In *The Possibility of Philosophical Understanding: Reflections on the Thought of Barry Stroud*, edited by Jason Bridges, Niko Kolodny & Wai-Hung Wong (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 147-181). Pagination follows the published text.

Inside and Outside Language: Stroud's Nonreductionism about Meaning

Hannah Ginsborg

In the *Blue Book*, Wittgenstein describes a certain general view of understanding and meaning, namely as mental processes which accompany the signs of our language, and which "give them life." We are tempted, he says, "to think that the action of language consists of two parts: an inorganic part, the handling of signs, and an organic part, which we may call understanding these signs, meaning them, interpreting them, thinking" (Wittgenstein 1958, 3). Wittgenstein thinks that this temptation is to be avoided. In the place of the view he has described, he goes on to suggest an alternative answer to the question of what gives "life" to the otherwise dead signs of language: "if we had to name anything which is the life of the sign, we should have to say it was its *use*" (1958, 4). The idea that a sign's having meaning is a matter of its being used in a particular kind of way reappears in a famous passage from *Philosophical Investigations*: "For a large class of cases—though not for all—in which we employ the word 'meaning' it can be explained thus: the meaning of a sign is its use in the language" (1953, §43).

Wittgenstein's rejection of the idea that meaning and understanding are mental processes which have to be added to signs to "give them life," and the suggestion in his work of an alternative conception of meaning and understanding which we can label with the formula that "the meaning is the use," have been the focus of a recent series of essays by Barry Stroud.[1] Stroud brings out in these essays the pervasiveness of the

[1] The essays I have primarily in mind are "Wittgenstein on Meaning, Understanding, and Community" (2000), "Meaning, Understanding, and Translation" (2000), "Mind, Meaning, and Practice" (2000) and "Meaning and Understanding" (forthcoming), although I do not discuss the last of these essays here.

idea which Wittgenstein aims to undermine, even among philosophers, such as Dummett, Wright, and Kripke, who take themselves to be adopting (or in Kripke's case, interpreting) Wittgenstein's views about language and the mind. With great clarity, and with a simplicity of expression which belies the depth and sophistication of his approach, he both articulates Wittgenstein's challenge to the "disastrous assumption" that thought, meaning, and understanding are "something which accompanies the handling of sounds, marks and other objects" (Stroud 2000, 173), and shows how that challenge undermines a range of more specific misconceptions about meaning. The strategy of the challenge itself can be summarized quite briefly: it consists, Stroud says, "in showing that *whatever* might be thought to accompany the use of a sound or mark would be nothing better than another 'dead' mark or object or event" (2000, 173). But the misconceptions to be exposed are, in Stroud's words, "deep and compelling" (174), and it is a difficult task to lay out the challenge in a way which makes clear its philosophical force.

I believe that Stroud succeeds in accomplishing that difficult task. He shows, to my mind convincingly, the error in a particular, but very widespread, version of the "disastrous assumption," namely that meaning or understanding something by an expression is a matter of being instructed, guided, or justified in the use of that expression. At least to that extent, then, he succeeds in vindicating the idea that the meaning of an expression is not something which *underlies* the use of an expression, but rather something which the expression has in virtue of *how* it is used. The doubts I want to articulate in this chapter concern, not Stroud's acceptance of the slogan that "meaning is use," but rather his view of how this "use" is to be understood. Stroud ascribes to Wittgenstein, and endorses, a nonreductionist view of meaning and understanding. While an expression has meaning in virtue of how it is used, that use cannot be characterized except in terms which presuppose the idea of meaning and understanding. The use which is relevant to meaning consists in such things as saying how things are, issuing orders, stating the result of calculations, and so on: that is, it consists in uttering and responding to expressions meaningfully or with understanding. Any explanation of the meaning of terms, then, has, itself, to invoke semantical or intentional notions like meaning and understanding. So there is, in the end, for Stroud, nothing to replace the various misconceived views which aim to account for meaningful use of expressions in terms of guidance by underlying mental states and process. Philosophical reflection can help us clarify the notion of meaning by undermining mistaken attempts to provide a fully general account of meaning, but it cannot offer a substitute for those attempts, since no fully general account is possible: there is no prospect of "explaining the phenomena of meaning and understanding 'from outside them,' as it were, without…supposing that anything means anything or is understood in a certain way to those whose understanding is being accounted for" (viii).

I shall argue, in this chapter, for a less pessimistic attitude towards the reductionist project. After a brief exposition of Stroud's view in section 1, I shall go on in sections 2 and

3 to examine various considerations which might be thought to motivate his nonreductionism, arguing that none of them is sufficient to rule out traditional reductive approaches. I shall argue in particular that one seeming motivation which he offers rests on an ambiguity in the notion of an explanation "from outside" meaning and understanding. While there is one sense in which the prospects for such an explanation are hopeless, there is another sense, I shall argue, in which the aspiration to explain language "from outside" is reasonable. I shall then try, in section 4, to outline a partially reductive explanation—an explanation "from outside" meaning but not "from outside" all consciousness of normativity—which satisfies this reasonable aspiration while still doing justice to the intuitions which tell against traditionally naturalistic approaches to meaning. And I shall end in section 5 by pointing out an affinity between the central idea of this explanation and an idea developed by Stroud himself in his earlier work on Wittgenstein.

I.

Stroud articulates his nonreductionist conception of meaning in a number of different contexts. I shall focus on one in particular, namely his criticism, most fully developed in "Mind, Meaning, and Practice" (2000; first published 1996), of Kripke's "skeptical paradox" about rules and meaning. As is by now familiar, Kripke develops his skeptical view of meaning by proposing the skeptical hypothesis that, in all a person's previous uses of "plus," he meant not addition, but the nonstandard function *quus* or *quaddition*, defined so that that *n* quus *m* is equal to the sum of *n* and *m* for all *n* and *m* less than 57 (which Kripke assumes to be larger than any numbers that the person has added so far), and to 5 for all other *n* and *m*. Kripke uses this hypothesis to argue that "given all the applications of the word that a person has made or responded to in the past, and everything there is or could be 'in his mind,' it is still not determined what he means by the word 'plus'; it is compatible with all those facts that he means and understands by it something different from *plus*" (2000, 179-180). And Kripke's generalization of the argument has, as Stroud puts it, "the unsettling consequence that there is no such fact as an expression's meaning one thing rather than another" (180). According to Stroud, though, this skeptical conclusion relies on an assumption about meaning which Wittgenstein rightly rejects: that for someone to mean something by an expression, or for the expression to have meaning in a community, there must be something which guides or justifies the individual or the community in the use of the expression.

> Kripke describes the [skeptical] problem as that of finding a fact that constitutes a person's meaning or understanding an expression in one particular way rather than another, and he holds that any such fact must somehow "contain" within it some

> "directions" or "instructions" to the person to say or do things in a certain way in virtue of meaning or understanding the expression in the way he does. (180)[2]

Wittgenstein would agree, according to Stroud, that there can be no such fact. Any item, in the mind or elsewhere, which guided or instructed or directed its possessor in the use of an expression would in turn have to be an item with a meaning which its possessor would have to grasp, so the question of meaning or understanding would arise again for that item. But Wittgenstein would deny that the fact of an expression's meaning something requires that the use of the expression be guided. Rather, for Wittgenstein and for Stroud, "what an expression means is to be found in its use, not in any fact or item which is supposed to give it or specify its meaning" (181). It is the use of the expression, and not some inner state or item lying behind, or more specifically guiding, that use, which gives it its "life" or meaning .

How are we to understand the "use" which gives meaning to an expression?[3] In a discussion of Wittgenstein which prepares the ground for his criticism of Kripke, Stroud suggests that Wittgenstein understands it as "the distinctive role of an expression in all those human activities in which it is or might be employed" (175). According to Stroud, the idea that "meaning is use" is illustrated by examples like that of the "complete primitive language" described in §2 of *Philosophical Investigations*, in which a builder issues various commands—"Slab," "Pillar," "Block," and "Beam"—and his assistant responds to them by bringing corresponding building-stones. (Following Stroud, I shall refer to this as "language-game §2.") The "whole use" of the expressions in that language "lies open to view: we can see exactly what role the utterance of each of them plays in the lives of those people" (176). The sounds produced and responded to in the primitive language have "life" or meaning because they have a "use or role in human activities": for example the builder can produce the sound corresponding to the word "slab" in order to get the particular kind of stone he needs for building at that point. The builder and his assistant have mastered their language because they have mastered "the technique of acting and responding linguistically in appropriate ways…and so being capable of the sorts of activities and reactions that language makes possible" (176). Their knowledge of the language is a part of their knowledge of how to carry on the work of building: the builder "knows how to get the building-stones he needs" (176), and the implication is that this is a way of characterizing what he knows in knowing the meanings of his terms.

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[2] As can be seen from the passages quoted so far, Stroud often writes of someone's meaning something by an expression as distinct from his or her understanding something by it, and, relatedly, of how someone uses an expression as distinct from how he or she responds to it. I think it is important not to lose sight of the distinctions registered by this usage, so I will sometimes follow Stroud in this, but in the interest of brevity I will often follow common practice in taking someone's "meaning" something by an expression to include her understanding something by it, and her "use" of the expression to include her responses to it.

[3] The following account of Stroud's answer has been influenced by helpful discussions with Michael Rieppel.

Stroud uses the example of the builder and his assistant to bring out the point that there must be a "regularity" in the use of the expressions of the language, or that the use of the signs must be part of a "general practice."

> Someone who stands near a partly built building and shouts out "Slab!" is not thereby giving an order if there has been no practice of sounds' having been uttered and responded to for certain purposes in certain regular ways in the past. Someone who carries a stone to a building site shortly after hearing such a shout has not thereby understood it to have a particular meaning if there is no general practice of responding to it or to other sounds in that way. The sound "Slab!" would simply have no "life" or use in those circumstances. (178)

Stroud motivates this demand by pointing out that "there must be such a thing as the correct way of using or responding to a sound or mark that has meaning or use" (177), something which he takes to require in turn that "there be…some regularities or general practices to which an individual speaker's performance can conform or fail to conform" (177). Stroud allows that we can put this by saying that someone who "utters or responds to an utterance correctly is following a rule for the use of that utterance" (177). But that should not be taken to imply that there is anything which guides or instructs the person in the use of the utterance. It means only that "the person utters or responds to the expression in the right way" (177) where that in turn amounts to using it in conformity with the general regularity or practice prevailing among the users of the language. The participants in language-game §2 are following the rule insofar as they conform to the practice of saying "Slab" where a slab is needed and bringing a slab when the expression "Slab" is heard. That this "rule-following" behavior does not require any inner item which guides the behavior is, Stroud says, shown by Wittgenstein's account of how such a language might be taught, namely by training the language-users to produce and respond to the sounds of the language appropriately. There is no need, in this training, to set up a connection between the sounds of the language and any inner items in the "minds" of the pupils. "The teaching is successful if the pupil learns to carry the right kinds of stones to a builder, or to order the stones he needs if he is a builder. That is the only 'connection' the teaching has to establish, since whoever receives the teaching and uses and responds to those sounds in the right ways understands them and knows what they mean" (178).

