國立臺灣大學文學院哲學系

碩士論文

Department of Philosophy

College of Liberal Arts

National Taiwan University

Master Thesis

規則依循、意義與規範性

Rule following, Meaning and Normativity

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中華民國 100 年 7 月

July, 2011

ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I defend a Wittgensteinian rule following based theory of meaning, by proposing a solution to Kripke's sceptical paradox based on an acceptance of a non-semantic normativity condition. First of all, I draw a distinction between rule following practices: in accordance with a rule and following a rule. Secondly, I show the intelligibility of Kripke's sceptical paradox expounded in *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* and claim that it would be a genuine problem to any theory of meaning. Then I argue that the sceptical paradox can be avoided by the proposed distinction. Thirdly, I show that if we adopt the semantic normativity, then the paradox seems unavoidable. But the paradox could be dealt with if we choose to embrace an alternative conception of normativity, which is intersubjective in character. Moreover, I will further show that the rule following based theory of meaning coped with intersubjective normativity is able to account for successful communication in some abnormal cases, such as malapropisms.

Key words: Wittgenstein, rule following, sceptical paradox, intersubjective normativity, Kripke, Davidson, theory of meaning

中文摘要

在本論文中，我嘗試提出一個解決克里普奇懷疑論的解決方案，利用一個維根斯坦式的意義理論，奠基於我們對於非語意的規範條件的接納，我們可以使用依循規則的行為來解釋意義。本文中，首先我將嘗試把維根斯坦於《哲學探究》一書中提出的意義理論加以改善：將我們依循規則的方式分開來談。如此，我們可以宣稱依循規則的方式有兩種，一是符合規則，二是依循規則。接下來，我會論證克里普奇的關於意義的懷疑論證是可信的，亦即，對於任何一個意義理論，它都是一個難題。不過，只要我們將依循規則的方式分開來，我們或許可以避免懷疑論的攻擊。最後，如果我們在尋找一個意義的規範性條件，那麼語意式的規範性似乎不是一個好的選擇。我將論證，接受一個語意式的規範性會導致懷疑論的攻擊。但是，如果我們選擇一個非語意式的規範性，例如：互為主體規範性，那麼或許我們有比較好的機會不會掉入懷疑論的攻擊中。最後，我將論證一個規則依循的意義理論加上互為主體的規範性可以解釋近音詞誤用卻有成功溝通的現象。

關鍵字：維根斯坦；規則依循；懷疑論論證；互為主體規範性；克里普奇；戴維森；近音詞誤用；意義理論

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Speaking language is an ability for human beings to communicate our beliefs of the external world, of our own mind, and of other's mind. A natural language in general consists of a great number of linguistic expressions, which are not merely syntactic components, but also have some semantically fixed interpretations. Statements of a language, although sharing the standard features of the syntax, deserve a distinction between those that express real matters of fact and those that, in Hume's term, project various attitudes of the speaker. It is then a difficult task to give one theory, e.g. a factualist theory of meaning, to explain the meaning of all statements given in a language for that the statements of the former type seems to be true under distinct type of conditions to those of the latter type for it seems dubious whether there are facts which can be shared by others to support the truth of the statement 'I feel good.'

One proposal is to retain the identity of meaning and facts only for statements about real matters of external world. The approach is favored by logical positivists who have a strong inclination to pursue a unified theory of meaning. We can also trace the origins of their thought back to *Tractatus*, in which Wittgenstein has marked a boundary between meaningful statements and meaningless ones. However, in the transition of his thoughts, Wittgenstein has turned away from the thesis that the theory of meaning elaborated in *Tractatus* is the required theory of meaning, instead, he maintained was an attitude that *Tractatus* could not be the whole story of how communication and meaning work. Nevertheless, Wittgenstein has showed no denunciation to his former thesis in any case, but tried to give various and yet intelligible interpretations of our meaning discourse.

Hence, questions such as 'How does meaning generate from using words?' and 'How do people communicate via utterances?' could receive an explanation from a rule following framework. Still, other problems would ensue once it is allowed to follow different rules in similar situations. Are interpretations going end somewhere? Is it possible to tell right applications of terms from wrong ones? Would it be alright if I give my own meanings to terms that refer to my mind activities? These discussions can all be sought in Wittgenstein's account of rule following of which I will reconstruct in chapter two.

Wittgenstein considered over and over the question how to give a theory of meaning with respect to natural language in *Philosophical Investigations*. Augustian picture of meaning, which identifies the meaning of a word via ostension, is not correct nor incorrect in every respect. It could be the theory of meaning we have when learning a new language, but it seems to lack convincing power in explaining our mother language learning. Furthermore, it is possible that when a layman speaks of 'five', what he has in mind is not referring to an abstract entity, but only the quantity of his fingers. And there is no problem for him to use numbers in communicating with others, who may know and refer numbers to a lot of abstract entities in another realm. Given that communication is a practice, the theory of meaning is to explain how the practices are performed, while not rendering actions as arbitrary in due course, by specifying which rules they follow. The rule-following theory of meaning would be anti-realistic in its root since it does not rest upon abstract entities, platonic or mental to determine whether an agent is following a rule.

Nonetheless, any account of rule-following based theory of meaning would encounter the one and the most difficulty, which is that it is almost not possible to distinguish the agent's practices or actions as conforming to a rule from following a

rule without appeal to the intention of the agent. However, to rest our interpretation of other actions on the intention of the speaker is likely to lead us into ashes for that what we see from the actions is that the intention of others is non-transparent. Hence, I think that it would be worthwhile to given an explanation in terms of normativity. The issue would receive thorough treatment in the final chapter.

The thesis aims at establishing the following two claims: First, to explain communication and meaning in terms of a rule-following based theory of meaning is cogent in the sense that it can avoid Kripke's sceptical paradox with respect to meaning. Second, an appropriate conception of normativity, integrated with the given theory, could bring us to a more promising position in showing how abnormal uses of linguistic entities, such as malapropisms, is able to arrive at successful communications.

Wittgenstein's remarks in *Philosophical Investigations* have received novel interpretations since 1980s, after Kripke published a small volume claiming a sceptical problem that threatens meaning factualism. His claim was so controversial that barely no philosophers (including Blackburn, McDowell, Crispin Wright, and Boghossian) accepted his interpretation for Wittgenstein. Nonetheless, regardless the faithfulness of the interpretation, the sceptical problem is itself genuine to most theories of meaning and should receive treatment rather than being dismissed. I will reformulate the argument so as to be more focus on meaning factualism. Besides, Kripke's solution, which appeals to the community to answer the paradox, is so vaguely formulated that even received no substantial attention. I think that it is worth to reconstruct the solution from a projective aspect, which stems from Hume's attitude to moral statements. I believe that we can see its intelligibility in the light of Hume.

Objections and criticisms to Kripke's work would be the main theme in chapter

three. Some are criticizing Kripke for being unable to provide a coherent theory, e.g. Blackburn, and some are seeing Wittgenstein in another aspect, e.g. McDowell, and arguing that Kripke's interpretation may be wrong. Others may provide his own interpretations to Wittgenstein, e.g. Wright, to assimilate Wittgenstein's philosophy of mathematics with his philosophy of language. The aforementioned theses would be discussed in turn in order to see the sceptical argument in the right track.

The final chapter will mainly focus on the very notion of normativity. Different theories of meaning, I will argue, integrate different conceptions of normativity. Meanings are not static, but generate through processes of communication. It is common sense that a particular statement would receive distinct meanings in different contexts. However, 'context' is a term too vague to be understood. Recent developments of belief revision theory have been fruitful in explaining the fluctuation of meaning through analyzing the context. However, even if we adopt one of its theories, it would still be dubious how to decide a given set of belief is, and should be, revised through receiving pieces of evidences.

The simile between language and games will shed some light on the issue. Games are not only played in accord with rules but are confined by rules. Players are in a position forced to follow rules in order to win. Speakers and hearers are under a similar vein in which the utterances are made in accord with rules. Nonetheless, there is a crucial problem for rule-following, that is, using a language is not merely speaking or interpreting according to grammar and conventional rules. First of all, language users are not all restricted to follow specific rules in all circumstances of communication. Second, we are allowed to breach rules anytime when possible. To make things worse, we are allowed to follow deviant rules in similar situations and yet still succeed in communication. By contrast, finding established rules do not

satisfy our need, we are able to form new rules when possible. I will subsequently reformulate three theses on normativity, namely, semantic normativity, communal normativity, and intersubjective normativity, and argue that each of them is not satisfactory in one way or some others. I will propose a more appealing conception of normativity to cope with the rule following theory of meaning pursuing here.

CHAPTER ONE

Wittgenstein's Rule Following Account of Meaning

In order to grasp the theory of meaning of later Wittgenstein, it would be necessary to investigate the possibility of a unified theory in advance, since the idea first grips him in his early work, and is the main theme in the first hundred sections in *Philosophical Investigations* (*PI*). In this chapter, I will defend a rule following based theory of meaning by investigating rule following practices. I propose a distinction between 'in accordance with a rule' and 'following a rule' and I argue that such a distinction, if cogent, would eventually lead us free from Kripke's sceptical paradox.

1.1 Against a unified theory of meaning

Given that there are various forms of unified meaning theories, I will only discuss two of them, which appear to be the utmost concern for Wittgenstein. One is an ostensive theory of meaning, which was rooted in Augustine's *Confessions*. The thesis is that when we learn new words, we learn them ostensively, therefore, the meaning of words resides in our ostensive pratices. The other is to refer the meaning of sentences to propositions or mental entities of the relevant kind. The approach lasts quite long that one can even sense the similar spirit in contemporary philosophical theses. However, Wittgenstein, being aware that a philosophical thesis is never possible to be universal, offers alternative accounts of meaning that in harmony with our uses of language rather than disproves the above theories of meaning. In arguing against Augustinian conception of language, Wittgenstein's stance is not that ostension cannot be used in that way; it is that it would be a serious misunderstanding to think that it is all that is necessary to make the connection between words and their referents.

Wittgenstein begins with a quotation from Augustine's *Confessions* in *PI* to characterize an ostensive theory of meaning:

> When grown-ups named some object and at the same time turned towards it, I perceived this, and I grasped that the thing was signified by the sound they uttered, since they meant to point *it* out. This, however, I gathered from their gestures, the natural language of all peoples, the language that by means of facial expression and the play of eyes, of the movements of the limbs and the tone of voice, indicates the affections of the soul when it desires, or clings to, or rejects, or recoils from, something. In this way, little by little, I learnt to understand what things the words, which I heard uttered in their respective places in various sentences, signified. And once I got my tongue around these signs, I used them express my wishes.[1]

The passage suggests, if only roughly, a theory of meaning for natural language in terms of ostension and signs. The underlying thought, for Augustine, is to give a unified account of how we acquire language. While the account explains *one* method of how we get to know the meaning of words like 'table', 'chair', it leaves other linguistic expressions, such as commands or questions, unexplained as they would take care of themselves. While some terms can be defined ostensively, mental terms are hardly defined in that way. Augustine suggests a relation between words and meaning, just not all the meaning of words can be defined in that way.

Other philosophers who try to establish a theory of meaning with different conceptions of meaning more or less share the same thought of Augustine. One proposal is to retain the identity of meaning and facts only for statements about real matters of external world. The approach is favored by logical positivists who have a

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[1] *Philosophical Investigations*, §1

strong inclination to pursue a unified theory of meaning. The origins of their thought can be traced back to *Tractatus Logical-Philosophicus* (*TLP*), in which Wittgenstein has marked a boundary between meaningful statements, as statements that represent the reality, and meaningless ones. Nonetheless, logical positivists depart themselves from Wittgenstein by advancing the 'verification principle', according to which a sentence is meaningful if it can be verified by sense datum.[2] Wittgenstein did not disclaim the verification theory of meaning directly, though I believe that the goal would be achieved in the reconstruction of his thesis.

Besides, to acquire a rough picture of Wittgenstein's theory of meaning expounded in *PI*, perhaps it is a good way to approach the issue via the theory of reference in *TLP*. Early Wittgenstein shared with Russell at hoping that to provide a single philosophical account of language is plausible. There are two essential components in Wittgenstein's logical atomism: (i) that meaning is not contingent (ii) that the meaning of a name is its reference. (*TLP* 3.203) Claim (i) can either mean that one is certain of one's words mean or that the meaning of the words cannot fail to exist, and this is where Russell and Wittgenstein depart. Russell took the first line while Wittgenstein took the second. To combine (i) with (ii) reveals that genuine names, contrary to ordinary names, of a language refer to the indestructible objects which are simple and basic components of the world. (*TLP* 2.02-2.023) The early Wittgenstein tries to prove the isomorphism between language and world, such that propositions correspond to states of affairs. States of affairs of which are existing are called facts. The world is not composed of objects, but determined by the existing states of affairs. The theory of meaning proposed in *TLP* would be realistic in essence

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[2] The approach was later identified by Quine (1951) as a form of reductionism, which can be traced back to Locke and Hume. The reason for Quine to abandon the verification theory of meaning is, of course, distinct from Wittgenstein. However, it is worthwhile to see that from a holistic aspect, it is nonsense to speak about the relation between a linguistic component and a factual component for any individual sentence.

since it admits the existence of facts as the meaning of propositions.

As Wittgenstein considers the explanation of the meaning of words via ostension, it is discovered that even though the act of ostension correctly describes a system of acquiring a language, it succeeds only partially if it aims at providing a unifying account of language acquiring. It is because there are still diverse explanations and the act of ostension is only correct with restriction to a certain extent. And we are in no position to decide which is primary since even the act of ostension is not presuppositionless. As Wittgenstein says, 'one has already to know something in order to be capable of asking a thing's name.'[3] To show a novice that 'this is the King in a chess game' by pointing to something requires that he already knows what a piece in the game is.[4]

The theories of meaning mentioned above was the central concern for Wittgenstein from *PI* §1 to §242 where he aims to argue against the possibility of a unified theory of meaning. Beside Augustine's picture, Wittgenstein keeps his attention on the thesis that meaning of words is companied with the mental process when uttering them. The idea that what is going on 'in your mind' needs not have any relevance to what you are meaning at the time. The question Wittgenstein asks is whether there is something going on in his mind when he says the words by virtue of which he conceives it as a single word. And of course, there need not be anything of relevance that accompanies the commands. (*PI* 20a)

Wittgenstein subsequently invites the reader to think that we could have different uses for a given sentence among people. That is, while mathematicians may refer numbers to abstract entities, laymen can refer numbers to fingers or objects signifying them. It would be awkward to say that the laymen have misused numbers.

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[3] *Philosophical Investigations*, §30b
[4] *Philosophical Investigations*, §31a

Moreover, it seems that we could further imagine a primitive language, consists of only a very few words, happens to be the whole language of a tribe[5]. Perhaps these words serve the role as orders and commands, and nothing else. By rejecting the idea that an order is essentially composed of two parts, Wittgenstein is rejecting a fundamental and natural component of Frege. It is the idea that language is a means for communicating thoughts, that is, representations of reality. (*PI* 20b, 363) One may claim that the primitive language is not complete because of its limited expressibility comparing to other languages. Nonetheless, Wittgenstein rejects the claim by saying that we even have no slightest idea of what a complete language is. Would it mean a language which can serve to express all the truths in the external world? Obviously not since no language is ideal in this sense. Is it necessary for language to have grammar rules and a set of words so that we can generate sentences from them? The answer seems to be negative, either. For that no one prevents us to use only a finite set of words, without any sentences, to communicate. According to Wittgenstein, a language is like a city, composed of mazes and streets, and one cannot draw a clear demarcation between city and its suburbs.

In the transition of his thoughts, Wittgenstein has turned away from the thought that thesis elaborated in *TLP* is the required theory of meaning. The question "What do you mean?" is answered by "I mean p", but not "I mean what I mean by 'p'."[6] From 1920s on, Wittgenstein has turned to the view that there is no such thing called meaning, neither as propositions, nor as mental processes. Furthermore, he holds that 'an explanation *says* what a proposition *means*'[7]. Nonetheless, it is not given clearly on what an explanation is.

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[5] *Philosophical Investigations*, §6

[6] The Big Typescript 213 : 3

[7] The Big Typescript : 3

Later on, he maintained an attitude that the thesis expounded in *TLP* could not be the whole story of how communications proceed. Nevertheless, this is not to denunciate that the former thesis is unsatisfactory in explaining meaning and communication, but aims to give various and yet intelligible interpretations of our meaning discourse.

When Wittgenstein answers the question of how we acquire language by saying that our communication proceeds like a game governed by rules, our attention should be drawn to the diversities and contingencies of games. It is then reasonable to see why Wittgenstein argues at length against a unifying account of language in the first hundred sections of *PI*. Given that we find no common feature or property among all games, perhaps we could accept that there is also no such a thing common to all languages.

If something is to be the meaning of a word or a sentence, it is its uses in particular circumstances. Whether a *use* is following a rule is thus a key to distinguish normal cases from arbitrary cases. But how do we know a speaker really understands the use of a word, rather than performing according to it coincidentally? To understand the meaning of a sentence is to know how to follow the rule, that is, how to perform the rule-governed actions and behaviors.

Suppose that a teacher is teaching the pupil the *plus* function. Our question is: How to determine whether the pupil has grasped the use of the function? Wittgenstein makes the remark that the possibility of the pupil's understanding of the rule will depend on his performances going on independently.[8] Perhaps he will make mistakes, but we only can say he does viewed in this light. Only after the repeated success of his performances, not one or two coincidences, can we say that he is following the rule.

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[8] *Philosophical Investigations*, §143b

However, there is still no explicit boundary for someone mastering a system.

