis* fact must be conceived of to enable an effective answer to the sceptic; despite the fact that Kripke takes this suggestion to be 'mysterious' and 'desperate' (51).

It should be clear by now, that Kripkenstein's challenge is a radical form of scepticism and it is important to pin down what makes it so. Throughout the discussion, I shall often write as if the sceptical challenge concerned only meaning and meaning-facts. A reason to do so is that analytic philosophy, as Michael Dummett has often argued (e.g. in his (1973/81: ch. 19), was from its beginning on concerned with developing a theory of meaning as its theoretical fundament. Such a perspective gives rule-following scepticism, as a radical scepticism about meaning, a central place. It is the prime challenge for a theory of meaning as the theoretical fundament of systematic philosophy. Even if one does not agree with Dummett

on the importance of a theory of meaning, reformulating and discussing the problem in meaning-theoretic terms will prove heuristically advantageous.

The meaning-theoretic terms to be employed here are broadly Fregean.<sup>2</sup> This has two reasons: 1) most of the philosophy of language of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be understood as a reaction to themes found in Gottlob Frege's writings – understanding, thus, how rule-following scepticism relates to his conception of meaning makes it easier to see how it relates to other theories of meaning; 2) it is exegetically useful to understand Wittgenstein in particular as frequently forwarding thorough criticisms of Fregean doctrines; Kripke (1982: 53-4) mentions the relevance of the sceptical paradox to Frege's ideas.

In the sceptical challenge above, continuing the series correctly involves grasping a mathematical rule which can be symbolised by '+2' and means that one ought to add 2 at any stage of the series. With this in place, we can borrow Kripke's (1982: 54) characterisation of the problem in Fregean terms:

Frege's analysis of the usage of the plus sign by an individual posits the following four elements: (a) the addition function, an 'objective' abstract entity; (b) the addition sign '+', a linguistic entity; (c) the 'sense' of this sign, an 'objective' abstract entity like the function; (d) an idea in the individual's mind associated with the sign. The idea is a 'subjective' mental entity, private to each individual and different in different minds. The 'sense', in contrast, is the same for all individuals who use '+' in the standard way. Each such individual grasps this sense by virtue of having an appropriate idea in his mind. The 'sense' in turn *determines* the addition function as the *referent* of the '+' sign.

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2 I shall, however, only consider the ingredients of meaning that concern the truth-value of declarative sentences. When I write 'meaning', it must be understood as 'sentence-meaning' or 'literal meaning'. The possibility that a speaker intends to communicate something that is not captured in a sentence's literal meaning, and which would make the introduction of 'speaker-meaning' necessary, will play no role here. See Dummett (1973/81: 81-9) for Frege's view on the issue.

[The problem for the Fregean is] how the existence in my mind of any mental entity or idea can *constitute* 'grasping' any particular sense rather than another.

On a Fregean conception, sentences, including those which express rules, express thoughts and those thoughts can be decomposed into the Fregean senses (or *Sinn* as Frege originally called them in the German singular) of the elements of the sentences. The thought expressed by the sentence 'Mary sees Carmen' is that Mary sees Carmen. The thought is the same for anybody who understands the sentence and can be decomposed in several ways. It can, for example, be understood as being formed by the name 'Mary' and a verbal phrase 'sees Carmen' or as being formed by two names 'Mary' and 'Carmen', and a relation '\_\_\_sees.....', in which the blank spaces mark where the names belong.

The name 'Mary' refers to Mary. Mary is, in Frege's wording, the *Bedeutung* of the name. The *Sinn* of 'Mary' is often called its 'mode of presentation' and determines the name's reference to Mary. When I point at Mary and utter her name, my pointing can be understood as fixing the *Sinn* of the name, it is how I focus people's attention onto Mary. Sentences also have a *Bedeutung* and that is their truth-value: whenever Mary sees Carmen, the sentence 'Mary sees Carmen' is true and it is false otherwise. The relation of names to objects and sentences to truth values, 'Frege's word-world relation for complete expressions', is usually called 'reference'. This is already enough terminology to give a clear presentation of the sceptic's radicalness.

The idea that 'the banana is green' is true only if the banana is green is intuitively appealing and seems useful if we try to find out whether one ought to say 'the banana is green' or 'the banana is yellow'. Taking such examples as paradigmatic for a theory of meaning is the central idea of Semantic Realism. Semantic Realism (SR) and Linguistic Normativity (LN)

can be defined as follows:<sup>3</sup>

(SR)

If in a sentence ' $\alpha$  is  $\varphi$ ', ' $\alpha$ ' names an object  $o$  and ' $\varphi$ ' ascribes a property  $P$  to  $o$ , then ' $\alpha$  is  $\varphi$ ' is true just in case the possible fact  $F$  of  $o$ 's being  $P$  obtains.

(LN)

If  $S$  means something by a term ' $\varphi$ ', then there is a set of properties,  $P_1 - P_n$  that govern the correct application of ' $\varphi$ ' for  $S$ .

To say that there are properties which govern the correct application of an expression just means that there is something that one ought to say if one means  $\varphi$ , because we can assume that 'govern' implies the presence of a prescriptive rule together with which the said set of properties determines correct application. I shall take rules to have an important role in thinking generally, for by pretending to use a word in accordance with a rule without judging that this is actually correct, the rule cannot be said to concern the language user and one cannot speak of genuine rule-following. Together, SR and LN then lead to SC. Therefore, there is no fact of the matter that constitutes meaning for Semantic Realism – and because of that there is also nothing that justifies me meaning this rather than that. In application, there is no fact that determines and justifies my intention to continue rather than to quontinue the series '2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12'.

Now, why should one be entitled to just help oneself to some version SR plus LN? After all, the intuitive appeal they have becomes dubitable due to the sceptical scenario: it is not clear anymore that one can straightaway help oneself to these principles. The intuitive appeal must be clarified and defended, if some reading of SR plus LN is to form the basis for

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3 The definitions are borrowed from George Wilson (1994: 244/239). My use of them regarding the sceptical scenario is, however, different. The difference will not play a role here..

a viable position.

Even if SR is rejected or modified, one still has to explain why language use is non-arbitrary – why there is correct and incorrect language use at all. The more general question then turns out to be whether a plausible notion of *Sinn* is still possible or whether assessing the possibility for a conception of meaning which is not related to facts of the matter can be the only plausible future project.

There are different ways of accounting for the stability of our intuitions about *Sinn*, three of them will be discussed in the remainder of the thesis. Colin McGinn argues that rule-following individuals exercise specific mental capacities which guarantee a firm grasp of *Sinn*. Crispin Wright partially rejects McGinn's solution and, as a better alternative, proposes that meaning is judgement-dependent. I, on the other hand, shall argue that there is an alternative way of construing rule-following which saves a viable notion of correctness from leading SR into SC.

### **3) Colin McGinn's Non-Reductionism about Meaning-Facts**

Compared to Kripke (1982), Colin McGinn's interpretation of Wittgenstein on meaning presents us with an astonishingly meek philosopher. He writes in the introduction to his *Wittgenstein on Meaning* (McGinn (1984: xiii):

I believe that contemporary philosophical opinion has absorbed a very great deal of Wittgenstein's views, and that much of his criticism of various philosophical doctrines is accordingly of only historical importance. (This is not really to say that I think Wittgenstein's views have *no* relevance to contemporary philosophy; I am merely



warning against a temptation anachronistically to read into Wittgenstein's text issues and concerns which are not his.)

The gist of Kripke's presentation is another one. According to Kripke, Wittgenstein's criticism of various philosophical doctrines is, *mutatis mutandis*, applicable to contemporary issues. It would, of course, be wrong to attribute to Wittgenstein a concern with these issues, but it is quite another thing to claim, as Kripke does, that the most important lessons to learn from Wittgenstein have not been learned well and that, because of this, the very footing of many influential and fundamental contemporary doctrines (especially about meaning, but not exclusively) is dubitable.

The topic of the present section will be to examine whether McGinn can appreciate the radicalism that Kripke finds in Wittgenstein and, subsequently, whether McGinn's response to the sceptical challenge is adequate. The criterion for adequacy will not depend on whose exegesis is more accurate, but it must depend on whether McGinn's response answers the sceptical challenge. This means that only those sections in McGinn (1984) will be considered which bear on this question, despite the distorting effects this has on a rendering of McGinn's achievements in general.

To start with, I shall point out a common denominator between McGinn and Kripke. McGinn (1984: 37-8) reads Wittgenstein as advocating a positive point about rule-following which he dubs 'multiple application thesis'. Wittgenstein holds that 'there has to be more than one occasion on which *it* [a rule] is obeyed; what he says is just that if any rules are to be grasped *some* must be obeyed more than once'. McGinn (ibid.) finds this observation connected with a positive claim about the concept 'meaning':

[...] our conception of grasping a rule *at a time* essentially involves the idea of

applications of the rule *over* time. The repeated use that is required for there to be meaning is something spread out over time; meaning is, so to say, an essentially *diachronic* concept.

Kripke (1982: 7-8) seems to have something similar in mind when he writes about grasping a rule:

This is the whole point of the notion that in learning to [continue a series] I grasp a rule: my past intentions regarding addition determine a unique answer for indefinitely many new cases in the future.

When he goes on to formulate the sceptical challenge, he explicitly takes the diachronic character of meaning into account (21):

[...] nothing in my mental history of past behaviour—not even what an omniscient God would know—could establish whether I meant [to continue or to quontinue]. But then it appears to follow that there was *no* fact about me that constituted my having meant [to continue rather than to quontinue].

That Kripke formulates the issue from a first-person perspective here does not directly clash with McGinn's reading – but it has interesting implications. According to McGinn (81) it is not clear whether each individual who grasps a rule must follow it several times or whether applications can be distributed over several individuals; on the second conception, there could be an established rule which several individuals grasped and which each followed only once. He rightly observes that Wittgenstein (1958: §199) is only committed to the second claim, whereas Kripke's presentation entails a commitment to the first claim. Herein lies a possible disagreement about what the diachronic character of meaning exactly is and that might have consequences for the plausibility of rule-following scepticism. The two conceptions can be

defined as follows:

(Weak Multiple Application Thesis)

For every rule  $\varphi$ ,  $\varphi$  must be repeatedly applied, possibly distributed over several individuals (and at different times).

