rate there is ample reason to think that response-dependence theory is not so much an answer, or a viable alternative, to these various skeptical doctrines as another "skeptical solution" (like Kripke's) that leaves all the problems very firmly in place.

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NORMATIVITY AND MEANING: KRIPKE'S SKEPTICAL PARADOX RECONSIDERED

CONSUELO PRETI

> A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably.
>
> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. 115

INTRODUCTION

Kripke attributes to Wittgenstein the discovery and solution of what he calls a skeptical paradox with respect to meaning.[1] In recently revisiting Kripke's position, however, I came to the conclusion that Kripke's interpretation cannot be correct.[2] What I will show here is that Kripke's attribution to Wittgenstein of a skeptical paradox is generated in part by a conception of normativity that characterizes the relation between a sign and its meaning, which, I will argue, is not the normative issue that occupies Wittgenstein in his investigation of meaning and understanding. Further, and perhaps more important, I will argue that Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein rests on a broader misconstrual of the key target of Wittgenstein's remarks in *Philosophical Investigations*: the "mental

[1] S. Kripke, *Wittgenstein: On Rules and Private Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

[2] C. Preti, *On Kripke* (Cincinnati, OH: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 2002). It is a commonplace that Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein attributes to Wittgenstein a view that Kripke does not himself support, so we merely note this here. A more controversial point is whether Kripke is offering an exegesis. I believe that, in spite of the fact that Kripke claims that "the present paper should be thought of as expounding . . . Wittgenstein's argument as it struck Kripke, as it presented a problem for him" (*Wittgenstein*, 5), it seems clear that Kripke is offering an interpretation of the genuine nature of Wittgenstein's views in *Philosophical Investigations*. See also W. Goldfarb, "Kripke on Wittgenstein on Rules," *Journal of Philosophy* 82, no. 9 (1985): 473, note 5.

process" view of meaning.[3] Like Kripke, however, I believe that it *can* be shown that there is an important unifying theme that links Wittgenstein's remarks on rule-following and private language, as I will make clear.[4]

It is sometimes said that Wittgenstein provides more criticism about the nature of meaning than he does a positive account of it throughout his remarks in *Philosophical Investigations*. In fact, I believe that *Philosophical Investigations* (hereafter *PI*) has a cohesive, and strongly defended, positive thesis with respect to the nature of meaning at its core, one that I wish to argue is grounded in the notion of the normativity of meaning, as Wittgenstein understands this notion.[5] The thesis *itself* (that meaning is not an inner mental process) is not news,[6] but the role that normativity plays in tandem with this thesis in linking the variety of remarks Wittgenstein makes in its defense in *PI* should be more fully emphasized, as I will show.

Others have claimed that Kripke's attribution of a skeptical paradox to Wittgenstein is incorrect, and I will concur, based on the alternative interpretation I will offer here of Wittgenstein's position.[7] I will end by claiming, however,

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[3] And, of course, the erroneous tendencies, prompted by bad philosophy, that lead us to such conclusions. Kripke in effect says little about this (but see *Wittgenstein*, 69–70). I think it is crucial, and it has a resounding effect on the plausibility of his interpretation.

[4] J. Llewelyn, "Following and Not Following Wittgenstein," *Inquiry* 29 (1986): 363, notes that a key feature of McGinn's criticism of Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein turns on McGinn's claim that nothing in the rule-following considerations logically entails the rejection of a private language. Kripke, of course, takes the private language argument to be almost wholly contained in passages concerning rule-following (*Wittgenstein*, 3). What I would like to add to this dispute is the possibility that the rule-following considerations and the private language argument *are* closely linked, but not the way Kripke claims that they are.

[5] It is not that Kripke (or others) ignores the notion of normativity. But he emphasizes it from a perspective that I came to believe was ultimately at odds with Wittgenstein's own stated project. I think there may be (at least) *two* issues that fly under the banner of normativity here: one having to do with the relation between words and their meanings, and one having to do with content *itself*. Compare C. McGinn, *Wittgenstein on Meaning* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 146–47. It was when I began critically to examine Kripke's position on the skeptical paradox that I began to believe that his arguments for it relied on normative relations that affect or characterize the former, which do not entail conclusions that impinge on the latter.

[6] McGinn, citing a number of representative passages from Wittgenstein's corpus, calls it the "most accessible and well-understood of Wittgenstein's negative contentions" (*Wittgenstein*, 3), and takes pains to clarify that Wittgenstein means to reject a *mentalistic* rather than *mechanistic* conception of the nature of meaning. We could say, from a contemporary perspective, that Wittgenstein is rejecting one form of what is known as internalism or individualism about meaning.

[7] A number of provisos need to be stated at the outset. First: elements of the position I will be piecing together here are to be found in the work of some commentators, as we will note. What is *not* so evident in the analyses offered in the literature, however, is the way the pieces of the puzzle fit together to render a consistent and smoothly linked reading of Wittgenstein's project of eradicating a mistaken (but tempting) picture of the nature of meaning and understanding. Second: I will not

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that Kripke's analysis is ultimately important in that it has provided a way of shedding new light on the cohesiveness of Wittgenstein's investigations concerning meaning and understanding in *PI*.

WITTGENSTEIN ON MEANING AND UNDERSTANDING

Wittgenstein, by his own lights, did not take himself to be offering a theory, but, if anything, a journey through topics that (as he claims) show themselves to be interrelated.[8] Nothing is to be presupposed about the notions of meaning and understanding: the concepts themselves dictate the investigation we should make of them. What this means for Wittgenstein is that we should avoid the temptation to see these concepts as other than they are. The idea is that if we look to the way that the concepts of language, meaning, or understanding relate to other concepts (by looking at the way we *use* those concepts, for instance), we may begin to see that to cling to a certain view about meaning and understanding is simply wrong, or, at best, indefensible (*PI* 90):

> We feel as if we had to *penetrate* phenomena: our investigation, however, is directed not toward phenomena, but, as one might say, towards the '*possibilities*' of phenomena. . . . Our investigation is therefore a grammatical one. Such an investigation sheds light on our problem by clearing misunderstandings away. Misunderstandings concerning the use of words, caused, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of language.

Chief among the advantages of a grammatical investigation, according to Wittgenstein, is that it is *descriptive*; a descriptive investigation can deliver, in his view, the clearest view of the concepts of language, meaning, and understanding (*PI* 124, 126). This is because we are, for various reasons, according to Wittgenstein, tempted not just to hold or to cling to a certain conception of meaning and of understanding (and thus also of language) but also to *impose* it— and even to alter what we observe so that it conforms (even just to our satisfaction) to this conception. But this conception, tempting as it may be, can be resisted

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be arguing that Wittgenstein is either correct or incorrect, but only attempting to delineate what I think are his broad concerns, and revealing the defense I think he offers for them, in contrast to Kripke's reading. And finally: commentators vary as to the benefit of mining the manuscripts that Wittgenstein himself did not publish, some of which were previous versions of or notes on issues that ultimately were treated in *Philosophical Investigations*. It is true, of course, that Wittgenstein did not live to see the publication of *PI*, but it is commonly believed that he was satisfied enough with what is contained in at least part I to be aiming to publish it when he died. I will limit myself, here, as many do, to the text of the *Investigations*, as Wittgenstein's most developed version of the issues that concerned him. All references to *PI* are from L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953).

[8] *PI* preface.

if we simply look at the role that language plays in our customs, our practice, and our lives, as well as its role *as* a custom, or a practice, in our lives (*PI* 66). For Wittgenstein, the best way to achieve clarity in what we see when we investigate language is by describing the way we use language (among other things), shoring this up by countless examples and counterexamples meant to dislodge the roots of our (mistaken) pre-conceptions of it.