Nevertheless, with respect to each community and each rule, a speaker's utterances (and accompanied actions) must be in a position to be assessed by others. This would be the preliminary condition for any communication to be successful. Moreover, the possibility of new interpretations of ordinary discourse makes it intelligible to interpret lies and jokes. We simply do not resort to the conventional meanings of sentences when understanding some lies and jokes. Hence, rules are subject to change. 'Apple' means a kind of fruit in communities that speak standard English, but nothing prevents John and Anna from stipulating its meaning as 'it is a good day'. Whenever John says 'Apple!' to Anna, and Anna replied something like 'Yeah, indeed!' or 'No, it is going to rain!', neither John nor Anna would regard this conversation as meaningless. For they do have a meaningful conversation with respect to their previous convention. Nonetheless, if we retain that correctness conditions are objectively normative, it follows that John 'ought to' say 'it is a good day' or 'the weather is nice' when he want to say that it is a good day. This alleged theory of meaning would be ideal since it highly reduces the risk of confusion. But it is obvious that this is seldom the case in our ordinary language. Therefore, I claim that rules employed in communications are open to change with respect to new agreements between members of the community.

Providing the alternative picture, Wittgenstein does not aim to eliminate other possible theories of meaning. For that he is not giving a theory of meaning for all natural language. If we think that the rule following based theory of meaning is the final answer in the pursuit of meaning, then we are likely to commit the mistake that Augustine and some other philosophers have made: to think that languages have essence which can be constructed as a unified theory of meaning. Nonetheless, with

regard to the ostensive theory of meaning and verification theory of meaning, they have both grasped some significant component of communication, but that does not yield to an appropriate theory of meaning since what they have grasped is only partial.

To conclude, in arguing against ostensive theory of meaning and realistic theory of meaning, Wittgenstein does not directly replace the former theses with his one. The underlying thought is much more ambitious: It would not be possible to give a unified theory of meaning. It is because the varieties of languages are similar to the diversities of games. Which common features that we can find are only partial in the sense that we may find common between any two games, but would be in vain in searching for any common feature between all games. What he has offered in turn is only some remarks on communication and meaning. For example, Wittgenstein proposes that the meaning of words is closely related to how we use it. We can say that the meaning of words depends on their uses in particular circumstances. Investigations on how we use words or sentences could help us explain meanings. How to construct a theory of meaning that does not yield to be a unified theory of meaning would be the main concern of this essay.

1.2 Language as game

The simile between language and games is profound in Wittgenstein's later work, where he articulates various language games to illustrate that (i) an unifying account of language and meaning is impossible, (ii) there is no such thing as an ideal language, (iii) the meaning of sentences and words lie in their use in particular language games. While the first two claims are having a dissolving character towards philosophical problems, the third claim is constructive with respect to the whole account of meaning that it explains meaning with rule following practices.

In order to make the analogy plausible, Wittgenstein invites his readers to compare the process of explaining the role of chess pieces, including moving the pieces, playing a chess game, and the ways we often do in explaining the meaning of sentences, making certain utterances, and communicating with other people. As long as we find that playing a game does not involve any abstract or spiritual entities, but only how one acts with rules, it may sound convincing that what really matters in our communication is how we use language in conformity with the community we belong.

As already established in section 1, a unifying account of meaning would claim that the relation between linguistic entities and meaning is unified, of which an ostensive theory of meaning is a typical instance. Wittgenstein attacks the idea by saying that (i) even ostension is not presuppositionless; in order to know what is being pointed, one has to have some knowledge in advance. (ii) There are more than one intelligible way to explain the relation between linguistic entities and objects. These points show that the search for primitives is in vain. While we may stipulate what counts as primitive as we prefer in construction of a theory of meaning, there is no primitive notion among all theories of meaning.

Think of someone taking a note with 'Five red apples' to a shopkeeper. The shopkeeper could have different ways of understanding the sheet. For example, he could open the drawer named 'Apples', find some red ones by looking at a colour chart, and count to five. The point here is that we do not have to appeal to 'meaning' or 'meaning entities' to explain our communication. Of course, a shopkeeper who has studied philosophy and favored realism may appeal to meaning entities whenever he is making an utterance or an interpretation. Meanwhile, Wittgenstein does not claim that the shopkeeper has made a serious mistake in believing meaning as entities. The

arguments in *PI* only shows that the whole process of communication could be undertaken in various ways. Hence, we are almost unlikely to give a single answer to explain the relation between our utterances and meanings.

One of the reasons for his preferring the conception of game is its diversity; that we are unable to say what is in common among all games, although we can likely find some similarities, large or small, between any two games. For Wittgenstein, the concept of game only forms a family, so do languages. As we may find English and French share similar grammatical structure that verbs have past tense, the feature does not exist in Chinese. While Chinese and ancient Japanese share thousands of Chinese characters, there does not exist a corresponding number of alphabets in western languages. Based on the similarities, not anything in common, we call these different sets of words and sentences as a language. Therefore, Wittgenstein claims that languages themselves are resembled no common feature, yet we can find something in common within any two of them, as Wittgenstein addresses:

> "… Instead of pointing out something common to all that we call language, I'm saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common in virtue of which we use the same word for all – but there are many different kinds of *affinity* between them. And on account of this affinity, or these affinities, we call them all "languages".[9]

As a result, with respect to languages, Wittgenstein oppose to the claim that our natural languages are flawed or that they only approximate with logic, an ideal language with fixed rules. What he insists is a descriptive character of concepts, that we can only characterize what games are, or what languages are, by descriptions. To give a normative definition would be effortless, for that these concepts are in fact

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[9] *Philosophical Investigations*, §65

concepts with blurred edges, unlike those in calculi or logic. It was the underlying thought in *Tractatus* where Wittgenstein tried to give the general form of the propositional and of language. As he later says in *PI*:

Here we come up against the great question that lies behind all these considerations. －For someone might object against me: "You make things easy for yourself! You talk about all sorts of language-games, but have nowhere said what is essential to a language-game, and so to language: what is common to all these activities, and makes them into language or parts of language. So you let yourself off the very part of the investigation that once gave you the most headache, the part about the *general form of the propositional* and of language.[10]

Furthermore, the attitude against the idea of an ideal language leaves his philosophy with a therapeutic character. Philosophers who aim either to formalize our natural languages or to eliminate the defects in them are facing misleading questions, as if these languages could be made better, or more perfect. That we should look for what is the case rather than speculating what should be the case. This is exactly the moral from one of Wittgenstein's most famous mottoes: 'Don't think, but look!'. Instead of positing entities for meaning, or modifying our natural language to a more perfect language, perhaps it is better for us to look around and see how communication proceeds and what our natural language is. Wittgenstein's own investigation into languages turns his attention to *games*, in which he finds that our communication proceeds like playing games.

Games, according to Wittgenstein, do not have a common characteristic or feature. Although we may find some similarities between any two games, for example, in chess and in baseball game, players strive to win as their final goal, it is still

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[10] *Philosophical Investigations*, §65

dubious whether we can discover the 'essence' of games, if any. For instance, not every game has a goal for winning. This brings us to the idea that languages might have been different than what some philosophers' might intuitively think of, for they seem to work hard in discovering the essence among objects or phenomena. A typical instance is the posit of universals in Platonism: Since we can apply 'red' to roses and tomatoes, there must be something in common between these two things; universal or abstract object which we call 'red'. The problem for this philosophical superstition lies in its very mistake of looking for an entity when we use the word 'red' in various circumstances. Furthermore, none of the alternative theories fair better if they have the same presupposition but only differ in providing different candidates of the entities.

Wittgenstein then proposes that these instances can be classified as 'red' only because they share some similarities. He uses a term 'family resemblance' to call concepts that have this particular feature. However, these similarities are neither transitive nor universal among all red objects. They form a family which we term 'red' and members within the family resemble one another. Yet we may not find a common feature or essence among all these objects. Nonetheless, an acceptance of family resemblance seems to violate our intuition that different concepts have sharp boundaries. Since it would blur the boundaries between concepts which more or less share some similarities, would it be the case that we would lose the grasp of boundaries? This, I think, is a genuine challenge to Wittgenstein's treatment of concepts. For a devastating consequence, that we are unable to tell the difference between concepts sharing similarities, such as *games* and *languages*, and thus lose the ability to distinguish concepts, may follow from the family resemblance approach to concepts.

The alleged challenge, though as convincing as it may sound, is in vain. It does not threat the idea of family resemblance in the sense that Wittgenstein actually takes a descriptive approach to concepts. As he claims, "How would we explain to someone what a game is? I think that we'd describe *games* to him, and we might add to the description: 'This *and similar things* are called games.'[11] The idea of family resemblance is based on a descriptive approach to concepts, that is, a rigid definition to concepts is not provided. Rather, these activities, including moving chess pieces, throwing a ball to serve in tennis, and hitting the ball with a bat in baseball games, are called *games* because we describe them as so.

As we turn our attention to languages, the analogy to games forces us to admit that a language, which consists of few words and no other grammar or formation rules, would nonetheless be a language. In fact, this is a typical language game that Wittgenstein has in mind:

> Let us imagine a language for which the description given by Augustine is right: the language is meant to serve for communication between a builder A and an assistant B. A is building with building stones: there are blocks, pillars, slabs, and beams. B has to pass him the stones and to do so in the order in which A needs them. For this purpose they make use of a language consisting of the words "block", "pillar", "slab", "beam". A calls them out; B brings the stone which he has learnt to bring at such-and-such a call. --- Conceive of this as a complete primitive language.[12]

From which it follows that we have no right to claim that the language which builder A and B use is flawed. As one might intuitively think of, it seems that the language described above does not resemble our natural language in many aspects, since it

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[11] *Philosophical Investigations*, §69
[12] *Philosophical Investigations*, §2

contains only commands but without any function of inquiries, assertions, or expressions of propositional attitudes. Wittgenstein challenges the idea by asking if we have an exact idea of what a language is. For him, natural languages are like an ancient city which you can not exactly tell where its boundaries are. Although one might suppose that a proper language should be composed of syntactical rules and appropriate semantics, it is not the case that a suitable language for communication must reach such requirements. In addition, the language in use could have arbitrary rules of grammar and flexible semantic interpretation, so one is unable to provide a formal characterization[13] either on its grammar or on its semantics. Hence, we are able to claim that an exact list of rules and a fixed semantics are not of necessity for a language, or a theory of meaning.

The language-game analogy actually brings another central concern of Wittgenstein, that is, his later philosophy is rather on the therapeutic side. Certain philosophical questions are more or less raised because of confusions on our uses of languages. For example, in *PI* §36, Wittgenstein claims, "Where language suggest a subject and there is none, we should say, a spirit". It suggests an attitude of dissolving most philosophical questions. What Wittgenstein had in mind is that our uses and utterances in ordinary language is as good as it can be and does not need extra modifications or corrections from philosophy.

Furthermore, the meaning of words and sentences can be explained in terms of our uses in a language without appealing to entities, such as propositions or facts, as Russell and early Wittgenstein may embrace. It should be noted that Wittgenstein is not saying that to posit meaning entities is false or misleading. What he aims to put

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[13] Here what I mean by 'formal characterization' would be similar to how Frege has done to propositional calculus, that Frege axiomatized the theorems in propositional language with six axioms and a rule of inference, *modus ponens*.

forth is the thesis that there could be various methods to relate words and sentences with meaning, so it would not be adequate to claim that with respect to all natural languages, meaning is abstract. Take chess as an example, the meaning of 'king' lies in how chess players move the king in accord with the rules. What matters in a chess game is how one uses the pieces to make movements in order to win.

It brings us to the central thesis of his philosophy of language: meaning can be explained in terms of use. Of course, we are not rendering every arbitrary use as meaningful, but only those which are intelligible or in accord with rules. Similar to our movements in ordinary chess games, players do not have the right to move 'knight' in a straight line. When it moves, it can move two squares horizontally and one square vertically, or two squares vertically and one square horizontally. This is the rule for moving knights. Therefore, the use of sentences has to be in accord with rules in order to be interpretable for members in the same community. However, a mere accordance with rules cannot be the criteria of one mastering a language or a game, for it is possible that every move or utterance is made 'correctly', in the sense that it is in conformity with rules, coincidentally. We will hesitate to admit that such players have known how to play the game. Whether we have the criteria of understanding a language, besides actions and practices, is a question that Wittgenstein strives to answer later. For the moment, we need some clarification on what a use theory of meaning is.

The slogan 'meaning is use' cannot be interpreted literally as identifying meaning with use of language. It is a roundabout way of explaining meaning in terms of our linguistic use. It is only roundabout because it does not give a direct answer to the question 'What is meaning?', but instead characterizes our ordinary practices of saying and interpreting sentences as it might suffice our need. Therefore, in search of

meaning, we turn our attention to how practices constitute our understanding of languages. These are the main problems to be dealt in the next section: How could understanding as a mental activity be explained in terms of actions? What exactly is meaning under the given framework? Moreover, since we cannot mean anything as we like with words, where does this *non-arbitrariness* generate from?

1.3 Practices, understanding, and the non-arbitrariness of grammar

Linguistic practices, being only the performances, seem unable to decide whether one has understood a rule since these practices may come out randomly and yet do not violate the rule. On the other hand, understanding a rule, as a mental state, requires external criteria if we have no desire to see the possibility of private understanding, which signifies that an agent is able to decide whether he himself understands a rule without appeal to the community or external factor. The clash between practices and understanding leaves Wittgenstein's rule following of meaning with some features of arbitrariness as well as non-arbitrariness. In this section, I aim to provide an explanation and a bridge to the clash, namely, when we understand rules in our own methods, the way we perform our practices after we grasp the rules is arbitrary. Then, when judging whether one is following a rule, we appeal to his constant practices in different situations of the community.

The philosophical question that Wittgenstein concerns in *PI* is always: How is meaning possible? Given that he does not aim to provide any conceptual analysis with respect to meaning, understanding or communication, but instead asks how an utterance can be meaningful, we can see a similar spirit from Kant, according to whom questions about theories of knowledge shift from 'What is knowledge?' to 'Granted that we have knowledge, how is knowledge possible?' Let us take for

granted that our practices can be categorized as rule following ones and arbitrary ones. Our question is: How my actions relate to my understanding? Apparently, understanding is a mental state. Given that is the case, how should we bridge the clash between mental states and practices? In the following, I argue that although my practices and actions *per se* cannot determine whether I understand a rule, it is still non-arbitrary if we aim at communication. The arbitrariness of practices rests on ways that I understand a rule, and the non-arbitrariness is in *human nature* and *social constraints*, or, in Wittgenstein's words, *forms of life.*

Practices, or actions, cannot by themselves determine whether one is following a rule. Concerning the game of chess, since one may randomly perform his actions, and, accidentally, it was moving rook in a straight line on the chessboard. We do not want to admit his ability of playing chess because it only comes out randomly. But then, what do we have at hand to decide if one's action is following a rule? Mental states seem to be the first answer for they intuitively resemble our understanding of rules. Nonetheless, as we consider the clash between actions and understandings, we can think of cases that one may perform actions in conformity with rules, and yet has no understanding of such rules.

Put more extremely, I may perform an action, for example, moving knight forward in a chess game, with almost any kind of intention or mental state. I may move it cheerfully because I sense that I might win this game. Or, on the contrary, I can move it depressively since I nearly lose the game. Does the mental states or intention make any difference in telling whether I am following a rule? It seems not. But then, the question becomes: What constitutes our understanding of rules and the non-arbitrariness of rule following practices?

Wittgenstein shows his concern in *PI* 75, 'What does it mean to know what a

game is? What does it mean to know it and not be able to say it? … Isn't my knowledge, my concept of a game, completely expressed in the explanations that I could give?' The question there is whether we have a satisfactory explanation of how we acquire a language, for it is not provided from some 'inner' entities, nor can it be found in our practices only. Nonetheless, to posit anything between would be awkward and in some sense beg the question. We must then put ourselves in a position that seeks a neat explanation of rule following practices. In other words, once we can distinguish our rule following practices from others, it will suffice our need. For it not only provides a hint of how we learn language, but answers our original question: How to give an account to explain communication, given that communication succeeds?

First of all, we should understand one of our difficulties is that some actions are not bounded by rules and yet it is still part of a game. For example, there is no speed limit for throwing a ball for any baseball players, as you may pass the ball from hand to hand. However, these actions are undoubtedly part of baseball games. Since the application of a word or an action is not everywhere bounded by rules, it leaves us a question: When can we say one is following a rule? From which it follows that there are some cases which we do not have a clear idea whether they belong to the language or the game. It gives an impression that our applications are 'inexact' to a certain extent. Would it be possible to sweep away the inexactness of using a language to communicate? Wittgenstein's answer seems disappointing as he draws:

…[L]et's understand what "inexact" means! For it does not mean "unusable". And let's consider what we call an "exact" explanation in contrast to this one. Perhaps like drawing a boundary-line around a region with chalk? Here it strikes us at once that the line has breadth. So a colour edge would be more exact. … No

single ideal of exactness has been envisaged; we do not know what we are to make of this idea – unless you yourself stipulate what is to be so called. But you'll find it difficult to make such a stipulation – one that satisfies you.[14]

I quote it at length because it shows the insurmountable difficulty in our ordinary discourse if we want to pursue an exactness of language. Furthermore, the motive to sublime logic to natural language seems rather inadequate. On the one hand, our language is (for a certain part of them) empirical, inexact, and we can add new words to a given language. On the other hand, logic, for example, propositional logic, is an ideal formalized language that it has fixed rules and a fixed set of alphabets. As one might think that an indeterminate sense is not a sense after all, Wittgenstein is satisfied with it since inexactness resides in our language and communication. To posit an intermediary, such as propositions, between propositional signs and facts stems from misunderstandings towards our language. Once again, our language is never constructed ideally, for its inexactness and indeterminate senses. However, these are not things to be swept away, according to Wittgenstein. What should be removed is philosophers' confusion that our language needs improvement.