(Strong Multiple Application Thesis)

For every rule  $\varphi$ ,  $\varphi$  must be repeatedly applied by a single individual.

How does this square with Semantic Realism? If combined with LN, we get two distinct conceptions of linguistic normativity which allow us to pin down the diachronic character of meaning (note that take it for granted from now on that the applications happen at different times):

(Weak Diachronicity)

If  $S$  means something by a term ' $\varphi$ ', then there is a set of properties,  $P_1 - P_n$  that govern the correct application of ' $\varphi$ ' for  $S$  and there must be multiple applications of the term, possibly distributed over several individuals.

(Strong Diachronicity)

If  $S$  means something by a term ' $\varphi$ ', then there is a set of properties,  $P_1 - P_n$  that govern the correct application of ' $\varphi$ ' for  $S$  and there must be multiple applications of the term by  $S$ .

Paul Boghossian (1989a: 88-9) mentions the multiple application thesis in his review of McGinn's book, but fails to notice that there are two ways of spelling it out; he, subsequently, criticises McGinn for not spelling it out like Kripke did. This might have been one reason why answering the sceptical challenge based on McGinn's weaker notion has, to my knowledge, never been tried. I stress this point now, as I shall frequently come back to it and

eventually argue for Weak Diachronicity in the last section of the thesis.

When it comes to McGinn's discussion of Kripke, serious flaws in his reading can be found. In his discussion of Kripke's book as an exegesis, he writes (McGinn 1984: 60):

The general [issue behind] Wittgenstein's argument, according to Kripke, is as follows. [...] We ordinarily think that some uses of words are correct and some are incorrect, some uses correctly express the fact we want to state and some do not: Wittgenstein's question is supposed to be what this distinction consists in.

And right at the beginning of chapter 3 (140), wherein he criticises Kripke's book not as an exegetical endeavour, but as presenting an independent problem, he writes:

Kripke's argument takes the form of showing (or trying to show) that no past facts can ground a judgement of present correctness or incorrectness: nothing shows that present use is *justified* by facts about past meaning.

When compared to the passage in Kripke that I have just quoted above (1982: 21) and the characterisation of the sceptical challenge in the previous section, these statements prove wrong. Frequent repetitions in similar terms warrant the conclusion that this bogus estimation of the sceptical challenge lies at the heart of McGinn's reading. The crucial word in McGinn's characterisation of the problem is 'justified'. The challenge is not only to say how present language use is justified by facts about past usage, but how it is constituted – there is more to it than the epistemological challenge.

McGinn thinks that Kripke's challenge is how the *Sinn* of what one says can ever be certain whereas the problem rather consists in the question whether there is such a thing as *Sinn* at all. This already suffices to conclude that McGinn cannot appreciate the radicalness that Kripke finds in Wittgenstein. He clearly misses the mark.

A crucial first step in his preparation to answer the sceptic consists in giving up what, in chapter 1, he had presented as one of the most important positive claims that Wittgenstein makes about rule-following. There (ch. 1, especially 36-38) he had claimed that, for Wittgenstein, possession of the ability to follow a rule means, among other things, that grasping a rule at one time requires that there have been multiple applications over time and that this constitutes normativeness. His misreading of the sceptical challenge leads him to conjecture that an answer can be most easily found when the challenge is applied to concepts (148); he goes on to propose the following strategy:

What we must do is to drop the initial formulation in terms of constancy of meaning across time and normativeness and simply ask directly what it is that constitutes possessing and exercising one concept rather than another.

In attempting to apply the new strategy to the sceptical challenge, he makes an important observation (150-1):

What is very striking about Kripke's sceptic is an assumption he makes which [...] both is essential to the argument and itself unargued for. I mean the assumption that if there are semantic facts they will have to be *reducible* to facts specified non-semantically: for the sceptic is in effect demanding an answer to the question 'what does meaning/reference consist in?' which does not just help itself to the notion of meaning and reference.

As far as his strategy is concerned, this observation seems to provide an excellent opportunity to show that the answer he is about to propose is not subject to the challenge.<sup>4</sup> Concerning the answer he writes (151):

The kind of reply that is being implicitly judged illicit is one that simply uses semantic

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<sup>4</sup> He does, however, criticise Kripke's meagre treatment of the possibility.

concepts, as follows: what it consists in to mean/refer to addition by '+' is for the speaker to *mean/refer to* addition by '+' – *this* is the sort of 'fact' that meaning consists in.

What McGinn proposes here is to consider an irreducible fact about semantic concepts which, so he claims, constitutes and determines correctness and incorrectness in language use, that fixes *Sinn*. The problem is, of course, that this was just one part of the question. Only if he could show that there is an irreducible fact about semantic concepts that constitutes *Sinn*, rather than merely pushing it from indeterminacy into determinacy through constituting correctness, would his reply actually meet the challenge.

It might be worthwhile to consider another example. The fact that makes true Bob's self-ascription that he means 'the banana is green' is precisely the fact that he means that the banana is green. According to McGinn, this is enough, because of the 'existence of irreducibly conceptual facts' (154-5) which determine, for Bob and everybody else, how semantic concepts are applied. This is the sort of irreducible *sui generis* fact that Kripke found mysterious and that we are after here. McGinn goes on to elaborate his notion of concept possession and its role in meaning and rule-following.

McGinn (164-6) introduces three strategies for fleshing out the non-reductionist intuition that there are irreducibly conceptual facts. The first one appeals to a causal theory of reference. According to this view, reference and meaning are fixed by a causal relation between an utterance (like the proper name 'Tiger Bob') and what the utterance stands for (a unique tiger called 'Bob'). Something in the world (like tiger Bob) is a causal origin of an utterance (like any sentence containing 'Tiger Bob' as a singular term). Non-reductionism could be assumed if we can make sense of the idea that the causal relations bring it about that

I just mean tiger Bob by 'Tiger Bob'. This is an interesting proposal, but it belongs to a future discussion of reductionism, because causality takes the place of *Sinn* and that seems to demand that meaning-properties are to be explained in terms of causal properties. If we do not introduce a new notion of causality, these must be the causal properties described by natural sciences. Even if the causal links securing reference were irreducible facts, a discussion of reductionism must contain a discussion of their alleged irreducibility, as it is hard to see how irreducibility and causal efficacy go together here. After all, if reference can be fully explained in terms available to, say, physics, what more is there about semantic properties than about physical properties which keep them from collapsing into the latter? And if there is such a crucial feature, would that not implausibly entail the necessary incompleteness of physics (cf. Boghossian (1989b: §31))?

The second view that McGinn presents is the Gricean programme (167-8), according to which semantic facts must be explained in terms of the propositional attitudes that figure in communication. Facts about language are to be reduced to psychological facts and explained in psychological terms (viz. 'believes that' or 'intends that'). I have already explained above why this is incompatible with Kripke's sceptical challenge when I mentioned that intending to follow a rule and meaning are alike subject to the sceptical challenge. It is not clear why insisting on it would be a good alternative, because it seems to accept the sceptic's reductionism and that is just what McGinn attacks.

The third possibility appeals to the idea that concept possession is possessing a capacity – and this is exactly the idea that McGinn adduces to claim that his proposal is not trivial. McGinn (168-9) understands that 'capacity' must not mean anything like 'disposition' as attacked by Kripke. He introduces capacities via examples of perception. To possess the

concept 'red' is 'to have the capacity to discriminate, recognise or identify' red things. In teaching a child the concept 'red' we expect it to be capable of discriminating, recognising or identifying red things; it is therefore an intuitive step to equate the possession of an observational concept with a certain capacity.

Things look less promising when the proposal is directly applied to the sceptical challenge (169-70). McGinn suggests that, for the sceptical scenario as presented above, it is the concept of *add 2* that I exercise when I continue the arithmetic series, and not the concept of *add 2 up to 12 and then add 3 afterwards*, 'because the capacity that gets brought to bear is the capacity' *to add 2* and not *to add 2 up to 12 and then add 3 afterwards*, 'where the former capacity is conceived as a capacity to recognise what is the *sum* of pairs of numbers' and nothing else. There are two independent problems with this suggestion. The first one is, obviously, that this does not suffice to explain the constitution of *Sinn*, even if we are prepared to admit that it fixes an uncertain *Sinn*. The second problem is that the proposal so far has not contained any defence of the claim that there is a distinction between capacities and dispositions.

In attempting to solve the second problem and bring together his notions of capacity and normativity, McGinn (174-5) once again violates his own strategical recommendation and makes use of Wittgenstein's diachronic concept of meaning. He states that 'the notion of normativeness Kripke wants captured is a transtemporal notion' and goes on to define such a notion:

We have an account of this normativeness when we have two things: (*a*) an account of what it is to mean something at a given time and (*b*) an account of what it is to mean the *same* thing at two different times – since (Kripkean) normativeness is a matter of



meaning now what one meant earlier [...] to mean [to continue a series] at  $t$  is to associate with [the rule governing the series] the capacity to [continue] at  $t$ , and to mean the same by [the rule governing the series] at  $t'$  is to associate with [the rule] the *same capacity* at  $t'$  as at  $t$ .

I shall apply this idea to the scenario: for me to continue, rather than to quontinue, the series '2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12,...' by writing '14' at some time  $t$  is to associate with the functional expression '+2' the capacity to continue the series at  $t$ , and to mean the same by '+2' at some  $t'$  is to associate with '+2' the very same capacity at both times. But in the scenario, the challenge is to show why I ought to write '14' rather than '15'; McGinn only gives an account of what it is to mean '+2' at two different times i.e. an account of the identity of meaning over time. He has not explained why the sceptic cannot object that we are obliged to write '15', while we think that we are (at least) entitled to write '14'. The normativity of meaning that the sceptical scenario addresses would have to form an integral part of fleshing out McGinn's first condition for normativity: an account of what it is to mean something at some time  $t$ . An advocate of McGinn's view can hold that he actually has such an account, but it seems likely that he cannot say much more than pointing at the alleged fact that he means something, because he means it. The considerations just mentioned suggest that explaining linguistic normativity needs more than that, but saying more would already require a departure from how McGinn understands his non-reductionism. It now seems that exactly such a departure is required if one wants to make sense of linguistic normativity at all.