It might seem from this account that it is sufficient for sounds and marks' being meaningful, and more generally for there being rules governing their use, that they be produced and responded to in regular and predictable ways. So the account might seem to leave open that if two automata were programmed to produce the expressions of language-game §2 under appropriate circumstances, with one automaton capable of detecting locations calling for a slab and programmed to respond to them by making the sound "Slab," and the other capable of discriminating and manipulating different shapes of building-stone, and programmed to respond to the sound "Slab" by bringing a slab to the

first automaton, then "Slab" would have "life" or meaning just as it has in the language-game with humans.[4] Similarly, it might seem to allow for the possibility of ascribing meaning to sounds and marks that are regularly produced by nonhuman animals, for example where birds regularly emit cries when predators are approaching, and other birds respond to those cries by flying away. By the same token, it might seem to amount to a reductionist account of meaning for human language, one on which the meaningfulness of the sounds and marks we produce is accounted for in terms of regularities in our production of them, where those regularities are characterized in a way which does not presuppose treating the sounds and marks as already meaningful.

Stroud does not consider cases of animal communication, and he touches only fleetingly (179) on the possibility that the speakers of language-game §2 could be automata. But he gives every indication that he takes the meaningful use of language to be specific to humans, and in the introduction to *Meaning, Understanding, and Practice* he is quite explicit about his attitude to the possibility of reducing the phenomena of meaning and understanding to nonintentional phenomena: "the prospects of [such a reduction] seem to him] to be hopeless" (viii). Stroud's commitment to nonreductionism emerges, in the essay we have been considering, from his criticism of Kripke's skeptical view of meaning. Kripke is right, he thinks, to take nonintentional facts about the past history of the use of an expression to be insufficient to determine what the individual or community means by the expression. The introduction of *quus* "helps bring...out" that "there are a great many facts about the past behaviour of a community or an individual in connection with a particular expression which do not together imply— and so cannot be taken to be equivalent to—the fact that that expression means what it does" (182). But that does not mean that there are *no* facts which imply or are equivalent to the fact of an expression's meaning what it does. For example, "it is a contingent matter of fact...whether a community or individual is following a particular set of rules or not," and the fact that they are following a particular set of rules does imply that they use their expressions with a specific meaning: "in identifying the rules or practices they are following, we thereby specify...what a proper understanding of the expressions in question would be" (183). So far this is compatible with the possibility that a community's following a particular set of rules is a nonintentional fact about it, amounting to the fact that its members produce and respond to certain sounds and marks in certain regular ways. But Stroud goes on to exclude that possibility. "What an expression or a speaker means, or what rule for an expression an individual or a group of speakers is following, or what is a correct application of or response to an expression, are not equivalent or reducible to facts which are not themselves specified in similarly intentional or semantical or normative terms" (184). While there is nothing over and above an expression's meaning what it does than its being

[4] In fact Warren Goldfarb argues (following a suggestion he credits to Stanley Cavell) that Wittgenstein intends *Philosophical Investigations* §2 to leave open whether the builders are human beings or something more like automata (see Goldfarb 1983).

used in a particular way, that use has to be described in intentional terms: "a description in non-intentional terms of what happens whenever certain sounds are uttered or certain marks are made would not say what human beings are doing with those sounds or marks. It would leave the sounds and marks 'dead' or without 'life' or meaning" (184).

Now to deny that semantic facts are reducible to nonintentional facts is not to deny that they are reducible to any other facts at all. For example, we might suppose, with Grice, that we can make sense of meaning in terms of states like belief and intention, conceived of as prior to meaning but as still presupposing intentionality. Is Stroud committed to an austere nonreductionism on which the use which gives "life" or meaning to an expression can be characterized only in terms which presuppose meaning? Or would he allow a less austere and partly reductionist approach on which we could account for meaning in terms of a more basic idea of goal-directed human activity? We saw earlier that Stroud introduces Wittgenstein's view of the use that is relevant to meaning by saying that it is "the distinctive role of an expression in all those human activities in which it is or might be employed" (175), and that he takes the sounds produced and responded to in language-game §2 to have "life" or meaning in virtue of their "use or role in human activities" (176). The obvious candidate for such an "activity" in the case of language-game §2 would appear to be building, where this is thought of as including subordinate activities such as carrying building-stones to the place where they are needed, or bringing it about that they are carried there. It would seem then, that "Slab" has the "life" or meaning that it does because it is used by the builder to *get slabs*: the builder who knows how to use the expressions of the language knows, according to Stroud, "how to get the building-stones he needs" (2000, 176). This is at least somewhat indicative of the less austere of the two approaches. For it suggests on the face of it that the activities relevant to meaning are not specifically linguistic or communicative: that the expressions of a language get their "life" or meaning from their role in such activities as *getting* slabs, or *calculating* the sum, as opposed to *ordering* slabs, or *saying* what the sum is. And this opens up the prospect of an account which is at least partially reductive. If we can make sense of the builder and his assistant as engaging purposefully in their building project prior to conceiving of them as meaning or understanding anything by the sounds which are produced as part of their activity, then we can perhaps go on to make sense of the meaning of the sounds in terms of the use which they have in that activity.

But Stroud describes the relevant activities in ways which suggest that he has in mind the more austere of the two approaches. He says that the technique one masters when one masters a language is that of "acting and responding linguistically in appropriate ways" (176): the technique the builder has mastered in learning to use expressions like "Slab" is that of "ordering the building-stones he needs" (176-177), and in the case of our expression "plus" the technique is that of "asking for, giving, and in other ways talking about the sum or the addition function in English" (179). This suggests that what gives the expressions their "life" or meaning is in the first instance that we use them to say things, where "saying" includes such acts as asserting, commanding, requesting, and so forth. Even

though these activities of saying things in turn have a role to play in activities that are not specifically linguistic, like the activity of cooperative building, we cannot appeal to those nonlinguistic activities as part of a reductive explanation of the meaning of the expressions: rather we have to see the expressions as having meaning in virtue of being used meaningfully. Stroud brings out the austerity of this view in the introduction to *Meaning, Understanding, and Practice*, where he talks about the possibility of accounting for an individual's meaning something by a term by appealing to his or her conformity to community practice.

> Someone's meaning or understanding something by a certain word on a certain occasion could...perhaps be explained as the person's engaging in a certain practice or conforming to the way that word is used....But that would account for the person's meaning or understanding that word in a certain particular way only if the description of the general practice says or implies what that word is used to mean in the community in question. (ix)

Stroud goes on to give an example of such a description for the case of "red": we describe the use of that term by saying that "in the community the word is used to mean *red* or to say of things that they are red" (ix). We cannot hope to explain a person's meaning *red* by "red" on some occasion by saying that she conforms to the practice of a community in which "red" is used, say, to get people to bring red things. All we can say is that she conforms to the practice of a community in which "red" is used to *mean red*. And since this characterization already draws on the notion of a person's meaning *red* by "red," this rules out any possibility of a fully general explanation of what it is to mean *red* by "red."

2.

I have offered only a bare outline of Stroud's rich and nuanced discussion of the phenomena of meaning and understanding. But I think it is enough to frame the question I want to raise about Stroud's view: what justifies or motivates his commitment to a nonreductionist account of the use relevant to meaning? In the essay we have been discussing, he suggests that the requirement of nonreductionism emerges as one of the morals of Kripke's skeptical argument. Kripke, he says, is right to understand the skeptical hypothesis as showing that there are no facts of meaning which consist in a person's being guided in her use of an expression by an inner state: "the possibility of 'quus'-like interpretations succeeds in refuting any view of meaning or understanding which requires that there be some item in a speaker's or hearer's 'mind' which tells him what to do in using or responding to an expression" (185). Where Kripke goes wrong, according to Stroud, is in holding that this is sufficient for showing that there are no facts of meaning at all: that it is "never so in the world that, for instance, a builder orders a slab and an assistant obeys the

order, or that someone asks for the sum of two numbers and someone else gives the right answer" (185). The "possibility that 'plus' might mean *quus*," Stroud says, does not show that there are no facts of meaning at all, but "only that facts of meaning or understanding or correctness of response do not follow from and so are not reducible to any non-intentionally described goings-on, no matter how complex and long-standing" (185).

Now it is clear that "the possibility that 'plus' might mean *quus*" is sufficient to show that facts of meaning cannot be reduced to nonintentionally characterized facts about how a term has been used in the past, since no finite list of its (nonintentionally characterized) uses can determine on its own what the term was being used to mean. But it does not obviously follow that there are no nonintentionally characterized facts to which meaning facts can be reduced. In particular, it does not follow that we could not reduce the fact that someone means addition by "plus" to the fact that she is disposed to respond to "plus" questions by giving the sum.[5] Whatever the other obstacles standing in the way of such an account—and we will examine some of them below—it does not seem to be vulnerable to the *quus* hypothesis. This is because the force of the *quus* hypothesis is to undermine the idea that a person's meaning something by a term is a matter of her being guided, instructed, or justified by some particular item, whether that item is something in her mind, or something external, like a finite series of past uses. As both Kripke and Stroud recognize, a person's past uses of "plus" cannot guide her future uses, or be cited by her to justify them, unless she understands them a certain way, and Kripke's skeptical hypothesis is effective because it shows that nothing warrants her understanding them as meaning *quus* rather than *plus*. But the dispositional account is not committed to the idea that there is anything which guides the person to say "125" rather than "5" in response to a prompt of "68 + 57," or which justifies any conviction she might have as to the correctness of her response. So there need be no item—and on the version of the account I want to consider there *is* no item—for which the question of interpretation arises. There is indeed an epistemological issue of how the person, or anyone else, could come to know that she is disposed to give the sum rather than the quum. But since we are not supposing that she justifies her saying "125" by appealing to the fact that she is disposed to give the sum, this does not undermine the proposal that her meaning *plus* consists in her being disposed to give the sum. As long as we do not endorse a more general skepticism about dispositions, there is no reason to deny that there is a fact of the matter as to whether she is disposed to give the sum or the quum, and the fact that she is disposed to give the sum is thus available as a candidate for what her meaning addition consists in.[6]

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[5] "Giving the sum" here is to be understood as something like "uttering a numeral which denotes the sum": a person can give the sum in this sense without herself understanding the word "sum" or even (although I do not think that this is essential to the point) understanding the numeral she utters.

[6] In one passage, from "Meaning, Understanding and Translation," Stroud seems to equate skeptical arguments invoking *quus*-like interpretations with skeptical arguments against dispositions, suggesting that the problem arising from the possibility of *quus*like interpretations is not a special problem about meaning, but only an instance of a more general problem about ascribing abilities or dispositions on the basis of finite evidence(2000, 127-128). But I think that this is a mistake. As will become clearer later in this section, we can allow that someone's past responses to "plus" questions are sufficient evidence for her having a disposition to add (rather than to quadd), but still be skeptical that there is anything about those responses which constitutes her *meaning* addition (rather than quaddition).