Recall that in the previous section, we have claimed that if something is to be the meaning of a word or a sentence, it is its uses in particular circumstances. Following Wittgenstein, I now claim that whether a use is following a rule is thus a key to distinguish normal cases from abnormal cases. But still, the question about how we know a speaker really understands the use of a word, rather than performing according to it coincidentally, haunts us over and over. This is indeed a hard question: given our performances of rules, how can we show that we actually understand the rules? It seems probable to answer by saying that to understand the meaning of a

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[14] *Philosophical Investigations*, §88

sentence is to know how to follow the rule, that is, how to perform the rule-governed actions and behaviors. However, one might challenge that it only puts off the question rather than answering it for it appeals to another mental state, knowing. A more probable response should be that for anyone to understand the meaning of a sentence is to see if he can perform the rule governed behaviors with success independently. If he utters the sentence in correct situations, which are assessed by others, he will be considered as understanding the rule. This answer leads us a way to bridge between practices and understanding a rule without appealing to anything mental.

We have so far given an elementary exposition to the significance and the arbitrariness of practices in the rule following theory of meaning. Nonetheless, we must not rest ourselves only in practices to determine whether one understands a rule. For it would likely lead to a problematic consequence that when a monkey accidentally types out *Hamlet*, we would admit it understanding English, which is obviously not the case. Normally, we think that understanding is a mental process. However, Wittgenstein argues that understanding is not process at all, and that the criteria by which we decide whether someone understood a sentence, and what he meant by it, are quite different from the criteria by which we discover what mental processes are going on while someone is talking or writing.

Let us now consider the following example. Given a commonsensical claim that a man who knows the rules of game, such as chess, will have different experiences when he watches that game from someone who does not know the rules. However, the experiences, either for the man who has mastered the game or for the other who has had completely no idea of it, will vary from case to case. Therefore, Anthony Kenny, in speaking for Wittgenstein, claims that these experiences cannot 'be regarded as

themselves constituting the understanding.' [15] Many different experiences could happen, yet none of them is necessary or sufficient to constitute my understanding. Wittgenstein explains the concept of understanding itself as a family resembling concept. It means that understanding, being a relation between signs and the agent, is an internal one, and 'differences in ways of operating with signs mean differences in understanding itself.' [16]

Understanding is not a mental process, but a mental state. Nonetheless, if we are satisfied with the explanation, there would be a clash between our understanding of a language, and our actions which are in accord with the language. Apparently, we have no convincing argument showing how understanding a language, as a mental state, interacts with utterances or performances. Two theses on rule following have been argued so forth: First, practices of rules, utterances of languages, or any sort of performances cannot be the criteria to decide whether an agent has grasped, mastered, or understood the rule. It is because all the practices or performances could be in accord with the rule by coincidence. Secondly, mastering a language does not mean that mistakes, including misuses of words, or misunderstandings with respect to utterances, are impossible. Therefore, the idea that whenever we understand the rules, it follows our every move is correct, is not guaranteed.

It leaves us some arbitrariness in rule following practices. The arbitrariness lies in the association with a word or a sentence, since there are several internal relations from our understanding to the linguistic entities. As one might quickly find out that the arbitrariness of understanding leads to the arbitrariness of meaning indirectly, there is nonetheless some non-arbitrariness which lies in grammar and is beyond the scope of our understanding. As the community serves the least criteria of correct

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[15] Kenny (2006), p. 113
[16] *Ibid*, p.121

speech, it is the non-arbitrariness that prevents the rule following theory of meaning burning down to ashes. For an agent to speak correctly in a community, the meaning of utterances do not depend on him but rather on the community.

Therefore, the foregoing paragraph gives us a sketch of the arbitrariness and non-arbitrariness of rule following. The arbitrariness resides in how we "understand" a word or a sentence. As argued above, we understand rules, regardless for languages or for games, in our own ways. Our ways of understanding rules are indeed arbitrary. There is no such a typical mental state called 'understanding the game of chess'. Yet, with respect to a game, there are correctness conditions which are independent of one's understanding. More specifically, Michael Foster points out that 'a person's adoption of a particular grammar, and the ability of sentences to serve as grammatical principles, are heavily *constrained*.'[17] The range of the grammars are constrained by our *human nature*, and by our upbringing within specific social practices and traditions. Therefore, the particular range of grammar which we adopt is not a matter of choice, but is determined either by the limit of thinking and inferring or by the social environment. Thus, concerning the constraint by *human nature*. Wittgenstein explains it as: "And thinking and inferring (like counting) is bounded for us, not by an arbitrary definition, but by natural limits," including the fact that a person "can't *think* it… he can't fill it with personal content; he can't really *go along with it* – personally, with his intelligence".[18] A thorough explanation of social practices will be left to the next chapter, where we can see how Kripke applies the idea to construct a sceptical solution.

Hence, the relation between practice and understanding is arbitrary in one sense, and non-arbitrary in another. As long as we understand rules in our own methods, the

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[17] Foster (2004), p.61

[18] *Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics*, §116

way we perform our practices after we grasp the rules is arbitrary. But then, how should we determine if one has understood a rule? I think that a quick answer will be that 'by seeing his applications of that rule in different circumstances'. Thus, we appeal to the community in order to determine whether the agent has grasp the rule. Nonetheless, for Wittgenstein, it is pragmatically improbable that we could think in any way as we like since we are at least bounded by human nature and social conventions.

1.4 Rule following practices: *in accordance with* and *following*

In what follows, I propose to distinguish two ways of rule following practices: 'in accordance with a rule' and 'following a rule'. The problem has already raised in *PI*, in which readers are invited to think whether two agents, sitting at a chessboard, move their pieces 'correctly' would be considered as playing the chess game. Moreover, if their actions were so abnormal, such as yelling and stamping with their foot, would a suitable translation into chess rules render them as playing a chess game? One consequence is that it would be possible to consider any practice of an agent, with appropriate interpretation, as following a specific rule. Under this condition, to speak of meaning would be useless for we would arrive at a similar result as Kripke's sceptical conclusion: there is no fact whatsoever for anyone to mean anything. It follows that rule following theory of meaning would break down into ashes. Besides, I claim that a severe rule following problem will arise if we do not have such a distinction in mind. Following Wittgenstein, I claim that the distinction is not drawn in any difference among our mental states, nor in any realist entities. In order to separate these two notions, we must rely on our shared community to determine whether one's practices are merely in accordance with a rule of the community or he

is actually following it. In the present section, I aim to elaborate the significance of making such a distinction to rule following theory of meaning by showing that if the distinction is missing, then our theory would become useless in explaining meaning. First, I purport to show a specific rule, which our practices can at best be in accordance with it. Given that the rule is unable to be followed, our inability to follow it yet *in some sense* justifies that we are following that rule. The direct consequence of the rule following problem is that we are both following and not following a rule, which is obviously not acceptable. Therefore, a clarification between 'to accord with a rule' and 'to follow a rule' is called for.

The intelligibility of rule-following practices is based on a use theory of meaning. According to Wittgenstein, '... if we had to name anything which is the life of the sign, we should have to say that it was its *use*.'[19] The meaning of a sentence, if any, is given by its use. Sentences *per se* would not have any meaning at all, and their meanings would change with respect to different uses in different circumstances. However, it seems that we still lack of a comprehensive explanation of what meaning is. For the appeal to explain meaning in terms of uses would after all be too vague. The notions of 'use' itself needs further clarification. I claim that instead of characterizing meaning as use, we ought to focus on what counts as 'following a rule'. If we can provide a satisfactory account of what 'following a rule' is, we are able to explain meaning in terms of practices which are 'following a rule'.

Let us firstly put our attention on the practices which are merely in accordance with a rule. Since every action is in a position reinterpretable, it seems that our practices could be interpreted to be compatible with any rule. Wittgenstein, in his way of stating the problem, claims, 'But how can a rule teach me what I have to do at *this*

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[19] Wittgenstein (1958), p. 4

point? After all, whatever I do, on some interpretations, can be made compatible with the rule.' [20] We may arrive at a preliminary agreement that interpretations by themselves do not determine meaning at all because every action is interpretable to be in accordance with a given rule. It follows a paradox in *PI*, which was later led to the most debatable issue in theories of meaning:

> This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be brought into accord with the rule. The answer was: if every course of action can be brought into accord with the rule, then it can also be brought into conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here. [21]

The underlying thought is that our actions, being interpretable to accord with any rule, would lose its significance since we are unable to tell whether an action violates the rule. If violation of rules cannot be specified, it follows that we are forced to admit any given action could be in accordance with it. The result is obviously undesirable.

We may find a hint to the solution in *PI* §217: '"How am I able to follow a rule?" – If this is not a question about causes, then it is about the justification for my acting in *this* way in complying with the rule.' Wittgenstein provides, I think, an implicit, yet intelligible, solution to the problem raised by practices which are merely in accordance with a rule. Our practices, if we want to claim that they are following a rule, would require justifications in one or another way in order to be compatible with the rule. In other words, to say that one's actions are following a rule, not only his actions should be within the correct applications of the rule, but the agent ought to have justifications for his performing so. The justifications would provide guidance to the agent so that his performances are not carried out randomly. Hence, I claim that

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[20] *Philosophical Investigations*, §198
[21] *Philosophical Investigations*, §201

the distinction between 'in accordance with a rule' and 'following a rule' are drawn upon the notion of justifications. However, before giving an detailed account of what is or constitutes our justifications, this answer remains unsatisfactory.

For the moment, I would like to turn our attention to the problem that I have outlined in the previous paragraph. I hope that a clarification of the problem would put us in a better understanding of the notion of justification. If, given that we do not distinguish practices which are 'in accordance with a rule', and those which are 'following a rule', construction of a rule which lead to paradox would be possible. Consider a rule α whose very content can be expressed by one sentence, 'don't follow α'. Thus,

Rule $\alpha =_{df}$ Don't follow α.

If we want to follow α, it turns out that we are not following α. Yet if we are not following α, then, by its definition, we are following α. It turns out that we are trapped in the situation of *following* and *not following* rule α simultaneously. There is indeed some eerie feeling: *in a sense* I follow such rule because I do not follow it, and if I do not follow the rule, I simply follow it. It seems that I can neither say I am following or not following it. The consequence, of course, is not acceptable. For we would not like to see a rule which we can follow and not follow at the same time. One might object to the legitimacy of the rule by claiming that the rule is impossible to follow, hence we should not waste our time in searching a better answer. Nonetheless, in a sense the rule is not intelligible, for it is plain that there might be rules which are impossible to follow, e.g. rule $\beta =_{df}$ perform P and $\neg P$ at the same time in all circumstances. But rule α is not one of them, therefore, it is at least not *a priori* impossible to follow. Moreover, while in a formalized theory, e.g. ZF set theory, we can stipulate a new axiom in order to avoid Russell paradox, the case is not so in a

theory of meaning constructed upon ordinary discourse. It is possible that we would find a rule after all in some language shared by the community, and it seems that there is no obvious reason to prevent the occurrence of such a rule.

Obviously, no objective fact will support that either we are following α or not following α, and the appeal to use will not help too much either. Objective facts, supposedly, do not guide us in rule following. The justification that support our rule following practices should guide us in future cases. The appeal to use, as we have argued before, would be too vague, so there would not be much significance of doing so. In addition, when we speak of rule following practices, there is no genuine restriction to whether we can have such a rule in our community, and the performance of the rule, if any, is not empirically impossible, since any action would be in accordance with the rule. To state the problem more precisely: once we do not distinguish ways of rule following practices, there would be a rule α which one cannot say he is following, nor can he is not following it. However, any performance of an agent would be compatible with the rule. Since we aim at explain our meaning discourse with rule following practices, the emergence of such rule would bring confusions to our theory of meaning.

To trace back to the nature of rules would not help much either. A rule, roughly speaking, is a characteristic function, which takes the value 1 for elements in the set, and the value 0 for elements not in the set. That is to say, performances or actions that are compatible with a rule would be in accordance with that rule. Otherwise, not in accordance with it. Rule α, without exception, takes value 1 for actions or performances according with it, 0. Moreover, there is no undecidable cases, i.e. no performance will both take value 1 and 0. As a result, it seems that that rule α, which behaves like any other rules, is also a characteristic function. However, I claim that

problems generated from rule α arise because we, including Wittgenstein perhaps, take the concept of 'following a rule' for granted. A little reflection to the problem would reveal that to follow a rule is one thing, but to be in accordance with a rule is another.

Hence, the performances of rule following perhaps may be separated based on an analogy to the distinction of model-theoretic and proof-theoretic approaches in classical logic. In order for someone to follow a rule 'plus', he must have *justifications* for following such function. His calculation using the sign '+' should not be *blind*, but rather that at every stage he must have justifications to move on to the next stage. If his performances of plus function come out randomly, no matter how surprising the correctness are, he is simply not following plus. When we want to follow a rule, it is required that we know the rule, i.e. we know its content and how to perform it, and we must be guided to follow the rule. On the other hand, to be in accordance with a rule does not require that much. We may find that the key to explain meaning through practices does not rely on how we interpret one's practices, but it depends on the justifications in performing such an action.

The sceptical paradox, as presented by Kripke, shows the tension between attribution of facts and attribution of meaning. A way out is to accept the sceptical solution, which preserves our talking of meaning in terms of a shared form of life.[22] Rule α paradox, on the other hand, shows the tension between in accordance with a rule and following a rule. Furthermore, if the rule following theory of meaning proposed here makes no such specific distinction, we will find ourselves lost in speaking of meaning in terms of actions. For practices themselves, while in accordance with a rule and rule α, do not distinguish whether we are following one

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[22] A thorough discussion and investigation is presented at Chapter 2.

rule rather than another. Recall the moral that Wittgenstein addressed in *PI* §201 is that any course of action can be made out to accord with any rule. I suppose that we understand the notion of 'in accordance with a rule' better and more intuitively, comparing to the notion of 'following a rule.'[23] An action is said to be in accordance with a rule if it agrees with the content of the rule.

We have now drawn a distinction between 'in accordance with a rule' and 'following a rule'. I have argued that we only have loose restrictions for an action to be in accordance with a rule, but to say that one's action is following a specific rule requires much higher standard: justifications, or assertibility conditions. For the moment, we may suppose that 'to be accordance with a rule' is more likely a model-theoretic concept of truth, and 'to follow a rule' is a proof-theoretic one. We say a sentence *p* is true iff what it says is obtained, irrespective of whether we have knowledge or justifications for *p*. Likewise, we judge someone to be in accordance with a rule if his actions agree with the content of the rule. On the other hand, one's actions are following a rule iff he has had proofs for every performance of the rule. Similarly, in a proof-theoretical account, we say *P* is true iff we have a derivation for *P*. The result is highly interesting. When our performances are made to be in accordance with a rule, we are still not following *that rule* until we have justifications for performing it. Moreover, it is possible that our performances are only in accordance with some rules, but we could never find justifications for us to follow them. The proposed rule α is clearly one typical example such that at best our

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[23] I find that perhaps Kripke implicitly assumes the notion of 'in accordance of a rule' when he speaks about rule following practices. It follows that Kripke's paradox can be explained away with the distinction drawn here. Thus, not only the performance '1+1=2' is made to accord with *plus* as well as *quus*, but all my past performances of '*x+y*, for any *x, y* ∈ ω' accord with *plus* and *quus*. On the other hand, the sceptical solution is more like 'following a rule' under the distinction. My explanation of 'in accordance with a rule' coheres with the underlying thought of the sceptic's challenge, provided that the set of my previous responses of addition is only a proper subset of both the set of results of performing plus function and the set of results of performing quus function.

performances are in accordance with it, but we can never follow it.[24]

A brief review shows that what I have presented would be a problem only if we do not distinguish the two ways of rule following practices: 'in accordance with a rule' and 'following a rule'. I claim that our naïve conception of 'following a rule' might be flawed for it allows the consequence of following and not following rule α simultaneously. However, if justifications are required in following a rule, the problem would lose its power. In addition, if 'in accordance with the rule' is our only way of rule-following, Kripke's paradox will doubtlessly become a real threat to the rule following theory of meaning. By drawing the distinction, we are able to see the intelligibility of Kripke's paradox and its sceptical solution. Rule α is certainly a blatant formulation based on our blurred ideas of 'in accordance with a rule' and 'following a rule'. Yet I have no determinate answer to the question whether any rule satisfies certain condition will behave like rule α for the moment.

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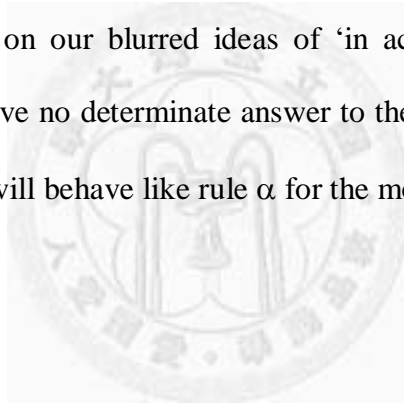
[24] Similarly, in a logic system, we have some true sentences, Gödel sentences, but they are not provable. Of course, if we are following *plus*, then our performances will no doubt accord with *plus*. Soundness still holds.

CHAPTER TWO

The Sceptical Paradox and the Quest for Normativity

In the present chapter, I aim to reformulate the sceptical paradox expounded by Kripke (1982), and argue that the paradox is a genuine problem for theories of meaning with realist character as well as for a rule following theory of meaning. Furthermore, I show that although philosophers, including Blackburn, Boghossian, McDowell, have argued against the paradox, their arguments fails to do its purpose. Thus, probably we should turn to the sceptical solution, instead of arguing against the paradox. Finally, I argue that an acceptance of sceptical solution would lead us in searching for a better conception of normativity.

2.1 The impact of Kripke's paradox

Kripke, in one of his seminal works *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (*WRPL*), proposes a sceptical paradox which, according to him, is not Wittgenstein's nor his, but rather as Wittgenstein struck him. It aims to put forth the thesis that there are no facts to determine my meaning one thing rather than another. Moreover, it is extended to argue for the impossibility of a number of abstract entities to play the role of our meanings. For Kripke, the paradox is unanswerable, at least not directly. He suggests that instead of looking for meaning entities, perhaps we should turn our attention to the circumstances where communication is made. We can then characterize the conditions to provide a theory of meaning with respect to a community.