By presenting the issue as he does, McGinn fails to account for the idea that there is an obligation as to what one ought to do when one grasps a rule. This means that he has also misread the kind of normativity that Kripke thinks meaning has and therefore, as a proposal as

to how correctness or incorrectness in rule-following is constituted, McGinn's account misses the mark again. Boghossian (1989a: 90) also criticises McGinn for this serious mistake and sets out to give a better account:

[...]if true, any proposed candidate for being the property in virtue of which an expression has meaning must be such as to determine what is the correct use of that expression: it ought to be possible to read off [from] any such property what is the correct use of that word.

To be fair to McGinn, Boghossian (ibid.) writes that he 'occasionally seems to state the normativity thesis correctly'. But Boghossian's own characterisation of normativity is potentially misleading.

A first point that must be stressed here is that the property in virtue of which an expression has meaning must justify my entitlement and my commitment to say what I ought to due to what I mean.<sup>5</sup> A second point is that Boghossian (1989b: §5) denies the essentially diachronic character of meaning while McGinn overemphasises it:

Suppose the expression 'green' means *green*. It follows immediately that the expression 'green' applies *correctly* only to *these* things (the green ones) and not to *those* (the non-greens). The fact that the expression means something implies, that is, a whole set of *normative* truths about my behaviour with that expression: namely, that my use of it is correct in application to certain objects and not in application to others. This is not, as McGinn would have it, a relation between meaning something by an expression at one time and meaning something by it at some later time; it is rather, a relation between meaning something by it at some time and its *use at that time*.

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5 José Zalabardo (1997) has argued that Boghossian (1989b) and Wright (2001: ch. 4) misrepresent the conception of normativity behind the sceptical challenge, because they do not sufficiently stress the importance of justifying linguistic entitlement and commitment.

Boghossian explicitly commits himself to SR and, if not read together with his recent denial that meaning is normative (cf. Boghossian (2005)), to LN.<sup>6</sup> Why does he not make the step from LN to Weak Diachronicity or Strong Diachronicity as defined? Boghossian's idea seems to be that the relation between meaning something by 'the banana is green' and the use of that expression does not entail that meaning has an essentially diachronic character. The diachronic character might still be an accidental feature for him – what he denies is that it plays a fundamental role. But, and here I find Boghossian's account insufficient, being able to use 'the banana is green' correctly is a matter of being able to identify green bananas over and over again and of having actually done so – at different places and at different times. After all, I was able to write '4' after '2' and '6' after '4', because I meant to add 2 (or the sceptic's alternative) at each stage of applying the rule before I entered the sceptical scenario. As far as Linguistic Normativity is concerned, that is the intuition behind the multiple application thesis. Boghossian must say more to make plausible that neither the weak nor the strong version of the multiple application thesis for rule-following, which we find in Kripke and Wittgenstein, does play any central role for correctness. This implies that he must argue that following a rule correctly once is quite independent of past and future use. But then, continuing the series in the scenario up to '12' is not a paradigmatic case of correct rule-following, because it brings multiple applications of the rule '+2' into our focus. Yet it seems that Boghossian does think that the sceptical scenario raises a deep problem about correct application. It is not clear how we can accept both claims and why Boghossian's peculiar notion of correctness is not the one we should reject.

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6 It is important to stress here, that Hattiangadi (2006/2007) argues that we can make sense of correctness without making having to accept any notion of semantic normativity. I cannot pursue this point here, but it is not clear that Hattiangadi and Boghossian (2005) can make sense of correctness without accepting some version of the multiple application thesis. It therefore seems that my objections below may concern these more recent proposals as well. I shall, however, take up Hattiangadi's proposal and say how it can easily be squared with the multiple application thesis in order to do away with this particular worry.

So far, only McGinn's answer to the constitutive question has been considered. He also discusses the epistemological question and writes (176): 'This question concerns the character and quality of the *justifications* we commonly rely upon in ascribing meaning and concepts to ourselves and others.'

It is, as it was concerning the constitutive question, useful to understand McGinn's view as a departure from his reading of Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein (1978: 335) explicitly links his view on the epistemological question to the multiple application thesis. The mathematical training, he writes, that somebody undergoes in learning how to calculate could merely be seen as a history of how she acquires the ability through experience. In other words, the training seemingly results in her having a specific knowledge afterwards, understood to be like an inner state somehow comprising an understanding (or technique) of how to calculate. He goes on to say that this way of seeing the mathematical training is warranted if the person trained always [*stets*] calculates correctly.<sup>7</sup> And then he writes that demonstrating to herself and to others that she has the ability to calculate is only possible by calculating correctly. Such a demonstration is, it seems safe to add, only needed when there is any reason to doubt her ability. Take such demonstrations as the paradigmatic cases of overt rule-following behaviour.

McGinn (128-30) rightly reads this passage (in combination with others) as one of many instances of Wittgenstein's denial that 'understanding is an inner state or process of any kind – conscious, unconscious, physical or ethereal'. But he generally takes Wittgenstein to suggest that understanding must be manifested and the passage is grist to his mill. From this McGinn concludes (*ibid.*):

This line of thought leads to the *sort* of position we find Wittgenstein occupying: the

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<sup>7</sup> Wittgenstein uses the word 'stets' which connotes uniformity and also means 'reliably'. 'Stets' is etymologically related to 'steady'.

conjecture then is that he is unwilling to allow rule-grasping without overt rule-following behaviour because to do so would be to rob the ascription of rules to people of any substantial content – we would have no idea *what* we were ascribing. I offer this as a conjectural reconstruction of at least part of what is motivating Wittgenstein to advance his multiple application thesis [...]

There are two points that must be stressed here. Wittgenstein only demands overt rule-following when the trained person makes mistakes in what she was trained to do. The other point is that if the idea is correct that understanding must not always be manifest, the multiple application thesis cannot be based on the demand for overt rule-following. But McGinn (130-1) now claims against his straw-Wittgenstein:

Wittgenstein's denial that understanding is the source of use and a *bona fide* mental state (with a physical basis) renders him unable to detach understanding from actual use[...]

This line of McGinn's exegesis is very important for present purposes, because it motivates him to reject the weak multiple application thesis: he attributes to Wittgenstein the view that all cases of rule-following must be overt and from this he develops a subtraction argument against the weak multiple application thesis (131):

Wittgenstein thinks that all the rules can be supposed preserved while subtracting their application save that we have to leave one that is applied more than once; but why should removing *its* application altogether (or reducing it to one occasion) suddenly obliterate all that has hitherto been preserved?

Given that overt rule-following is not the paradigmatic case McGinn takes it to be, the subtraction argument rests on a false premise. The problem is that he seems to suggest that the

weak multiple application thesis (as forwarded by Wittgenstein) must lead to the subtraction argument, because it cannot be had without overt rule-following. But this is not the case. Therefore, McGinn has no cogent argument against adopting the weak multiple application thesis or Weak Diachronicity. Nevertheless, he shows us the importance of keeping the multiple application thesis and overt rule-following separate.

Nevertheless, McGinn takes his exegesis to point out the direction for his non-reductionism. What he needs to do now, one would think, is to show that his conception of capacity allows him to detach understanding from actual use and, thus, what account of justification this yields for the ascription of meaning and concepts to oneself and others. Against this background from the exegetical part of his book, his first point in criticising Kripke (176) is contentious:

[...] the sceptic is far too restrictive in the sorts of facts he takes to be (in principle) available to memory: why not say, taking a cue from the irreducibility thesis, that I can now remember precisely what I *meant* yesterday? [...] This seems no more problematic in principle than remembering what I believed or intended or felt; it is remembering a fact about my 'mental history'. [...] [T]he suggested constitutive facts seem capable of serving equally as responses to the epistemological sceptic, since they are facts about which the speaker had knowledge at the earlier time.

In this passage he explicitly relies on the (past) manifestation of a capacity, although he had criticised his straw-Wittgenstein before for doing so. But McGinn makes a second suggestion concerning the epistemological problem.

The second suggestion is based on conceding to the sceptic that whatever is available in memory underdetermines meaning. He suggests (178) a third-person view of the matter to

see that underdetermination is actually a standard problem in epistemology and that Kripke's challenge does not introduce anything new. In ascribing meaning to somebody who utters 'There is Tiger Bob' my ascription might be compatible with her meaning that there is a tiger called 'Bob' now, which will change name tomorrow and be called 'Ashoka' afterwards. What happens in such cases is that the basis on which I ascribe meaning to somebody else always underdetermines what that person means. He goes on to write (178-9):

But this is not at all surprising when we consider the ascription of capacities and dispositions to people and things. Just consider the ascription of solubility to salt: we commonly suppose that salt would dissolve in water at any place or time [...], but we have not tested salt for solubility everywhere in the universe or at all future times [...]

First of all, McGinn suggests that the epistemological problem in the sceptical scenario can be reduced to a problem of induction. For induction from evidence to causal links (from instances of salt dissolving in water to the solubility of salt in water), only an adequate third-person authority matters. This would only be sensible if he argued against the sceptic that first-person authority was not available for meaning and intention in rule-following, but he does not explicitly do so. Another problem is that the notion of normativity that we find in the sceptical scenario plays no obvious role in the problem of induction. If it played one, McGinn should account for it. It is thus far from clear how the sceptical scenario can be reduced to the problem of induction.

In conclusion, McGinn's discussion of the sceptical challenge is by no means sufficient. There is, however, a possibility to amend McGinn's general strategy for meeting the sceptical challenge. This would involve a notion of concept, capacity, or ability which is inherently normative (in the sense required) and which can account for the constitution of

*Sinn.* John McDowell has proposed such a notion along Kantian lines for the capacities involved in empirical judgements (cf. McDowell (1994/2008)) and Crispin Wright conjectures (in Wright (2007)) that this might lead to a useful conception of a notion of rational judgement which underpins non-inferential knowledge about what one means.