Stroud does not discuss the dispositional approach explicitly, but he does make clear that he rejects views on which, as on the dispositional approach I have described, meaning is constituted by extensionally characterized regularities in the utterance of expressions: "To say that a word is regularly applied in a certain community only to things that are red...is not to specify what that word means in that community" (2000, ix). Registering a disagreement with Quine, in his 1995 essay "Quine on Exile and Acquiescence," he says that he sees "no hope of understanding our knowledge of language as simply a matter of our being caused to utter certain sounds or to move in certain ways" (2000, 167). Although we can call our knowledge of language a "disposition," he says, the behavior to which we are disposed must be described using intentional terms like "says that *p*": "it is a disposition or capacity to say things in some ways and not in others, for example, the disposition we English speakers have to say that there is a rabbit by uttering 'There's a rabbit' and not by uttering 'Ecco un coniglio' " (167). Now it might be that we cannot avoid Quinean worries about indeterminacy without describing the behavior in intentional terms, and this might be one motivation for rejecting the kind of dispositional view I am considering. But if we are concerned only with the kind of worries raised by Kripke, it is less clear why the disposition would have to be intentionally characterized: why we could not say that a speaker means *rabbit* rather than some *quabbit*-like alternative in virtue of being disposed, say, to utter or assent to "rabbit" in the presence of rabbits.

In the discussion of Kripke on which we have been focusing, Stroud says that "it seems that we would be unable to make the right kind of sense of the familiar phenomena of speaking and meaning and understanding without thinking of them in [intentional] ways. We would be restricted to describing a series of sounds and marks and movements without seeing them as having any particular 'life' or meaning" (187). Part of the idea here is that a mere finite "series" of sounds and marks, on its own, could have no meaning: and this is the idea that is so convincingly brought home by Kripke's *quus* hypothesis. But it is not clear that the only context which could endow the sounds and marks with meaning would have to be one that already includes meaning-involving activities like reporting, questioning, giving orders, and so on. As I have already suggested in raising the possibility of the "less austere" form of nonreductionism, a possibility which appears to be suggested in some passages by Stroud himself, the required context might include activities which were intentional without being meaning-involving. Or, more to the present point, it might be sufficient that the sounds and marks be implicated in lawlike regularities characterizable without appeal to any intentional notions at all. This, I take it, is the idea underlying the dispositional view and also related views like informational semantics, on which expressions, whether of public language or of a "language of thought," get their

meaning from lawlike correlations with extralinguistic circumstances. Proponents of views of this kind recognize, I think, that a finite series of sounds and marks—or of the corresponding inscriptions in a language of thought—cannot in itself have "life" or meaning. But they see it as making all the difference whether or not the sounds and marks in the series are of kinds which are nomologically correlated either with nonlinguistic states of affairs, or (in the case of theories with an inferential or conceptual-role component) with other sounds and marks. If a series of sounds and marks is implicated in a system of nomological correlations, then, according to the intuition driving this kind of view, it has all the context it needs to endow it with meaning.

As a way of asking why, from Stroud's point of view, this kind of reductive approach would not be acceptable, it is worth considering whether he would endorse any of the objections which Kripke himself raises against the dispositional account. The most significant of these objections is often described as the "normativity objection," since Kripke at one point summarizes its crux in terms of a contrast between the normative implications of ascribing meaning and the merely descriptive implications of ascribing a disposition (Kripke 1982, 37). Kripke's primary formulation of the objection is in terms of the inadequacy of the dispositional approach to account for the role meaning plays in justifying our uses of or responses to expressions. The skeptic's puzzlement about meaning, Kripke says, concerns "my *justification* for responding '125'...he thinks my response is no better than a stab in the dark" (1982, 23). But nothing in the dispositional account "indicate[s] that...'125' was an answer *justified* in terms of instructions I gave myself, rather than a mere jack-in-the-box unjustified and arbitrary response" (23). The dispositionalist's proposal thus "misconceives the sceptic's problem—to find a past fact that *justifies* my present response. As a candidate for a 'fact' that determines what I mean, it fails to satisfy the basic condition on such a candidate...that it should *tell* me what I ought to do in each new instance" (24). At least as formulated here by Kripke, this is clearly not an objection which Stroud would endorse. For it makes explicit appeal to the very assumption about meaning which Stroud aims to undermine, an assumption on which meaning "tells us" how to use an expression, or contains "instructions" in the light of which our use can be justified. The failure of reductive dispositionalism or other related accounts, for Stroud, cannot be that they fail to do justice to the guiding or justificatory role of meaning, since the principal thrust of Stroud's discussion is that meaning does not play any such role.

What of the other two objections which Kripke raises? One of these concerns what Kripke calls the "finiteness" of dispositions. He claims that not only my actual uses of the "plus" sign, but also the totality of my dispositions with respect to that sign, are finite: in particular, he says, I have no disposition to respond with the sum to numbers that are too large for me to grasp. So even granted that I am disposed to respond with the sum to numbers small enough for me to grasp, nothing rules out the skeptical hypothesis that I understand by "plus" a quaddition-like function yielding 5 as the value for all other numbers (26-27). And it does not help here, Kripke says, to try to overcome this finiteness by

appeal to idealized conditions specified in *ceteris paribus* clauses, for example to spell out what I am disposed to do by saying that I would give the sum if I were given the means to carry out my intentions with respect to the "plus" sign. For that presupposes that I have determinate intentions, which is just what the skeptic challenges. The other objection appeals to the fact that people can be disposed to make arithmetical mistakes. Someone who typically forgets to carry might, for example, be disposed to say "115" when asked to respond to the "68 + 57" query. The dispositionalist seems to be committed to the claim that such a person means, not addition, but a nonstandard function which diverges from addition in just those cases where the person, as we would put it, "makes a mistake" (28-30). Here again, according to Kripke, appeal to *ceteris paribus* clauses is fruitless. We could specify the disposition, Kripke says, only by means of some formulation specifying what I would say if my dispositions to make mistakes were removed, but to make a mistake is just to "give an answer other than the one which accords with the function I meant" (30), so the formulation would again presuppose that I meant something determinate by "plus," which is just what the skeptic challenges.

On the face of it, it looks as though these two objections are independent of the normativity objection. So they might be thought to provide a reason for Stroud to reject the dispositional view. But on closer examination they turn out to rely on the same assumption about the guiding or justificatory role of meaning which motivates the normativity objection.[7] We can see this by considering an initial response to the two objections which has appeared frequently in the literature on Kripke's Wittgenstein, namely that the difficulties Kripke raises for the dispositional analysis of meaning are not specific to meaning, but simply difficulties with the idea of a disposition as such. Simon Blackburn, in his formulation of this response, points out with respect to the finiteness objection that we can ascribe the disposition of brittleness to a glass even if we allow that the disposition could never be actualized on Alpha Centauri because the glass would decay before it got there (Blackburn 1984, §2). By the same token, it would seem that we should be able to ascribe a disposition to give the sum even while allowing that this disposition could not manifest itself for numbers beyond a certain size. Kripke might reply that no amount of evidence could ever license us in ascribing such a disposition, since the possibility of quaddition - like variants could never be ruled out. But the same could be said about the glass. The fact that it breaks when struck in circumstances which we can observe is compatible with an infinite range of possible dispositions which we might ascribe to it (for example, the disposition to break when struck in circumstances which we can observe, and to vaporize when struck in other circumstances). A related point can be made about the objection from the possibility of mistakes. To deny that someone can have a disposition to give the sum on the grounds that she sometimes fails to do so would be like denying that a glass

[7] This is suggested by Kripke himself, when he says that "almost all objections to the dispositional account boil down to" the normativity objection (1982, 24), and that "the fact that our answer to the question of which function I meant is justificatory of my present response...leads to all its difficulties" (37).

can be brittle or fragile because there are some circumstances in which it does not break when struck. Even if the person has a disposition to make mistakes, for example because she regularly forgets to carry, the parallel with physical dispositions holds: we can ascribe to salt a disposition to dissolve in water while allowing that salt has other dispositions which sometimes prevent the initial disposition from being manifested (e.g., if the solution is saturated or subject to the influence of a strong electric field).[8]

Why does this response seem not so much as to occur to Kripke? I think that it is because his conception of the dispositional approach is shaped by the same assumption which underlies the normativity objection: that any candidate for the state of meaning something by an expression has to be something which gives instructions for, and in that way justifies, the use of the expression. Kripke assumes that any dispositional approach to meaning must accommodate that requirement, and that leads him to assume that the dispositionalist must offer a characterization of the relevant dispositions which could instruct someone in the use of the corresponding expressions. On the dispositionalist view as Kripke conceives it, then, the disposition which constitutes meaning addition by "plus" cannot simply be characterized as a disposition to add or to give the sum in response to "plus" queries, since from that characterization it could not be determined by a person who did not already understand the meaning of "add" or "sum" that someone with that disposition ought to give the sum rather than the quum in response to "plus" queries.[9] This accounts for his rejection, for the case of the supposedly meaning-constituting dispositions to which the dispositionalist approach appeals, of the kind of idealization implicit in the ascription of physical dispositions like fragility. When we call the glass fragile, we are typically content to understand its fragility as a matter of its having a tendency to break when struck, and it does not trouble us that we cannot give a precise and exhaustive characterization of the "ideal conditions" under which that disposition is actualized except by saying that they are the circumstances under which the glass in fact breaks when struck. But Kripke assumes that the dispositionalist could not accept a similarly circular specification of the disposition in virtue of which someone means addition by "plus," namely one on which the ideal conditions are those in which the person gives the sum. For "according to [the dispositionalist] the function someone means is to be

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[8] For other versions of this line of objection, see Forbes 1984; Wright1984, 772; and Goldfarb 1985, 477.

[9] When Kripke first introduces "the dispositional analysis [he has] heard proposed," he characterizes it in a way which does make reference to addition: "To mean addition by '+' is to be disposed, when asked for any sum 'x+y' to give the sum of x and y as the answer" (1982, 22). But later he gives a more formal characterization: "the simple dispositional analysis gives a criterion that will tell me what number theoretic function φ I mean by a binary function symbol '*f* ', " namely: "The referent φ of '*f* ' is that unique binary function φ such that I am disposed, if queried about *'f(m, n)'*, where '*m*' and '*n*' are numerals denoting particular numbers *m* and *n*, to reply '*p*', where '*p*' is a numeral denoting φ(*m*,*n*)" (26) The meaning-constituting disposition is specified here simply as the disposition I have to respond to "plus," without reference to addition, and Kripke goes on to make clear why he thinks this is required: "The criterion is meant to enable us to 'read off' which function I mean by a given function symbol from my disposition" (26). Clearly the dispositional analysis as initially proposed cannot provide such a criterion, which is why Kripke amends it in his more formal characterization.

read off from his dispositions; it cannot be presupposed in advance which function is meant" (Kripke 1982, 29-30). However, once this condition is rejected, we can see that there is nothing objectionable about a "circular" specification of the disposition. More generally, we can see that the inability to characterize ideal conditions for the actualization of a disposition is no more problematic for supposedly meaning-constituting dispositions than it is for the kinds of dispositions which we invoke in everyday talk about objects.