Firstly, with respect to different posits of meaning, for example, facts, introspectable mental states, or Platonic abstract objects, there is a normativity requirement, which requires the candidates of meaning to *guide* our future use, to be

satisfied. Furthermore, I will make an assessment between two different readings on the normativity of meaning, namely, external normativity requirement (ENR), argued by Boghossian, and internal normativity requirement (INR), supposedly proposed by Kripke[25]. Finally, some philosophers have argued that the conclusion of the sceptical paradox was not so radical as it seemed to be. It follows a revival of semantic realist theory, based on dispositions. I shall outline the argument, and by showing its instability, argue that it is after all not a successful way out from the sceptical paradox.

The paradox is presented as follows: Suppose that '68+57' is an addition I have never performed before. Until a sceptic comes and questions my certainty about the answer, I am quite confident that my answer should be '125'. However, instead of '125', the sceptic suggests that I should answer '5'. Firstly, his challenge seems to be out of the question. No one who has mastered the plus function would accept such a mad suggestion for we normally have confidence in our previous applications of *plus*. It seems that we could easily proof our mastering the function by providing evidences, such as that our past performances of *plus* are mostly correct, or that we have learned the axioms of Peano's arithmetic, to support the correctness of our application.

Nonetheless, a little reflection of the sceptical challenge will reveal its force. By hypothesis, I should follow the very function, presumably addition, which I have applied so many times in the past. Moreover, when I say that I *should follow* the very function, it is required that either I have justifications for my following *plus* or I can prove every step is supported by the previous ones. At no stage should my calculation or performance be a leap into the dark. If it happens that my result of 'plus' is arbitrary, then I am simply not performing plus function at all. As a matter of fact, some facts may be purported to supply that my intended function is coherent with plus

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[25] The exact formulation of INR is in fact pointed and clarified by Ahmed (2007).

function so as to wipe out the uncertainty and the indeterminacy of my performing *plus*. However, the sceptical paradox is two-folded since it casts doubts both on the possibility to constitute meaning in terms of facts, and the reasons that I am confident to answer '125' rather than '5'. Thus, any proposed solution to the paradox must meet two requirements, metaphysical and epistemological respectively: (1) There is some facts that constitute my meaning. (2) It must in some sense show how I am justified in giving the answer '125' in the case '68+57'.

The sceptic claims that it is possible that the function which I thought I was using is in fact *quus* but not *plus*. The definition of *quus* function, denoted by $\oplus$, is as follows:

$x \oplus y = x + y$ if $x, y < 57$,

$\quad = 5$, otherwise.

For the moment, suppose that I have never performed *plus* function with arguments larger than 57. It is obvious that all my past results are compatible with *plus* function as well as *quus* function. Based on this fact, the sceptic questions my confidence on answering '125' rather than '5'. He suggests that perhaps I should answer '5' instead of '125' because I may have been following *quus* rule all along. If my justifications, for example, past performances, support *plus* as well as *quus*, then I am in no better position to say I am following one but not the other.

However, it should be noted that the sceptic is not arguing that our definition of *plus* is ill. As the way Ahmed puts it, 'we all agree at the outset that there is a fact about whether 68 plus 57 is or was 125. That is not in question. What is in question is whether there is any fact in virtue of which '68+57' as you *meant* it in the past denoted 125 or 5.'[26] So stated, the sceptic claims that there is no problem with our

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[26] Ahmed (2007), p.102

definition of plus, but merely that we have no justifications of applying *plus* rather than *quus*, since our past performances of plus must be in accordance with the performances of quus, given that *quus* only differs from *plus* on a computation which we have never done before. Certainly, if we are following *plus*, we are not following *quus*, and *vice versa*, since the contents of these two rules are in fact incompatible. However, any action that we made previously would be in accordance with plus as well as quus. This seems to be the moral Wittgenstein drew in *PI* §201, 'This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because *any course of action can be made out to accord with the rule*' (my italics). Nonetheless, Wittgenstein has no intention to dwell on the paradox. For it is only a significant problem if we do not distinguish between 'in accordance with a rule' and 'following a rule'.

From the sceptic's side, he sets no restriction on any behavioristic evidences or mental contents that may constitute my justifications. In other words, the sceptic argues that there is no *fact* of any sort that can be purported to determine my performing *plus* but not *quus*. This claim is rooted in the metaphysical aspect of the paradox. Its epistemological aspect is made clear with the claim that even if God, being omniscient, knows all my past mental states, he would still be unable to determine whether I am following a rule. The thought integrated in the second claim is that the justifications or evidences cited, rather than being external or communal as it might be, must *in some sense* show how I am justified in my responses to apply 'plus'. That is, the justifications ought to *guide* my use. But it seems that neither mental states nor inner instructions is able to serve as justifications for following *plus* function, as a short remark drew from Wittgenstein, '[a]nd hence also "obeying a rule"

is a practice. And to *think* one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule.'[27] The epistemological aspect of sceptical paradox actually poses a normativity constraint to any answer to it. The sceptic claims that any of the facts as to what you meant in the past by 'plus' must satisfy the following constraint: present awareness of it must *tell* you how to respond to '68 plus 57'. This is, we should be fully aware of the after-effect posed by the epistemological aspect of the paradox: It leads us to a search for normativity thesis with respect to meaning.

The paradox puts a constraint, namely that any possible explanation to account for meaning is required to *guide* our future use. More briefly, any fact in virtue of which you meant addition by 'plus' must tell you how to answer a new addition problem. This is known as the *normativity requirement*. However, the requirement, so characterized, leaves open to more than one interpretations. Paul Boghossian takes the external characterization of which 'any fact that ensured the difference between a right and a wrong answer to '68 plus 57' *whether or not* that fact justified *me* in answering '125' rather than '5'.

> Suppose the expression 'green' means *green*. It follows immediately that the expression 'green' applies correctly only *these* things (the green ones) and not to those (the non-greens). The fact that the expression means something implies, that is, a whole set of normative truths about my behaviour with that expression: namely, that my use of it is correct in application of it to some objects and not in application to others.[28]

The normativity requirement favoured by Boghossian is generally referred as *external normativity requirement* (ENR) for it claims that any fact that answers the sceptic must make a distinction between correct and incorrect uses. The normativity is

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[27] *Philosophical Investigations* §202,
[28] Boghossian (1989), p.148

external because it resides in objects or properties. This is to say, the object itself determines which word can and cannot be correctly applied to it. Hence, the constraint seems only tell the difference between incorrect uses from correct ones, but it does not tell us when to correctly apply.

On the other hand, Kripke shows his concern of normativity when he claims, '…the sceptic created an air of puzzlement as to my *justification* for responding '125' rather than '5' to the addition problem as queried. He thinks my response is no better than a stab in the dark'.[29] Arif Ahmed takes an alternative characterization of the requirement. Ahmed claims that the fact which answers the sceptic 'must be a fact awareness of which *guides* your responses in one direction rather than another.'[30] In other words, the fact not merely stipulates correct from incorrect applications, it should provide justifications for the agent to apply *plus*. We shall see clear that Kripke, in refuting candidates of meaning, assumes the INR as a litmus test. In other words, any candidates of meaning should not only distinguish correct application from incorrect applications, but also *guide* his future applications of it.

So far I have elaborated the rule-following paradox and its two aspects. The sceptic begins his question with a computation that I have never done before, provisionally, '68+57' will be the desired computation. In order to be accordance with the rule that I have performed in the past, it is possible, the sceptic argues, that I should answer '5'. In spite of the paradox, *plus* function is well-defined for all pairs of integers as well as *quus* function. The sceptic only suggests that (1) there is no fact which constitutes my meaning plus rather than quus and (2) there is no reason to be confident that in the case of '68+57', I should answer '125'. In fact, my present usage is, and should be, to accord with the rule that I previously engaged. Given that I am

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[29] Kripke (1982), p. 23
[30] Ahmed (2007), p. 105

performing *plus*, the answer I should give is 125. However, nothing in the set of my previous behaviors or mental history is able to determine my meaning one function but not the other. This, then, is the sceptical paradox. The consequences are best stated in Ahmed's terms, '[i]n short, the sceptical challenge has this profound implication: if it cannot be answered then there are *never* any facts about what *anyone* means by *anything*.'[31]

With respect to candidates for meaning, Kripke characterized several theories of meaning, each of which is constructed based on dispositions, simplicity argument, introspectable mental states, *sui generis* facts, and Platonic abstract objects, respectively. For the moment, let us give a short remark on the role of behavioristic evidences. Could they play the role of justifications? Presumably, behavioristic evidences are finite. Hence, when the sceptic comes and challenges my application of plus, I cannot resort to any behavioral evidences to show I am following a rule rather than another. For they are compatible with *plus* as well as with *quus*. A dispositional analysis with behavior evidences would accommodate them to determine which rule is in fact being followed. However, Kripke rejects dispositional analysis with the following, '[p]recisely the fact that our answer to the question of which function I meant is *justificatory* of my present response is ignored in the dispositional account and lead to all its difficulties.'[32] From this quote, we can see that, for Kripke, the answer provided by dispositional analysis of behaviors is failed because it does not satisfy INR.

Among these candidates, I will leave *sui generis* facts and Platonic abstract objects alone, not because they are irrefutable, but I have already outlined the failure for realist theory of meaning in the previous chapter. Moreover, dispositional theory

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[31] Ahmed (2007), p.103
[32] Kripke (1982), p.37

of meaning will be left until the end of the current section due to its varieties and complexities. Therefore, in what follows, I will firstly sketch the arguments which support the simplicity argument and the thesis which claims that introspectable mental states are meaning entities, respectively. Then I aim to give an account of why these two are not workable.

It is natural, especially after the time of Copernicus, for us to choose the simpler hypothesis among two competing hypotheses. This line of thought often has its place in scientific theories. If theory A is simpler, but it has the same explanatory power with another theory, then theory A would be preferable for its simplicity. Based on similar line, the simplicity argument goes like this: obviously, the definition of *plus* is simpler than the definition of *quus*. Hence, the sceptical challenge would not be a real threat since we may reply the sceptic by saying that *plus* has a simpler hypothesis.

However, the argument from simplicity is *simply* off the target. It mistakes the significant question that the sceptic is asking: what fact was there to your meaning *plus* rather than *quus*? A proper answer, supposedly, points out those facts to which I mean *plus*. Whereas the referring is fixed, it would differentiate my meaning *plus* and my meaning *quus*. However, appealing to simplicity has no substantial aid to our answering the question.

Consequently, some philosophers turn to 'introspectable mental states' and claim that my meaning *plus* is an introspectable mental state, a mental state which I will not be mistaken, such as my sensations. This is indeed a variance of sensationalism. According to which, when I feel cold, I would not be mistaken with my mental state 'cold'. With respect to a meaningful utterance, we would have certain introspectable states that have the function like sensations serve as its meaning.

However, as argued in the previous paragraph, any answer to the sceptical paradox should minimally satisfy the INR. Kripke claims that the introspectable mental states fairs no better than other candidates in satisfying the normativity requirement. Moreover, such mental states are not sufficient enough to support for meaning *plus*. Also, for my meaning *plus*, these states are not necessary, either. The first objection to introspectable mental states goes from the 'cube' example in *PI*. Where Kripke uses the example to show that these mental states are unable to tell us how to proceed.

> For example (*Philosophical Investigations* §139)[33], a drawing of a cube comes to my mind whenever I hear or say the word 'cube'. It should be obvious that this need not be the case. …'In what sense can this picture fit or fail to fit the use of the word "cube"? – Perhaps you say "It's quite simple; - if that picture comes to me and I point to a triangular prism for instance, and say it's a cube, then this use of the word doesn't fit the picture." But doesn't it fit? I have purposely so chosen the example that it is quite easy to imagine a *method of projection* according to which the picture does fit after all. The picture of the cube did indeed suggest a certain use to us, but it was possible for me to use it differently.'[34]

Kripke argues that mental pictures are open to be reinterpreted, as a cube may allow different methods of projection and results in different images. We may find an echo of Kripke's criticism of introspectable mental states from Descartes, 'if understanding consists in a sensational state then the state cannot guide you in the way that a pilot is guided by the instruments on his ship.' Indeed, considering the example of the cube, the fact that it allows different methods of projection blurs the normativity which

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[33] In Kripke's original text, it was referred to §134. However, according to the edition I have at hand, it should be §139.
[34] Kripke (1982), p.42

might consist in its use *per se*. Nonetheless, it is not equal to say that there is no normativity in linguistic practice. It only amounts to the thesis that introspectable mental states, played the role as *meaning* entities, would not *guide* our future applications.

As to the objection of the sufficiency of the introspectable mental states when uttering a meaningful sentence, Kripke claims that the mental state of *plus* application could allow different interpretations. For instance, it is also accompanied with our applications of *quus*. Following this line of thought, although it does not lead to the conclusion that these mental states are meaningless or that they are insufficient to be the candidates of meaning, it cannot answer the sceptical challenge that whether there is any fact whatsoever can determine one's meaning one function rather than another.

Finally, in arguing against the necessity of the mental states for meaning, Kripke invites the reader to imagine a case where we ask an agent, who was drugged, to read a few genuine lines, but he happens to have the 'feeling' of reciting something already learned by heart. Intuitively, the agent is reading through the lines even though he merely has the feeling of reciting. By making an analogy in cases of applying *plus*, Kripke claims that it shows the accompanied mental states is not necessary, which follows that an agent can perform addition without appropriate mental states. As a result, Kripke concludes that no internal impression, neither a *quale*, could possibly tell me in itself how it is to be applied in future cases. In addition, in taking another line to argue against the necessity of accompanied mental states, Wittgenstein claims that in ordinary discourse, an agent may not be aware of these mental states while reading or performing in accordance with a rule, only when he focus on his actions would he have been aware of them. It seems rather unconvincing to claim that these states are there all along, even if I have not noticed.

Nonetheless, as Arif Ahmed already points out, neither Kripke's, nor Wittgenstein's argument is a knockdown argument against the necessity of introspectable mental states. Firstly, sensationalism might have queried that given that a robot does not have accompanied mental states while doing addition, would we recognise it as performing the function *plus*? Or would we think that it only recites what already exists in its memory stick? The robot example might help us to figure out whether we would admit something has the ability of addition if it has no mental states. Secondly, consider a case where an agent sits down and feels the hardness of the chair from his back. Wouldn't he have the feeling all the time while sitting down? Although he may notice it until sitting for a long period, it seems that we do not want to say that it wasn't there all along.

Hence, I think that the objection to sensationalism only succeeds in arguing its failure of satisfying the normativity requirement, and in arguing against its sufficiency for meaning attributions. In sum, with respect to candidates of meaning, we have examined through the *sui generis* facts and Platonic abstract entities in the previous chapter, and in this section I have sketched the arguments for simplicity and sensationalism. None of them, up to now, has a convincing force in answering or rejecting the sceptic. In the remaining of this section, I will try to answer the dispositionalists counter attack[35] to Kripke's scepticism and assess the cogency of the argument.

With regard to the scope of the scepticism, Shogenji proposes a two readings, namely *modest* and *radical*, each of which is made clear through a distinction between *semantic theory* and *interpretation scheme*. An interpretation scheme, according to Shogenji, is 'the specification of a mapping from sentences used under specific

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[35] Since there are many varieties of dispositionalism and it is not the aim of this essay to go through all of them, I will only restrict myself to the dispositionalism proposed by Tomoji Shogenji.

circumstances to their semantic values.'[36] For example, the interpretation scheme of English maps the utterance 'the weather is rainy today' uttered in a rainy day to truth. On the other hand, a semantic theory maps semantic relevant facts to interpretation schemes. More precisely, it not only identifies relevant semantic facts with respect to a sentence, but maps different semantic facts to different interpretation schemes. In addition, Shogenji claims that an adequate solution to modest scepticism should satisfy three requirements: correctness, uniqueness, and generality. Briefly stated, correctness condition requires that 'given the relevant facts, the semantic theory must deliver the standard interpretation scheme, according to which what we take to be the correct use of an expression is indeed correct.'[37] In other words, the semantic theory in question would be able to map any meaningful utterances with appropriate semantic relevant facts to suitable interpretation scheme. Uniqueness condition requires that 'given the relevant semantic facts, the semantic theory must allow no non-standard interpretation schemes, according to which what we take to be the wrong use of an expression is correct.'[38] The result is that the semantic theory never maps meaningful utterances to non-standard interpretation schemes. And the third condition claims that *any* conceivable language must satisfy the first two requirements.

Having established the demarcation between semantic theory and interpretation scheme, the modest scepticism thus challenges the set of past usages of a given speaker by saying that it does not exclude the awkward interpretation scheme *QuEnglish*, in which '+' means *quus* rather than plus. In other words, the set of my previous usages is unable to determine which interpretation scheme ought to be

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[36] Shogenji (1993), p.490
[37] Shogenji (1993), p.492
[38] Shogenji (1993), p.492

applied. On the other hand, the radical sceptic would question 'the very correctness of what we consider a standard interpretation'[39]. What does this mean? The radical sceptic argues that there is no particular reason for us to prefer a specific semantic theory rather than the alternatives.

With specification to the scope of these two versions of sceptical paradox, Shogenji claims that he has a solution for the modest one. His solution is Initial Dispositional Theory (IDT), which differs from a simple version of disposition theory in the choices of dispositions. The pain for a simple version of disposition theory is that dispositions are, supposedly, finite, and that they only *describe* what would be the case without guiding future applications. However, the IDT characterizes our dispositions with those employed under *normal conditions*[40], and argues that the disposition which we have got from normal conditions would not lead us into sceptical conclusion. The IDT solution for modest scepticism claims that our initial dispositions are generated from 'some correct basic routines which the speaker was initially disposed to under normal conditions.'[41] Shogenji claims that the solution brings us the required guidance which cannot be found in a simple version of disposition theory. Hence, the initial dispositions generated from those conditions would guide our use and avoid the sceptic's challenge on dispositions.