The problem one must be aware of here is that human rationality is, according to Kant, governed by regulative principles and understanding is governed by rules. He (Kant (1966: B171)) explicitly claims that the power to judge is to bring sensibilia under rules, the rules of understanding. It is not clear how a Kantian approach to mental capacities can answer the sceptical challenge at all. I shall thus not assess it in more detail.

The remainder of the thesis will be concerned with two topics: the assessment of Crispin Wright's non-reductionism as a reaction to McGinn and the rehabilitation of the multiple application thesis via assessing the plausibility of Weak Diachronicity and Strong Diachronicity.

#### **4) Crispin Wright's Judgement-Dependent Conception of Meaning**

While McGinn's work on rule-following must be seen as a direct reaction to Kripke (1982), Crispin Wright's *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics* was published two years before Kripke's book and contained a discussion of Wittgenstein's remarks on rule-following as an attack on mathematical Platonism and related issues.<sup>8</sup> Based on his reading of Wittgenstein, Wright has exegetical qualms about Kripke's sceptical challenge. But he

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<sup>8</sup> Cora Diamond (1991: ch. 7) has criticised Wright's account there for three reasons: 1) the discussion of the relevant remarks is not related to a discussion of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*; 2) the Dummettian terminology misleads him to read Wittgenstein too often as an anti-realist; 3) 'there is an inadequate understanding of Wittgenstein's conception of grammar and its relation to philosophical method'. The points will play a role in the discussion below and it will be rehearsed based on what Wright writes in later papers.



nevertheless stresses the importance and its independence from Kripke's solution, about which he is more critical (Wright (2001: ch. 4)). This section will present and assess Wright's reply to Kripke's challenge as based on a criticism of McGinn.

Crispin Wright's (1989a) criticism of McGinn is, at first glance, similar to Boghossian's (1989a). The charges against McGinn have already been discussed in the previous section. It is, however, important to note that Wright explicitly rejects McGinn's discussion of the multiple application thesis, while holding onto its importance for Wittgenstein and himself (Wright (1989a: 118-9)).<sup>9</sup>

On the positive side, Wright (111) stresses that by proposing a non-reductionist strategy McGinn makes use of the 'most vulnerable point' in Kripke's dialectic. He takes it to show that an account of how first-person authority about what we mean or have meant is possible. But he is also quick to note (113) that McGinn's epistemological account does not enable a notion of how one faultlessly and effortlessly self-ascribes meaning which is not also available to reductionists about meaning-facts. This further requirement is crucial to counter Kripke's conjecture that non-reductionism is either built onto introspection or desperate and mysterious. The point can also be made for psychological states such as intentions to follow rules:

There are plenty of dispositions – courage, patience, intellectual honesty – the self-ascription of which is warranted only on grounds which any third party could employ. If, notwithstanding points of disanalogy generated for example by the holism of the mental, content-bearing psychological states like belief, intention, and hope *resemble* dispositions in the manner in which they have to answer to an indefinitely circumscribed range of behavioural manifestations, how is the institution of non-

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<sup>9</sup> Assessing Wright on the latter issue will be reserved for the next section.

inferential first-person authority with respect to such states not simply a *solecism* – evidence of the permeation through into ordinary discourse of a discredited Cartesian typology of the mental which takes sensations as its paradigm?

In other words, because McGinn has provided insufficient argument for what the difference between capacities and dispositions exactly is, the self-ascription of meaning based on non-reductionism can go two ways: 1) self-ascribing intention or meaning is not essentially different from self-ascribing dispositions; 2) self-ascribing intention or meaning is epistemologically analogous to self-ascribing sensations of which one is actually conscious. In the first case, overt linguistic behaviour is constitutive of meaning – a point that McGinn alleges to reject. In the second case, overt linguistic behaviour is caused by a publicly undisclosed psychological entity called 'meaning' – a point that Wittgenstein and Kripke reject just as much as McGinn does. Concerning the fact that constitutes rule-following and meaning, the first case implies that there are no rules – only behavioural regularities, the second case implies a hypostatisation of rules (the notorious 'rules-as-rails' picture). How can these considerations serve as a starting point?

The considerations give, so Wright claims, rise to a deep and difficult problem which McGinn fails to notice. Self-ascription of some states such as pain or tinnitus can definitely be said to have a particular onset in time and an end. Also, their occurrence does not require a specific conceptual equipment, it is quite easy to see that anybody is authoritative about such states. It is 'because, since they are events in [people's] consciousness, [one is] in the nature of the case conscious of them. Further, because such states are essentially *of* a consciousness, they can presumably bear only causal relations to their outward and behavioural expressions' (113). This is the phenomenal basis for the states people are first-personally (and non-

inferentially) authoritative about and the relation to their expression (like in pain-behaviour) is that 'of antecedent state to symptom or trace'. But for some other psychological states, the dispositional states, 'the connection with behavioural display is not symptomatic but constitutive' (114). Wright claims that Wittgenstein was interested in neither of them as the paradigm for the psychological concepts he was most concerned about. Thus, the non-reductionist must not base his conception of meaning on either of them, because (and this is something Kripke's sceptic brings to the fore) neither conception of a psychological state can sufficiently explain it. Still, intention in rule-following and meaning are similar to both conceptions of psychological states, both feature 'the combination of first-person avowability with disposition-like connections to behaviour in circumstances which the avower need not have envisaged' (113). The urgent problem is that the non-reductionist needs to say something about the epistemology of meaning, but he cannot rely on either received model. For Wright (114), the compelling and deep problem McGinn did not address is:

[H]ow is it possible to be effortlessly, non-inferentially, and generally reliably authoritative about psychological states which have no distinctive occurrent phenomenology and which have to answer, after the fashion of dispositions, to what one says and does in situations so far unconsidered?

This question is, according to Wright (*ibid.*), the 'heart of the Wittgensteinian agenda' and Kripke's sceptical challenge takes us to it. McGinn on the other hand does not recognise this most central theme.

Wright gathers from Wittgenstein's writings no concrete suggestion about how *Sinn* is to be constituted (126-8). Nevertheless, he argues that Wittgenstein forwards constraints on how the agenda has to be carried out and that those constraints are captured in the following

statement (126):

Language, and all rule-governed institutions, are founded not in our internalization of the same strongly autonomous, explanation-transcendent rules, whose requirements we then succeed, more or less, in collectively tracking, but in *primitive* dispositions of agreement in judgement and action.

On such a conception, giving a positive theory of *Sinn* as autonomous in a Fregean sense is not a sensible task. Recall that, since different people can express the very same thought, it must be independent of any individual's mind. *Sinn* governs reference and meaning, the basic semantic concepts, from without the individual mind and linguistic normativity on such a view cannot be made sense of without invoking the 'rules-as-rails' picture which Wright finds misconceived and anti-Wittgensteinian.

All one can do is to name the 'primitive dispositions of agreement in judgement and action' and to take them as samples with which one tries to convey a different understanding of *Sinn*. In other words, and to connect it with what was said above, the form of judgement behind self-ascribing meaning and intention must be accounted for in a way that makes it the basis for justifying or explaining to other people what one means or intends. But if the form of judgement behind such avowals does not track something down that is judgement-independent, as Wright gathers from Wittgenstein, it must constitute such avowals and, also, explain the first-person authority with which they are made. *Tout court*, meaning and intention must be judgement-dependent. But how are we to introduce judgement-dependence?

Judgement-dependence in general refers to the idea that the extension of some predicates is determined by judgements in a way that others are not. The best way to make sense of this is via the notion of covariance: under optimal conditions, a subject holds a

certain belief iff it is true (below, two ways of defining this biconditional will be introduced). In other words, a fact and a subject's judgement about whether the fact obtains will, under optimal conditions, covary. This covariance can be construed as *apriori* true or *aposteriori* true. In the first case, the judgement determines the extension of the truth-predicate and in the second case it is merely extension-reflecting. If meaning and intention are judgement-dependent, judgement must determine the extension of the truth-predicate for self-ascribing them.

The detailed introduction of Wright's judgement-dependent conception of meaning will have three stages:<sup>10</sup> 1) explaining the order-of-determination test; 2) introducing basic and provisional equations in general; 3) applying provisional equations to avowals.

The cases to be considered to make sense of the order-of-determination test are shape-ascription and colour-ascription. The covariance between fact and judgement differs in each case and the difference can be made clearer by the order-of-determination test.

Assume a situation in which you are to ascribe three-dimensional shapes to objects, the conditions for doing so are cognitively ideal, i.e. there is nothing about you or the circumstances that could have a negative influence on your judging that an object has a particular shape (Wright calls them 'C-conditions'). Assume furthermore that those conditions are substantially specified and do not logically entail the truth or falsehood of the ascription.<sup>11</sup> This is meant to show that whether an object is cube-shaped is independent of your judging it to be so; a true ascription, in other words, of cube-shape to things does not depend on cognitive pedigree only. What leads us to this conclusion? There is something independent of

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<sup>10</sup> The framework Wright uses will only be introduced insofar as it is needed to for his reply to the sceptical challenge. A full discussion can be found in Wright (1992: appendix to ch. 3) but should be read together with Johnston (1993: appendix 3).

<sup>11</sup> See p. 36 below for an explanation of what 'substantially' means here.

your judging that determines truth in this case. In order to be sure about shape, you must judge several times from various angles (unless we are dealing with two-dimensional or one-dimensional shapes (i.e. an arrangement of points and lines in one dimension) – but that is not part of the case we consider here). The need for several observations suggests that we cannot make sense of an *a priori* covariance between optimal judgements and fact without making the extension of the shape-predicate part of the ideal conditions. This shows that the shape of an object seems to be independent of your judgement. According to Wright (1989b: 130), the judgements behind shape-ascription pass an order-of-determination test which is designed to clarify the relation between best judgements (those made under cognitively ideal conditions) and truth:

Passing the test requires that there be some content to the idea of best judgements *tracking* the truth – the determinants of a judgement's being true and of its being best have to be somehow independent. Truth, for judgements which pass the test, is a standard constituted independently of any considerations concerning cognitive pedigree.