3.

I have been arguing so far that there is nothing in Kripke's skeptical line of argument to motivate Stroud's relatively austere version of nonreductionism. In particular, neither the *quus* hypothesis itself, nor the points about finiteness and mistakes which Kripke raises against dispositionalism, tell against the kind of dispositional approach I characterized earlier, on which there is no assumption that a person's use of language must be guided by, or justified in terms of, her grasp of the relevant dispositions. More generally, once we have followed Stroud in rejecting the assumption that facts of meaning require that something guide or justify us in our use of expressions, then there appears to be nothing in Kripke's argument to rule out either reductive dispositionalism or any of the related views which aim to reduce facts about meaning to facts about the implication of linguistic occurrences in lawlike regularities characterized in extensional terms. What other considerations, then, might be motivating Stroud to regard the project of reduction as "hopeless"? One moti-vation might be the thought that the phenomena of meaning and understanding are just too complex to be captured by this kind of view. Stroud hints at this in a number of places, for example in a passage from "Mind, Meaning, and Practice" denying that the use relevant to meaning can be captured in terms of criteria of application, where he points out that "only certain words are properly said to be applied to something, for example the word 'peacock' when I say of something directly before me 'That is a peacock' " (Stroud 2000, 175). When someone says "That is a peacock," "is" and "that" have a use and a meaning even though they are not applied to anything; and in the remark "A peacock roaming the garden would certainly enliven the scene," the word "peacock" is no longer being applied to anything, at least not in the same way as it was before (2000, 175). These considerations might seem to cast doubt on any theory which would attempt to characterize meaning simply in terms of correlations between utterances and states of affairs (for example between the presence of peacocks and utterances of "That's a peacock"). The uses of expressions are just too multifarious, it might be thought, for us to be able to describe them without appeal to semantic notions, or to identify nonsemantic dispositions to produce a given expression under such-and-such extensionally described circumstances. Later in the same essay Stroud alludes to the "richness, complexity, and intricate interrelations among the rules, techniques, and practices

that determine the meanings of even some of the simplest things we say and understand" (191). This complexity contributes, Stroud makes clear, to the "difficulty of stating clearly and fully what the uses and practices are" (191) and this again would be a possible motivation for endorsing nonreductionism.

But this does not seem to offer sufficient ground for rejecting nonreductionist views of the kind we have been considering. First, proponents of naturalistic semantics have shown themselves to be extremely resourceful in coming up with refinements which aim to accommodate some of the complexities while still doing justice to the basic intuition that a term means what it does in virtue of the extensionally characterized regularities in which it figures. One such refinement is the idea that the relevant correlations hold in the first instance for expressions in a language of thought rather than a public language. It is much more plausible to suppose that there is a lawlike connection between the presence of dogs and tokenings of an internal expression dog than that such a connection holds for the word "dog" in a public language.[10] Another is the idea, associated with naturalistic inferential or conceptual role semantics, that the correlations which endow a term with meaning hold not between utterances and extralinguistic states of affairs, but between one utterance (or tokening of a sentence in the language of thought) and another.[11] Second, we might follow Stroud's own lead in taking as our starting model of language a simplified language like that of language-game §2. There seems to be no difficulty, for that language, in specifying nonaccidental correlations between utterances and states of affairs, or, relatedly, dispositions on the part of its users to produce and respond to utterances under specific circumstances. We can say, for example, that utterances of "Slab" are regularly followed by a slab's being brought to the place where the utterance was made, or that the assistant is disposed to bring a slab when he hears the expression "Slab." If, as the proponent of naturalistic semantics maintains, these facts constitute what it is for "Slab" to have the meaning it does in that primitive language, then, in Stroud's words, "the lessons illustrated schematically in that simple case might be carried over to more realistically complex behaviour" (179). That is, we might argue that if we can come up with a plausible reductionist account for a very simple case, that shows that it is possible in

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[10] In "Meaning, Understanding, and Translation," Stroud criticizes the language of thought hypothesis on the grounds that it does nothing but shift the problem that it is meant to address. "The problem of saying what it is to understand observable expressions of a natural language has been moved one step inwards and raised about certain hypothesized mental items instead. It is the same problem, with the added difficulty that now we are less sure what sorts of items or expressions we are talking about" (2000, 116). I think that this is a legitimate criticism if the existence of a language of thought is supposed to provide, on its own, an answer to the question of how meaning and understanding are possible. But a language of thought might be hypothesized, not as itself sufficient for the understanding of expressions of a public language, but as facilitating a dispositional or nomological-causal account in the way suggested in the text. In that case the criticism does not apply. For a recent, and more general, formulation of this point, see Margolis and Laurence 2007 (570-571).

[11] Or, as on the kind of two-factor approach proposed by Block (1986), that the meaning of an expression is determined by both kinds of correlation.

principle, notwithstanding the practical difficulties, to provide the same kind of account for natural language in humans.

I described Stroud above as indicating that the complexity of language contributes to "the difficulty...in stating clearly and fully" the ways in which linguistic expressions are used, and I have just suggested that this complexity is not a sufficient reason for endorsing nonreductionism. But Stroud appears to agree, for he goes on in the passage from which I quoted to say that the difficulty "is not just a matter of complexity." Rather, he says, "it is that in giving descriptions of the practices...we must employ and rely on the very concepts and practices and capacities that we are trying to describe and understand" (191). Here he is alluding to what he has characterized a few paragraphs earlier as a "very important point" brought out by consideration of the challenge presented by Kripke: "how someone means or understands certain expressions, or what those expressions mean...in a community, are facts which in general cannot be adequately specified except by using the very concepts that the speakers are thereby said to be master of" (190). This point is one which he develops in detail in two essays both originally published in 1990, "Wittgenstein on Meaning, Understanding, and Community" (2000) and "Meaning, Understanding, and Translation" (2000). In the latter essay he argues convincingly that we cannot specify the use in which meaning consists if we are restricted to saying only that someone uses an expression in the same way that the community uses it, or that it is used in the same way as some other mentioned expression. I cannot, for example, say what the word "otiose" means simply by saying that it is used the same way that the word "functionless" is used, that is, by describing a relation between two mentioned expressions, "otiose" and "functionless." I have, rather, to use some expression which is used the same way that those expressions are used, for example when I say "The word 'otiose' means *functionless*." But I can use the expression "functionless" meaningfully only if I myself possess the same capacity I am attempting to describe when I say what a person means by "otiose." There is thus "no hope of describing [the use which matters to a word's meaning]...by saying that [it] is the same as or different from that of some other mentioned expression. We must speak of the things the word applies to, or state what it can be used to say about them, not just mention some expressions and the relations between them" (124).

Is this a reason for nonreductionism? The passage from "Mind, Meaning, and Practice" following Stroud's identification there of the "very important point" suggests that he thinks it is.

> Because we know what an order is, and can pick out a certain type of stone we call a slab, we can say that builders in language-game §2 who utter "Slab!" are ordering a slab. Equipped as we are with the concept of addition, we can say what a pupil who responds to certain utterances in distinctive ways has mastered; he has got the concept of addition, he understands and gives the right answers to addition problems, he understands "plus" to mean *plus*. If we were restricted to saying

> without interpretation only what utterances a speaker responds to, what distinctive movements of his body are caused by those utterances, and what utterances he himself is thereby disposed to make in different circumstances, we could not make the right kind of sense of what he is doing in responding and uttering as he does. (190-191)

While there is no explicit argument here for nonreductionism, there is at least the implication of a move from the thought that we need the concepts *slab* and *addition* in order to characterize what the builder and the pupil are doing when they use the expressions "slab" and "plus," to the thought—apparently intended to exclude reductive accounts of meaning—that we cannot describe that use in terms of causal relations among utterances, external circumstances, and bodily movements. And Stroud makes clear a few paragraphs later that he takes the "very important point" to have nonreductionist implications, when he characterizes the conclusion to which it leads as one on which "facts of what expressions mean...can in general be expressed only in semantical or intentional statements which make use of the very concepts that they attribute to those they describe" (192).

But it seems to me that the move I have described rests on a failure to distinguish clearly between two different ideas: the idea that we cannot characterize the meaning of an expression without using that expression or some other expression with the same meaning, and the idea that we cannot characterize the meaning of an expression without using semantical expressions like "means," "orders," "says that" and so on. In other words, it fails to distinguish the idea that we cannot characterize meaning without drawing on our own grasp of concepts corresponding to the expressions whose meaning we are trying to characterize, from the idea that we cannot characterize meaning without drawing on our grasp of what it is to mean something by those expressions or to entertain those concepts. Stroud is quite right, I think, to hold that we cannot characterize the meaning of a term like "plus" or "slab" without using the concept of addition or of a slab. That was one of the morals which emerged from our discussion of Kripke's "finiteness" and "mistakes" objections to reductive dispositionalism. But as we also saw in the course of that discussion, nothing prevents the dispositionalist from drawing on the notion of addition in characterizing the disposition in which someone's meaning addition is supposed to consist. She can say, for example, that the person's meaning addition by "plus" consists in her being disposed to give the sum in response to "plus" questions. The only thing which stands in the way of her using the concept of addition as part of a characterization of the meaning of "plus" is the assumption against which Stroud so forcefully argues, namely that the characterization of the disposition has to be able to guide or justify the person in her use of "plus." So even though, to go back to the last passage I quoted, facts of what expressions mean "can be expressed only in...statements which make use of the very concepts that they attribute to those they describe," it does not follow that they can be expressed only in "semantical or intentional statements" of that kind. It is at least left

open that we can express them with such nonsemantical statements as “When he hears a shout of ‘Slab’ he brings a slab” or (implausible though this proposal would be given the nonobservational character of “otiose”) “She is disposed to apply ‘otiose’ to things that are functionless.” In expressing facts of meaning in this way we would be describing “what utterances a speaker responds to, what distinctive movements of his body are caused by those utterances, and what utterances he himself is thereby disposed to make in different circumstances.” But, in using terms like “functionless” and “slab” to characterize what it is for those terms to mean what we do, we would also be relying on the same “concepts and practices and capacities that we are trying to describe and understand.”