Early passages in *Philosophical Investigations* focus critical attention on what Wittgenstein calls the "Augustinian" picture of language, that, in brief, treats all meaning on the model of *naming*. Wittgenstein's remarks in the early passages of *PI* are directed toward what he believes is a powerfully entrenched thesis about meaning based on this model (one to which he himself succumbed to in his early work).[9] In attempting to clarify the thesis, he makes a number of telling remarks about what he ultimately believes cannot be correct about meaning and understanding. What thus emerges in *PI* is Wittgenstein's commitment to the project of elucidating, and countering, a seemingly widespread conviction, mistakenly elevated into theory, that meaning is a mental/inner state or process that *accompanies* our use of signs, suspended (somehow) before the mind, and which constitutes their meaning. An important part of the lengthy *PI* 20 reads as follows, with the interlocutor framing the question that summarizes the misguided view, on the subject of the foreigner who takes "Bring me a slab" as a single word:

> But then, is there not also something different going on in him when he pronounces it,—something corresponding to the fact that he conceives the sentence as a *single* word?—Either the same thing may go on in him, or something different. For what goes on in you when you give such an order? Are you conscious of its consisting of four words *while* you are uttering it? Of course you have a *mastery* of this language—which contains those other sentences as well—but is this having a mastery something that *happens* while you are uttering the sentence? And I have admitted that the foreigner will probably pronounce a sentence differently if he conceives it differently; but what we call his wrong conception *need* not lie in anything that accompanies the utterance of the command.

The emphasis on mastery in Wittgenstein's reply to the interlocutor that makes an early appearance here is a key to understanding subsequent issues, in my view; it encapsulates the normative element in language that Wittgenstein will use to put pressure on the inner process conception of meaning.[10] Further, the more positive claim about meaning, as we will see, can be traced by keeping firmly in mind the link that Wittgenstein makes concerning the role of this normative element in the more explicit conception of language that he considers in various

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passages in *PI*: one that takes language to be part of our natural history (*PI* 25), something that is best explained by conceiving it as the use of signs to communicate within a context (loosely, a 'form of life') and, importantly, one that involves abilities characterized as customs, habits, and practices (*PI* 7, 19).

NORMATIVITY: "NOW I CAN GO ON"

Presumably we can communicate in the first place because we employ signs that we understand and that others understand. There would appear to be some uniformity to meaning and understanding since we do not have to explain and re-explain ourselves—or reinvent some system of symbolic representation—each time we use signs to communicate. So, what does this uniformity consist of? How does it work? What is at the bottom of the notion that a sign means this but not that? What makes it correct to use one sign rather than another? What does that correctness consist of? These questions, of course, form part of the larger questions at the heart of the concept of language: what is it that determines the meaning of our signs? What is the nature of meaning? As we noted above, Wittgenstein took it that, whatever the meaning of our signs consists of, it is not an inner state. Instead, his emphasis is on the use of signs: their application, in the context of life the way it is lived, the variety of communicative relations we have in our human life, and what this variety can tell us about language, meaning, and understanding. But the concept of sign-application raises puzzles that need investigation.[11]

Philosophical Investigations 138 is the passage that is conventionally taken to introduce a series of remarks known as the "rule-following considerations." The puzzle that appears to emerge from these passages is the one that Wittgenstein sees arising between what constitutes understanding or grasp of the meaning of a sign and the application of it (*PI* 139): "When someone says the word 'cube' to me, for example, I know what it means. But can the whole *use* of the word come before my mind, when I *understand* it in this way?" Or, again (*PI* 151): "A writes series of numbers down; B watches him and tries to find a law for the sequence of numbers. If he succeeds he exclaims: 'Now I can go on'—So this capacity, this understanding, is something that makes its appearance in a moment. So let us try and see what it is that makes its appearance here."

What I believe deserves emphasis in Wittgenstein's investigation into the puzzles raised by sign application is indirectly contained in these passages: namely, the use of a sign *over time*; the grasp of a sign and the use we make of

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[9] *PI* 23.

[10] *PI* 150, 199. McGinn links the notion of mastery to Wittgenstein's positive claim that meaning is use as follows: "understanding is essentially connected with use because it precisely the capacity *to do* certain things with signs" (*Wittgenstein*, 31).

[11] I should explicitly say at this point that Kripke's points *could* be put the same way. But the puzzles with respect to sign application that I see Wittgenstein as concerned with are not those that Kripke attributes to Wittgenstein.

it on repeated subsequent occasions. "Trying to see what it is that makes its appearance here" occupies Wittgenstein for the next considerable number of passages in *PI*. And I believe that at the heart of his efforts is the project of trying to pin down what *understanding* the meaning of sign could consist in if, as I am arguing here, it must clearly involve application. Application of a sign, which importantly, it must clearly involve what he calls mastery, is something Wittgenstein has already claimed involves what he calls mastery, is something that lies at the heart of language, an ongoing communicative device, which, for its success, depends on the correct application of signs over and over again.

The puzzle that Wittgenstein considers throughout these sections in *PI*, I would argue, turns on his having noted that the capacity to use a sign—to understand a sign—is not, by nature, a single event. Genuine understanding of a sign involves understanding *how to apply it*, which appears to introduce the notion of sustained and future instances of understanding.[12] Moreover, this understanding, and its projection into the future, is bound by issues of correctness; you understand how to apply the sign *the right way*; potentially, infinitely many times—that have not yet taken place. So I would argue that the concepts of future use, future correct use, and the like are at the heart of what Wittgenstein discusses as "rule-following." The question, or puzzle, that has captured his attention is what determines the understanding and meaning of our signs, given that we use them

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[12] We should note that there is some disagreement over this. Some accept the conception I am defending here: see S. Blackburn, "The Individual Strikes Back," *Synthese* (1984): 281–82; P. Coates, "Kripke's Sceptical Paradox: Normativeness and Meaning," *Mind* 95 (1986): 77–80; B. Gert, "Kripke's Sceptical Paradox: Normativeness and Meaning," *Mind* 95 (1986): 77–80; B. Gert, "Wittgenstein's Private Language Argument," *Journal of Philosophy* 83, no. 9 (1986): and W. W. Tait, "Wittgenstein and the Sceptical Paradoxes," *Journal of Philosophy* 83, no. 9 (1986): 475–88. But P. Boghossian, "The Rule-Following Considerations," *Mind* 98 (October 1989): 507–49, does not. We can briefly comment as follows: the overarching issue in Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein is, ultimately, whether what can be called the normativity of meaning is threatened by skepticism. What I am arguing is that the normativity that plays a role in Kripke's argument is one that is relevant to the link between words and meanings, and falls short of establishing a genuine threat to the normative property of content itself as employed by Wittgenstein to make his points. I think that Wittgenstein reveals an important component of the normativity of content by way of his revelation that the nature of meaning and understanding involve rule-following; and that *future* applications of a rule are noted as an important element in support of that point: Wittgenstein wants to discover what it is to *understand* when understanding appears to have to include the ability we express as "now I can go on."
    Boghossian directs his remarks to McGinn's critical assessment of Kripke's paradox and claims that Kripke's normativity requirement is not as McGinn claims: "This is not, as McGinn would have it, a relation between meaning something by an expression at one time and meaning something by it at some later time; it is rather a relation between meaning something by it at some time and its *use at that time*" (Boghossian, "The Rule-Following Considerations," 513, emphasis his). But this, it must be said, does little more than re-assert Kripke's position in the face of criticism of it by McGinn, instead of offering a defense of it in the light of that criticism. For my own part, I think Boghossian's point fails to appreciate the role of the normative in the correct light, by ignoring the importance of Wittgenstein's emphasis on *future* use (mastery).