Recall that the requirements of any solution to modest scepticism, proposed by Shogenji, are: correctness, uniqueness, generality. The IDT passes the requirement 'by uniquely delivering the correct interpretation scheme for every conceivable language,

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[39] Shogenji (1993), p.491
[40] According to Shogenji, the concept of normal conditions has no substantial difference from Boghossian's term 'optimal conditions'. Normal conditions are specified as 'among actual conditions under which the speaker executed basic routines, normal conditions are those under which her executions were stable.' (Shogenji, 1993)
[41] Shogenji (1993), p.496

according to different relevant facts.'[42] Nonetheless, with regard to the requirements, we find no such an echo in WRPL. Instead, there is at least the INR to be satisfied. It may not be exaggerating to say that perhaps Shogenji misses the gist of the sceptical paradox and the requirements he sets for solution to modest paradox is fishy. The proposed theory IDT attempts to solve the paradox by giving a novel choices for dispositions. However, the theory only looks fine if we are satisfied with the *guidance* given by the initial disposition and described relation between semantic theory and interpretation scheme. In effect, the whole construction is still under a naturalistic framework for meaning theories. One significant feature for these theories is that the meaning entities, regardless in dispositional form or Platonic form, are descriptive in character and the normative force seems at best *external*. As argued above, even if our dispositions satisfy the external normativity requirement, there still remains a question whether they satisfy the INR as well. With respect to the requirement, there is no evidence showing that IDT would satisfy it. Furthermore, the distinction of modest scepticism and radical scepticism seems to be based on a realist's presupposition: the existence of a semantic theory. Shogenji claims that the semantic theory not only identifies relevant semantic facts but also maps different semantic facts to distinct interpretation schemes. I wonder the possibility of such a theory, for it seems that the theory can take good care of every single instance of meaningful utterances without making any mistakes. Obviously, it is not the case in our ordinary discourse. We misunderstand other people or interpret them falsely sometimes. The IDT, I think, leaves no space to explain such cases.

In sum, I have sketched the sceptical paradox and shows its consequence. The paradox so formulated is a real threat to any realist theory of meaning. It not only

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[42] Shogenji (1993), p.499

argues that there is no fact of any sort about anyone mean anything, but sets a constraint to any possible answer to it: internal normativity requirement. That any proposal for theory of meaning should justify my future applications of words or sentence. I have further examined a proposed dispositional theory of meaning, the Initial disposition theory, and argued that it fails to satisfy the INR and the ground of the distinction between modest scepticism and radical scepticism might be at stake. So to speak, the paradox, although arguing that no facts could serve to be the meaning of linguistic entities, is not negative towards theories of meaning, since it actually puts an important landscape, which is that the speaker should be *guided* in uttering, to further research on meaning.

2.2 Revisiting the sceptical paradox

Having outlined the significance of sceptical paradox, I now turn to several responses and criticisms of it. Given that Kripke did not offer a general condition to reject to all meaning entities, it leaves philosophers some possibilities of further researching probable entities. Boghossian (1989) is one among them. Moreover, McDowell (1984) has taken a different route in arguing against the sceptical paradox. He offers an interpretation to Wittgenstein, and claims that Kripke has mistaken Wittgenstein's arguments elaborated in *PI*. Blackburn (1984), in trying to find the internal defect within the paradox, argues that if one of the consequences of the sceptical paradox is a refusal to private language, then it could be extended to communal language as well. In other words, Blackburn rejects the intelligibility of sceptical paradox by claiming that the sceptical solution would also be untenable, granted the paradox. In what follows, I aim to review the theses proposed by McDowell, Blackburn, and Boghossian, respectively and show that their arguments fail to do its original purpose.

That is, the sceptical paradox is itself a genuine, and perhaps independent, problem for any theory of meaning to be proposed.

McDowell aims to defuse the paradox by looking back to Wittgenstein's original context. First of all, he presents a reading on Wittgenstein which is different from Crispin Wright and Kripke, and claims that Wright's and Kripke's interpretations are actually two horns of a dilemma, and his could go between the dilemma. Wright characterizes Wittgenstein's conclusion on rule-following as 'there is in our understanding of a concept no rigid, advance determination of what is to count as its correct application.'[43] According to McDowell, in claiming so, Wright brings danger to objectivity since it opens a backdoor for relativism and scepticism to sneak into the notion of 'correct application'. In accord with this claim, the underlying thought is that 'understanding an expression is grasp of a pattern of application, conformity to which requires determinate verdicts in so far unconsidered cases.'[44] However, it should be noted that the 'pattern' idea is 'inaccessible to definitive explanation.' However, if one is to find an explanation of 'pattern', it may be suggested that the idea comes naturally to us in a idiolectic way. In this sense, communal pattern is the collection of idiolectic pattern of uses.

McDowell consequently shifts his attention towards paradox of rule-following, a well-known paradox put forth by Kripke. The argument begins by attacking factualism of meaning, following Wittgenstein's path in *PI*. Hence, to use a word correctly is to use it in accord with the rule. But the problem arises when we have no right to claim which rule we are following since every sign is open to any interpretation. In sum, the argument leads to an *seemingly* unacceptable conclusion: there is no fact that could constitute my having attached one rather than another

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[43] Wright (1980), p.21
[44] McDowell (1984), pp.47-8

meaning to the 'plus' sign. The result can be generalized, and the possibility of successful communication is at stake. The paradox, in rejection of truth-condition account of meaning, embrace an account that replace truth-condition with justification condition. And we make sense of the justification conditions in terms of their use to record acceptance of individuals into the linguistic community. The above is called 'sceptical solution', constructed after the acceptance of sceptical paradox.

The criticism to Kripke and Wright is based on a re-reading of *PI* §201, especially the second part of it, of which Kripke is charged, by McDowell, as ignoring. McDowell claims that the misunderstanding of §201 will bring us two horns of dilemma, one is the paradox, and the attempt to resist the paradox will drive us to another mythology of meaning and understanding. These two horns of a dilemma are coined as Scylla and Charybdis by McDowell. One stands for theory that understanding is always an interpretation and the other shows a picture of a basic level at which there are no norms. Scylla let us choose either that 'there is no substance of meaning or that the mythology of rigid-machine.' [45] Embracing Charybdis gives us way to avoid Scylla, but it drives us to an unwanted result that meaning seems to be an illusion. McDowell cites three alternatives to be free from dilemma: custom (*PI* §198), practice (*PI* §202), or custom (RFM VI-31).

As a result, McDowell then turns his attention towards communal practice when he claims that we have to situate our conception of meaning and understanding within a framework of communal practice. According to McDowell, the crucial difference between his theory and Kripke's (also Wright's) is on how the idea of 'publicity' is interpreted. McDowell claims that publicity emerges as a condition for arguing that the assimilation of understanding to interpretation would bring us to intolerable

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[45] McDowell (1984), p.242

dilemma, and that the key notion for us to steer between Scylla and Charybdis is: practice of a community. A question which can differ the interpretation of Wright and of McDowell on rule-following: How does Wittgenstein's insistence on publicity emerge? McDowell repeats his previous answer that 'publicity emerges as a condition of the possibility of rejecting the assimilation of understanding to interpretation, which poses an intolerable dilemma.'[46] Wright takes it as the only alternative left after the distinction between seeming right and being right is shown to be empty.

In *Chapter three*, I will argue that communal practices is not always necessary in meaning discourse. Therefore, a brief remark would perhaps suffice our present need. It might be intelligible to stick to communal practices when speaking of rule following. However, in ordinary discourse, there could be successful communications which goes beyond communal practices, such as, cases of malapropisms. For example, when Mrs. Malaprop says that 'it is a nice derangement of epitaphs', she intends to say 'it is a nice arrangement of epithets.' Nonetheless, a competent speaker may well understand her intended meaning. Thus, it seems rather difficult to account for malapropisms and yet establish a successful communication for McDowell. Furthermore, the sceptical paradox proposed by Kripke is not Wittgenstein's, as already made clear in *WRPL*, where Kripke claims that the paradox is neither his nor Wittgenstein's. The paradox is presented rather as Wittgenstein struck him. Therefore, McDowell's rejection to Kripke by reinterpreting Wittgenstein's *PI* might not be so convincing as it appears to be.

Blackburn, striving to look for the internal inconsistency of the sceptical paradox, is concerned with two questions: (1) Whether Kripke's exegesis of Wittgenstein is correct. (2) What is the real significance of the considerations put forth by Kripke?

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[46] McDowell (1984), p.260

With respect to the first question, he focuses on the following two issues: Kripke's use of scepticism and his attitude to facts. Blackburn takes it for granted that there are some 'sort of facts' after all when he says that whatever the correctness condition is, 'it is the fact that distinguishes the production of terms from mere noise, and turns utterance into assertion.'[47] The negative part of his conclusion is that Kripke is not successful in arguing that public rule-following is possible, whereas private rule following is not, while the positive part tries to make room for individual rule following.

Blackburn firstly suspects Kripke is making a wrong analogy to Hume as Kripke attributes the origin of the idea of sceptical solution to Hume. According to Blackburn, Hume's scepticism leaves us two options: to lower the truth-condition or deny it altogether. Both options are so offered to be compatible with the possibility of errors. Blackburn carefully distinguishes Hume from Kripke by pointing out that Hume holds a view called projectivism, according to which, 'we speak and think "as if" the world contained a certain kind of fact'. Blackburn then expresses his sceptical attitude towards Kripke's rejection of facts by saying that Wittgenstein would more or less accept the talking of facts as our way of expressing a use of word is rule-governed and others that are not. As a result, Blackburn proposes his interpretation of Wittgenstein, hoping that to distant distorted interpretation, namely Kripke's, and come closer to the original Wittgenstein. His positions can be divided into three: (1) He believes that scepticism is only as an instrument, and that the eventual conception of rule following that must emerge does not deserve to be called sceptical. (2) He hopes to preserve the implications of redundancy theory of truth, as proposed by Wittgenstein. (3) He wants to cement between Wittgenstein and the real Hume. The flaw, according to Blackburn,

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[47] Blackburn 2002 (1984), p.29

would be that there is no particular reason to discriminate against the would-be private linguist.

In the process of elaborating the paradox, Blackburn agrees with Kripke that current dispositions cannot answer it because an appropriate answer should at least be normative. However, Blackburn disagrees with Kripke on his overall rejection to dispositions. Kripke argues that dispositions are finite and the results of generating function *plus* would be infinite. Blackburn makes another point that whether dispositions are finite or infinite are not obvious. Besides, if individual dispositions are at stake, so are community dispositions since the community is only the collection of individuals.

As Blackburn characterizes, the difference between individual and community is that the community has the authority to judge whether an individual is a competent operator. However, Blackburn challenges he distinction by saying that 'we don't know what it is to see someone as obeying a principle of application, unless we know what it is to follow one, and this is the fact of which we still have, so far, no conception.'[48] Following this line of thought, Blackburn criticizes the idea that if mutual support provides the standard for correctness, then a community can answer him by claiming that rule following is a conception of which we have no decent knowledge yet. In addition, if public is constituted by individuals, then it is likely to fall into sceptical paradox again. As the dilemma proposed by Blackburn shows: If the presence of a community enters as part of the truth-conditions of what it is to follow a rule, the sceptic who won against the individual would win also against the community. But if mention of the community comes part of a projective solution, then a similar side-step is in principle available to the individual. Furthermore, Blackburn

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[48] Blackburn 2002 (1984), p.38

makes the following claims: (1) It is unable to separate the private from the public, given any earlier considerations we have had. (2) We may share a sympathy with a basically 'anti-metaphysical' conception of rule-following. (3) We simply cannot deliver accounts of what constitutes shared following of a rule, or what the fact of a rule being in force 'consists in'. In sum, sceptical argument for Blackburn is a tool to eliminate unnecessary metaphysical facts. However, the conclusion not only applies to individuals but it may also extend to the community. The underlying thought, I think, can be divided into the following two: (1) We do not understand what constitutes shared following of a rule. (2) Community, or public, is constituted by individuals, hence any argument threatens individuals can also be applied to communities.

I agree most of Blackburn's ideas with respect to the paradox. However, in order to make individual rule following possible, it seems that a communal rule following is primary. Otherwise, it would be as if the language is invented by oneself. In fact, in speaking of community, it is not necessary to think of a large one, such as the community in which members speak English. We could rest ourselves on a community which consists at least of two people. It follows that the possibility of private language is still prevented.

In the final part, I turn to Boghossian, who proposes a robust realism with respect to meanings. Recent discussions on rule following have revealed the fruitfulness of Boghossian's brilliant piece 'Rule-following considerations'[49] where Boghossian, after showing the inappropriateness of irrealistic and reductive theories of meaning, defends for robust realism as the only shot left for plausible candidates of meaning. The paper presents eligible discussion as well as criticisms on the proceeded

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[49] Kusch (2006), Hattiangadi (2007)

discussion by McGinn, McDowell and Wright. Besides, Boghossian also spends at length elaborating the nature of sceptical paradox, proposed by Kripke. However, in the following, it is designed to show that robust realism is untenable. A suitable theory of meaning should eventually be irrealistic.

It would be fancy to think that meaning is a kind of platonic objects for that the success of communication can be easily explained, granted the meanings of declarative sentences are fixed and able to be shared. Taking a closer introspection shows that meanings are dependent on human affairs, however. On the one hand, meaning is distinct from mathematical objects which are treated by some mathematicians as platonic entities. It may be plausible to say that numbers refer to platonic objects, but no doubt the case is different with words. The failure of building block theory indicates the meaning of a sentence is not composed by its components. To think that meanings are platonic entities is to mistake the concept of meaning from that of reference. On the other hand, meanings come into play only with human activities. Studies of meaning must conduct the research on human activities. Furthermore, it is through communication that we find ourselves engaged with the issue of meaning. Perhaps this shows the legitimacy of pursuing meaning in terms of constructing a theory of communication.

Obviously, communication is never a one man deal. With regard to what a successful communication is, philosophers have been far from a consensus. Among those prominent ones, Davidson and Dummett stand out to represent a truth-conditional and an assertion conditional theories of meaning respectively. The origin of these two approaches can be traced back to Grice and early Wittgenstein. Two agents come to a successful communication once the speaker has knowledge of what he speaks (Dummettian). As for Davidsonian, it is the interpretation of the

interpreter which matters. The question should perhaps shift into: What does the normativity of meaning consist in? For if we have an adequate conception of normativity of meaning, it seems that we might have a much more clear sight in seeing the problem. McGinn, one of the pioneers who argue against Kripke's sceptical paradox, claims that the normativity of meaning is transtemporal. Nonetheless, Boghossian refutes McGinn's thesis when he claims that if the normativity requirement is the one McGinn outlines, then disposition theory would certainly pass its test. Unfortunately, according to Kripke, they do not. For Boghossian, the normativity of meaning is simply a way of saying that meaningful expression possess conditions of correct use (true or assertoric). That they pose conditions on what one should perform.

Moreover, Boghossian argues against irrealism, reductive theories of meaning, anti-reductive theories of meaning by firstly attributing Kripke, while conceding his irrealistic concern on meaning ascription sentences, a global non-factualism. Yet a global non-factualism is incoherent in itself. Hence, the problem with the sceptical solution can be formulated in two related aspects: acceptance of non-factualism and the result is global rather than local. Boghossian consequently formulates an argument of global non-factualism:

Premise 1: A non-factualist about meaning – there are no entities, moreover, no facts, serve as the words' meanings – implies that no meaning-attributing sentences can be truth-conditional.

Premise 2: Since the truth-condition of a sentence S is a function of its meaning, a non-factualism about meaning would likely lead to non-factualism about truth-conditions.

Premise 3: By (2), we have:

For all *S*, *p*: [*S* has truth-condition *p*] is not truth-conditional.

Conclusion: From (3) and disquotational properties of the truth predicate,

it follows that: For any *S*: [*S*] is not truth-conditional.

Nonetheless, as Boghossian addresses, the failure of non-factualism is not due to its global character, but the controversial application of the notion of truth. On the one hand, to form a non-factualist thesis, and, on the other hand, the result after accepting the thesis. In framing a non-factualist thesis, the concept of truth employed is not deflationary in character:

For on a deflationary understanding of truth, a sentence will be truth-conditional provided only if it is apt for semantic ascent; and it will be apt for semantic ascent provided only if it is a significant, declarative sentence. But it is constitutive of a non-factualist thesis precisely that it denies, of some targeted, significant, declarative sentence, that it is truth-conditional.[50]

I share the sympathy with Boghossian that meaning is neither eliminable nor reducible. But this does not justify his thesis that robust realism of which judgments about meaning are factual, irreducible, and judgment-independent, is the correct candidate in meaning discourse. Furthermore, as we have shown in the previous section, the sceptical paradox is not *global* in character, and that the normativity requirement would be internal in sceptical paradox, while Boghossian only gives an external one.

2.3 The sceptical solution and the quest for normativity

In section 2.2, we have already pointed out the alternatives given by Blackburn, Boghossian, and McDowell are not so promising as they propose to be. In the present

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[50] Boghossian (1989), p.162

section, we focus on, firstly, Kripke's solution towards the paradox, and, secondly on how a better explanation of normativity could be arrived via the exploring of the solution, since a rule following based theory of meaning requires an adequate normativity condition[51]. With respect to the fact that solutions to the paradox can be divided into *straight* and *sceptical* ones, I shall argue that straight solutions are untenable with regard to the sceptical paradox, instead, we should accept the sceptical solution in the followings. The sceptical solution is one that admits the consequence of the paradox, but starts to save our meanings on that very ground. Granted that there are no meaning entities to support our meaning, we can turn to the conditions where we make communications and characterize them as a criteria to decide whether someone is a competent speaker. However, as long as Kripke solely offers a heuristic account of sceptical solution in terms of *agreement*, *forms of life*, and *criteria*, I will put my effort in arguing for the indispensability of normativity in meaning discourse.