The distinction I am making here is essentially the same as a distinction drawn by John McDowell to clarify Michael Dummett's contrast between modest and full-blooded theories of meaning. The distinction, as McDowell puts it in an essay originally published in 1987, is between a theory “from which someone could derive possession of the concepts expressed by primitive terms of its object language” and a theory which “describes a practical capacity such that to acquire it would be to acquire the concept” (McDowell 1998, 91). McDowell draws this distinction in response to Dummett's characterization of a “full-blooded” theory of meaning as one which would “serve to explain new concepts to someone who does not already have them” (Dummett 1993a [originally published 1975], 5) and, conversely, of a “modest” theory as one which, in the case of a concept expressed by a primitive term, “would be intelligible only to someone who had already grasped the concept” (Dummett 1993a, 6). Dummett argues that a theory of meaning must be full-blooded, but McDowell points out that this is impossible in the sense of “full-bloodedness” corresponding to Dummett's characterizations: “any theory...would need to imply *some* concepts...and it seems undeniable that any theory of meaning for a language would need to help itself to at least *some* of the concepts expressible in the language” (McDowell 1998, 88). McDowell suggests, though, that these characterizations do not capture the distinction Dummett intends. Rather, the requirement of full-bloodedness is the requirement that an account of language be “as from outside” in the sense that, in giving an account of a concept, it does not take for granted a grasp of the concept's “role as a determinant of content” (1998, 91). McDowell illustrates the point in connection with Dummett's own sketch of what it would be to grasp the concept *square* as, at the very least, “to be able to discriminate between things that are square and those that are not,” for example by “apply[ing] the word ‘square’ to square things and not to others” (Dummett 1993b, 98). McDowell points out that this sketch “does not hesitate to employ the concept *square,*” so could not serve to explain the concept *square* to someone who did not already have it. But it still counts as a characterization of meaning “as from the outside” because “it uses the word ‘square’ only in first intention—that is, never inside a content-specifying ‘that’-clause” (McDowell 1998, 91).

McDowell's clarification is especially relevant in this context because Stroud often alludes, especially in more recent writings, to the impossibility of characterizing the

meaning of expressions "as from outside" language.[12] In the introduction to *Meaning, Understanding, and Practice*, he raises the question of reduction as the question "how far can we get in explaining the phenomena of meaning and understanding from outside them?" (Stroud 2000, viii). And in describing his answer, he writes of the "need to see [meaning and understanding] always from within an engagement with some community's understanding of them" (2000, ix). Now I think that what Stroud means by this talk of "from outside" is the same as what McDowell means by "full-bloodedness." A theory which explains the meaning of the terms of our language "from outside" would be a theory that does not use those expressions in intentional contexts. If it took the form of ascribing capacities to speakers, then for each primitive expression of the language it would, in McDowell's terms, "describe a practical capacity such that to acquire it would be to acquire the concept." As Dummett puts it in registering his acceptance of McDowell's "correction," it would "describe a practice the mastery of which does not demand prior possession of the concept" and thus "make intelligible [a speaker's] acquisition of that concept by coming to speak the language" (Dummett 1987, 267). The kind of reductive account of meaning which I have been provisionally defending would be "from outside" meaning in this sense. It would seek to make the notion of meaning intelligible in nonintentional terms by taking expressions to have the meanings they do in virtue of standing in certain nonintentionally characterized relations to one another or to extralinguistic reality. And this would enable us to explain what it is for a speaker to acquire a concept corresponding to an expression by explaining how her uses of the expression came to stand in those nonintentionally characterized relations.

But Stroud is also concerned, as we have seen, to show the impossibility of a theory of meaning which would be "from outside" language in a different and stronger sense, in that it would attempt to state the meaning of all the primitive terms in a language without using either those terms themselves or any other terms synonymous with them. Such a theory would count as "full-blooded" according to Dummett's original characterization: it would be a theory "from which someone could derive possession of the concepts expressed by primitive terms of its object language."[13] If such a theory were possible, we could appeal to the idea of it in order to explain how it is that we come to acquire language "from outside," by hypothesizing that we have an implicit grasp of the theory and that its characterizations of the meanings of the expressions of the language serve to guide us in their correct use. It is a theory of this kind which Stroud seems to have in mind when he alludes, at the end of "Wittgenstein on Meaning, Understanding, and Community," to "the kind of explanation of meaning and language which we aspire to in philosophy," an aspiration which requires that we "find some facts, the recognition of which would not require that we already speak and understand a language, and some rules which would tell us what, given those facts, it

[12] This is a particularly prominent theme in Stroud's forthcoming "Meaning and Understanding."
[13] Indeed, in "The Theory of Meaning and the Practice of Communication," Stroud criticizes Dummett himself for advocating a theory which is "from outside" language in this stronger sense (2000, 207-208).

was correct to say" (Stroud 2000, 94). This aspiration, he says, cannot be met by our ordinary statements of meaning because "they make essential use of words that are already 'alive,' that already have a meaning" and so cannot "serve to get us into language in the first place" (2000, 94).

Stroud is quite right, I think, to emphasize the impossibility of a theory which is "from outside" in this stronger sense. There can be no getting into one's first language by being brought to grasp a theory which attempts to characterize the meanings of the expressions in the language, whether or not the theory is framed in intentional or semantic terms. But it is important not to confuse the hopeless aspiration for a theory which can "get us into language" by instructing us in how to speak and understand it, with the *prima facie* more reasonable aspiration for a theory which is "from outside" language only in the sense that it does not use the expressions of the language in semantic or intentional contexts.[14] A theory of this latter kind could not itself "get us into" language because we would already need to have mastered the language of the theory in order to be in a position to be guided by it. However, if Stroud is right in rejecting the assumption that facts of meaning have to instruct or guide us, then the theory would not need to play that role in order to serve as a philosophically satisfactory theory of meaning. It could explain or make intelligible how we "get into language from outside," not by itself being the kind of thing which can "get us into language," but by characterizing the capacities involved in speaking and understanding a language in a way which makes it unmysterious how we can come to acquire them.

4.

I have examined a number of considerations which might seem to support Stroud's nonreductionism, and I have argued that none of them is effective. Should we conclude that Stroud is wrong to deny the possibility of reductive dispositionalism about meaning, or of any other kind of view which seeks to explain meaning solely in terms of extensionally characterized regularities in our use of expressions? I shall argue in this section that we should not. Stroud is right, I will suggest, to think that we cannot make sense of the "life" of linguistic expressions solely in terms of their use conforming to regular patterns. But I will argue that this does not commit us to the austere form of nonreductionism which denies the possibility of any general account of meaning and which, in effect, takes

[14] There is evidence of this confusion at the end of "Mind, Meaning, and Practice," where Stroud suggests that what is most disappointing about the nonreductionist view is that "if facts of what expressions mean...can in general be expressed only in semantical or intentional statements...then they would seem not to be the kinds of facts that could ever explain how language and meaning in general are possible, or what facts or rules human beings rely on, as it were, to get into language in the first place, from outside it" (2000, 192). This seems to me to run together the reasonable aspiration to "explain how language and meaning in general are possible" with the hopeless aspiration to identify "facts and rules" that human beings can rely on to "get into" language, by using them as a source of guidance or instruction in coming to speak the language.

facts about meaning as primitive. Rather, I shall suggest, a proper appreciation of what is objectionable about reductive dispositionalism points the way to a view which allows us to explain meaning "from outside" language without simply identifying the meaningfulness of an expression with its figuring in nonintentionally characterizable regularities.

To begin developing this line of argument, I want to return to language-game §2. Stroud holds, as we saw, that we can think of the sounds produced and responded to by the builder and his assistant as having "life" or meaning without supposing that their use is guided or justified by inner states or processes. What makes them meaningful, and gives them the particular meanings they have, is simply a matter of their regular use. But, as we also saw, Stroud holds in addition that this use has to be understood in intentional and indeed in specifically semantic terms. What makes the sounds meaningful is that they are used in the linguistic activity of ordering building-stones. Now I have been arguing in the previous two sections that Stroud does not do enough to motivate the nonreductionist aspect of his view. But this is not because I think that the kind of reductive dispositionalism which we have been considering is correct. On the contrary, I agree with Stroud that we cannot make sense of the sounds in language-game §2 as meaningful simply in virtue of the extensionally characterized lawlike regularities in which they figure. Unlike Stroud, though, I do not see this as a consequence either of Kripke's *quus* hypothesis, or of the impossibility of trying to characterize meaning "from outside" language. Rather, I see it simply as a reflection of pretheoretical intuitions about what is required for meaning and understanding. If, to reconsider a possibility I mentioned briefly in section 1, automata were programmed to produce and respond to expressions of language-game §2 in just the way the builder and his assistant do, it would be intuitively implausible to claim that the expressions were meaningful, at least for the automata themselves. The same would be true, although perhaps to a lesser extent, in the case of animals who were conditioned to respond to the expressions by fetching the corresponding building-stones. It seems, again intuitively, that there is a distinction between an animal's being disposed to respond in a certain way to a shout of "Slab" and its understanding the shout, or attaching a meaning to it.

Even if it is stipulated that the builder and his assistant are human beings, capable of intentional states, and even that they are fully competent speakers of a language like English or German, that still does not seem to be enough to secure the intuition that their use of the expressions, as described in purely extensional terms, is meaningful. We could imagine, for example, that the expressions "Slab," "Pillar" and so on are not part of their language, but that the assistant has the psychological peculiarity that he cannot lift a slab unless he hears the word "Slab," cannot lift a pillar unless he hears the word "Pillar," and so on.[15] The assistant might know that he is to bring a slab because of some other sign

[15] We might think of the role played by the expressions in this example as an extension of that sometimes played by grunts in weightlifting, humming in jazz piano improvisation, or shouting out Japanese numerals while doing certain martial arts exercises. In these cases making, and perhaps also hearing, certain sounds facilitates certain bodily movements, but in a way which is independent of whether or not they mean anything to the person whose behavior is influenced by them.

made by the builder, but be unable to do so unless the builder also shouts “Slab.” Or we could even imagine that no other sign is needed: the sound of the word “slab” not only makes it possible for him to bring the slab, but also causes him to do so. We could go still further and imagine that the builder and the assistant are aware of this situation. The builder might know that in order to get the assistant to bring a slab he has to shout “Slab.” The assistant for his part might know, when he reflects on why he is picking up this particular building-stone rather than one from another pile, or indeed on why he is picking up any building-stone at all, as opposed to finishing his cup of tea or enjoying a moment of rest in the sunshine, that it was the builder's shout of “Slab” that caused him to do it. This still does not seem sufficient to warrant the claim that the assistant understands the builder's shout of “Slab,” as opposed to merely believing that the shout had a certain effect on him.

I do not think that Stroud would disagree with any of this. He might well allow that, irrespective of the more theoretical motivations which we considered above, our intuitions about meaningfulness are sufficient to rule out the idea that mere causal regularities can endow expressions with meaning. But now I want to go on to raise a question which, I think, will reveal a serious point of disagreement. What is it about the situation described above which prevents us from accepting it intuitively as one in which the assistant means or understands something by “Slab”? More concretely: what element is missing from the situation, whose addition would allow us to accept it intuitively as one in which “Slab” has a meaning? Now it is clear that Stroud would reject one way of answering this question, namely that what is missing is any kind of instruction or justification by an inner state which “tells” the assistant how to respond. For Stroud, it can be no part of our pretheoretical intuitions that meaningful use requires this kind of guidance. And on this point I agree with him. But I think that he would also go further, and reject the question itself as tendentious. There is nothing to be said about what is “missing” about the assistant's response to “Slab” except that the assistant does not understand the expression, or that his use of it (in the broad sense which includes his responses to it) is not meaningful. Indeed, Stroud might say, the very idea that there is something missing from the situation, whose addition would turn it into something which we could accept as an example of the meaningful use of “Slab,” is itself a manifestation of the assumption that he is trying to undermine.