It should be clear by now that Frege's conception of *Sinn* would also require such a tracking epistemology and that a conception of rules modelled upon it, the 'rules-as-rails' conception, would as well. This is exactly what Wright, Kripke and, seemingly, Wittgenstein (cf. Wright (1980)) find a deeply problematic conception of rules and meaning.

For cases of colour-ascription, assume again cognitively ideal conditions. Under such conditions, the judgements you can make about the colour of an object always covary with what colour the object has. If object *o* is judged to be 'blue' under ideal conditions, object *o* is blue. The extension of the colour-predicate does not need to be part of the ideal conditions to

ensure that there is an *a priori* covariance between judgement and fact. That there is covariance in virtue of cognitive pedigree is the crucial difference to shape-ascription; for the present case we cannot assume the same sort of independence between judging and truth.

Judgements in this case fail the order-of-determination test and

[f]or judgements which fail the test, by contrast, there is no distance between being true and being best; truth, for such judgements, is constitutively what we judge to be true when we operate under cognitively ideal conditions. [ibid.]

To stress the role of covariance in the latter case: for judgements under cognitively ideal conditions which fail the order-of-determination test (as in the colour case) it is *apriori* true that the fact and a subject's judgement about whether the fact obtains covary.

A question that must be asked now is whether this *apriori* covariance is enough to infer that the judgements in question determine the extension of the truth-predicate.

According to Wright, three supplementary considerations will show that such an inference is warranted – all three considerations are made to secure the extension-determining status for judgements which fail the test.

In order to understand the supplementary considerations, it might be useful to first introduce the covariance in form of a provisional equation and supplement it with a different form:

(Provisional Equation)

$$C(S) (P \leftrightarrow JS(P))^{12}$$

The equation obviously only captures the covariance if it can be assumed that subject *S* is free of doubt and that she is disposed to act in accord with her judgement. We may stipulate that judging that *P* and believing that *P* are interchangeable for present purposes. It can thus be

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12 Short for: If *C*-conditions obtain for *S*, (*P* obtains iff (*S* judges that *P*))

assumed that she must sincerely believe that  $P$  obtains and this must, where relevant, inform her actions. Note also that nothing about the truth-value for  $P$  under non-C-conditions is said. There might, in contrast, be cases in which the C-conditions materially affect the truth-status of  $P$ . This type of covariance has the form of a basic equation:

(Basic Equation)

$$P \leftrightarrow (C(S) \rightarrow JS(P))^{13}$$

Consider a chameleon in the dark and suppose you are to ascribe a colour to it. Would the chameleon's colour not change under optimal conditions, i.e. when we switch the light on? Yes. Covariance can only be explained by the equation once the causal link between C-conditions and the chameleon's colour are clear (cf. Wright (1992: 117-9)). Arguing that something's colour in general is determined by our judgements is, thus, too ambitious. We should better not be concerned about the extension of the truth-predicate for colour-ascriptions under non-C-conditions. That is why basic equations seem not apt for capturing *a priori* covariance and that is why Wright uses provisional equations. The more pressing issue for present purposes, however, is whether the covariance captured by the provisional equation implies that the best judgement is extension-determining. Let us turn to the three supplementary considerations mentioned above.

One might object that the apriority of any instance of the provisional equation is trivial, because we can pack into the C-conditions whatever it takes to make any  $P$  true. But we can give a detailed description of what optimal conditions are for, e.g., colour-ascriptions. We can define the optimal physiological make-up of the visual mechanism and the sort of stimuli it ideally receives. An example would be a description of the sort of stimuli that hit the retina when one sees a colour under 'conditions like those which actually typically obtain out-

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13 Short for:  $P$  obtains iff (if C-conditions obtain for  $S$ , ( $S$  judges that  $P$ ))



of-doors and out-of-shadow at noon on a cloudy summer day' (Wright (1989b: 132)) – that provides us with a notion of what is optimal for colour-judgements and further research, probably containing variations in lighting and physiological make-up, will provide us with a more detailed account of optimal conditions. This is the substantiality-condition for provisional equations.

There is a second point to consider to avoid the objection that we are not dealing with genuinely extension-determining judgements. The question as to whether the C-conditions obtain must be 'logically independent of any truths concerning the details of the extension' of the truth-predicate for *P* (ibid.). If they were logically dependent, the 'satisfaction of the C-conditions would always presuppose some anterior constitution of' the fact that *P* obtains. An *apriori* covariance in the shape-ascription case would be a violation of this condition: the satisfaction of the C-conditions does presuppose some anterior constitution of shape, as they would contain details about the extension of the truth-predicate for the shape. This is the independence-condition for provisional equations.

The third consideration Wright names is as follows: the provisional equation must be the only available explanation of how the extension of the truth-predicate is determined. In other words, '[t]here is [...] no *explaining away* the case which [some] other considerations supply for saying the judgements formed under the conditions in question are extension-determining rather than extension-reflecting' (ibid.). It might be useful to give an example of how one can violate this constraint: if you consider a pain state, one might want to claim that the judgement that one is in pain is extension-reflecting and explain away a possible extension-determining status for the judgement, because there is a judgement-independent state PAIN with a definite onset time (now), an end (30 minutes after I have taken an

ibuprofen), and maybe an exact location (my lower back) and a distinct quality (piercing). Wright (1992: 123-4) even claims that we should think of pain as something about which judges are infallible, because pain is 'something whose occurrence requires no capacity of judgement on the part of the subject'. The latter claim introduces an alternative view of how one can violate the condition in the case of pain.<sup>14</sup> This is the extremal-condition for provisional equations.

To sum up the explanation of the order-of-determination test and the apriority of provisional equations, Wright (1989b: 132-3) writes:

The suggestion, in summary, is that there is at least a strong *prima facie* case for regarding a base class of our best judgements about colour as extension-determining. The case consists in the circumstances (i) that we can construct *a priori* true provisional equations for such judgements; (ii) that the C-conditions in these equations can be substantially specified, in a manner free of the triviality associated with whatever-it-takes formulations; (iii) that the satisfaction of the C-conditions is, in any particular case, logically independent of the details of the extensions of colour concepts; (iv) that no other account is available of what else might determine the extension of the truth-predicate among judgements of colour, of which the satisfaction by the relevant provisional equations of conditions (i)-(iii) would be a consequence.

Wright carefully points out that he is referring to a base class, because colour-ascription under conditions which are not cognitively ideal are constrained by what one would judge under ideal conditions. Ascribing the predicate 'red' to objects in a room with strong blue light must

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<sup>14</sup> I do not fully understand what Wright means here and I tentatively side with McDowell (1989) who rejects this idea.

be, on Wright's conception, modelled upon and justifiable by what one would judge if the light was normal. This intuition about colour-ascriptions was not accounted for in basic equations, as the chameleon case showed.

It remains to be shown whether the same or a sufficiently similar sort of covariance can be used to give an account of self-ascribing meaning and intention and, thus, of what Wright takes to be at the heart of Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations. I shall introduce the application and note two worries: 1) it is not clear that the first-person authority behind avowals is enabled by optimal judgements, the extremal-condition is violated as there might be other (simpler) explanations; 2) if mental holism is plausible, the independence-condition is violated and Wright has to explain it away to save the extension-determining status of judgements behind avowals. It will then be argued that the two worries can be strengthened and combined in order to attack Wright's judgement-dependent conception of meaning and intention. On the then emerging alternative picture, the first-person authority with which avowals are uttered is neither enabled by a form of judgement nor the capacity of an individual but is simply a feature of how people interact when they use language.

When it comes to the C-conditions for avowals, a new set of problems confront Wright. What are cognitively ideal conditions for a self-ascription of psychological states like sensations, emotions, mood, belief, desire and intention? First of all, the judging subject must be aware and sure that she is in that state and not in another – she must not deceive herself. Such a case of deception might be motivated by the subject (she might be akratic or under the influence of group pressure), or it might be based on circumstances which are, according to Wright, physiological or pharmacological. It might be useful to add pathological conditions to the list, as they complement the physiological circumstances. An appropriate set of C-

conditions must exclude the possibility that such influences are operative (Wright (1989b: 136)). On the positive side, the judging subject must have the relevant concepts and, as far as the present case is concerned, be attentive to what her intentions are. In any case, the C-conditions must, it seems, be substantially specified and they should be logically independent of the extension of the truth-predicate for the state in question in order to claim that we are dealing with a genuine case of extension-determining judgements.

Instead, now, of providing a substantial specification of the C-conditions that rules out self-deception, Wright (1989b: 137) proposes that the no-self-deception condition should be seen as being positive-presumptive:

By that I mean that, such is the 'grammar' of ascriptions of intention, one is entitled to assume that a subject is *not* materially self-deceived, or unmotivatedly similarly afflicted, unless one possesses determinate evidence to the contrary.

'Grammar' could mean two things: a) there is a fact that governs ascriptions of intention which renders the no-self-deception condition unproblematic; b) it is usually unproblematic to assume that the no-self-deception condition is met in ascriptions of intention. There might be other ways of reading 'grammar' here, but I cannot think of any.<sup>15</sup> It is impossible that a) is compatible with Kripke's sceptical challenge. What Wright would assume here is the very thing at stake: there seems to be no difference between the alleged 'grammar' of ascriptions of intention and what ascriptions of intention mean. Reading b) is also hardly compatible with the sceptical challenge, because the scenario is intentionally designed to render ascriptions of intention problematic, although they usually do seem to be harmless and safe. How should we

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<sup>15</sup> Wittgenstein himself does, according to Michael Foster (2004), hold that 'grammar' has these two readings; on the one hand, it can be gained from his remarks that grammar is non-arbitrary and, on the other, there are also remarks that motivate the idea that grammar is arbitrary. Foster (2004) reads the relevant passages not as excluding each other and claims that they are consistent. If, however, the two readings are projected onto Wright's proposal, problems for his conception of meaning result.

understand this proposal and what non-reductionist alternative to scepticism does it offer?