Let us first recall that the paradox so formulated is an overall challenge to any meaning discourse that there is no *fact* whatsoever for anyone to mean anything, i.e., we are in no position to guarantee my meaning of an utterance with facts. It thus restricts the ways of the pursuit of meaning. Bearing it in mind, we may appreciate the line of thought of late Wittgenstein that he does not appeal to truth conditions for utterances to explain our meaning, but rather works hard to elaborate what the conditions are when one makes a correct move in a language game. In other words, instead of giving an account based on sufficient and necessary conditions for making utterances, Wittgenstein turns to cases in which we make successful communication

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[51] The requirement may not be obvious at first sight. However, as Wittgenstein shows his concern that an agent cannot follow a rule arbitrarily, it leads us to a search of the non-arbitrariness of rule following practices. Similar concern can also be found in Kripke (1982), when he claims that meanings are normative, in other words, I ought to apply the function '+' the way I previously did. I hold that the normativity condition is the key notion to a rule following theory of meaning. Nonetheless, exactly what normative condition would be considered as adequate will be left to the next chapter.

and claims that these conditions, for asking a question, for exclamation, for assertion, and for guessing, etc., can be characterized as the circumstances for one to make a correct utterance. It should be noted that we must not regard the conditions as definite, for that with regard to different communities, there could be different conditions.

Having outlined the sceptical paradox, a realization that no realist entities play the role of our meaning leads us to another way: perhaps we could admit the paradox as intelligible and see, on that ground, what we can construct from it. This is exactly the underlying thought of sceptical solution that we are not seeking for an answer to the paradox but trying to make our meaning discourse intelligible, granted the sceptical paradox. It should be understood beforehand that the sceptical problem is not constructed from the *vagueness* of concepts, as we may encounter in colors or in sizes of heap. Rather, it could be generated from any kind of concepts. The reason why Kripke chose the plus function to elaborate the paradox is perhaps that the concept of addition is supposedly the most precise concept that we have at hand. It is well-defined, and there is no ambiguity in all its results. Therefore, we cannot eschew the paradox from picking out a much more precise concept.

The solution, according to Kripke, should be found in what circumstances attributions of meaning are made and in the roles they play in our language game. Granted that the sceptical paradox is cogent, our task is to provide a suitable justification of our utterances and responses. When being asked '68+57?', our responses must not be blind. Our actions in a game as well as our responses in communication cannot *only* be in conformity with rules, for we would lose our grip of the distinction between in accordance with rules and following rules immediately. What, then, are the justifications and guidance to support our performances? Kripke responses the question with three answers: agreement, forms of life, and criteria.

A careful look reveals the fact that what Kripke has offered a rather heuristic answer. As he claims, '*Smith* will judge Jones to mean addition by 'plus' only if he judges that Jones's answers to particular addition problems agree with those *he* is inclined to give, or, if they occasionally disagree, he can interpret Jones as at least following the proper procedure,'[52] we can see that the only specified method to judge whether one is following the rule is *agreement*. Whether the agreement must reach a certain degree, Kripke gives us no answer. On the other hand, he appeals mainly to our intuitive conception of agreement, and he claims that massive agreements between Smith and Jones over the particular results of 'plus' would let Smith judge Jones as meaning 'plus'. From this point of view, we can see that the meaning of 'plus' is in a way secured by the agreements of behaviors or performances between Smith and Jones.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that to characterize meaning in this way does not guarantee the objectivity of meaning since it only relies on enough agreements between two speakers. The characterization stems from our ordinary practices and is not a categorical proposition. Moreover, since it does not tell us what we should do in judging whether someone is following a rule, it is only a descriptive account of explaining our following rules. As one may intuitively think of, there would be space of fallible discourses. The appeal to sufficient cases of agreements does not free us from the challenge that Smith and Jones might follow 'quus'. In other words, the agreements over the performances do not block the possibility of their following 'quus'. How would the sceptical solution fair better in this respect? I claim that the *agreement* alone is not a better alternative to other meaning entities in the sense that it does not rule out the possibility of my following 'quus' even if I reach an agreement

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[52] Kripke (1982), p.91

with other people. Nonetheless, speaking in terms of *agreement* would more or less secure our meaning discourse from the sceptical paradox, for at least we would not fall into the sceptical conclusion: there is no fact for anyone to mean anything.

I believe that Kripke is aware of the problem that *agreement* alone cannot guarantee the correctness of our meaning as he proposes another answer, forms of life, in support of his sceptical solution. Nonetheless, a detailed characterization of what forms of life are would likely be in vain. For that we cannot stipulate what counts as forms of life but only describes them as the ways they are. In speaking of forms of life, one may immediately think of Wittgenstein's claim in *PI* §241, '…It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life.' From this, we may find it intelligible with the claim that 'one who is an corrigible deviant in enough respects simply cannot participate in the life of the community and in communication.'[53] Now we are in a position to formulate a proper sceptical solution. Forms of life regulate the correct applications of rules, and members a community have, supposedly, the same form of life. The argument generated from this way may look better as it seems to be. We may in principle specify and distinguish the form of life adopting the plus function, and the other adopting the quus function. Since the paradox is not questioning the definition of 'plus', we may find it comfortable to admit the intelligibility of a community which adopts plus. The remaining question would be: How are we sure that we are in such a community but not in others?

A blatant answer would be that our actual community is uniform in its practices with respect to 'plus'. However, I think that there is no non question-begging way of arguing it; either we have to accept this very fact, or we put ourselves in an ice

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[53] Kripke (1982), p.92

breaking path. As Wittgenstein claims in *PI*, 'Don't think, but look,' we observe the circumstances which we are in and arrive at the conclusion that we are actually in a community which employs 'plus' with '+'. The sceptical paradox, although poses a genuine threat to realist entities of meaning, will not be intelligible unless we accept that we are in the same, or at least similar, community. The truth is, in order not to lose the power of the paradox, the sceptic and us must be in agreements to a certain degree. If there is no agreement between my use of 'plus' as well as every single words, the sceptical challenge would be *global*, which is self-defeating. For it follows that we cannot legitimately talk about whatever someone means because of new interpretations may always emerge. The claim that the actual community is the one which applies 'plus', once established, gives us a path to judge whether someone is applying '+' in the same way. The community would serve as the outward criteria to judge others' application of rules. The same mechanism could also be applied to internal states as well.

Now we can reformulate the private language argument in terms of the outward criteria from the community. Kripke's way of arguing against the private language is by specifying firstly the conditions where one applies rules in isolation: 'All we can say, if we consider a single person in isolation, is that our ordinary practice licenses him to apply the rule in the way it strikes him.'[54] It should be noted that the private language that Kripke (and, supposedly, Wittgenstein) is opposing is not a language which is spoken in isolation. In other words, Robinson Crusoe, although alone on the island, is not speaking a private language. Accordingly, a private language is one that except the speaker, no one else would understand it in principle. The private language argument is actually a consequence from the sceptical solution. For that our

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[54] Kripke (1982), p.88

understanding of a language would depend upon members of a given community. Since the meaning of linguistic entities, such as words, utterances, of private language are unable to be assessed for others, they cannot decide whether someone who really speaks a private language is speaking a language at all. As a result, Kripke claims that rules of a private language, if there is any, is not substantive in our communication, 'If our considerations so far are correct, the answer is that, if one person is considered in isolation, the notion of a rule as guiding the person who adopts it can have *no* substantive content.'[55]

To show the significance of the outward criteria, Kripke invites us to imagine a drug user who reveals abnormal mental states while doing drugs. That he could try to justify his abnormal uses with supportive mental states. Moreover, if we accept the possibility of private language, we cannot say his utterances is meaningless. The drug user example expounded by Kripke explains that the main problem for rule following account of meaning. That is, we dispense outward criteria, there is no appropriate justification to justify our utterances meaning one thing rather than another. Kripke further characterizes outward criteria: 'Roughly speaking, outward criteria for an inner process are circumstances, observable in the behavior of an individual, which, when present, would lead others to agree with his avowals.'[56] The agreements, forms of life, and criteria thus have a connection in our rule following theory of meaning. It is that for members who are in the same community sharing their forms of life, which could serve as the criteria to establish agreements between the community members and someone who tries to communicate with them.

Given that the answer, blatant as it may be, seems to be the best shelter that we could have, our task is to explain how someone means something in terms of rule

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[55] Kripke (1982), p.89
[56] Kripke (1982), p.100

following practices. The explanation ought not to be sought in *practices* alone since practices *per se*, as we have already argued, do not, and cannot, determine whether one follows the rule or merely acts in accordance with the rule. Kripke, being aware of the problem, claims, '[t]he relation of meaning and intention to future action is normative, not descriptive'.[57] It follows that there is an indispensable normativity condition either in straight or in sceptical solutions. Given that Kripke's sceptical solution only explains how we see a speaker as competent with respect to the community without giving conditions for the statements to be true, my project aims to start from here. I will, first of all, characterize the conditions where we make successful communications and give a normativity condition to show its intelligence. I propose to elaborate the appropriate normativity condition expounded in the sceptical solution.

The normativity is rather a vague term in which we find different conceptions as well as different formulations:

(1) *Normativity*: S means F by $x \rightarrow (a)(S$ ought to (apply x to $a) \leftrightarrow a$ is $f)$.

(2) *Norm-Relativity*:S means F by $t \rightarrow (a)$ (S applies x 'correctly' to $a \leftrightarrow a$ is $f)$.[58]

Hattiangadi (2008) has offered several arguments to show the untenability of (1). Firstly, we can see that (1) can be broken down into two conditionals:

(3) S ought to (apply x to $a) \rightarrow a$ is f

(4) a is $f \rightarrow S$ ought to (apply x to a)

Obviously, in many cases, it is not up to me, or to any agent, whether a is f. However, in order to do (4), I would have to apply x to every a that is f. This would be an echo of Boghossian's treatment of normativity, ENR, that if I mean *green* by 'green', in order to carry out my semantic obligation, I would have to apply 'green to all the

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[57] Kripke (1982), p.37
[58] Hattiangadi (2007), p.180

green things. Nonetheless, Hattiangadi claims that 'once we take into consideration all the other words, the demands of semantics would simply be too high.'[59] Given that 'ought implies can', (4) is not just too demanding, it is false. Therefore, she concludes that whereas (3) might be doable, (4) clearly is not.

On the other hand, according to *norm-relativity*, if I mean *horse* by 'horse', 'horse' will apply correctly to all and only horses. For Hattiangadi, this approach seems to be much more intelligible, '[t]here is no analogous difficulty in saying that the correct application of 'horse' outstrips (exceeds) what I can do.'[60] Nonetheless, I think that it only puts off the question since it gives no account of what "*S* applies *x* 'correctly' to *a*" is. The concept of correctness condition employed in (2), leaving unexplained, would after all lack its cogency if someone were to adopt it. Moreover, the appeal to explain meaning in terms of one's applying a term correctly may not skip the sceptical challenge after all. For my past instances of applying the 'plus' function are *correct* with respect to 'plus' as well as 'quus'. Thus, the key notion of rule following theory of meaning, and which is always needed to be clarified is an adequate normativity conception. These two conceptions of normativity are, in effect, proposed by semantic realists. The first formulation (1) would not be convincing if we recall that the normative relation between meaning and content shall be *internal*, and in (1) the proposed normativity is at best *external*, hence it fails to guide our further use. The second conception employs the concept of correctness condition to define meaning. While it may look cogent, it leaves the correctness condition unexplained and is likely to fall into sceptical challenge.

In sum, I have presented Kripke's sceptical solution with details and tried to emphasize the concept of *agreement*, *forms of life*, and *criteria*. The solution is,

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[59] Hattiangadi (2007), p.180
[60] Hattiangadi (2007), p.180

nonetheless, not *straight*; instead, it accepts the sceptical challenge that no meaning entities could explain our meaning discourse and see what is left from the residue. Fortunately, our appeal to a communal agreement defined meaning would be likely immune from the sceptical attack. Based on the theory, I have argued against the possibility of private language. That it would not be possible to construct a language in which the meanings or referents of it cannot not known by others. Such a language, under this framework, would not be substantive at all since its meanings and referents are only known to oneself and lack the possibility of agreements among others. Our remaining task is to examine and clarify different conceptions of normativity and determine which is mostly suitable for the rule following theory of meaning proposed here. Perhaps we may rely on our previously defined conception of agreement, forms of life and criteria to seek a suitable normativity. Nevertheless, I hold that an adequate rule following theory of meaning requires a normativity condition to be satisfied.
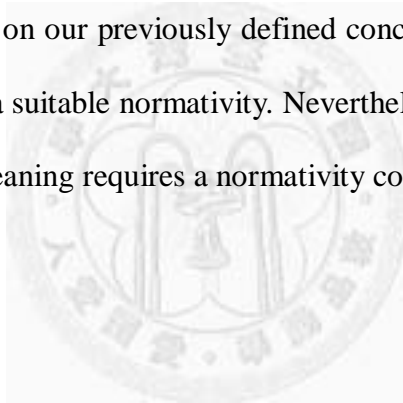
CHAPTER THREE

Towards an Intersubjective Conception of Normativity

The concept of normativity has been fundamental in contemporary theories of meaning. After Wittgenstein's *PI*, philosophers have realized that normativity may be the key to guarantee the success of communication. In order to prevent frequent confusion and misunderstanding during communication, it is better for us to appeal to a norm shared at least between the speaker and his interlocutor. So that under a certain norm, speaker's use of linguistic expressions, as well as the interlocutor's interpretation, will have a guideline in meaning discourse. However, after Kripke proposed the sceptical paradox, the status of norms seems to be at stake. Granted the naïve conception of normativity, that meaning is guided by norms, the sceptic would nevertheless challenge that we do not have justifications in following one rule rather than another. Therefore, the pursuit of an adequate conception of normativity seems urgent. An adequate conception of normativity could be found in Davidson's philosophy of language, where we characterize the conception of normativity as intersubjective.

3.1 Semantic normativity and its problems

In the present section, the normativity proposed by semantic realists will firstly be under investigation. The normativity under concern would then be semantic, which says that for communications to proceed, the norms resides in semantic entities, such as facts, propositions, meaning entities and the like. It would be my aim to show that the sceptical challenge is genuine and non-refutable for semantic realists, given that meaning is *prescriptively* normative. Secondly, Hattiangadi (2006, 2007) has offered several arguments against the conception of normativity employed in sceptical

paradox, and I would like to show her arguments are perhaps miss the target. Finally, I will argue that the normativity need not be objective, as semantic realists may suppose, to communication. Even if we do not adopt the objective conception of normativity, our communication can still be successful.

Although semantic normativity has been the central notion for meaning discourse for many philosophers (McDowell (1984), Boghossian (1989), and perhaps including Hattiangadi (2007)), there are nonetheless several difficulties which they cannot overcome. A detailed rejection towards the conception of semantic normativity is presented in Åsa Wikforss (2001). I shall, in the following, elaborate Boghossian's thesis as well as McDowell's firstly and argue against them based on Wikforss's arguments.

Semantic normativitists often claim that normativity resides in meaning. In other words, meaning of linguistic expressions would generate the required normativity for communication. The thesis can be best expressed in Boghossian's terms:

Suppose that the expression 'green' means *green*. It follows immediately that the expression 'green' applies *correctly* only to these things (the green ones) and not to *those* (the non-greens). The fact that the expression means something implies, that is, a whole set of *normative* truths about my behavior with that expression.[61]

Thus, the normativity for communication comes from the meaning of the expressions. With respect to a linguistic expression, say 'book', there is a set of truth in which the application of it would be correct. These truths not merely express a set of correct applications, but confine everyone *ought to* use it that way. Under this framework, no deviant uses of 'book' is allowed to be the meaning of it. In addition, it seems that the possibility of new meaning with respect to new expressions is preserved, while a

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[61] Boghossian (1989), p.148

reinterpretation towards expressions which are already in our language is not possible. It should be noted that the conception characterized this way is likely to be *external*. In other words, it would not be a constraint which regulates our behaviors and responses from our internal processes, since the conception of normativity rests upon meanings, of which the constitution is independent of human acts.

Other philosopher also have a similar line of thought, for example, McDowell engages to the semantic normativity when he claims:

> [T]o learn the meaning of a word is to acquire an understanding that obliges us subsequently – if we have occasion to deploy the concept in question – to judge and speak in certain determinate ways, on pain of failure to obey the dictates of the meaning we have grasped.[62]

McDowell embraces a more fruitful conception of semantic normativity in the sense that he extends the conception of normativity to how we learn linguistic expressions. The conception of normativity in McDowell's text is *prescriptive*. That in order to have an adequate understanding of a set of linguistic expressions, we *ought to* understand how the normativity obliges us to use (utter, assert, or respond) words in a certain way. It follows that there are norms which are independent of meaning discourse, and to learn the meaning of a word is to understand the norm which governs it. However, the sceptical paradox exactly shows the inadequacy of the view. The sceptic claims that even if we have norms (in the semantic sense), he would nevertheless has the right to challenge whether our use of any given linguistic expression is following one rule rather than another. Granted that meaning is (in some sense) normative, we still cannot justify ourselves in performing rule following practices but arbitrary ones.

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[62] McDowell (1984), p.45

So far I have characterized two formulations the conception of semantic normativity. Åsa Wikforss argues against semantic normativity by claiming that either 'the alleged normativity has nothing to do with normativity or it cannot plausibly be said that meaning is normative in the sense suggested'[63]. Furthermore, there is no reason to subscribe that meaning is an essentially normative notion. We will consider these claims in turn. In arguing against the claim that meaning is normative, Wikforss puts the question ahead, 'What is to do with truth and normativity?', in order to challenge Boghossian's conception of normativity. The normativity elaborated by Boghossian, has the consequence that "if I wish to speak the truth, and I mean *horse* by 'horse', then I should apply 'horse' to horses only". However, perhaps truth itself does not suggest normativity, at least not the normativity desired here. In order to make a transition from truth to normativity, Wikforss claims, '[i]t must be argued that we somehow have an *obligation* to express ourselves truthfully.'[64] Such an obligation, unfortunately, cannot be found within semantic normativity. We can at best appeal to pragmatic norms or social norms to regulate speakers that they *ought to* tell truth. If the norms are generated from linguistic entities, semantic normativists owe us an explanation why we are obligated to tell truth in communication.