Here I disagree. For I think that we *can* say something substantive about what is missing from the situation without committing ourselves to the objectionable assumption that meaning requires guidance by an inner state. What we can say is missing, I want to suggest, is the assistant's consciousness, when he brings the slab, that he is responding *appropriately* to the sound he has heard. Let us imagine the situation as I described it above, where the assistant regularly brings a slab on hearing a shout of “Slab” and is aware each time that his behavior is caused by the shout of “Slab,” but let us now imagine in addition that, as he brings the slab, he is conscious of what he is doing as appropriate in the light of the builder's shout. We might put this by saying that he takes it to “fit” the sound which

the builder has made, or (although in a nonliteral sense) to be "called for" by it. What we are imagining, then, is that he conceives the relation between the builder's shout and his own response not just as causal but also as normative: he takes the shout not only to elicit, but also to make appropriate, the response which he is giving.[16] To imagine the situation with this added element, I want to suggest, is to imagine the assistant responding *with understanding* to the builder's command. So the added element—the assistant's consciousness of the appropriateness of his response to the shout of "Slab"—gives us what we need to accept the situation, intuitively, as one in which "Slab" has a meaning.

Does the idea of the assistant's adopting this normative attitude carry with it a commitment to the idea of his being guided or justified by internal instructions? It might seem that it does. For, it might be argued, the assistant cannot take his response to "Slab" to be appropriate if he does not already recognize "Slab" as having a meaning, with which he can take his response to accord. And that in turn would seem to require that there is something he grasps antecedently to taking his response to be appropriate, something which justifies the claim to appropriateness. Even if he does not grasp what "Slab" means, it would seem at the very least that he must recognize it as having some meaning or other, so that there is something which he can take it—if only by sheer luck —to accord. But here I want to deny that the assistant needs to recognize "Slab" as having a meaning prior to taking his response to be appropriate. I want to claim that we can make sense of his having a "primitive" consciousness of the appropriateness of his response which does not depend on the antecedent grasp of a rule or standard determining that response as correct rather than incorrect, or even on the awareness that there is such a rule or standard.[17] As I see it, it is perfectly intelligible to suppose that he can, in bringing the slab, take his behavior to "fit" the builder's utterance, without his attitude presupposing either that he grasps the meaning of "Slab" or that he possesses a corresponding concept *slab*. He does not need to conceive either of the builder as telling him to bring a slab, or of himself as bringing a slab, in order to take what he is doing to be appropriate to the builder's utterance: he can simply think, as he is bringing the slab, that *this* (what he is now doing) is

[16] Note that his awareness of the appropriateness of his response is not a matter of his taking himself to have a reason to respond as he does in the light of the builder's shout. It is not that he takes it, for example, to be the prudent thing to do, or to be morally required. He may indeed have those attitudes toward his response, but they are not part of the consciousness of normativity which I am proposing as the missing element required for his response to be meaningful.

[17] It might be objected here that he cannot take his response to be appropriate without antecedently recognizing the possibility that it could be mistaken or incorrect, and that this in turn requires that he recognize a standard governing possible responses. But the normative attitude I am describing does not require antecedent recognition of a contrast between correct and incorrect uses. In taking his response to be appropriate the assistant is, at least in the first instance, contrasting it not with responses which are *inappropriate* (incorrect, mistaken), but with the broader class of responses which lack the feature of being appropriate. This includes not just (what we would call) cases of incorrectness or being mistaken, but also cases where the question of correctness does not arise, as for example if he were to react to the builder's shout by sneezing, or if a startled bird were to respond by flying away.

appropriate to *that* (what he has just heard). And to make the stronger point: this is something that he can think, not only prior to grasping what "Slab" means or grasping the particular concept of a slab, but prior to thinking of it as so much as meaningful, or of conceiving the slab he is bringing as belonging under a sortal concept at all.

If the normative attitude is of this primitive kind, then we can ascribe it to the assistant without committing ourselves to the idea that there is anything guiding his response to the builder's utterance, or instructing him in how to respond. Nothing in our supposition that he takes this attitude to what he is doing requires us to assume a different explanation of his response than would be given on the reductive dispositionalist view. We do not need to think of him as responding as he does *because* he recognizes his response as appropriate: we can instead explain his response in just the same way that we would have explained it in the initial situation, prior to the addition of the idea that he takes his response to the builder to be appropriate. Nor do we need to think of the normative attitude itself as justified in terms of a rule or principle dictating his response as the correct one. There is nothing about the "normatively enriched" situation which requires us to suppose, any more than we did with respect to the original situation, that there are any rules or instructions determining that it is appropriate for him to bring a slab rather than, say, a pillar.[18]

Now it is true that we might be committed, in assuming that the assistant adopts the normative attitude I have described, to one aspect of the picture of meaning which Stroud finds objectionable. We might be committed to there being a mental state or process which "accompanies" or "lies behind" the assistant's bringing of the slab: namely, the assistant's consciousness of the appropriateness of what he is doing. But this consciousness, as I have just noted, does not guide, instruct, or justify the assistant in his response to the sign. So it is not vulnerable to the line of argument which Stroud, following Wittgenstein, raises against the picture of meaning as requiring something "lying behind" the use of expressions. That line of argument, as we saw in section 1, turns on the thought that anything which could guide or justify us in the use of an expression would itself have to be meaningful, so that we could not appeal to it in order to account for meaning in general. But the consciousness of normativity which, according to the suggestion which I am making, is responsible for the meaningfulness of expressions, is not something which guides or justifies us in their use, and thus not something which we need to think of as, itself, meaningful. It "gives life" to the signs of language not by "telling us" how they should be used, but simply by making the difference between a merely reflexive response to (or production of) a sign, and the kind of response which we think of as "intelligent" in the sense of involving understanding.[19]

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[18] For more on this primitively normative attitude, see Ginsborg, forthcoming .

[19] I am assuming here that we can make sense of someone's responding to a sign "with understanding" without drawing on the supposition that there is anything specific that she understands. It might be thought that the assistant can respond to the builder's shout with understanding only in virtue of understanding e.g. that he is bringing a slab, or that the builder has called for a slab. But I think we can make sense of a primitive notion of responding with understanding, that is, of responding intelligently as opposed to reflexively or robotically, which parallels the notion of a primitive consciousness of normativity. This notion does not depend on, but rather can be invoked to make sense of, the notions of understanding *that* such-and-such is the case, or of understanding a sign as having a specific meaning. According to the account I go on to present in the text, the assistant does indeed understand that he is to bring a slab, but the fact of his doing so

Part of my aim in making this suggestion is to offer a motivation for rejecting the dispositionalist view. What is wrong with that view, I am suggesting, is that it does not do justice to the normative attitudes which are a necessary aspect of the meaningful use of language. And this is something which we can recognize, I am suggesting, without being committed to the objectionable assumption that facts of meaning involve our being guided or justified in the use of expressions. This part of my point can be restated in terms of the "normativity objection" which Kripke raises against the dispositional account. I argued in section 2 that Stroud could not endorse this objection in the form that Kripke states it, namely as the objection that meaning facts cannot be dispositional, because dispositions merely describe how we use terms, rather than telling us how we ought to use them. If the suggestion I have made is correct, however, there remains some truth to the objection in its more general form, as the complaint that the dispositional account does not do justice to the normativity of meaning. For even after we have rejected the idea that the meaning of an expression justifies us or instructs us in its use, there remains a sense in which meaning is normative: namely, that the ascription of meaning to an expression implies that its uses can be regarded in normative terms, as being or not being appropriate. And the identification of meaning facts with facts about dispositions fails to capture this normative implication. To say that someone is disposed to respond to "plus" queries with the sum does indeed imply that we can distinguish two kinds of uses she makes of "plus," one in which she behaves as she is disposed, the other in which (perhaps due to interfering factors such as carelessness or distraction) she does not; but it does not imply that a use of the first kind can be regarded as correct or appropriate.[20]

However, the more important part of my point, in the context of the present chapter, is to show that we can reject reductive dispositionalism without endorsing Stroud's austere form of nonreductionism. For my suggestion offers a way of accounting for the meaningfulness of linguistic expressions which does not require the use of those expressions in semantic or intentional contexts and which is thus "from outside" language in what I have called the "reasonable" sense. As long as we accept the notion of the kind of normative attitude to the use of signs which I have described—an attitude which does not presuppose the prior recognition of the signs as meaningful—then we can draw on

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is constituted in part by his being disposed to respond intelligently, or with understanding, to a shout of "Slab."

[20] See Bridges (ms.) for an insightful discussion of the different ways of understanding Kripke's normativity objection. To state the point in Bridges's terms, I am proposing that there is truth to the objection understood in what he calls the "evaluative" sense, although unlike Bridges I take the relevant kind of normative evaluation to bear not on whether a use is correct or incorrect, but rather on whether it is appropriate as opposed to not being appropriate, where not being appropriate includes not only being incorrect, but also being something to which standards of correctness do not apply (see footnote 17).

that notion to provide a partially reductive account of the notions of meaning and understanding. The meaningfulness of expressions on this account is constituted, as on the reductive view, by the fact that we are disposed to use in them in certain regular ways, but with the proviso that, in using them we take our uses to be appropriate in the primitive way which I have outlined. For example we can say, at a first approximation, that what it is for someone to mean addition by "plus" is for her to be disposed to respond to "plus" queries with the sum, where, in each actualization of that disposition, she takes a primitively normative attitude to her response. Now it is at least arguable that someone who takes that attitude to a given response is in a state with intentional content. Even though she need not entertain the intentional content *addition*, she still has to have a thought with the intentional content *appropriate*, even if it consists only in the thought *this is appropriate to that*. So, at least on this way of understanding the consciousness of normativity to which it appeals, my account does not do without intentional notions altogether. But even if it relies on the intentional in this way, it remains "from outside" intentional content in that its explanation of meaning does not appeal to our capacity to grasp concepts corresponding to the expressions of our language. The only intentional content it takes for granted is whatever content is involved in the consciousness of normativity as such. All other contents are, so to speak, constructed, by means of this consciousness, out of the raw material of our nonintentionally characterized responsive dispositions.[21]