One may want to say that all Wright claims here is that the default position is that the subject is not self-deceived, that one must not read too much into the word 'grammar'. But on that anodyne reading, there seems to be no difference between saying that positive-presumptiveness is a feature of the best judgements at stake and saying that it is a necessary feature of how people communicate. First-person authority, and, hence, non-reductionism, is then rooted in a form of interaction (e.g. a normal exchange of information in a conversation) rather than a form of judgement. That seems to be a perfectly viable way to argue for something along the lines of b) without having to invoke Wright's judgement-dependence. With this simpler alternative available, why would one want to insist on the existence of extension-determining judgements behind meaning and intention in rule-following? A violation of the extremal-condition may be possible, because there is another explanation and it also seems simpler than Wright's. Call this the first source for an objection.

Wright (1989b) is mainly worried about the first constraint on C-conditions, but further explanations can be asked for in order to bring together the demand for logical independence and any conception of psychological states which is compatible with some notion of mental holism. Why should there be a special worry about the independence-condition when it comes to psychological states? The worry comes into view if one considers any standard notion of mental holism. Following Ned Block (1998), for example, we can define:

(Mental Holism)

The identity of the content of any psychological state is determined by its place in the web of psychological states comprising a whole theory or group of theories.

The motivation for adopting Mental Holism is that the scientific terms used to describe psychological states gain their meaning from the role they play in a whole theory.<sup>16</sup> In detail: a psychological term only counts as scientific if it has a definite place in a theory of psychology (or group of such) and only if it counts as scientific can it be said to contribute to the truth-values of sentences in which it figures (for unscientific psychological terms can hardly be said to relate to psychological facts); therefore, psychological terms gain their meaning from the role they play in a whole theory of psychology (or group of such). How does Mental Holism make sense of, say, pain as a psychological state? If the term 'pain' refers to the psychological state PAIN, it does so because it has a place in a theory containing other terms which refer to other psychological states. The terms are connected by the theory and therefore it is assumed that the states are similarly connected in the web of psychological states. If this is true, the C-conditions for judging that some psychological state obtains always presuppose that the psychological state is constituted by there being a web of psychological states comprising a whole theory (or a group of such). That seems incompatible with the independence-condition, it might turn out that the satisfaction of the C-conditions does presuppose some anterior constitution of the psychological state in question, namely the web of psychological states. Call this the second source for an objection.

In order to see what Wright is aiming at, the two worries should be put aside for the moment and satisfaction of the independence-condition and positive-presumptiveness should be granted, even though the latter renders trivial the specification of the no-self-deception condition. The *apriori* true provisional biconditional we get now is:

$$C(S) \rightarrow (S \text{ believes she intends to } \varphi \leftrightarrow S \text{ intends to } \varphi)$$

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<sup>16</sup> Note that folk psychological terms can easily be seen to be holistically constrained as well. I shall not consider this possibility here for lack of space.

C includes the, now trivial, no-self-deception condition and, if there is no determinate evidence to the contrary, we are *apriori* 'justified in believing the result of deleting that condition from the provisional biconditional in question' (Wright (1989b: 137)). The deletion is possible in virtue of the 'grammar' of ascriptions of avowals and the dubious grammatical consideration also warrants the deletion of any other positive-presumptive C-condition. Wright is well aware that this provisional biconditional is restricted and that it is rather *apriori* credible than *apriori* true – but he (138) takes it to be *apriori* in some sense and, therefore, to do the required work and secure the extension-determining status of the form of judgement:

[S's] opinions, formed under the restricted set of C-conditions, play a *defeasible* extension-determining role, with defeat conditional on the emergence of evidence that one or more of the background, positive-presumptive, conditions are not in fact met.

Let's go back to the constraints on the C-conditions, especially the independence-condition. This, it seemed, is hard to bring together with any useful conception of mental holism one might want to entertain for independent reasons. I called this the second source for an objection. The problem was that assuming Mental Holism seems incompatible with the independence-condition for the judgements at stake. Wright (ibid.) acknowledges that there are no conditions in the present case 'whose satisfaction *a priori* ensures covariance of a subject's beliefs about his intentions and the facts'. But, again in virtue of the 'grammar' of ascriptions of intention, positive-presumptiveness demands that 'a subject's opinions about his or her intentions should be accepted'. This means that Wright admits some sort of dependence between a subject's beliefs about her intentions and her intentions. It is crucial now that he can show why this case does not violate the independence-condition.

The logical dependence only makes trouble, Wright argues, if it leads to a self-conception of the subject which, in a second step, generates behavioural singularities that are not in sync with that self-conception or seem to demand an unacceptable modification of the self-conception. Such a tension with a self-conception would count as a case of self-deception which the account can handle. On this interpretation, whatever can be problematic about the logical dependence in such cases will result in self-deception whenever it threatens a judgement's extension-determining status. Wright's idea concerning the grammar of ascriptions is, thus, also a reason for rejecting that worry; he writes (*ibid.*):

When a possession of a certain intention is an aspect of a self-conception that coheres well enough both internally and with the subject's behaviour, there is nothing *else* that makes it true that the intention is indeed possessed.

This is not enough to fully accommodate Mental Holism, for Wright only considers coherence, internal and as far as a subject's behaviour is concerned, in relation to self-conception. Of course, self-conception is what matters for his purposes, but the objection from Mental Holism was that the web of psychological states is what makes it true that the intention is indeed had. The web is what constitutes the very possibility of any self-conception. Therefore, the possession of a certain intention does depend on a sufficiently coherent self-conception, but that in turn depends on there being a web of psychological states – the obtaining of which is presupposed by the relevant optimal conditions for the judgement. The upshot is that Wright must yet reject Mental Holism to save the independence-condition.<sup>17</sup>

This would not be a big problem, if Wright could hold that 'dependence' in this case means something else than in the shape- and colour-ascription cases. Such a notion of

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<sup>17</sup> This objection is not new. Boghossian (1989b) and Miller (see next footnote) have expressed similar worries.



dependence would probably have to be based on a substantial conception of self-consciousness or self-reference, one that licenses the view that self-reference be not reducible to a conception of reference modelled upon the word-world relation Frege has introduced for complete expressions. But that means arguing for a first-person/third-person asymmetry which he rejects in Wright (2001: ch. 11).

If 'dependence' means the same in all cases, we should expect to find other operational criteria (analogous to self-conception) which can overturn our judgements in the case of shapes and colours. Such criteria can be understood as indefeasibly determining the truth in all three kinds of cases (colour, shape, and intention) – in the case of shapes, this would mean that the overturned judgement fails the order-of-determination test and the distinction between extension-determining and extension-reflecting judgements would be rendered futile. If, for example, we ascribe (under optimal conditions) a shape to an object with a complicated geometry and our description entails that the object can be said to be both spherical and cubical, the judgement can be rejected on the *apriori* reason that such a shape is not possible. The judgement turns out to be false, because there is a geometrical criterion which overturns it. Even if the geometrical criterion is not an *apriori* constraint (it may have been stipulated merely in order to ensure reconstructability with the means of standard geometry) Wright's distinction, captured in the order-of-determination test, seems unstable. The reason for this is that, simply, one can rule out that any object in question is both spherical and cubical without ever looking at it; such a judgement is not extension-reflective.<sup>18</sup> It is hence hard to see how the independence-condition can be made to work and, thus, how genuinely extension-determining judgements can be made sense of.

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<sup>18</sup> The possibility of such an argument was found by Alexander Miller (2008). He (2007/1989) has also presented other strong reasons why the independence-condition is a problem for Wright.

This now means that almost all considerations that secured the genuinely extension-determining status of the provisional equation in the colour-ascription cases are either considerably weakened or flawed in the context of avowals, for: (i) the provisional biconditional in the case of intention is only *apriori* credible, not *apriori* true; (ii) the C-conditions, especially the problematic no-self-deception condition, have not been substantially specified; (iii) the satisfaction of the C-conditions is not logically independent of the details of the extension of the truth-predicate for the psychological predicates at issue (viz. 'means that p' or 'intends that p'). The only consideration that remains is (iv) that no other account is available of what else might determine the extension of the truth-predicate of self-ascriptions of intention, of which the satisfaction by the relevant provisional biconditional of conditions (i)-(iii) would be a consequence. But it can't do much work anymore, as it presupposes the satisfaction of the other three conditions. Nevertheless, I shall argue in the next three paragraphs that facts about how people use language can be adduced to question the satisfaction of the extremal condition (iv) as well.

It already seems quite unclear whether meaning and intention are truly judgement-dependent. The step from provisional equations in the case of colour-ascriptions to the provisional biconditional in the case of avowals is a big one. Two related reasons that the idea does not work for avowals are: 1) it is not clear what 'grammar of ascriptions of intention' means and it is dubitable that this squares well with what is demanded by the sceptical challenge (on an anodyne reading of 'grammar', the difference between positive-presumptiveness as a feature of the optimal judgements at stake and as a feature of how people do communicate is blurred); 2) the idea of positive-presumptiveness leads Wright to substantially revise almost all considerations that secured the extension-determining status in

the colour-case and it is by no means clear that the status is preserved for the case of intention – especially since positive-presumptiveness can probably not save the independence-condition from the objection motivated by Mental Holism (and anything else has little prospects).

Reconsider the first source for an objection and combine the anodyne reading of 'grammar' with condition (i): I am entitled to believe anything somebody tells me about herself if there is no determinate evidence to the contrary. This need not have anything to do with best opinions and judgements, but is, one might want to say, a fact about communication.<sup>19</sup> It is, on such a view, an *apriori* constraint on communication, of which avowals and colour-ascriptions are instances.<sup>20</sup>

One might object here that biconditionals do not concern communication *per se* and that my alternative thus covertly changes the topic.<sup>21</sup> That might be true, but the grammatical consideration invoked to justify the application of biconditionals in this case does concern communication. Whatever one's favourite conception of grammar is, it at least constrains communication in the sense that certain syntactic structures are not available. It is Wright's grammatical consideration that invites us to seriously consider communication. But we need not go much further here, because there is an alternative to scrutinising the relation between grammar and communication. One could simply argue that there is a moral requirement for politeness in speech which entails positive-presumptiveness for avowals and which competent speakers can be expected to be aware of. If something along these lines turns out true, Wright's account of self-ascriptions of meaning and intention is trivial at best, because the same primitive fact about communication is, while the *explanandum* of the judgement-

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19 Donald Davidson (1980) has argued that this fact is the very basis for interpreting what other people say. Miller (2008) mentions that one could try to justify the locution 'grammar of ascription of intention' along these lines, but this would render Wright more vulnerable to the objection which I raise here.