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again and again. Baker and Hacker[13] put it this way (emphasis theirs): "It is a truism that, relative to a given rule, doing the same thing as before must be correct if what was previously done was correct . . . it is the practice itself which is the arbiter of what is doing the same thing. The concept of a rule and of doing the same thing are interwoven (*PI* 225), since the former determines what *counts* here as *the same*. . . ."

So the important point to remember is that Wittgenstein is using the rule-following considerations to put continued pressure on his stated target: the misguided conviction or temptation (characteristic of "doing philosophy" in his pejorative sense)[14] to take meaning or understanding as a mental state, an independent, inner, hidden, and isolated entity that "hovers before the mind." I would argue that the rule-following considerations are an example of the revelation that Wittgenstein makes about language, meaning, and understanding, framed in the early passages in his criticism of the Augustinian picture of language and developed through, for instance, the passages that discuss ostensive definition (28), chess pieces (31), seeing aspects (33), and the interpretation of signposts (86).[15] It is quite explicit in the note (a) (interleaved by the editors) at passage 139, where, again, the hapless interlocutor expresses the mistaken view, and Wittgenstein replies:

> "I believe the right word in this case is. . . ." Doesn't this shew that the meaning of a word is something that comes before our mind, and which is, as it were the exact picture we want to use here?

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[13] G. Baker and P. M. S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Rules, Grammar and Necessity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 165–66. Baker and Hacker reject Kripke's community view (as I do), and appear to concur with my formulation of the normativity that lies behind Wittgenstein's endeavors. Baker and Hacker do not make the link that I am arguing for here, but they supply some ammunition for its defense. See also G. Baker and P. M. S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980); and G. Baker and P. M. S. Hacker, *Scepticism, Rules, and Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984).
    Sticklers, incidentally, will point out that at *PI* 225 what Wittgenstein says is: "The use of the world 'rule' and the use of the word 'same' are interwoven (as are the use of 'proposition' and the use of 'true')."

[14] *PI* 194: ". . . When we do philosophy we are like savages, primitive people, who hear the expressions of civilized men, put a false interpretation on them, and then draw the queerest conclusions from it."

[15] Wittgenstein uses a number of examples throughout *PI* to show us how easily we succumb to the temptation of *positing* entities in our search for the answers to puzzles, in lieu of "looking" at what it is we are puzzled by (*PI* 66): "Consider for example the proceedings that we call 'games'. . . What is common to them all?—Don't say: 'There *must* be something common, or they would not be called "games" '—but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all." He makes a similar point at *PI* 36: "And we do here what we do in a host of similar cases: because we cannot specify any *one* bodily action which we call pointing to the shape (as opposed, for example, to the color), we say that a *spiritual* [mental, intellectual] activity corresponds to these words. Where our language suggests a body and there is none: there, we should like to say, is a *spirit*."

Suppose I were choosing between the words "imposing," "dignified," "proud," "venerable"; isn't it as though I were choosing between drawings in a portfolio?—No: the fact that one speaks of the *appropriate word* does not *shew* the existence of a something that etc.

So we can plausibly read Wittgenstein as taking his investigation to have revealed that rules and their nature are naturally connected to the view that meaning is *use*, keeping it all the while in mind that he is ultimately engaged in dislodging a mentalistic view of meaning and understanding. We use language to communicate, and we communicate, successfully (correctly) time and time and time again, consistently and productively. What we should see is that this involves the capacity to follow a rule, and as I see it, what Wittgenstein has discovered is that the capacity to follow a rule, the mastery at the heart of understanding meaning and language, could not, itself, plausibly be a hidden, inner, mental state or process. When you learned, for instance, the word "subway," were *all* rule-governed uses part of grasping its meaning? How *could* they be? After all, as we have said, using a sign (mastery) is not just using *that* sign at *that* time; the use of a sign takes place *over* time (*PI* 179–80):

> —And now one might think that the sentence "I can go on" meant "I have an experience which I know empirically to lead to the continuation of the series." But does B mean that when he says he can go on? . . . No. The words "Now I know how to go on" were correctly used when he thought of the formula: that is, given such circumstances as that he had learnt algebra, had used such formulae before.—But that does not mean that his statement is only short for a description of all the circumstances which constitute the scene for our language-game. . . . We can also imagine the case where nothing at all occurred in B's mind except that he suddenly said "Now I know how to go on"—perhaps with a feeling of relief; and that he did in fact go on working out the series without using the formula. And in this case too we should say—in certain circumstances—that he did know how to go on.
> *This is how the words are used.* It would be quite misleading, in this last case, for instance, to call the words a "description of a mental state".—One might rather call them a "signal"; and we judge whether it was rightly employed by what he goes on to do.

To continue to defend the conception of meaning as an inner process that accompanies our application of concepts appears all the more clearly misconceived, thus, given Wittgenstein's emphasis on repeated and correct application of our words (*PI* 187–88):

> "But I already knew, at the time when I gave the order, that he ought to write 1002 after 1000."—Certainly; and you can also say you *meant* it then; only you should not let yourself be misled by the grammar of the words "know" and "mean". . . . Now, what was wrong with your idea?
> Here I should first of all like to say: your idea was that that act of meaning the order had in its own way already traversed all those steps: that when you meant it, your mind as it were flew ahead and took all the steps before you physically arrived at this or that one.
> Thus you were inclined to use such expressions as: "The steps are *really* already taken, even before I take them in writing or orally or in thought." And it seemed as if they were in some *unique* way predetermined, anticipated—as only the act of meaning can anticipate reality.

KRIPKE: NORMATIVITY, INNER PROCESS, AND THE SKEPTICAL PARADOX

I wish to show now that Kripke implicitly employs a notion of normativity in the building of the so-called skeptical paradox that he attributes to Wittgenstein's remarks, but that, as we will see here, the normativity in question is not the same as that which features in Wittgenstein's own stated concerns. I believe the reason for this lies in the fact that Kripke's project ultimately centers on the private language argument, and its implications, as he sees it. Because Kripke reads the rule-following considerations as containing advance copy on what he claims is the genuine issue being developed by Wittgenstein, the skeptical paradox and its solution,[16] we may say that the difference in interpretations here, especially on the question of the kind of normativity in play, is based on differing convictions about what Wittgenstein's investigations genuinely concern.

Kripke explicitly claims that he finds Wittgenstein's claims concerning the inner process view of meaning not entirely intuitive: "Wittgenstein's conviction of the contrast between states of understanding, reading, and the like, and 'genuine' introspectible mental states or processes is so strong that it leads him . . . into some curious remarks about ordinary usage. . . . Coming to understand, or learning, seems to me to be a 'mental process' if anything is. . . ."[17]

Kripke subjects this to analysis, and makes a case for Wittgenstein's having meant something weaker than a wholesale rejection of the "mental process" model of understanding, suggesting that Wittgenstein may have only meant to claim that "thinking of understanding as a 'mental process' leads to misleading philosophical pictures, but not necessarily that it is wrong."[18]

I made a case above for the view that Wittgenstein does in fact take the stronger view as his target, and, if I am right, this is a critical misunderstanding of an important feature of Wittgenstein's project in *PI*. Kripke does not discuss the issue in great detail, but the following may be sufficient to shed some doubt on his approach here. Kripke refers[19] to Wittgenstein's passages 305–06, which here we quote in full:

> "But you surely cannot deny that, for example, in remembering, an inner process takes place."— What gives the impression that we want to deny anything? When one says "Still, an inner process does take place here"—one wants to go on: "After all, you *see* it." And it is this inner process that one means by the word "remembering."—The impression that we wanted to deny something arises from our setting our faces against the picture of the 'inner process.' What we deny is that the picture

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[16] Kripke, *Wittgenstein*, vi.
[17] Ibid., 49.
[18] Ibid., 50, note 33.
[19] Ibid.

of the inner process gives us the correct idea of the use of the word "to remember". We say that this picture with its ramifications stands in the way of our seeing the use of the word as it is.