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[21] It might be helpful here to situate my view explicitly among the various more or less reductive accounts mentioned in the course of this chapter. In section 1, I characterized Stroud's view as "austerely nonreductionist" in that it denies that we can account for the meaning of terms without appeal to specifically semantic notions: this rules out, for example, explaining what it is for "plus" to mean addition without appealing to the idea of saying or asserting that one number is the sum of others, where saying that *p* of course implies that one grasps the meaning of *p*. (I am assuming here for convenience that "plus" is a primitive term of the language.) A less austere form of nonreductionism, like Grice's, would account for the fact of "plus" meaning addition in terms of speakers' intentions and beliefs regarding addition, e.g. the intention to get someone else to believe that *x* is the sum of *y* and *z*. Stroud does not explicitly consider this kind of account, and I think he would reject it, but, as noted in section 1, he sometimes hints at a view on which we might explain the meaning of "plus" in terms of its use in intentional activities like calculating. Since I take it that we cannot calculate without having beliefs involving (say) the concept addition, this account would be reductive to the same degree that Grice's is, in that it would reduce semantical notions like *meaning addition* to intentional notions like *believing that x is the sum of y and z*. Neither of these accounts is "full-blooded" or "from outside language" in either of the two senses distinguished in section 3, since they both make use of the primitive terms of the language in semantic (Stroud) or more broadly intentional (Grice) contexts. My own account is more reductive than either of these because it seeks to explain the fact of "plus" meaning addition without taking for granted that speakers have intentional attitudes toward addition. But it is less reductive than a straightforwardly dispositional view because it takes for granted the primitive consciousness of normativity which is at least arguably an intentional attitude involving the content *appropriate*. Both my own view and the kind of dispositional view discussed here are "from outside" language in what I called the reasonable sense, but since they both use terms like "sum" in accounting for the meaning of "plus," and hence draw on the concept of addition, they are not "from outside" language in the stronger sense. It might be possible, dropping the assumption that "plus" is primitive, to offer an even more reductive dispositional account of the meaning of "plus" which would characterize the corresponding disposition without using "sum" or its synonyms, but, as Stroud points out, an account of this kind could not be generalized so as to explain the meanings of all the terms in a

Now if this partially reductive account is correct, then someone who is disposed to respond to "plus" questions with the sum, and, in so doing, to regard her response as primitively appropriate, thereby counts as meaning addition by "plus." So whenever she responds to a "plus" query, she is, in virtue of taking her response to be appropriate, using the sign meaningfully, and more specifically, using it to mean *addition*. This might invite the objection that the "primitive" normative attitude I have been describing is not, after all, prior to grasp of meaning. If the assistant is reliably disposed to bring a slab on a shout of "Slab," then taking his response to be appropriate to the builder's shout on any given occasion does not precede, but rather *just is*, his understanding "Slab" to mean that he is to bring a slab. So, it might be objected, the proposed account does not offer an explanation of the phenomena of meaning and understanding in terms of attitudes which are not themselves semantic or intentional. Rather, the idea of semantic or intentional content is built into the explanation from the start.

But it is important to see that, if the assistant's awareness of the appropriateness of his response to the expression "Slab" and his awareness of it as conforming to the meaning of "Slab" are coeval, this is not a genuine objection to the kind of reductive account I have suggested but rather an indication of its success. For it will be a consequence of any successful philosophical reduction that, once we have accepted it, our thought of the reducing phenomena will imply, and hence in one sense depend on, our thought of the phenomena which are being reduced. If the idea of a philosophical reduction is coherent at all, then this dependence must be compatible with the claim that the reducing phenomena can also be seen as explanatorily prior to, and thus in a more fundamental sense independent of, the phenomena which they are being invoked to explain.

5.

The account I have given depends crucially on the assumption that the idea of someone's taking her use of a sign to be appropriate can be made intelligible without appeal to the idea of the sign's being meaningful. Stroud, I suspect, would reject this assumption. He might agree with me that the possibility of using language meaningfully requires the possibility of adopting a normative attitude to one's use of signs. But, at least on the evidence of the series of papers we have been discussing, he would deny that the appropriateness or correctness we might ascribe to a given use could be understood except in terms of

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language without using any of those terms. Such an explanation, if it were possible, would be "from outside" language in the strong sense. Another kind of reductive approach, not considered in this chapter, is Robert Brandom's explanation of semantic and intentional notions in terms of normative notions that are themselves not further explicable in naturalistic terms. While my own view is like Brandom's in relying on the unreduced notion of a normative attitude, it differs from it in at least two respects. First, as will become clearer in the next section, the relevant norms are not, as they are for Brandom, socially instituted. Second, the relevant normativity for Brandom is essentially connected with reasons and rationality, and applies in the first instance to inferential practices, whereas on my view it is prior to the appreciation of reasons and applies in the first instance to noninferential uses of expressions.

conformity to meaning. This denial is implicit in his claim that the correctness of an individual's use of an expression can be determined only by its conformity to a general practice, which for Stroud just is its conformity to the meaning of the sign.

> For someone's performance to be the correct way to do something there must be some standard or pattern to which it conforms. For the use of linguistic expressions, those standards can be provided ultimately only by the ways in which the expressions are in fact used....[The possibility of correct use requires] that there be some way in which those expressions are used, some regularities or general practices to which an individual speaker's performance can conform or fail to conform. ("Mind, Meaning, and Practice," 2000, 176-177)

Or, as he puts it in "Wittgenstein on Meaning, Understanding, and Community," "in the case of speaking and understanding a language, there must at the very least be some regularity, some general pattern of activity, for one's performance to conform to. Otherwise there would be no such thing as correctness or incorrectness" (2000, 83). To judge by these passages, Stroud would reject as incoherent the normative attitude I have suggested that we ascribe to the builder's assistant in language-game §2. For to make sense of that attitude we must take the assistant to regard himself as responding appropriately or correctly to the expression "Slab!" without relying on any conception of him as conforming to a general practice in virtue of which the sign is meaningful.

I cannot here provide a full defense of the assumption on which my account depends. But I do want to draw attention to some considerations raised by Stroud himself, in a somewhat different context, which I think offer it at least some indirect support. In his very first published paper, "Wittgenstein on Logical Necessity" (2000; first published 1965), Stroud discusses the shared "natural reactions" or, as he also calls them (although always with the word in scare quotes) "judgments," which Wittgenstein sees as underlying our practices of calculating, making inferences, drawing conclusions, and so on.[22] Wittgenstein brings these "natural reactions" into relief by using examples of people or communities who do not share them, but instead display "reactions" which are different from ours. These include the pupil at *Philosophical Investigations* §185 to whom it comes naturally to continue the series "2, 4, 6, 8...1000" by writing "1004," and the wood sellers in *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* who set the price for wood proportionally to the surface covered by the wood they are selling. As Stroud points out, we could not explain to the pupil that he was not going on in the same way, or to the wood sellers that they were selling wood wrongly. That would be like trying to correct someone who, in a case which Wittgenstein describes as "presenting similarities" with the pupil who writes

[22] Stroud also alludes to these "reactions" in later essays, for example in his "Wittgenstein on Meaning, Understanding, and Community" (2000, 85-86) and less explicitly, but still recognizably, in his "Mind, Meaning, and Practice" (2000, 192).

"1004," naturally reacts to the gesture of pointing by looking in the direction of the line from fingertip to wrist. We could not show that person, by pointing, which way she was meant to respond to the initial gesture, since she would bring the same aberrant reactive propensities to the gesture with which we were trying to correct her. And something analogous would be true of the explanations with which we might attempt to influence the behavior of the pupil or the wood sellers (2000, 5). Reflection on how we might attempt to interact with the people in these examples leads Stroud to the conclusion that they "would not be fully intelligible to us...they would be different sorts of beings from us, beings which we could not understand and with which we could not enter into meaningful communication" (13). So the examples, as Stroud understands them, reveal something about the conditions of meaning and understanding. They reveal that the possibility of linguistic communication rests on our according or agreeing in the kinds of natural reactions manifested in our continuing the series with "1002" rather than "1004," or in setting or accepting a price for wood on the basis of its volume or weight rather than the area it covers.

I think that these considerations about the conditions of meaningful communication are both true and important. The possibility of linguistic communication rests on agreement in the sorts of reactions brought into relief by Wittgenstein's examples, and, as Stroud is primarily concerned to emphasize, these reactions reflect contingent natural facts about us rather than conventions which we have chosen to adopt. But I find a number of difficulties in Stroud's account of the natural "reactions" on which the possibility of language rests. One difficulty emerges when we ask whether we are to think of them as, so to speak, mere "brute" reactions, or rather as judgments with intentional content. While Stroud refers to them as "judgments," in an allusion to Wittgenstein's mention at *Philosophical Investigations* §242 of the "agreement in judgments" necessary for communication, he always uses the word in scare quotes, suggesting that he does not think of them as genuine judgments with the kind of content that could figure in a "that"-clause. And the suggestion is made explicit in his claim that the "agreement" to which Wittgenstein refers is not "the unanimous acceptance of a particular truth or set of truths" (14) but rather "the universal accord of human beings in behaving in certain ways" (15). But, on the other hand, he also describes these reactions in ways which suggest that they do after all involve intentional content. The way that we respond to the "add-two" instruction, he says, "will depend in part on what we take to be 'going on in the same way' " (12); and we will defend our claim to have made the correct move by appeal to "something like our 'shared judgment' that putting down '1002' is doing the same as we were doing earlier" (14).[23]

[23] See also the introduction to *Meaning, Understanding, and Practice*, where Stroud says, apparently alluding to our propensities to the kinds of reactions under discussion: "[It] seems as if even the very general contingent facts which make language and communication possible must themselves be understood in intentional terms in order to be seen to have that role" (2000, viii).

There is thus a tension in Stroud's account of the agreement in reactions which makes linguistic communication possible. Does that agreement consist merely in the fact that we all agree in writing down "1002" after "1000," that is, that we all write, or are disposed to write, the same thing? Or does it consist in the fact that we all agree, as he puts it, "in finding" or "supposing" (15) that writing "1002" after "1000" is doing the same that we were doing earlier: that is, in the *judgment that* writing "1002" is doing the same as we were doing earlier? And if we attempt to resolve the tension by saying that it consists in both of these, then we are faced with the task of understanding how they are related. Do we all put down "1002" *because* we all agree in the judgment that writing "1002" is doing the same, so that that judgment serves as a reason to which we might appeal to defend the correctness of our writing "1002"? That would seem on the face of it to undermine Stroud's insistence on the natural character of the "reaction" manifested in our writing "1002," and, relatedly, his claim that our agreement in reacting these ways is a matter of our behaving the same way rather than of our unanimously accepting some proposition as true. But the converse relation, according to which we judge that writing "1002" is doing the same because we naturally react to the series by writing "1002," seems implausible. Why would a mere "brute" reaction of writing (or being inclined to write) "1002" give rise to the relatively sophisticated judgment that, in writing "1002" one was (or would be) doing the same as one had been doing earlier?