20 This presupposes, of course, that ascribers and avowers should have little use in ascriptions and avowals which are never uttered or, when tacit, influence actions.

21 I am indebted to Darragh Byrne and David Cockburn for this idea.

dependence account, an important element of the *explanans*. One could even argue that positive-presumptiveness only works if the irreducibility of meaning-facts (or communication-facts) is presupposed and *vice versa*. On such a reading, Wright offers hardly more than a verbose version of McGinn's initial answer to the sceptic, the trivial: I mean that the banana is green, because I mean that the banana is green. But would that not imply that Wright begs his own question, because he presupposes the answer to the deep question in order to answer the deep question?

It is still fair to assume that this is not conclusive as it stands. After all, Wright is not committed to the alternative construal of positive-presumptiveness and there is no other non-reductionism that answers the deep question.<sup>22</sup> True, but Wright gets into trouble if another non-reductionist presents a simpler solution based on the alternative. Consider Boghossian's Robust Realism (Boghossian (1989b: §31)), according to which judgements about meaning are factual, irreducible and judgement-independent. Why not combine Robust Realism with the idea that positive-presumptiveness is a necessary fact about how people interpret other people (to rehearse a central idea in Davidson (1980)) or that it is a necessary fact about communication (as Grice (1975) had argued)? At any rate, it is not clear why positive-presumptiveness must be a feature of best judgements rather than how people must interact if they use language in any ordinary exchange of information. On such a view, the phenomena which have led Wright to assume that there are extension-determining judgements can be reinterpreted as evidence for a set of basic facts about conversation. As long as that remains possible, there are no good reasons to go with the more complicated option and not simply associate positive-presumptiveness with basic truths about communication – which amounts to arguing that the extremal condition is not satisfied either. On the other hand, there is a good

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<sup>22</sup> This is the attitude towards Wright's proposal that Bob Hale (1997) commends.

reason to make that step: it seems that Wright's own constraints on extension-determining judgements have not been clearly met as far as meaning and intention are concerned. We can hence assume that a suitable account of forms of interaction, rather than forms of judgement, can do the trick.

There are other dissenting voices. Boghossian (1989b: §30) objects to Wright that 'facts about content, constituted independently of the judgements, are presupposed by the model itself'. Hattiangadi (2007: 160) also states: 'The problem, quite simply, is that Wright appeals to my *judgements*, and the sceptic can always question the contents of those judgements'. Boghossian and Hattiangadi assume, arguably driven by Semantic Realism, that judgement and content are always independent. Wright's way into a judgement-dependent account was his reading of Wittgenstein as putting forward such an idea. But this assessment of Wittgenstein is highly controversial, Cora Diamond (1991) and others have argued that Wittgenstein has always believed in some form of Realism and it is very hard to bring this idea together with what Wright takes Wittgenstein to say about meaning.<sup>23</sup> Considered together with my two objections, the future for an account of meaning as judgement-dependent seems not promising.

In this section, I have introduced Wright's non-reductionism about meaning-facts. The idea was that meaning and intention in rule-following are judgement-dependent. I have raised three objections against it. First, Mental Holism contradicts one of his central constraints on extension-determining judgements and his attempts to explain it away are not successful – the prospects for repairing it seem hardly realistic as well. Second, invoking the 'grammar' of self-ascriptions to claim that avowals are positive-presumptive is either directly question-begging

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<sup>23</sup> A useful collection of papers arguing for interpreting Wittgenstein's later writings along these lines can be found in Crary and Read (2000).

or blurs the difference between positive-presumptiveness as a feature of the judgements at stake and as a feature of communication in general. With this distinction gone, it is not clear why his account should not collapse into another form of non-reductionism which relocates the positive-presumptiveness behind avowals in basic facts about linguistic practice. Third, the remarks from Wittgenstein which he adduces to motivate his judgement-dependent account are highly controversial and defending judgement-dependence needs much more work.

In the remaining section I shall assemble the results from the discussion of McGinn's and Wright's proposals. It will be argued that the weaker conception of the multiple application thesis can still be used as the basis for an alternative non-reductionism about meaning-facts.

### **5) (Yet) Another Non-Reductionism about Meaning-Facts**

This last section sums up some results from the preceding sections and develops them. First, the Sceptical Conclusion, Semantic Realism and Linguistic Normativity will be repeated. Second, the multiple application thesis will be reiterated together with its two readings and it will be shown how they can be used to formulate two new conceptions of Linguistic Normativity (namely, Weak Diachronicity and Strong Diachronicity). After that, it will be argued that Strong Diachronicity leads to another form of non-reductionism than Weak Diachronicity does and that Weak Diachronicity can make sense of genuine cases of rule-following for which the strong conception cannot cater. The upshot of this will be that a more inclusive non-reductionism demands Weak Diachronicity. Then it will be argued that the new

solution is insensitive to the worry that any version of LN entails baffling ontological and epistemological commitments and that one may want to reject it. To amend the solution, it will be argued that the alternative non-reductionism must at least contain Semantic Realism and the weak multiple application thesis built into one's conception of correctness. I shall conclude with a programmatic suggestion and a plea for its theoretical footing.

In the beginning, it was argued that it seems intuitively right to assume that a past intention, which guided my rule-following before, can somehow back my present and future use up. Kripke (1982: 7-8) wrote: 'my past intentions regarding addition determine a unique answer for indefinitely many new cases in the future'. A sceptic, however, can question whether there is a fact of the matter that constitutes and justifies my intention to follow a specific rule. Formulated for meaning, the sceptical conclusion (SC) is:

(SC)

There is no fact of the matter about what any expression means.

To bring out the radicalness of the sceptical conclusion, I have introduced a conception of meaning which is based on Frege's notion of reference plus a matching notion of linguistic normativity. Together they can be thought of as an attempt to explain meaning based on the intuition that 'the banana is green' is true only if the banana is green and that I thus ought to say that it is green rather than that it is black. This takes rules to have an important role in thinking generally, for by pretending to use a word in accordance with a rule without judging that this is correct, the rule cannot be said to concern me and we cannot speak of genuine rule-following.

(Semantic Realism: SR)

If in a sentence ' $\alpha$  is ' $\varphi$ ', ' $\alpha$ ' names an object  $o$  and ' $\varphi$ ' ascribes a property  $P$  to  $o$ , then

' $\alpha$  is ' $\varphi$ ' is true just in case the possible fact  $F$  of  $\alpha$ 's being  $P$  obtains.

(Linguistic Normativity: LN)

If  $S$  means something by a term ' $\varphi$ ', then there is a set of properties,  $P_1 - P_n$  that govern the correct application of ' $\varphi$ ' for  $S$ .

The sceptical scenario shows us that SR and LN lead to SC and any appeal to the intuitive soundness of SR plus LN, which is commonly made, needs further arguments.

Colin McGinn (1984: 37-8; 81) has remarked that Kripke's notion of grasping a rule is too restrictive. Wittgenstein and Kripke agree that there must be multiple applications for a rule to be a rule at all, but Kripke commits himself to the thesis that the multiple applications must be made by the same individual, while Wittgenstein seems to think that they can be distributed over several individuals:

(Weak Multiple Application Thesis)

For every rule  $\varphi$ ,  $\varphi$  must be repeatedly applied, possibly distributed over several individuals (and at different times).

(Strong Multiple Application Thesis)

For every rule  $\varphi$ ,  $\varphi$  must be repeatedly applied by a single individual.

Together with a conception of linguistic normativity, the two versions of the multiple application thesis can be used to define the diachronic character of meaning. Combined with LN, the conception of linguistic normativity of choice for present purposes, we get the following two definitions of the diachronic character of meaning:

(Weak Diachronicity)

If  $S$  means something by a term ' $\varphi$ ', then there is a set of properties,  $P_1 - P_n$  that govern the correct application of ' $\varphi$ ' for  $S$  and there must be multiple applications,



possibly distributed over several individuals.

(Strong Diachronicity)

If  $S$  means something by a term 'ϕ', then there is a set of properties,  $P_1 - P_n$  that govern the correct application of 'ϕ' for  $S$  and there must be multiple applications by  $S$ .

I have argued that Colin McGinn fails to fuse the multiple application thesis with a useful conception of normativity and that his argument against the weak multiple application thesis (the subtraction argument) fails. It is useful here to introduce Crispin Wright's discussion of this strand in McGinn's book to buttress and clarify my point of view. Wittgenstein's 'claim was that the very existence of any rules depends on some rules actually being applied: and that one rule being applied only once would not be enough' (Wright (1989a: 118). McGinn (1984: 131) interprets this, and that is what leads him to abandon the multiple applicability thesis for his proposal, as follows:

Wittgenstein thinks that all the rules can be supposed preserved while subtracting their application save that we have to leave one that is applied more than once; but why should removing *its* application altogether (or reducing it to one occasion) suddenly obliterate all that has hitherto been preserved?

There is, also according to Wright's reading, nothing in Wittgenstein's writings that allows for such a subtraction argument against diachronicity. Wright conjectures that, again, McGinn's misunderstanding of normativity is where his misinterpretation of Wittgenstein ultimately comes from. Seemingly pace McGinn, Wright (1989a: 118-9) takes the multiple application thesis to be central for Wittgenstein's views of rules: <sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> McGinn can see this remark of Wright's as a misreading of his account. He clearly argues that the multiple application thesis is central for Wittgenstein's views on rule-following, but that it is not ultimately useful, due to the subtraction argument, for the explanation of rule-following.

[...] it belongs with his attempt to point to an alternative account of normativity to the 'rules-as-rails' imagery of platonism, to explain how there can be a stable middle ground between the hypostatization of rules and the denial of their existence. The thesis is believed by Wittgenstein, it is fair to assume, to be a *consequence* of the proper account of the middle ground and is therefore a vital clue to the character of Wittgenstein's view.