Why should I deny that there is a mental process? But "There has just taken place in me the mental process of remembering. . . ." Means nothing more than; "I have just remembered. . . ." To deny the mental process would mean to deny the remembering; to deny that anyone ever remembers anything.

What Kripke claims, on the basis of these passages,[20] is that Wittgenstein may be making the point that it is the *terminology*, like the term "mental process," that is philosophically misleading, but, as he puts it, that the impression rendered by these passages is that "*of course* remembering is a mental process, if anything is." But I think that Wittgenstein has made it explicit throughout *PI* that, while terminology is not incidentally related to a (philosophical) problem, the *problem* is not grammatical or linguistic: the problem is *elucidated* by way of grammatical investigations. So what is the problem here? The very same as what it has been prior to these later passages: the inclination or temptation[21] we have to insist that we are actually saying something significant about (in this case) the nature of "remembering" by claiming that it is an inner/mental process.[22] *PI* 306, quoted above, expresses this explicitly, and the very same kind of point is first introduced at *PI* 13: "When we say: 'Every word in language signifies something' we have so far said *nothing whatever*; unless we have explained exactly *what* distinction we wish to make." *PI* 66 (quoted above) puts the same point in a different way, and *PI* 153 contains a clear remark on the broader issue:

> We are trying to get hold of the mental processes of understanding which seems to be hidden behind those coarser and therefore more readily visible accompaniments. But we do not succeed; or, rather, it does not get as far as a real attempt. For even supposing I had found something that happened in all those cases of understanding,—why should *it* be the understanding? And how can the process of understanding have been hidden, when I said "Now I understand" *because* I understood?! And if I say it is hidden—then how do I know what I have to look for? I am in a muddle.

As I see it, Kripke misconstrues the very nature of Wittgenstein's project by failing to appreciate the significance of Wittgenstein's remarks about the inner process picture of meaning and understanding. And in so doing, I believe, he attrib-

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[20] But consider that, from Kripke's perspective, the end of *PI* 308 appears even more explicit: "And now it looks as if we had denied mental processes. And naturally we don't want to deny them."

[21] *PI* 109: ". . . philosophical problems . . . are solved, rather, by looking into the workings of our language, and that in such a way as to make us recognize those workings: *in despite of* an urge to misunderstand them."

[22] Compare, for instance: *PI* 14, 25, 28, 34, 36, the end of 67, 94, 140, 141, 153, and 155. Recall also that Wittgenstein includes discussion in *PI* on the subject of the *tendency* to succumb to this erroneous way of thinking about things that puzzle us, in the passages that concern the nature of philosophy; see *PI* 38, 90, 93, 109, 116, 119, 122–131, 174, 196, 255, and 309, among others.

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utes a view to Wittgenstein that does not (cannot, perhaps, given the nature of the misconstrual) accurately represent the investigation that Wittgenstein was explicitly engaged in. So let us turn now to Kripke's argument for the skeptical paradox.

THE SKEPTICAL PARADOX

The by now notorious example that launches Kripke's attribution of a skeptical paradox to Wittgenstein starts by considering our understanding of the "meaning" of the sign "+." We might reflect that this understanding consists of having been shown pairs of integers, for instance, and been told and/or shown by example that when "+" features in between pairs, this signals a relation that is to occur between them. The relation is called "addition": the presence of "+" between two integers is meant to have a *result*, namely, the sum of the two quantities referred to by the terms flanking the sign.

Now, we would say that someone demonstrates understanding of "+" under conditions where she produces what we would call the "right" answer. So the question is: what determines that understanding? Kripke puts it like this: to understand addition is to grasp a rule, in that to grasp a rule is to have past intentions that determine a particular answer, and the same one, in the presence of "+," every time.

A "bizarre"[23] skeptic, however, raises the following doubt: how does my present ability with respect to addition determine what I intended by "addition" in the *past*? What does giving the answer "125" to the question "68 + 57" demonstrate (if anything) about what, and in virtue of what, that answer is generated? To put it another way (epistemologically): How can what I do now give a justification for my using the rule for addition when I do?[24] After all, says the skeptic, what can be brought to bear to deny the contention that maybe in the past I meant something *else* by "addition"? Maybe, in the past, what I meant by "addition" was that for 68 + 57 to add up to 125, whatever takes the second argument place of the function had to be less than 57. If it was more, then "68 + (n > 57)" will equal 5. Kripke calls this function "quaddition," and the skeptical paradox is off and running. What makes me think I didn't *always* mean "quus" by "plus"? The skeptic's point is that *nothing* in my giving the answer "125" this time in fact rules out *another* answer.

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[23] Kripke, *Wittgenstein*, 8.

[24] Kripke claims that the skeptical paradox has a metaphysical aspect and an epistemological aspect. The metaphysical aspect is the doubt shed on whether there is any fact of the matter as to meaning *plus* and not *quus*. The epistemological aspect of the paradox is the doubt shed on whether one has any justification for claiming that one means *plus* and not *quus*. The two are related in that if there were any fact of the matter, it would act as justification.

The essence of Kripke's example here is that "quus" is defined in such a way that my *present* performance with respect to $68 + 57$ could conform *either* to "quus" or to "plus." And the skeptical problem is: is there anything about what I would call my understanding of "plus" that could decide the issue as to which function I meant in the past and, therefore, which present employment of "+" is *correct*?

Now, if we look closely at the normative claim here, what we see that it is explicitly centered on conformity of past intentions to present deployment of a sign: it centers on the relation of *sign* to its meaning, and not to meaning/understanding in general.[25] And the important and subtle issue that separates Wittgenstein's concerns from Kripke's interpretation of those concerns, I believe, turns on the following. In spite of what Wittgenstein says about *application* or use of words or signs, the normative issue, for Wittgenstein, does not concern the question "what (if any) fact of the matter will rule on the question as to what '+' means?" For Wittgenstein, as I have claimed, the question appears to be "what it is to understand a sign once we realize that to understand a sign is to be able to correctly apply it in the future?"

We can clarify the issue here as follows. *If* the question "what does x mean?" is taken to convey the problem: "what (if any) fact of the matter rules on the issue of whether sign S retains its meaning from yesterday to today?" I think it is fair to say that Wittgenstein is simply not interested in that question. *That* question is a question about that part of the relation between symbols and their meanings, and Wittgenstein does not seem explicitly concerned with that. We might even say that there is indeed no fact of the matter that guarantees that my present use of S conforms to my past use of S given that it is *arbitrary* that a given sign expresses a given sense. But the arbitrariness of the connection between signs and what they express is *not* a skeptical problem about the nature of meaning and understanding; not for Wittgenstein, and, I would say, not at all. From the non-necessary connection between a sign and its sense we cannot conclude that our words never mean anything.