Furthermore, to embrace semantic normativity would likely lead to the claim that espressing a false statement is committing a semantic error. Consider the following example: Under a certain situation, I misperceive something and utter 'That's a horse', while it is in fact a cow. Certainly I have made a false utterance, but would it violate the semantic norm? Given that the utterance is false, because it is from my beliefs where the false utterance is made, it should be clear that my use of 'horse' might still be *semantically correct*. Hence, it is possible that while I am not violating semantic

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[63] Wikforss (2001), p.204
[64] Wikforss (2001), p.205

norms, my utterances could be false after all. Although the semantic normativitists might claim that 'if I mean *horse* by 'horse' then applying the word to a non-horse is violating a semantic norm'[65], the alleged claim is not supported in their theory. For it is not one's use has violated the given semantic norm, but one's perception was under a circumstance which easily led him to mistakes. So to speak, semantic normativists lack an explanation to the possibility of false utterances, and yet not violating semantic norms.

Hattiangadi takes a different line of strategy. First of all, she aims to construct a semantic realist theory of meaning. In arguing so, she argues for the indispensability of semantic facts. However, the semantic realism defended would not embrace semantic normativity in the strong sense. For it is exactly the conception which is adopted by Kripke's sceptic. The strong semantic normativity can be formulated as:

(1) *Normativity*: S means F by $x \rightarrow (a)(S$ ought to (apply x to $a) \leftrightarrow a$ is $f)$.[66]

We have already outlined the difficulty of (1) in section 2.2, and a brief review will suffice for the present purpose. Hattiangadi claims that (1) has a too strong requirement that (1) can be separated into two conditionals:

(2) S ought to (apply x to $a) \rightarrow a$ is f

(3) a is $f \rightarrow S$ ought to (apply x to a)

Accordingly, (4) says that for any a that is f, an agent S ought to apply x to a. It follows that granted 'ought implies can', we will soon find (4) is not only too demanding but false. As there are (possibly) infinite a which is f, the satisfaction of the conditional would simply be beyond our limit of recognition. Hence, the *Normativity* characterized fails since, in principle, we cannot satisfy it. Moreover, Hattiangadi claims that in order to reach the generality, Kripke would have to adopt

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[65] Wikforss (2001), p.206
[66] Hattiangadi (2007), p.180

such a strong conception of normativity. That is, in order to construct an *a priori* argument against all kinds of meaning facts, the semantic obligations adopted in the sceptical paradox would be *categorical* or *prescriptive*. Given that (1) is untenable, we should not worry that the sceptical paradox would threat the semantic normativity proposed. Nonetheless, we shall hesitate to admit that (1) is the normativity embedded in sceptical paradox. For the construction of (1) is based on semantic realism in the sense that '*x*', which supposedly signifies the linguistic expressions, would violate the underlying thought in the sceptical paradox. The paradox is constructed based upon the thought that meaning is (internally) normative without having any import from semantic realism.

One may propose that even if (1) is false, we can regard norm-relativity as the required normativity. According to it, if I mean horse by 'horse', 'horse' will apply correctly to all and only horses. Certainly, speaking in this way, the conception of normativity would not exceed my limit as (1) does. Hence, norm-relativity can be formulated as:

(4) *Norm-Relativity*: S means F by $t \rightarrow (a) (S$ applies x 'correctly' to $a \leftrightarrow a$ is f).

While (4) seems to be okay in meaning discourse, it is too weak in the sense that there is almost no normative force in the formulated normativity. For it substitutes the normative term 'ought to' by a factual term 'correctly'. The restrictions would then fails to meet the INR, which we have elaborated its significance in providing a solution to the sceptical paradox. Furthermore, although the paradox is constructed based on the assumption 'meaning is normative', it should be noted that (4) would not be the conception of normativity employed in Kripke's sceptical paradox. Moreover, the normativity presented in sceptical paradox is not as weak as (4). In fact, as argued in section 2.1, the paradox actually implies an *internal normativity requirement*. The

normativity requirement demands not only our uses to be correct, but that we ought to be *guided* in every step of performing a rule.

Then, Hattiangadi proposes another normativity condition which is a modification of *Normativity*:

(5) *Normativity**: S means F by x → (a)(S ought to (apply x to a) → a is f).[67]

She claims that the definition of semantic normativity would be adequate for two reasons. First of all, it does not have the conditional (3), so it does not go beyond a speaker's ability. In other words, the speaker need not apply x to a for every a that is f. The only requirement would be that if a speaker *ought to* apply 'horse' to a moving creature in his visual field, then it is *horse*. Secondly, the conception of normativity in (5) would be semantic, not moral, prudential, rational or others. However, (5) does not ease the problem raised by Kripke's sceptic. Although (5) would not go beyond my linguistic capacities, the consequent '(a)(S ought to (apply x to a) → a is f)' seems to be still under sceptic's challenge. If a speaker ought to apply '+' to 'quus', it does not mean 'quus' is 'plus'. The gist of the sceptical paradox is that even if we have a norm which governs our uses or performances of rule, the sceptic can legitimately challenge us whether we are following one rule rather than another. I think that although Hattiangadi might be successful in arguing against the *a priori* generality of the sceptical paradox, to examine each semantic realist theory with sceptical paradox shows them to be untenable one by one.

Thus, none of the semantic realist theory discussed here would survive from the sceptic's attack. For that even if the thesis that meaning is *semantically* normative is true, we are still facing the difficulty that we have no justifications for following one rule rather than another. Furthermore, as Boghossian and McDowell present the

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[67] Hattiangadi (2007), p.181

intuitive conception of semantic normativity, I have sketched its failure both from sceptic's side and from Wikforss's arguments. Given that there is a norm for truth, it does not immediately yield a norm for meaning. Further arguments are required in order to bridge the norms of these two notions. Moreover, the case that my utterance is false while I am not violating semantic norms seems to be incoherent with the thesis of semantic normativity. For semantic norms stipulate the correct uses of linguistic expressions. A violation of them would follow semantically false statement, and *vice versa*. Being aware of the problems discussed, Hattiangadi, in defending semantic normativity, adopts a different approach to the problem. She first formulates the conception of normativity which was assumed in the sceptical paradox, namely *Normativity*, and claims that in order to reach its full generality against semantic realist theories, the formulation is necessary. Furthermore, she argues that the normativity is so strong that goes beyond one's linguistic capabilities. A weaker conception of normativity, *Norm-relativity*, would not suffice the sceptic's need, either. Finally, she has proposed a conception of normativity, which, according to her, would be the required conception of normativity for semantic realists. However, I have argued that the alleged consequent of the conditional (5) may not hold after all. The upshot is that although, for the moment, we do not have an *a priori* argument supporting the generality of the sceptical paradox, present semantic realist theories fail to establish its intelligibility under the sceptical challenge. The conception of semantic normativity, therefore, seems not to be the conception of normativity desired in our rule following theory of meaning. In turn, I shall turn to Davidson's intersubjective normativity in the next section.

3.2 The role normativity plays in Davidson's theory of meaning

As for now, we have investigated the conception of semantic normativity and found it unsatisfactorily for two reasons. First, none of the formulated conception of normativity is able to avoid the sceptical paradox. Secondly, semantic normativists owe us an explanation to how semantic facts *guide* our use. That is, while semantic norms distinguish correct applications from incorrect ones, it does not directly provide the justification or guidance in my each application. In the present section, we shall consider another conception of normativity, intersubjective normativity. The conception is implicitly adopted by Davidson in the construction of his theory of meaning. The starting point for Davidson is that we *do* have successful communications. The task for a theory of meaning is not to say under what circumstances communications would be successful, but, given that there are successful communications, how to explain meaning in terms of them. Moreover, as Davidson is an anti-realist with regard to meaning, he proposes a slingshot argument to argue against traditional theories of meaning. Nonetheless, although Dummett also has an anti-realist conception of meaning, he stands on an opposite side to Davidson, in the sense that the burden of communication is put on the speaker, while for Davidson, it is rather on the interpreter's side. The difference in them leads to two different theories of meaning as well as the normativity involved. Discussing Davidson's theory of meaning, I shall not leave Dummett aside. In what follows, the theory of meaning proposed by Davidson, including his famous *no language* thesis, will firstly be discussed. What follows is Dummett's objection to Davidson will be under examination. I will show that social norm, in contrast with intersubjective norm, is not primary in meaning discourse. Moreover, members of a community are able to breach rules if they reach a new agreement. However, it does not yield that social

norms are dispensable. Social norms are important for communication, but not necessary. In the final part, I argue that the conception of intersubjective normativity, intelligible as it may seems to be, needs some modification in order to be satisfactory.

One strand of contemporary development of theories of meaning has a quite different approach, namely, to take successful communications as the starting point, and then to seek the explanation for meaning based on them. That is, instead of looking for meaning entities or semantic facts that support our meaning discourse, we turn the question around into: Given that we do have successful communications, how is meaning possible? However, while we can roughly characterize communication as an activity between at least a speaker and an interlocutor, it is rather difficult to give a detailed and precise definition for communication, not to mention the much more complicated notion, successful communication. On the one hand, to account for successful communications seems to be an essential task for any theory of meaning to be satisfactory. If communications are only randomly successful, it would be in principle accidental to understand a speaker, or to generalize it, the author of the present essay. The consequence would be that each time our utterances are similar to a leap into the dark, while hoping that there would be a ground for us not to fall. Fortunately, this is not the case in pragmatics. That given that we are same members in a community, communication are by and large correct. The question for Davidson, as well as for Wittgenstein, perhaps, is always: How to explain meaning, given that we have communications? Wittgenstein appeals to rule-following uses, and Davidson turns himself to a theory of truth, upon which we can construct a theory of meaning later on.

For the moment let us have a brief review of the slingshot argument. The argument aims to refute any theory of meaning, which identifies the meaning of a

singular term with its reference. There are two assumptions: (i) Logically equivalent singular terms have the same reference. (ii) A singular term does not change its reference if a contained singular term is replaced by another with the same reference. Suppose that 'R' and 'S' are two sentences alike in truth value. The following four sentences, according to Davidson, have the same reference.

(1) R

(2) $\{x: x=x \wedge R\} = \{x: x=x \}$

(3) $\{x: x=x \wedge S\} = \{x: x=x \}$

(4) S

Clearly, (1) and (2) are logically equivalent and so are (3) and (4). The difference between (2) and (3) fades out if we observe the fact that the difference, $\{x: x=x \wedge R\}$ and $\{x: x=x \wedge S\}$ are alike in truth value, granted R and S are alike in truth value. And if the meaning of a sentence is what it refers to, all true sentences must refer to the same meaning, hence they are synonymous. The upshot is absurd.

Kirk Ludwig and Ernest Lepore (2003) have argued that the argument fails to refute the theory of meaning that it aims to. In the first place, if we read (2) as a quantified noun phrase, 'the set of all x such that $x = x$ and R', the assumption (ii) would have no application in the argument due to the substitution does not work within quantified phrases. Besides, what are we to say two singular terms are logically equivalent? It is plausible to differ the notion of logical equivalence from its standard use and say that two singular terms are logically equivalent iff they co-refer on all reinterpretations of non-logical terms. However, no single conception of logical equivalence can account for the logical equivalence of (1) and (2), on the one hand, and two singular terms which are logically equivalent, on the other hand.

In the construction of a theory of meaning, the primary concern for Davidson is

that the information concerning the meaning of the object language should be given in a metalanguage. Hence, the task is to establish a mapping from object language to metalanguage. The only way out, suggested by Davidson, is to match any sentence *s* in the object language with a sentence which in some way gives the meaning of *s*. One obvious candidate is *s* itself, if the object language is itself contained in the metalanguage. Otherwise, a translation of *s* in the metalanguage will do the job. In addition, we try to keep the place of *p* as extensional as possible, that is to say: (i) An elimination of the phrase 'means that' is necessary. (ii) To provide the sentence that replace '*p*' with a proper connective. (iii) To supply the description that replaces '*s*' with its own predicate.[68] The result is a familiar T-scheme:

(*T*) *s* is *T* if and only if *p*.

What is needed for a theory of meaning is no more than appealing to the semantic notion, 'is *T*'. All instances result from the schema, where '*s*' is replaced by structural description of a sentence in *L* and '*p*' by that sentence, will just be true sentences of the language. As Davidson concludes, 'a theory of meaning for a language *L* shows "how the meanings of sentences depend upon the meanings of words" if it contains a (recursive) definition of truth-in-*L*.'[69]

In sum, Davidson tries to construct a theory of meaning without committing to meaning entities. The compositional meaning theory is preserved though meanings of sentences are now given in terms of their truth conditions. To know the semantic conception of truth of a given language is to know how sentences in the given language can be true, in other words, to acquire the necessary and sufficient conditions for the truth of sentences. This amounts to understanding the language. As a result, the theory of meaning sweeps the concept of meaning away, and yet only

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[68] Davidson (1984), p.23
[69] Davidson,(1984), p.23

semantic notions relative to true-in-*L* are retained.

In constructing a theory of communication, Davidson proposes that the theory is subject to empirical test. The speaker must find out what the alien as an interlocutor hold as true in his language. Then the speaker may characterize a true-in-alien which establishes a mapping from sentences true in alien languages to sentences true in the speaker's language. We allow the margin of error which stems from sentences held true translated by the sentences held false. Principle of charity is assumed so we maximize our agreements and the self-consistency as much as possible. Moreover, in a radical translation, what the alien means by an utterance cannot be disentangled from what he believes. We would fall into a circle that we do not know what someone means unless we know what he believes and we do not know what one believes unless we know what he means. The essence of the method of radical interpretation is to match held-true sentences of a language to held-true sentences of another language by means of a truth definition and errors within a certain limit can also be explained.

Radical interpretation, so to speak, is the scenario where we face the speaker of a language unknown to us, and without the help of dictionaries or translators. We start by identifying which sentences our "interlocutor" holds true, and we assume the principle of charity, that in most of the time he is trying to express the true beliefs that we would express in similar situations. The methodology of radical interpretation is holistic: 'it is to be applied not just to single utterances but to all of the utterances that we can use for constructing our meaning theory for the speaker.'[70] Having made a brief sketch to Davidson's theory of meaning, we are moving ourselves to issues on normativity. The no language thesis, which speaks for the primacy of idiolects, leads us to a conception of normativity which is intersubjective. On the other hand,

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[70] Kusch (2006), p.77

Dummett's use theory of meaning makes us choose the conception of normativity which is social.

First of all, granted that without a language communication is likely to be impossible, perhaps we should then turn our attention to what sort of *language* is primary in a communication. As Dummett and Davidson are fully aware of the problem but see it from a distinct perspective, their answers fall into two categories: the language, supposedly social, and the idiolect. A weak reading of the former indicates the primacy of a norm to govern correct and incorrect uses of the language, but a strong reading of it leads not only to the primacy but to the sufficiency and necessity of the norms. However, the latter is exactly a radical rejection to both the weak and strong thesis of how social norms play in communications. Of course, in arguing for the priority of idiolects, Davidson does not ignore the significance of social norms. His strategy is merely that although successful communications are made with the aid of social norms from time to time, it does not prove the necessity or sufficiency of social norms as desired by Dummett. For the sake of clarification, in what follows I will discuss the no language thesis first, and consider Dummett's criticisms towards it later.

The no language thesis set forth by Davidson shifts the attention from a study of a systematic account of language to the ability between speaker and interlocutor to 'converge on passing theories from utterance to utterance.'[71] What interests Davidson most in the theory of meaning is the necessary condition for communication. Viewed in this light, a shared language is not our desired candidate. Then Davidson proposes the distinction between prior theory and passing theory. Prior theory is a set of beliefs for the speaker, and it is the way the interpreter is prepared in advance to interpret an

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[71] Davidson 2005 (1986): 106

utterance of the speaker. Passing theory for the speaker is the theory he intends the interpreter to use. As for the interpreter, passing theory is the theory he actually uses to interpret an utterance. If we consider the fact that malapropisms, as Davidson says, also issue in successful communications, this will pull the communication down to an activity between idiolects. For that malapropisms, by its definition, are utterances not conformed to previously established rules, regardless syntactic or semantic. The remaining task then is to show that even in the case of malapropisms, we still have successful communications under the distinction of prior theory and passing theory.

Hence, by conceding various instances of successful communications, specifically malapropisms, Davidson is able to proceed his theory of meaning based on the distinction of prior theory and passing theory, that is, idiolects. Nonetheless, it should be emphasized that the constructed theory of meaning does not pay much attention to describe actual practices as Davidson himself claims that his concern is with necessary conditions to linguistic communication. In sum, Davidson has argued for the primacy of idiolect in communication by supporting examples of malapropisms. The language, which is socially governed, cannot explain the success of communication in cases of malapropisms. It is therefore not necessary nor sufficient to involve social norms as conditions for communications. The normativity, adopted in Davidson's theory of meaning, would likely be intersubjective, although he does not specify it clearly. Since at the time when passing theories of the speaker and the interpreter converge, communication would be successful.

Nonetheless, Dummett has approached the problem from a different aspect where he sees the threat of private language if one takes idiolect as conceptually primary in communication. Moreover, the distinction between correct and incorrect uses of a language will be arbitrary if we do not hold that a language with social

norms is primary in communication. Now it can be seen that although Davidson mainly concerns with successful communications as the way to construct a theory of meaning, Dummett is concerned about the correct and incorrect uses of language:

> Any speaker beyond the initial stages of mastering language must have some conception of what language he is speaking and hold himself responsible to that. …Using language and playing a game are not like doing one's hair and taking a bath. One may do either of the last two things as one likes and still be doing it. But, if the game ceases to have rules, it ceases to be a game, and if there cease to be right and wrong uses of a word, the word loses its meaning.[72]

However, I think that Dummett is perhaps missing the mark when he stresses on the normativity of uses of language. Obviously, not every communication is governed by a fixed set of rules; and in addition, wrong uses of words are not always considered as meaningless. On the one hand, it would be too strict if we accept that one must understand the entire language to make his utterance correctly. On the other hand, it would be genuinely impossible to give old words new meanings (which we often do). At any rate, it is not an easy task to frame and refute Dummett's theory of meaning so I will leave his thesis and turn to the problem with Davidson.