But there are still two possible conceptions of multiple application on the market and it is not clear that Kripke is right in proposing the stronger one for his challenge. On this point, McGinn could still be right, even if he is wrong in supposing that the weaker conception leads to the subtraction argument.

Concerning Wittgenstein himself, I have argued in the section on McGinn that the multiple application thesis is not a consequence 'of the proper account of the middle ground', but that it itself is the middle ground. It could thus be that Wright himself is mistaken about the role of diachronicity in Wittgenstein's remarks; but if not, he might still be underestimating, just like McGinn and Boghossian, the role it can play in an alternative attempt to respond to the sceptical challenge.

Against Boghossian, the objection was raised that his notion of normativity does not make clear how linguistic commitment and entitlement can be justified. This is not a problem for Weak and Strong Diachronicity. If they are good, one only has to point out the relevant set of normative properties to justify one's meaning this rather than that. The second objection against Boghossian was that one must take a version of the multiple application thesis into one's notion of normativity to account for the fact that one applies the rule '+2' at each step of the series '2, 4, 6, 8...'. If one does reject linguistic normativity of any kind, one would at least

have to allow a version of the multiple application thesis for one's notion of correctness. At any rate, Boghossian is wrong in assuming that meaning does not have an essentially diachronic character – even though he might grant some version of the multiple application thesis as a consequence of getting the essential properties of meaning right.

Kripke has, I take it, shown that Strong Diachronicity leads to the sceptical conclusion, because it is based on the intuitive conception of what it is to grasp a rule that he had proposed. It is less easy to show that Weak Diachronicity enables cases of rule-following which are outside the restricted scope and feature a different basis for the self-ascription of meaning and intention plus the first-person authority associated with it. Nevertheless, there are such cases.

Whenever rule-following is based on a tradition, one might want to say that the multiple applications of a rule are distributed over several individuals. Consider a family tradition: there is a rule in a certain family which has been there for many generations. At the the age of 16, the oldest child receives from the father a copy of Spinoza's *Tractatus*, the copy was passed on for many generations now – it is, in fact, a first edition. It is clear that each father in that family who ever gets into the situation where he can follow the rule does so only once. It is also clear that there have been multiple applications of the rule by different people and that those people's rule-following constitutes and justifies (at least in part) other people's rule-following afterwards.

There are other cases of genuine rule-following along these lines. Consider initiation rites like receiving an academic title; one only receives the same title once and there are, possibly, many rules in the process which an individual follows only that one time. Still, those rules have been followed by others before, will be followed after, and are followed at the

same time. The multiple applications are distributed over several individuals. In a similar way, all sorts of social institutions and conventions can be adduced as sources for examples along these lines. Strong Diachronicity (and any other conception of normativity which makes use of the strong multiple application thesis) cannot cater for these cases, because it requires that the multiple applications are necessary but not distributed over several individuals. If this is correct, then Kripke's notion of grasping a rule is too restrictive. That it is correct seems intuitively appealing; most normatively constrained areas of human life are those where conventions, traditions and social institutions play a role and Kripke gives us no reason to think that they are not on a par with those rules which form the exclusive domain of Strong Diachronicity.

But does that effectively counter the sceptic? Definitely not as it stands. He could easily accept all objections to the strong multiple application thesis and yet object to the father, whose oldest child turns 16 today, that he should give her a copy of Descartes' *Meditationes* (which happens to have been passed down in the family as well), because he intended to follow the rule 'every father gives his oldest child a copy of the *Tractatus* up to 2008 and a copy of the *Meditationes* afterwards when the child turns 16' rather than 'every father gives his oldest child a copy of the *Tractatus* when the child turns 16' – the father who tried to follow the right rule was just mistaken about which rule his father (or grandfather) had passed down to him. But when the sceptic challenges the father to cite an appropriate fact, we find that the rule-follower is in a different situation.

To see the difference, consider the old situation: in the context of Strong Diachronicity (and related conceptions), one is talked into adducing a fact about one's past intentions or history of rule-following. The rule-follower is in a quandary because he expects that a suitable

conception of the first-person authority about meaning and intention does the job. No wonder that a non-reductionist must assume that there is a good story to tell about one's first-person authority in self-ascribing meaning and intention which underpins one's refusal to accept the sceptic's reductionism.

If Weak Diachronicity is assumed, and this is the new situation, it is clear from the beginning that first-person authority may play a role, but might not always be sufficient. Coordinating with other people what one means and intends is crucial in some cases. This is why I conjectured that Wright could be wrong when he claims that the multiple application thesis is a consequence of what Wittgenstein took to be the middle ground between a hypostatisation of rules and denying their existence – that the weak multiple application thesis could be seen to be the middle ground instead. It is also why I objected to his proposal that one might want to relocate one's authority about meaning and intention and construe it as a fact about how people communicate – that a suitable account of forms of interaction rather than forms of judgement can do the trick. Norman Malcolm (1986: 174-5) makes a stronger point and claims that, according to Wittgenstein, something along these lines is true for any technique we learn:

In learning any technique (whether a technique of building a wall, of painting a house, of adding numbers, of making a cake, of playing a card-game) one must learn what *is called* 'doing the same' in that activity. On Wittgenstein's view, to say that a person is following a rule presupposes that there is in existence a regular way of acting which is taught and enforced – an established technique. Someone who had never encountered human society could not be said to be conforming to a technique – or even *intending* to do so.

Nevertheless, Weak Diachronicity is not unproblematic. According to it, we are entitled or committed to follow rules and mean things in a non-arbitrary way, because there is a distinct set of properties which govern obligation and entitlement. There are two problems with this set of normative properties: It is hard to say 1) what they are and 2) how we know them. For Weak Diachronicity to work, one's justification must come from the possibility of pointing out that those properties govern one's rule-following or meaning. How can that be achieved without making the properties independent of the individual mind and not, at the same time, invoke the infamous rules-as-rails picture? This, however, is a problem every version of LN has and one might want to find out whether the new non-reductionism could be made to work without it in order to avoid the problem.

Hattiangadi (2006/2007) and Boghossian (2005) have argued for SR without semantic normativity. If one could combine the weak multiple application thesis with an alternative notion of correctness, one can make the alternative non-reductionism work without LN. Hattiangadi (2006/2007: 179-80) introduces a distinction which can be applied to the word 'govern' in LN to reveal an ambiguity. It can either mean that  $X$  should correctly apply ' $\varphi$ ' or that  $X$  correctly applies ' $\varphi$ '. On the second reading, SR and LN do not lead to SC, so she claims. I will not evaluate this claim, but argue for its compatibility with my views.

Hattiangadi's norm-relative account (NR), her alternative to LN, can be defined as follows:

(NR)

$$X \text{ means } F \text{ by } \varphi \rightarrow (o)(S \text{ applies } \varphi \text{ 'correctly' to } o) \leftrightarrow o \text{ is } P$$

In order to come up with a notion of correctness in sync with the present proposal, we can combine NR and the weak multiple application thesis to obtain NR+, which seems to be a genuine alternative to Weak Diachronicity:

(NR+)

$X$  means  $F$  by 'φ'  $\rightarrow$  ( $o$ )( $S$  applies 'φ' 'correctly' to  $o$  & there must be multiple applications, possibly distributed over several individuals)  $\leftrightarrow$   $o$  is  $P$

But is this not a very odd assumption to make for a conception of meaning which builds on Frege's notion of reference, a genuine Realism about mid-size dry goods and other objects? No, because there are compelling cases. Consider a scientific experiment, the result of which is that under conditions  $C$  object  $o$  is in state  $St$ . In this case,  $o$  has been identified in a specific way – in other words, some term has been correctly applied to  $o$ , that is all 'identified' means in the present context. To make it an interesting thing for any Realist,  $o$  should be reidentifiable. It might be that nobody has been able for several years to reidentify  $o$  and that, thus, its existence has been heavily contested. But after a new technological development, it has become much easier to identify  $o$  under  $C$  as being in  $St$  (and, maybe,  $St'$ ). Would it not be natural to say that the constitution of  $o$  has become clearer and that, after several years, the first experiment has turned out to have delivered a perfectly justified result? Would we not say that we are clearer about what the first experiment meant? Especially in sciences which try to establish the basic facts of our world, such examples are not uncommon. In fact, they are perfectly normal and, from that perspective, NR+ does make more sense than NR (especially if the latter is read, implausibly, as implying that the very same individual must reidentify the object).

But this is not something that is familiar from science only. Think of a group of rangers trying to find out whether a specific kind of game has entered their territory. It might be that ranger Bob has identified an animal of that kind on hill  $h1$  and marks it. Then, they fail to reidentify the animal for months, consider it gone, or even think that Bob was mistaken.

But then ranger Jill reidentifies the marked animal on hill  $h_2$  with a group of young animals. It turns out that the animal has hidden itself to give birth to her young. It seems that NR+ captures this case as well and that SR makes more sense if understood along these lines.

If this is correct, we can also make better sense of the idea that language use is shared, because there is a communal practice in context of which language is used. Such a conception of practice can be called substantial, because it gives coordinated behaviour a central place alongside a Fregean conception of reference. Practice can then be defined in rather minimal terms if we take the examples given to suffice for an intuitive understanding of 'coordinated behaviour':<sup>25</sup>

(Practice)

Any coordinated behaviour of two or more individuals with a commitment to NR+ and Semantic Realism is a practice.

This proposal can now serve as a starting for explaining language use in more detail.

The discussion of rule-following offered in this thesis has a definitive upshot: a good conception of meaning which holds fast onto the irreducibility of semantic properties manages to fuse Realism and a substantial notion of practice. That this is a natural and plausible understanding of meaning emerges from rule-following scepticism. That it will yield a successful theory of meaning remains to be shown.

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<sup>25</sup> Lewis (1979/1969), Stalnaker (2002/1973/1974) and Brandom (1994: ch. 3. IV) have detailed accounts of how 'coordinated behaviour' can be construed. Unfortunately, the relation of those proposals to the view argued for in this thesis cannot be explored. Nevertheless, they seem to be the right starting point for a development of the present position.



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