We could put this by suggesting that Kripke is misled by a linguistic feature of meaning (that it is expressed by signs), and leaps to a semantical conclusion to which, on careful scrutiny, he is ultimately not entitled to.[26] Kripke wants to attribute to Wittgenstein "an important contribution to philosophy . . . a new form of philosophical scepticism,"[27] so we can take it that he means to be making a

claim about *meaning* or *content*, and not merely about linguistic correctness (what sign goes with what sense and how). But if this is so, it is puzzling that Kripke formulates the so-called skeptical paradox by using examples that turn on what amounts to the nature of the conformity of what is expressed by my present use of a sign with what is expressed by my past uses of it.[28]

We may be able to shed further light on this by looking at Kripke's formulation of the skeptical paradox from another angle. Kripke focuses attention on the issue of what determines the meaning of a sign by setting up the problem as one that could arise with respect to the same sign expressing a different meaning from t to $t + 1$, thus exploiting the non-essential connection between a sign and its meaning. But then, it seems we should be able to erect the skeptical paradox by raising it with respect to *any* way of rending the (arbitrary) connection between a sign and its meaning. In effect, the skeptical paradox should likewise fall out of an example using the case where the sign is *different* but the meaning that attaches to it remains the *same* from t to $t + 1$. The point here is that if the relation between meanings and the symbols that express them can truly sustain Kripke's skeptical paradox, then the skeptical paradox should follow from driving *any* kind of wedge between a symbol and its meaning. But there is no skeptical paradox *about meaning* that will arise from an example where the *meaning* stays the same but the *sign* that conveys it changes from t to $t + 1$. At most, what results from this is something that we could, if so determined, call "skepticism" about *the relation between signs and their meanings*, but this amounts to nothing more than the trivial point that signs and the meanings they express are arbitrarily related.

SIGNS, MEANING, AND MENTAL CONTENT

We can further support the claim that Kripke's formulation of the skeptical paradox falls short of actually establishing one by drawing an analogy between his formulation and the one that was originally employed to make a case for semantic externalism. I believe that the analogy will also be useful in highlighting the issue Kripke appears to be ultimately defending in his reading of Wittgenstein, and how this may have led him to attribute to Wittgenstein a view at odds with Wittgenstein's own stated aims.

Externalism about content, as is well known, is the view that the meaning and mental content is at least partly determined by objects and properties outside the confines of the psychological subject's head. Now recall that Hilary Putnam

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[25] See McGinn, *Wittgenstein*, 144, for a clear formulation of this point.

[26] But from time to time Kripke slides in his formulation of the skeptical paradox, from claiming that there is no fact of the matter that can guarantee that my present use of S conforms to my past use of S, to wholesale skepticism about meaning (*Wittgenstein*, 62). Such slides provide some evidence that he does take himself to be drawing, on behalf of Wittgenstein, a "powerful argument" whose conclusions seem "radical" and "implausible" (*Wittgenstein*, 1).

[27] Kripke, *Wittgenstein*, 7.

[28] It's possible that Kripke is compelled to put the problem this way to avoid falling afoul of an obvious self-refutation: if the skeptic is right, after all, then the skeptic's *own* claim will be meaningless. But I am claiming that the move to problems that arise for linguistic meaning falls short of supplying a paradox about meaning *tout court*.

originally made the point by posing a puzzle about what determines the meaning of the symbol "w-a-t-e-r" on Earth and on Twin Earth. Twin Earth is a place identical to Earth in every respect save that the chemical composition of the substance that falls from the sky and of which rivers and oceans consist of is not H_2O but is (a complex formula abbreviated as) XYZ. Putnam's Twin Earth example was deployed in the context of trying to show that a Fregean view of meaning-determination claimed that two signs could *not* express the same sense and pick out different references. By stipulation, the signs that are spelled "w-a-t-e-r" on Earth *and* on Twin Earth express the same set of descriptive senses: tasteless, colorless, liquid, etc. And what Putnam concluded, however, was that it was not reasonable to claim that the population of Twin Earth was referring to H_2O with their word "water"; nor were we referring to XYZ with *our* word "water." Upshot: sense cannot determine reference; reference, instead, partly determines sense. *Water* means H_2O on Earth, but XYZ on Twin Earth.[29]

Now suppose we were to claim that a skeptical paradox arises about the meaning of the word "water," arguing for it in the following way. The sense expressed by the word "water" on Earth is captured by the predicates "tasteless, colorless, liquid," the same as it is on Twin Earth. Now, whether or not I had been completely in the dark as to the existence of Twin Earth, and the fact that the reference of the word "water" on Twin Earth is not H_2O but XYZ, is irrelevant. "Water," on this argument, means H_2O *and* XYZ, plus whatever else that is picked out by that set of predicates on as yet other unvisited Twin Earths.[30]

A skeptic could claim, it seems, that this much ambiguity is tantamount to nothing less than a skeptical paradox. There simply is no fact of the matter as to whether my present use of the word "water" conforms to my past use, when I took it to mean H_2O. For what can I point to in my past deployment of that word that would rule on the question that I meant H_2O and not XYZ? What fact of the matter is there that would settle the issue? How can I claim I *didn't* mean XYZ but, instead, H_2O when uttering "water" in the past? I can't (the skeptic would say). I can't rule out that any past use of "water," in fact, didn't mean "H_2O *and* XYZ *and.* . . ." It's an "incredible" and "self-defeating" conclusion,[31] but so be it: our signs can't mean anything, precisely because they could mean *anything*.

But now we can consider the crucial fact more clearly. As is well known by now,[32] what goes for meaning goes for *content*. The issue does not, in fact,

[29] Hilary Putnam, "Meaning and Reference," *Journal of Philosophy* 70 (1973): 699–771.

[30] We can stipulate that Fregean views hold here: in this context, the Twin Earth thought-experiment is not being used as its usual stand-in for semantic externalism.

[31] Kripke, *Wittgenstein*, 71.

[32] C. McGinn, "Charity, Interpretation, and Belief," *Journal of Philosophy* 74 (1977): 521–35, and T. Burge, "Individualism and the Mental," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 4, ed. P. French,

actually concern the constancy of the relation between the sign "water" and its meaning: that is, on the meaning I took myself to be expressing with it in the past, and conformity to that past use with my present use. The original thought-experiment in fact stipulates that the word "water" on Earth and on Twin Earth both have the *same* (Fregean) meaning. The genuine issue turns out to be: what *concept* is expressed by the word "water"? What is the content of my thought that "water is wet"? Is it *that H_2O is wet*? or *that XYZ is wet*? Or *that __ is wet*? Does the entity referred to have a role in determining the content of thought, or does it not? The answer to this is something that is ultimately independent of what signs I use to express the thought; and, if skepticism does infect content, it will have to do so irrespective of issues that center on the signs that express that content. Issues about the meaning of words turn out to be issues about the content of thought, to be sure; but issues that concern meaning-bearing vehicles are not issues about meaning.

So Kripke can't get wholesale skepticism about content from an argument that turns on what signs express what meanings. We should now be able to see his formulation of the skeptical paradox is not actually about the *meaning* of a word, but about conditions that affect its being expressed by sign. But, whatever does determine the nature of content, it is independent of the signs I use to express it. Meaning (content) skepticism does not follow from points about whether or not sign A means that p both at time t and at time $t + 1$. All that does follow is that signs can change their meaning.