Davidson's project, though seemly convincing, is incomplete. The phenomena of malapropisms makes sense only when one already has a shared language, though not necessarily governed by norms. Otherwise, every utterance, which I have not interpreted before, seems eventually to be a malapropism, and the result is just absurd. In addition, when Davidson tries to make sense of the primacy of idiolect, it should not be forgotten that idiolect is part of a language at least shared in part with members of the community. To think that either idiolect or language governed with social

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[72] Dummett (1991), p.85

norms is conceptually primary in communication is perhaps misleading. Even though Davidson successfully argues against the primacy of a language governed by social norms in cases of malapropisms, he fails to extend his argument to argue for idiolects as necessary conditions. Moreover, in some cases of successful communication, idiolect even plays no role, let alone being necessary to communication. Consider the builder's language in *PI* §2 or a primitive language in a tribe that all meaningful utterances have been prefixed, successful communication happens even idiolects are insignificant. Hence, I think that the question 'Which is conceptually primary, the idiolect or the language?' would not have too much significance in theories of meaning. For we can find cases where the idiolect is primary as well as those where the (social) language is primary. Strictly speaking, this is not a refusal to both theories of meaning proposed by Davidson and Dummett. I admit that malapropism are not excluded from cases with success of communication, and I also share the sympathy with Dummett that a common language is indispensable in many cases. Paradoxically as it may seem to be, the acceptance of malapropisms is compatible with a shared language. Communication happens everywhere. In some cases, say malapropisms, an idiolect is conceptually primary while in other cases its role is replaced by a shared language.

Based on Wittgenstein's legacy, we may find it intuitive to assimilate communication to rule-governed games. Successful communication could be explained in terms of rule following performances. Nonetheless, it is to be noted firstly that rule following considered here should not be confused with prescriptive moral guidance. It is only in a weaker sense of normativity that we can make a rule following theory of meaning intelligible. That is, we are not obligated to perform a certain action in every step, however, we must be justified in each new application.

The justification, so to speak, does not come from anything *inner*, but depends on the social circumstances and agreements which have been made among others. Moreover, we should be aware that rule following practices are never an activity played on oneself, as to avoid the possibility of private language, and should be involved in a community. Correctness and incorrectness conditions are not law like or fixed, in the sense that a community is potentially unrestricted to change its following of a previous rule to another rule.

It is possible to take care of cases of malapropisms if rules are not interpreted as action guiding. Malapropisms, after all, are not serious phenomena that bothers us most in communication. If builder-in-chief says 'Brick' but actually means pillar, then at first the assistant may fail to bring pillar but after the often success of delivery of pillars by his assistant shows that rule following between the two builders has been changed. It is no doubt an example of successful communication in malapropisms, explained in terms of rule following considerations. Evidently, utterances made by following rules will receive its meaning relative to the rules. Changes of meaning are possible if members of a community are able to modify or alter the established norms. Misuse of words or mistakes can be easily identified comparing to rules.

To conclude, I have discussed Davidson's theory of meaning in terms of his theory of truth. With the slingshot argument, Davidson aims to sweep away theories of truth as well as theories of meaning which purports to use 'facts' or 'truth makers' as the meaning of linguistic entities. However, a close investigation shows the argument may not be cogent as it seems to be. Nonetheless, the aim of this section is that, granted that Davidson's theory of meaning is correct, would it be able to explain meaning discourse of our natural language? I agree with Davidson in dealing with malapropisms, as to hail the primacy of idiolects. However, if we consider the

builder's language in *PI*, we could felicitate Dummett by admitting the primacy of a (social) language. Therefore, the question 'which is conceptually primary?' seems to receive no direct answer after all. A brief remark would be that these two are both conceptually primary, in the sense that one cannot do with the other. Thus, I think that a hybrid of the conception of normativity involved in both philosophers' theses, intersubjective and communal, respectively, is perhaps sensible. For we can explain malapropisms, performances which are not following rules, supposedly, based on intersubjective normativity. In addition, to explain the meaning of builder's language, we may appeal to the communal normativity. Thus, we may move towards an adequate conception of normativity for a rule following theory of meaning.

3.3 Towards an intersubjective conception of normativity

In the present section, I aim to provide a suitable conception of normativity for rule following theory of meaning. The first thing which catches our attention is that the rule following based theory of meaning is an extension of Wittgenstein's rule following theory of meaning, which is pursued all the way long in *PI*. The reason I call it an extension is because while standing on Wittgenstein's shoulder, I try to draw a distinction between rule following practices. That is, practices which are 'in accordance with a rule' and those which are 'following a rule'. I have shown that the distinction is significant by showing a serious problem for rule following theory of meaning which would occur without the distinction in *Chapter one*, section four. Furthermore, the distinction can also be applied to account for Kripke's sceptical paradox and the sceptical solution. This would be the starting point of present section. However, as long as rule following practices are not arbitrary, it is required that we have justifications at hand in our application of rules. Not only so, in order to

distinguish correct applications from incorrect ones, it seems that a norm is necessary. The question is, granted that the sceptical paradox is thorn for semantic normativity, what conception of normativity would suffice our need? In the following, I shall first sketch the rule following theory of meaning in a nutshell. Secondly, I argue that intersubjective normativity would be a suitable option for our theory. It should be noted that it would not allow the possibility of private language in any sense, nor would it discard the communal normativity, which contemporary philosophers might intuitively assume for rule following theory of meaning.

With the question that there is no efficient way to decide whether one's practices is following a rule in mind, Wittgenstein arrives with the paradox: 'no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule'.[73] Despite the seemly paradox, I think that Wittgenstein agrees that the applications or practices of rules are still the criteria of understanding rules. The moral implied in *PI* is that If we insist on asking what meaning is, we are like to be trapped in a search for mental or abstract entities. However, once we focus, instead, on the question of what the explanation of meaning looks like, we will be subjected to much less confusion. Thus, following a rule is a practice to be carried out within a community, of which the communal conditions justify the correctness of practice. Moreover, correctness conditions of rule following should not justify performances which only fit the descriptions of a rule as following it. For that we would have no criteria to determine whether one is following a rule but only look at his performances. This leads us no way but back to Kripke's sceptical paradox. As a result, I have proposed in the previous chapter that a distinction between 'in accordance with a rule' and 'follow a rule' is necessary if we do not want to render

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[73] *Philosophical Investigations,* §201

our rule following practices as meaningless. Consider a rule like this:

Rule α =$_{df}$ Don't follow α.

If I want to follow α, it turns out that I am not following α. Yet if I am not following α, then, by its definition, I am following α. It turns out that I am trapped in the situation of *following* and *not following* rule α simultaneously. The strange situation arises because a primitive conception following a rule is assumed. Neither Wittgenstein nor Kripke has made an explicit distinction between different performances of rule following. However, to follow a rule is one thing, but to act in accordance with a rule is another. In order to follow a rule, *plus*, one must have justifications for following plus function. His calculation using the sign '+' should not be *blind*, but rather that at every stage he must have justifications to move on to the next stage. If his performances of plus function come out randomly, no matter how surprising the correct results are, he is simply not following plus. Similarly, when we want to follow a rule, it is prerequisite that we know the rule, i.e. we know its content and how to perform it, and we must have justifications showing that we are following such rule. On the other hand, acting in accordance with a rule does not require that much.

Therefore, it seems rather intelligible to claim that we understand the notion of 'acting in accordance with a rule' better and more intuitively than the notion of 'following a rule.' An action is said to be in accordance with a rule if it fits what the rule says. That is, the performances are in agreement of the contents of the rule. Suppose that we have two rules:

(R1) Sit down while snowing and jump otherwise.

(R2) Sit down while snowing and stand up otherwise.

When we see Jones sitting down while it is snowing, his action are said to be in

accordance with both rules. It follows that if rule following practices are taken only to be in accordance with rules, there will be no way to tell whether Jones is following (R1) or (R2) as long as the snow does not stop. The consequence will lead the present rule following theory of meaning into ashes if we do not distinguish two ways of rule following practices. Although we could tell the performances are following which rule if we heat up the place where the man sits, it would not be convincing once we encounter Kripke's sceptical paradox, in which Kripke's sceptic comes and asks Jones to do a calculation that he has never done before. Jones's answer, first of all, should be justified but not blind. The sceptic then challenges him if he has any evidence of his following plus but not *quus*[74]. If Jones attempts to answer the challenge by providing his past performances which are in accordance with plus, the sceptic will reply that they are also in accordance with *quus*. Thus, not only the performance '1+1=2' is made to accord with *plus* as well as *quus*, but all my past performances of '*x+y*, for any *x*, *y* ∈ ω' accords with *plus* and *quus*.

Nonetheless, once we distinguish practices which are 'in accordance with a rule' and 'following a rule', the sceptical doubt seems to be free of its assault power. On the one hand, the sceptical solution proposed by Kripke appeals to the community for justification, which is like the requirement of 'following a rule' under the distinction. On the other hand, the sceptical challenge seems to be based on the actions which are only 'in accordance with a rule', provided that the set of my previous responses of addition is only a proper subset of both the set of results of performing *plus* function and the set of results of performing *quus* function, similar to (R1) and (R2) characterized above. As a result, we have now sieved the problematic notion 'in accordance with a rule' out from 'following a rule'. What is left is to investigate the

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[74] The definition of 'quus' function, denoted by $\oplus$, is as follows:
   $x \oplus y = x + y$ if x, $y < 57$, $= 5$, otherwise.

conditions which we rely heavily on when following rules. I think that an inquiry into the correctness condition of successful communications and a suitable interpretation of normativity would be the key towards the construction of a rule following theory of meaning.

Correctness conditions are indispensable for rule following because we do not want to render every communication, including inward and private ones, successful and correct. Since we cannot apply sentences *arbitrarily* as we like to mean everything we want, meaning is certainly governed by some conditions. Such conditions should not be provided privately for if 'whatever is going to seem right to me is right, ... that only means that here we can't talk about "right".'[75] Roughly speaking, the communally accepted conditions for meaning discourse as the correctness conditions of rule following practices. If this claim is appropriate, it follows that for me to mean *X*, I am following the rules which gives the meaning of *X*. Therefore, for one to apply a word correctly, one applies it in certain ways in conformity with the community standards. The required correctness condition, taken as norms, indicates the desired normativity condition. First of all, we can characterize the conditions where a successful communication takes place as the correctness conditions. These conditions, taken into a community, can in turn characterize norms for communication. For me to communicate within a community, I should at least understand the meaning of sentences I am uttering. And to understand the meaning of a sentence is to know how to follow the rule which is governed.

The normativity of rule following practices would in no sense be objective because correctness conditions for a same conversation actually change from community to community. In addition, there is no 'ought to' played in the

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[75] *Philosophical Investigations*, §258

communication. Although the speaker puts himself in conformity with the community to communicate most of the time, for the sake of being interpretable, it is not necessary for him to do so. Once the speaker speaks in an outlandish manner, the hearers will modify the rules so to interpret him and arrive at a successful communication. In that case, one's meaning is engendered by norms, which, supposedly, are the rules they have newly established.

The norms, once found, distinguish correct applications from incorrect ones. However, the pressing question is this: What should be the appropriate conception of normativity in rule following practices? There are two provisional candidates: semantic and non-semantic normativity. However, in the search for an appropriate conception of normativity, I share my sympathy with Davidson that malapropisms actually play a significant role in ordinary discourse. Therefore, I would consider whether malapropisms can be explained by these two conceptions of normativity in turn.

The thesis of semantic normativity is that meaning engenders normativity. It follows that to grasp the meaning of plus, one 'ought to' answer '125' rather than '5' in the sceptical challenge. However, the path is already wiped away by Kripke, since the sceptic would challenge the determinacy of meaning. Neither meaning facts nor mental entities will help semantic normativitists answering the sceptical challenge. Even granted that there are kinds of dispositions, behaviors or semantic facts, it is nonetheless possible that we ought to reply '5', given that our past performances might have followed *quus* rule. Consequently, there seems to be no plausible way for semantic normativity to avoid the challenge.

In addition, to accept semantic normativity would leave us no room to account for non-literal meaning. Yet the usual occurrences of malapropisms in communication

show the significance of non-literal meaning in communications. For semantic normativists, there would be little chance to explain why malapropisms could communicate successfully. If one 'ought to' express a certain thought that 'it is a nice arrangement of epithets' only by the same sentence, there seems to be no way how someone grasps the thought 'it is a nice arrangement of epithets' by the other's saying 'it is a nice derangement of epitaphs.' To sum up, the failure of semantic normativity is due to its unavoidability with sceptical paradox and the failure to accommodate malapropisms as instances of successful communications. Hence, I hold that the normativity required for rule following is non-semantic.

It might be thought that a theory of meaning based on rule following is unpromising unless it can account for malapropisms. In fact, it is possible to take care of cases of malapropisms if rules are not interpreted as an one-way action guiding. If a builder in an English speaking community utters 'Brick!' but actually means 'pillar', then at first the assistant may fail to bring pillar. However, frequent successful delivery of pillars, once established, would show that rule following between the two builders has been adapted and reestablished. This would be an example of successful communications in malapropisms, explained in terms of rule following. Evidently, utterances made by following rules will receive their meaning relative to the rules. Adaptations of meaning are possible if members of a community are able to modify or alter the established norms. In this way, misapplications or mistakes can also be identified and corrected by the rules.
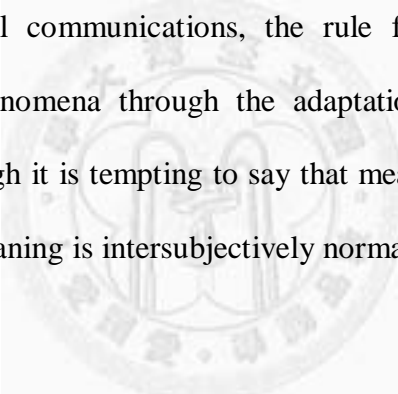
I claim that what is needed in practices of rule following may be intersubjective normativity. First of all, the norms are generated by collecting the correctness conditions of successful communications. Thus, when a speaker and a hearer reach an agreement over the communication they had, they can characterize the correctness

conditions, or norms, based on their mutual performances. The correctness conditions are the conditions under which I correctly use a word or a sentence. They can then adopt the characterized conditions as a rule for communication. Moreover, if a rule is adopted among a massive number of members in the community, it will amount to be a communal rule. But members of the community are still liable to breach any rule of the community. There is still no 'ought to' in using a particular sentence whenever one wants to express a certain thought.

Hence, the meaning of words or sentences is still engendered from the communal agreements of community, which indeed vary with respect to different communities. The reason that the phrase "intersubjective normativity" is favorable rather than "communal normativity" is because the agreements are actually generated between at least two people rather than a massive agreement within a large community. It is often seen that a small community would have its 'secret code', which interprets a common word or sentence with a different meaning. It would be absurd if a member of that community, who already learned the code, tries to correct others on pain of failure to understand their meaning. Moreover, malapropisms are explainable within this framework. Back to the builder's language, suppose this time that builder A uses his words in a malapropistic way. As long as A remains interpretable, builder B is guided through without knowing what 'Brick' or 'Slab' means in advance. Given that the utterances of the builder A deviate from the norms of the community, B is able to modify the communal rules so to accommodate A's actions. The two builders will be considered as forming a new rule for communication. Therefore, norms are not an objective standard with respect to all communities. The norms in play change in different communities.

Despite the conception of normativity implied in the sceptical challenge, rule

following as a theory of meaning sketched is concerned with intersubjective normativity. When the sceptic challenges that there is no fact to determine my meaning plus rather than another, a possible response is that meaning *plus* is how my community uses the sign '+'. Even if there is no fact to determine my meaning, communications still go well because members of the same community can reach agreements with one another. Therefore, it would be better if we can shift our attention to intersubjective normativity. On the one hand, we could be spared from the sceptical paradox in the sense that the correctness conditions are not in no means mental facts or semantic facts, but are dependent on communal agreements, which is compatible with the sceptical solution. On the other hand, granted that malapropisms are common in successful communications, the rule following based theory of meaning explains the phenomena through the adaptation and reestablishment of normativity. Hence, although it is tempting to say that meaning is normative, a better way to put it should be: meaning is intersubjectively normative.

CONCLUSION

So far we have come to three theses: (1) A construction of rule following theory of meaning, based on the analogy between languages and games, in the sense that speaking a language, like playing games, is sensible. For it keeps the advantages that Wittgenstein have made in *PI*, and it is able to explain with abnormal cases, such as malapropisms, yet arrive at a successful communication. Moreover, we could account for Kripke's sceptical paradox by drawing the distinction between practices which are in accordance with a rule and following a rule. (2) The sceptical paradox is a genuine problem to any given theory of meaning. That if a theoy of meaning cannot eschew from the sceptical attack, we ought to find it not satisfactory in explaining meaning discourse. (3) The norms, which generate the meaning of sentences, are collected through where successful communications take place. And the normativity condition employed is intersubjective, which is promising in explaining successful communications of malapropisms. These are sufficient to support a Wittgensteinian rule following theory of meaning aiming to establish here.

As a matter of fact, The explanation of meaning in terms of agreements between speaker and interpreter avoids committing to unnecessary meaning entities, and is free from the sceptical challenge. Moreover, to equip our rule following theory of meaning with intersubjective normativity is the right picture. It not only eschews from Kripke's sceptical challenge, but explains the acquiring of language while giving an intelligible account to the phenomena of successful communications of malapropisms.

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