The difficulty I have raised can be put in quite general terms, as a tension between Stroud's characterization of these reactions as consisting in "brute" behavior rather than genuine judgments, and his descriptions of them in terms which suggest that they have intentional content. But there is also a more specific difficulty regarding the particular content invoked in these descriptions. If we do think of the natural reactions as being, or involving, judgments, why should we think of them as judgments, specifically, *of sameness*? One reason for questioning this characterization of their content is that someone might recognize that writing "1002" after "1000" was going on in the same way as before, but still, when prompted to continue the series, naturally react by writing down "1004" instead. This might be, for instance, because she fails to share our attitude that the appropriate way to continue the series is to do the *same* thing after "1000" as she had been doing before "1000." Perhaps, to adopt a Kripke-style example, she thinks that when prompted to continue a series of numbers, one should do the *quame* thing as one had been doing at the beginning of the series, where to do the *quame* thing is to do the same thing for numbers less than 1000, and otherwise to add 4.

A second reason is that it is not clear how far the idea of *doing the same* can be extended beyond the example of the number series to Wittgenstein's other examples. If our reacting to a hand by looking in the direction of wrist to fingertip, or our calculating the price of a pile of wood based on volume rather than surface area, does consist in or involve a judgment of some kind, it does not seem to be a judgment that one is doing the same as one was doing before. We could imagine two people responding differently to a badly designed directional sign that neither has seen before: one is inclined, on seeing the sign,

to go through the corridor to the right, and the other to go up an adjacent flight of stairs. If their disagreement is not just a matter of brute reaction, but involves divergent judgments about what the sign calls for, it is at any rate not obvious that this could be construed as a disagreement about what would count as doing the same as they had been doing previously. Similarly, if we imagine people who had never sold wood before disagreeing about price-setting practices, and we suppose that they are making genuinely conflicting judgments, there is no reason why the conflicting judgments should concern conformity to previous practice.

I think that we can best preserve Stroud's insight, in the face of these difficulties, by reconstruing it in terms of the primitively normative attitude which I described in the previous section. The natural "reaction" brought into relief by the example of the aberrant pupil is that of writing "1002" after "1000" with the consciousness that what one is doing is appropriate. This is more than a "brute" response: it has the character of a judgment. Relatedly, the agreement in reactions which makes communication possible —in this particular case, which makes it possible for us to attach a shared meaning to an expression like "add two"—is not just agreement in writing "1002," but also in taking "1002" to be the appropriate thing to write. But the reaction does not consist, at least at the most fundamental level, in the acceptance of a proposition, for example the proposition that writing "1002" is going on the same way as before. A person who takes "1002" to be the appropriate thing to write might well be described also as accepting that proposition. But, I would suggest, she counts as accepting the proposition only in virtue of being inclined to write "1002" with the consciousness of doing what is appropriate. We can thus resolve the tension I described by identifying the reaction with a judgment, but where the judgment is not in the first instance to be identified with the acceptance of some proposition as true. Rather, it is a more primitive kind of judgment which differs from a "brute" reaction only by being carried out with the awareness of its appropriateness to the circumstances.

My point in offering this reconstrual has been to bring out explicitly something which I think is hinted at in Stroud's early discussion of the natural "reactions" underpinning our use of language: namely, that they involve a consciousness of appropriateness which is not based on the recognition of conformity to a general practice. We can see this most clearly in the case of the pointing hand. When we react to the pointing hand by looking in the direction from wrist to fingertip we are also aware, or at least potentially aware, of the appropriateness of that reaction to the hand. We not only look in that direction, but also take that to be the (appropriate) direction to look in, and our taking that direction to be the (appropriate) one to look in is just as much a part of the reaction as the looking itself. But this does not depend on our taking there to be a practice of making and responding to pointing gestures in virtue of which pointing hands come to mean that we should look in that direction. We would think of that way of reacting to the hand as appropriate even if we had no knowledge that this is, in fact, how human beings do typically react to seeing a pointing hand. The same is true in the more complex case of the

number series. In this case, admittedly, unlike that of the pointing hand, the relevant "reaction" depends on elements which do require conformity to a general practice: for example one's recognition of the numerals as having the meaning that they do. But to a pupil who is familiar with the numerals and has some facility in working with them, the recognition of "1002" as the appropriate way of going on from the series "2, 4, 6, 8...1000" will not depend on the recognition that there is a general practice of going on in that way. The pupil does not need to have any views about what other people are inclined to write in order to take it that it is "1002" and not "1004" which "fits" the preceding series.[24]

Let us return, now, to the case of the assistant who brings the slab when he hears the builder shout "Slab." I am suggesting that we can think of this as the same kind of primitive "reaction" which is manifested in the case of the pointing hand. The assistant brings a slab in response to the shout of "Slab" with the awareness that what he is doing is appropriate to what he has heard, in the same way that, when we see a pointing hand, we all look in the direction from wrist to fingertip with the consciousness that, in looking in this direction, we are responding appropriately to the hand. This might at first seem implausible, since there is nothing about the sound "Slab" as such which naturally seems to "point to" the bringing of a slab, in the way that the shape of a hand with index finger extended seems to "point in" the direction from wrist to fingertip, or the number series seems to "point to" "1002" as the correct continuation. The association between "Slab" and the bringing of a slab is arbitrary, in that the assistant could just as well have been trained to bring a slab on a shout of "*Platte*," or to bring a pillar on a shout of "Slab."

But, I am suggesting, the effect of the training is precisely to turn the sound "Slab" into something which functions, for the assistant, in the same kind of way that a pointing hand functions for an untrained person. The training exploits the assistant's natural predispositions to acquire certain habits of response, and to invest each of his habitual responses with a consciousness of its appropriateness to the item he is responding to, so as to bring about that these items come to be perceived by him as calling for, or pointing to, or indicating the responses he gives. That he regularly responds to "Slab" by bringing a slab rather than a pillar is, of course, in part a function of how he has been trained. But the role of the training is limited to that of shaping and directing the same kinds of natural tendencies that he exhibits in finding it appropriate to respond as he does to the pointing hand or the number series. He has a tendency to come to respond to repeated observations, say, of a given sound being uttered by one person, and a slab being brought by another person (who is then, perhaps, rewarded), by himself acquiring a tendency to bring a slab when he hears that sound, and, in so doing, to take himself to be responding

[24] This point is of a piece with the point made two paragraphs above, that the relevant judgments in these cases are not judgments of sameness. There, the sameness at issue was, specifically, doing the same as one was doing previously. But we can think of that as a special case of the conformity to a general practice which is at issue here, one in which the practice is confined to an individual rather than a community. (Stroud allows the possibility of such a practice, albeit with qualifications, in "Private Objects, Physical Objects, and Ostension" [2000, 228-229].)

appropriately to the sound. And this tendency is no less natural than his tendencies to respond as he does to the pointing hand or, at a more sophisticated level, to the prompt to continue the series "2,4,6,8...1000." It is true that, in contrast to his normative attitudes to the pointing hand and to the number series, the normative attitude he comes to adopt as a result of the training is directed toward an arbitrarily chosen sound. But it is precisely the point of linguistic training, we might say, to bring it about that we come to have the same kinds of normative attitudes to arbitrarily chosen sounds and marks that we naturally have to items like the pointing hand: that we respond to them in certain specific ways with the consciousness that our way of responding is appropriate. The arbitrary character of the items to which our normative attitudes thus come to be directed does not affect the natural, and—in the sense I have described—"primitive" character of the attitudes themselves.

I have been arguing, against Stroud, that we can make sense of the phenomena of meaning and understanding "from outside" meaning and understanding, by drawing on the idea of a primitive consciousness of normativity which informs our shared natural reactions to items like the pointing hand or the number series. Linguistic meaning arises, I have suggested, when our shared reactive propensities are directed, through training, toward particular sounds and marks, so that we come to have the same kinds of normative attitudes toward them as we do, without training, to the pointing hand. But my account retains something of the nonreductionist spirit of Stroud's in that I do not think there is any hope of "getting outside" the primitive consciousness of normativity itself. My point here is not just that we need to appeal to normative attitudes in making sense of the contentful character of semantic and intentional states. Although I think that that is true, the present point concerns the impossibility of accounting for the primitive consciousness of normativity through which these attitudes are possible. To account for this consciousness of normativity "from outside" in the stronger of the two senses I distinguished would be to identify a rule or principle in the light of which it is justified, a principle which would tell us, for example, that we are entitled to regard our response to the pointing hand in normative terms as opposed to treating it as a mere brute reaction. Following the same line of reasoning which Stroud emphasizes throughout, I take this to be impossible. For any such principle would have to be an item which we understood or which had meaning for us, and that would require that we adopt the same kind of normative attitude toward it that it is supposed to make possible. The question, then, of what entitles us to regard any of our natural reactions or ways of "going on" as appropriate has to remain unanswered. If the account I have given is correct, then we can indeed say that our doing so is a condition of the possibility of meaning and understanding. But this is not to cite a principle which would justify us in taking our reactions to be appropriate, but merely to restate the thesis that the possibility of meaning and understanding depends on our doing so.

This does not in itself rule out the possibility of accounting for the consciousness of normativity "from outside" in the second, reasonable, sense, by explaining, in

nonnormative terms, how it is constituted. Perhaps the consciousness of appropriateness involved in our response to the hand could be explained in terms of some psychological state or complex of states characterizable without normative language, for example in terms of feelings of satisfaction when we look in the direction from wrist to fingertip, or feelings of being nonnormatively compelled or constrained to do so. Or perhaps a more refined account might be offered in terms of our psychological responses to the observed reactions of another person observing our behavior when we look at the hand. But here, while I do not want to deny that such an account could be given, it seems to me that it would not so much make the normative attitudes intelligible, as explain them away as illusory. For it would be unable to make sense of the distinction, which is part of what we are committed to if we regard the attitudes as genuine, between the mere occurrence of feelings or other psychological responses in a person, and the person's having those feelings and responses with the consciousness of their appropriateness to the circumstances in which they occur. The proponent of such an account would have to deny the reality of that distinction, claiming that it could always be made out in terms of the presence or absence of further feelings and psychological states characterizable in nonnormative terms. And while this might be a defensible philosophical position on its own terms, it would not answer to the aim of showing, in a nonskeptical spirit, how to make sense of our normative attitudes and of the phenomena of meaning and understanding which depend on them. I agree with Stroud, then, that our distinctively human perspective on the world—a perspective which I take to be informed not only by our semantic and intentional attitudes but also by the more primitive normative attitudes which underlie them—imposes limits on any reductionist approach to meaning and understanding. What I have tried to show in this chapter is that those limits are less restrictive than Stroud believes.[25]

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[25] It is an extraordinary privilege to be Barry Stroud's colleague, and I would like to acknowledge here the contribution he has made to my intellectual life. He has served for me as a model of depth, clarity, seriousness, and integrity in philosophical thinking and teaching, and I have learned a tremendous amount from our discussions over the years. With regard to the present chapter, I would like to thank Barry Stroud again for illuminating discussions of many of the issues addressed here, and the editors of this volume for very helpful comments and suggestions.

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