I believe that Kripke goes astray on this point because, ultimately, his goal is to reveal what he takes to be Wittgenstein's skeptical *solution* to the so-called skeptical paradox.[33] If we take a broader look at what Kripke finds to be of the most interest about the skeptical paradox, it is that the skeptic's question is, in fact, directed to my taking it for granted that *I* know what *I* mean by a word in my language, or, to my taking it for granted that there are facts "about me" that can adjudicate what my words mean.[34] The skeptic's remarks, as Kripke sees it, prepare the ground for the skeptical solution. As Kripke reads Wittgenstein, what is under scrutiny is the issue of determining what I mean by the words I use and whether there is *anything at all* that *can* determine what I mean by the words I use. Kripke construes the problem ultimately as a skeptical issue regarding the

T. W. Uehling, Jr., and H. K. Wettstein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 73–121, both made this point in their analysis of Putnam's original claim about methodological solipsism, showing that externalism or anti-individualism about meaning was a far more significant claim than that "meaning ain't in the head"; rather, it is a claim that *the mind* itself ain't in the head. I import it here as a useful way of showing the limits of Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein.

[33] It is a *skeptical* solution, Kripke claims, because according to him, Wittgenstein accepts the skeptical paradox.

[34] Kripke, *Wittgenstein*, 21.

determination of meaning *from the perspective of an isolated independent particular speaker.* We could say that Kripke construes Wittgenstein's thesis concerning the nature of meaning as one that turns on what an *individual* can accomplish *by herself* in determining meaning.

We can see this by reviewing what Kripke claims that I purportedly have at my disposal against the skeptic and what it is, Kripke argues, is paper-thin. When asked what makes me think I didn't always mean "quus" by "plus," either in the past, or now in my present use of it, I might answer that (i) how I *use* "+" simply establishes what it means; that (ii) I *had in mind* that "+" means such and such, and that this is because I *grasp the rule* for *addition,* and that rule is not the rule for *quaddition;* or that (iii) I was *disposed* in the past to use "+" for *plus* and not *quus*[35] (so that what I would have said *then* is the determining fact of the matter for what I say *now*).

What the skeptic can claim, however, is that nothing in my "intending," nor in my past dispositions regarding "+," nor in my "having in mind"—no "fact about me"—can determine *which* of those two very different concepts I take myself to grasp.[36] After all, what does this grasp I allude to consist in? Did I perform some sort of ceremony, asserting "what I mean is 'plus'"? Do I perform that meaning-conferring ceremony every time? If so, what is that ceremony? What does it consist of? And how, in particular, does it cover every future computation I might be faced with? Did I perform it *this* time? If not, how can I be so sure that I didn't mean "quus" by "plus" up to now? What's the difference between a "quus" conferring meaning-ceremony and a "plus" conferring one? What do I have to go on to claim that there is a difference? What is there about my understanding of "plus" that makes *this* computation of 68 + 57 one more plain old instance of "addition" and not my first experience with an instance of "quaddition"? The situation, as Kripke will argue, is dire because, as the skeptic blithely points out, there is nothing I can point to, no fact of the matter, that is not equally determining of "quus" as it is for "plus." *I* myself don't and can't even know what I mean by my words.[37]

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[35] These correspond to the candidates Kripke suggests may work to blunt the skeptic's point (ultimately, according to Kripke, they don't): actual use or application of a sign; states of consciousness that are introspectively accessible; and dispositions.

[36] Kripke, *Wittgenstein,* 21. I take this as another example of how Kripke tends to assume that he has made his case for skepticism about *meaning/content* from his formulation of the skeptical paradox, and sometimes slides between the linguistic point to the more general point about content. Note, moreover, that Kripke appears to be less than sensitive, in his formulation of the issue here, to what Wittgenstein explicitly wants to reject: the notion that it makes any kind of sense to say that "there is something going on in me" that constitutes the nature of my following a rule. I think both of these errors are due to Kripke's interpretation of the concept of "private" as *non-social,* as I make clear below.

[37] I would hazard the suggestion here that Kripke is taken by the right *problem* (that is, the one that Wittgenstein is genuinely investigating), but draws the wrong conclusion. The claim that there is

Of course, according to Kripke, and on behalf of Wittgenstein, the conclusion that we do not mean anything by our words is "insane and intolerable."[38] And the skeptical solution Kripke attributes to Wittgenstein—the so-called community view—is claimed, by Kripke, to tie together the rule-following considerations and the private language argument in an important way. What Kripke claims is that the real significance of the private language argument lies in what the rule-following considerations reveal; namely, that a rampant skepticism infects the attempt to pin down what rule we are following in attributing a particular meaning to a word, so long as that attempt is performed in isolation from our fellow language users. The rule-following considerations are a way of highlighting that the skeptical paradox ultimately turns on what I *alone* can mean by my words and what *constitutes* my meaning something by my words. What Kripke takes himself to reconstruct from Wittgenstein's text is a defense of the notion of meaning that is erected on the idea that no single individual *can* mean anything by her words. So before we go on to challenge this interpretation, we must briefly consider the private language argument.

THE PRIVATE LANGUAGE ARGUMENT

On the face of it, there does seem to be one set of concepts whose criteria for application appear to be restricted to facts about *me*: the first-person concepts that I use to refer to my sensation-states, such as pain. If anything seems to be hidden, inner, or mentalistic, my sensation states seem to. To consider the concept of "pain," or to be asked to visualize "pain," does seem to call up some sort of entity (an experience, perhaps) before the mind, so it appears to make sense to say that the *meaning* of our sensation-words are determined by hidden, private, inner mental states or processes.

The topic of sensation-states and how we refer to them thus appears to be the opportunity Wittgenstein takes to ask: could the semantic character of an entire language—the words for sensation states and everything else—plausibly be constructed along the model that seems to make sense for signs for our sensation-states?

The answer, according to Wittgenstein, is no. What Wittgenstein attempts in the private language argument is to deny that *even* words for sensation-states could have their meaning determined by an inner state or process. What

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nothing that *I* might mean by my words is ambiguous, to be sure: one could draw the conclusion that meaning is not an internalist (Wittgenstein); or that there is no fact of the matter about meaning (Kripke). But on closer scrutiny, it seems as though an implicit internalism about meaning appears in Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein (odd, given Kripke's own insights in *Naming and Necessity*), which falls short of wholesale skepticism about meaning.

[38] Kripke, *Wittgenstein,* 60.

Wittgenstein brings to bear are his remarks about the nature of meaning and understanding (which include the notion of following a rule) against the topic of the meaning of sensation-signs, a plausible candidate for the inner state conception of meaning.

Wittgenstein contends that we can no more restrict the meaning of our sensation-words to a private, inner, mental, or hidden realm than we can for any other of the words in our language.[39] Sensation-words are *part of language*; and language and meaning, for Wittgenstein, turn on use, application, and—as we have been arguing—*correct* application, in the context of communication (*PI* 258). The concept of application of a sign, I argued above, introduces the concept of rule-following, which itself embeds a concept of normativity. To follow a rule is to get something *right*. Normativity, as we have been emphasizing, is a useful way of highlighting the big picture; to ask what it is that determines the nature of meaning will be to ask what makes it correct to apply this sign, and, most importantly, what makes it possible to say "now I can go on" (*PI* 151).

As I see it, the link between Wittgenstein's consideration of the private language argument and rule-following appears to rest on the central importance of the concept of normativity in his investigation of the nature of meaning. So the significance of the passages that contain the private language argument is that (if it is coherent at all) a private language is, in fact, a *reductio*: you *yourself* wouldn't understand it (*PI* 257). Why is this? Because on the conception of private meaning and private understanding, *understanding* and *appearing to understand* collapse into one another. Normativity is sacrificed, therefore, in a private language; but this is a non-negotiable element of meaning and understanding, according to Wittgenstein. There could not be a genuine language whose conditions of application build in a coherent account of normativity; but a so-called private language is precisely one that doesn't. So, we can argue, Wittgenstein concludes that the concept of a private language is one that cannot be defended, at best, and is incoherent, at worst.

The private language argument is an attempt by Wittgenstein to show that even what looks like a genuinely private language (comprising the words we have for our sensation-states) fails a criterial test for meaning. Nothing can be meaning, nor be graspable by the understanding, unless it carries a normative component. Meaning or understanding is a mastery, as Wittgenstein claims, and a mastery is governed by rules. If the language for our sensation states really were private, Wittgenstein claims, whatever we thought was the correct application of a word *would be*; and the notion of correct application of a word would collapse; a private language sidesteps normativity. As I argued above, Wittgenstein uses the example of the words for our sensation states to show that meaning cannot

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[39] See D. Pears, *The False Prison* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

be an inner state or process, even for those words which appear to refer to inner states or processes, because meaning and application go hand in hand. And, for Wittgenstein, the concept of application is one that carries an objectively normative component; something cannot *be* a correct application simply by *seeming* like one.

But Kripke takes another element as the object of attention in Wittgenstein's position. What Kripke draws as a line between the rule-following considerations and the private language argument is this: if we can decide privately what the word "pain" means, which is to decide privately what counts as correct application of it, the word "pain" could apply to everything, or nothing; such a view would result in there being no such thing as meaning anything by the word "pain." This is, of course, Kripke's skeptical paradox, which he claims is contained in *PI* 202: "And hence also 'obeying a rule' is a practice. And to *think* one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule. Hence it is not possible to obey a rule 'privately': otherwise thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same thing as obeying it."

And the solution to the paradox, as Kripke claims on Wittgenstein's behalf— the constitutive element of meaning—is to be found in a relation with those with whom we communicate. Kripke appears to take Wittgenstein's frequent references to "language and the activities into which it is woven" to support his contention that it is the community, and not an isolated individual in a private ceremony, that establishes the nature of meaning. To support this, Kripke argues that we must read Wittgenstein as wanting to repudiate a thesis about meaning based on *truth-conditions*—the view he defended in his early philosophical treatise on logical form and meaning.[40]

In *Philosophical Investigations*, however, as we claimed above, Wittgenstein is, by his own lights, clearly dedicated to denying a certain picture of meaning and the kinds of inclinations that seem to lead to it. I argued above that it was an inner mental state or process theory of meaning, one that can be seen to undergird both a Fregean and Russellian theory of meaning, which Wittgenstein criticizes as examples of having succumbed to the misguided view of meaning.[41]

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[40] Wittgenstein does take a Fregean and Russellian theory of meaning seriously in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1922). Frege's theory claims that meaning is that which points or leads the way to *what makes the sentence true*. Russell's version would be to say that every word in the language corresponds either to a certain kind of particular or to a universal, such that it can make a contribution in a definitive way to the truth or falsity of a sentence.

[41] This criticism applies both to Frege's theory of sense and to Russell's more directly referential view. Both *involve* a mental state or process. For Frege, the mental process is grasp of a (mind- and language-independent) sense, associated with our words. What Russell called *acquaintance* is, in effect, a grasping relation between the mind, universals, and (as he claimed) sense-data. Wittgenstein (I believe) was concerned to jettison the whole picture that these theories supported, what he calls the "subliming of logic."

Kripke claims that Wittgenstein instead wants to contrast *truth-conditions* with *assertibility-conditions* by way of his points about the impossibility of obeying a rule "privately." The solution to the skeptical paradox is not that there is *some-thing* expressed by our words, which counts as their meaning, which we understand, associate with our words, and entertain mentally. Rather, the solution will turn on the conditions under which our fellows in the semantic community accept our assertions.

According to Kripke, in brief, what gives our assertions meaning is that other language speakers accept what we say: "All that is needed to legitimize assertions that someone means something is that there be roughly specifiable circumstances under which they are legitimately assertable, and the game of asserting them has a role in our lives. No supposition that 'facts correspond' to those assertions is needed."[42]

What Kripke argues is that the circumstances in question involve reference to the *community*. As we saw above, Kripke reads Wittgenstein as claiming that no one by herself can determine meaning—there is no such thing as a *private* language, understood as a language whose content is specified by me and me alone—on pain of paradox. So Kripke reads Wittgenstein's private language argument as a set of remarks aimed at dislodging the idea that one can, for oneself, determine content and understanding. Rather, as Kripke claims, Wittgenstein's view about the nature of meaning, meant to solve the skeptical paradox, is that meaning is established by public criteria. The community with which we, as it were, play the language game that we play is that which determines, in a strict sense, what we mean by our words.

So according to Kripke, the force of the idea that a private language is not possible is that to follow a rule privately is not coherent. This is because, as we suggested above, the very idea of following a rule privately introduces the problem of *appearing* to do so as opposed to actually doing so. The notion of following a rule is crucial to that of what determines meaning, and the concept of following a rule collapses if it is possible to *think* one is doing so, so we must appeal to something to block that possibility. As Kripke sees it, interpreting Wittgenstein as defending the community view has the desirable outcome of both facing the skeptical paradox and solving it in a way that renders Wittgenstein's text less obscure and more cohesive.[43] The defense is roughly as follows. Others in the community can *check* and *agree* or disagree with the things that I say. They accept what I say with respect to a criterion: that of whether what I say *agrees* with what they would say under similar circumstances. If they disagree, they might do so for (at least) two reasons: either what I am saying is produced by some random,

non-rule-governed criteria; or, it is mistake that all the same is based on the kind of rule-governed criteria they recognize. The latter can still gain us entry to the community as fellow communicators; the former cannot.

The big picture, as Kripke argues, is given in Wittgenstein's emphasis on the "form of life" (*PI* 19). Our utterances have a role to play, and are useful (have a utility) in a wider framework. *We* simply are not alone in our communicative enterprises; we participate in a form of life, one that, according to Kripke, is what Wittgenstein believes is the nature of meaning and understanding. Part of participating in that form of life involves *expectations* that others will behave as we do with their words; we can rely on them, we can predict what they will say (exceptions of course can occur), and above all, we can understand them. Someone who produces sums according to, say, the "quus" rule is not in conformity with *our* form of life, though they may well be with another. But someone who claims to be adding, and not *quadding*, will be judged and accepted to be doing so, so long as the utterances agree or conform to what the community members do themselves. This is what, on Kripke's view, grounds the solution to the skeptical paradox, because it meets the paradox head on and sidesteps it neatly.

NORMATIVITY, PRIVATE LANGUAGE, AND THE SKEPTICAL PARADOX: CONCLUSION

We are now in a position to tie the strands of our discussion together. I have been working with the view that Wittgenstein uses the notions of ability, application and mastery with respect to our use of language to put pressure on the mentalistic conception of understanding and meaning, and to unfold and clarify a set of concepts that he has found to be interrelated. As I read Wittgenstein, no isolated and independent mental state could "contain" or constitute this sort of projectible ability, and thus, no such thing can be the nature of meaning. Note that the notion of pointing to anything like an isolated, independent, mental entity to be the constitutive element of "understanding a rule" is far-fetched, at best. How could an *ability* be any such thing? How is the normativity that constitutes that ability captured in such a thing? If understanding a sign involves following a rule, and the nature of rule-following can't be characterized plausibly as a hidden, inner, mental process, then the chances of the nature of meaning itself being constituted in that way come under fire.

Now, as commentators have noted,[44] Kripke reads "private" to mean individual, and "individual" as opposed to "public," in the sense of one vs. many, alone vs. in company, solitary vs. social. But there is another interpretation. I will conclude by arguing that while I agree with Kripke that sensation-word

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[42] Kripke, *Wittgenstein*, 77.

[43] Kripke gives a strong briefing on what he thinks is the structure of *PI* in *Wittgenstein*, 78–89.

[44] See, among others, McGinn, *Wittgenstein*.

examples—the "private language" argument—are but one specific case of a more general problem, I do not agree that the problem is solved by a community criterion of meaning.

The problem, as I see it, is that Wittgenstein's emphasis on the role of the community appears somewhat different from the one that Kripke attributes to him in his reading. It is true that Wittgenstein does emphasize that language is an activity that takes place among those wishing to communicate, and that the context ("language and the actions into which it is woven") is important. But note that Wittgenstein's remarks in *PI* tend to take the form of countering a picture of meaning and understanding that might otherwise tempt us; and he does not offer many examples of warding off the tempting but mistaken idea of a solitary, individualist, non-social determination of meaning, by, for example, emphasizing the nature of the community and a community-based determination of meaning. We could even hazard the point here that Wittgenstein was aware that a communitarian criterion of meaning (in Kripke's sense) will not necessarily succeed in thwarting the misguided view of meaning and content that he is concerned to dislodge. From the fact that our fellows in the community play a constitutive role in determining content it will not follow that content is *not* the "queer," inner mental process that Wittgenstein is concerned to deny. To see this, note that the question as to what determines the mental content of those in the community can still arise, and it is not inconsistent to claim that mental content is constituted by the queer, inner, mental processes of *those in the community*.[45] Perhaps, that is, it is true that what determines meaning or content must be partly constituted by the minds of others—but it won't follow from this that the content in *other* minds in the community isn't determined by *their* inner mental processes. Merely being *other* is not enough to thwart the inner state conception of meaning, and it may be that Wittgenstein appreciated this.

So my disagreement with Kripke would fall squarely on his reading of "private": he thinks it is to be understood in opposition to "social"; I think it should be understood along the lines of Wittgenstein's professed target: the hidden, the inner, the introspectively accessible, the mentalistic.[46] As I see it, any conception of meaning along such lines would undercut normativity, and Wittgenstein's investigation is meant to show that normativity is a key concept in language, meaning, and communication. Moreover, I believe that Kripke's emphasis on the *solution* to the so-called skeptical paradox tends to mislead him on the subject of Wittgenstein's broader concerns. Given that Kripke believes that

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[45] See C. McGinn, *Mental Content* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), which deploys this point against Burge's extension of semantic externalism from cases that depend on variation in the natural environment to cases of variation in the *social* environment (in Burge, "Individualism and the Mental.")

[46] See McGinn, *Wittgenstein*; I take this point and apply it in a different direction.

Wittgenstein offers a skeptical solution to the paradox that is based on a communitarian view of meaning, it seems practically inevitable that he will interpret Wittgenstein's remarks against a "private" language as targeted in favor of a contrast between the social and the individual, rather than as between the inner/mentalistic and (a mastery in) a language game (*PI* 7).

And there is wider picture of disagreement, as I have all but stated explicitly. I do not see that Wittgenstein does raise a skeptical paradox, or that he offers a skeptical solution, as Kripke reads him. The passage that Kripke cites as evidence of the paradox (*PI* 201) is not, as I read it, the statement of a paradox concerning the impossibility of meaning anything by our words. Rather, I think it is squarely in line with Wittgenstein's project as I have expressed it here. What he notes is that rule-following *can*, on the face of it, exhibit ambiguity. But in thinking that "every course of action can be made out to accord with a rule" (and so, *no* course of action can), what we are doing is falling into a temptation to see rule-following as an entity that shadows our actions, as the bad conception of meaning is taken to "shadow" or "be associated with" our words, and thus taking that ambiguity as something it is not. Instead (*PI* 199):

> To obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are *customs* (uses, institutions).
> To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be master of a technique.

As I noted above, I think that Wittgenstein ties the nature of meaning to rule-following, and uses the rule-following considerations to undercut the inner state or process conception of meaning. What I think these passages give us reason to believe is that Wittgenstein is arguing that what we must guard against is the temptation to see rule-following as the very thing that he is claiming meaning is not. Rule-following only seems to exhibit ambiguity if we insist on seeing it as an entity that must be grasped and intended in our use of words. Rather, what we must see is that rule-following carries its own brand of normativity with it, and that it is *this* that meaning consists of. We follow rules in grasping, conveying, and understanding meaning; and this is evident, Wittgenstein claims, in that we are able to grasp, convey, and understand meaning time and time again, in future activities, without jeopardizing communication. To understand means to do so on indefinitely many future occasions, successfully. This is what Wittgenstein means by meaning and understanding, on my view.

In conclusion, I am not convinced that the rule-following considerations support a radical skepticism about meaning, as Kripke argues. Kripke's interpretation, however, does highlight an important connection between the private language argument and the rule-following considerations. This is significant, as

I have argued, when coupled with Wittgenstein's avowed project of countering a mistaken picture of meaning, language, and understanding. When read from the perspective that an emphasis on a certain kind of normativity brings, key passages in *Philosophical Investigations* appear to fall into a fairly seamless whole, whose main thrust is the project of removing the temptation to distort semantic notions. The result is not just negative, however. Wittgenstein can be read as having revealed a key component of understanding, namely, correct future application, and noting its significance for any thesis about meaning. This position, of course, tends to repudiate Kripke's contention that Wittgenstein appears to formulate, accept, and solve a skeptical paradox. But Kripke's contention that the "real" private language argument is contained in the rule-following considerations, though ultimately incorrect, was inspired; and it was the inspiration for the interpretation I have argued for here.

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SKEPTICISM, CONTEXTUALISM, AND THE EPISTEMIC "ORDINARY"

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Epistemological contextualism is the view that the truth-conditions of a knowledge claim necessarily depend in part on the context in which the claim is made or assessed. That view emerged primarily out of the attempt to defeat epistemological skepticism, and many claim that it succeeds. In this article, I argue that contextualism fails both in its response to global (i.e., Cartesian) skepticism and in its characterization of "ordinary" epistemic practices and attitudes. I present a different way of understanding contextual variation in epistemic practices on which standards of knowledge are constant, but are met differently in different contexts. I argue that, although my account does not defeat skepticism, it provides a better characterization of "ordinary" epistemic practices, of skeptical inquiry, and of the relation between the two, than does contextualism. My overall aim is to elucidate, but not to "solve," the problem of skepticism, in a way that elucidates ordinary epistemic practices and attitudes.

The problem of skepticism lies in the conflict between skepticism and everyday epistemic attitudes: skeptical reasoning (at its best) is flawless, compelling, and thus rationally undeniable; but the skeptical conclusion is absolutely implausible, even ridiculous, from an "ordinary" perspective.[1] An adequate response to skepticism should explain how the knowledge claims we make in everyday life can be true, even though, in some sense, skepticism is correct. Initially, that seems impossible: if A and B oppose one another, how could we show that A is correct without denying B? The contextualist response is that, although A and B appear to oppose one another, they really do not. Skepticism and "ordinary" knowledge

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[1] See Barry Stroud, *The Significance of Philosophical Skepticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), and Thompson Clarke, "The Legacy of Skepticism," *Journal of Philosophy* (1972): 754–69, for illuminating discussions of the idea that the skeptical philosopher occupies a different standpoint from the one we occupy in "everyday life."