

Going on as one ought: Kripke and Wittgenstein on the normativity of meaning

Hannah Ginsborg 

University of California, Berkeley,
Berkeley, California

Correspondence

Hannah Ginsborg, Department of
Philosophy, University of California,
Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720-2390.
Email: ginsborg@berkeley.edu

Kripke's thesis that meaning is normative is typically interpreted, following Boghossian, as the thesis that meaningful expressions allow of true or warranted use. I argue for an alternative interpretation centered on Wittgenstein's conception of the normativity involved in "knowing how to go on" in one's use of an expression. Meaning is normative for Kripke because it justifies claims, not to be saying something true, but to be going on as one ought from previous uses of the expression. I argue that this represents a distortion of Wittgenstein's conception of the normativity of meaning, and that Wittgenstein's conception is preferable.

KEYWORDS

Boghossian, Kripke, meaning, normativity, rule-following, Wittgenstein

1 | KRIPKE'S NORMATIVITY THESIS

There has been considerable debate over the last few decades on the issue of whether meaning is normative. Philosophers have been interested in the issue largely because of its bearing on the question whether it is possible to give a reductive naturalistic account of linguistic meaning and mental content: whether, for example, we can explain the fact that words have meaning in terms of dispositions to verbal behaviour, or account for mental content in terms of law like correlations between happenings in the world and tokenings of expressions in a language of thought (see, e.g., Dretske, 1981; Fodor, 1990; Horwich, 1998, 2005; Millikan, 1984). The idea that there is something distinctively normative about meaning has been thought by some philosophers to rule out such reductive naturalistic views (see, e.g., McDowell, 1984; Brandom, 1994). Other philosophers have granted the normativity of meaning in a sense which poses a *prima facie* challenge to naturalism about meaning, but held that it is nonetheless compatible with naturalistic views (see, e.g., Gibbard, 1994, 2012; Wedgwood, 2007, 2009). And still

others have denied that there is anything genuinely normative about meaning or content at all (see, e.g., Glüer, 1999; Wikforss, 2001; Hattiangadi, 2006, 2007; Glüer & Wikforss, 2009).

The origin of this debate lies in Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations (Kripke, 1982).¹ Kripke read Wittgenstein as putting forward a skeptical argument against the very possibility of meaning and rule-following, and the thesis that there is a normative relation between the meaning of an expression and its use is a key premise of that argument.² Most philosophers were unconvinced by the skeptical argument itself, but many of them accepted the premise that meaning is normative. They saw it, not as entailing that there is no such thing as meaning or content, but as providing an important constraint on possible accounts of meaning. And those philosophers who describe themselves as opposing the normativity of meaning have presented themselves as challenging a relatively entrenched orthodoxy.

What did Kripke mean when he said, or implied, that meaning is normative? Most participants in the debate assume that Kripke's normativity thesis amounts to the thesis that meaningful expressions allow of correct or incorrect use, where correct use is in turn a matter of truth or warranted assertibility.³ While other possible interpretations have been considered,⁴ it is generally assumed that this is at least what Kripke himself had in mind. The debate has largely been about whether there is indeed something genuinely normative about the fact that meaningful expressions can be used correctly or incorrectly in the sense associated with truth, and whether the normativity derives from meaning as such or from other constraints, for example, moral or prudential requirements to say true rather than false things. And the same is true of the extension of the debate into the normativity of mental content and that of belief (see, e.g., Boghossian, 2003; Glüer & Wikforss, 2009).

I believe that the debate has got off on the wrong foot. For, as I argue in what follows, the normativity which figures in Kripke's normativity thesis is not the normativity associated with correctness in the sense of truth or warrant. In place of the standard reading, for which I take Boghossian as an exemplar, I offer an alternative reading of Kripke's normativity thesis, which I arrive at by considering Wittgenstein's conception of the normativity of meaning and seeing how Kripke's understanding of the normativity of meaning both draws on it and diverges from it. While the main aim of the paper is exegetical, I will suggest in conclusion that Wittgenstein's understanding of the normativity of meaning is to be preferred to Kripke's, whether we construe Kripke on the standard interpretation or on the one which I shall propose.

¹The central ideas of Kripke's book were presented in a 1976 lecture, the transcript of which was widely circulated and attracted a great deal of interest. So Kripke's interpretation very likely had an influence on discussions of meaning and rule-following prior to the book's publication in 1982.

²Kripke attributes the thesis to Wittgenstein, but since I believe it represents Kripke's own view as well as the view he ascribes to Wittgenstein, I shall refer to it as Kripke's thesis.

³Daniel Whiting refers to this as the "orthodox" interpretation of the thesis (2013, p. 221), and it is widely accepted (see, for example, Fodor, 1990, p. 135, n. 35; Gibbard, 1994, p. 100; Gibbard, 2012, pp. 10–11; Horwich, 1998, pp. 185–187; Horwich, 2005, pp. 107–108; Wikforss, 2001, p. 203; Speaks, 2009, p. 408; Wedgwood, 2009, Section 3.1). It came into currency following Paul Boghossian's influential (1989) article, but Boghossian in turn ascribes it to Blackburn (1984) (see Boghossian, 1989, p. 513). Blackburn assumes that the relevant correctness is truth; the suggestion that it might instead be equated with warrant is Boghossian's. Defenders of the normativity thesis have typically framed it in terms of truth rather than warrant; prominent exceptions are Gibbard (1994, 2012), and Brandom (1994).

⁴An initial survey of possible candidates was offered in Wikforss (2001); for more recent discussion of the alternatives see Whiting (2013), and Glüer and Wikforss (2020).

2 | BOGHOSSIAN'S INTERPRETATION OF THE NORMATIVITY THESIS

I begin with a sketch of Kripke's skeptical argument, since it is in the context of this argument that Kripke introduces the idea that meaning is normative. Kripke (1982) imagines a scenario in which, never before having added any numbers larger than 57, I am asked: "What is $68 + 57$?" I answer "125", and, in so doing, I am confident that "125" is the correct answer in two different senses. It is correct "both in the arithmetical sense that 125 is the sum of 68 and 57, and in the metalinguistic sense that 'plus', as I intended to use that word in the past, denoted a function which, when applied to the numbers I called '68' and '57', yields the value 125" (p. 8).

But now I encounter a skeptic who challenges my certainty about the correctness of my answer in the "metalinguistic" sense. "Perhaps, he suggests, as I used the term 'plus' in the past, the answer I intended for ' $68 + 57$ ' should have been '5!'" (p. 8). He gets me to take this possibility seriously by floating the hypothesis that by "plus" in the past I meant, not addition, but quaddition, which yields the sum of x and y when x and y are less than 57, and otherwise 5. On that hypothesis, he points out, the "metalinguistically" correct response is "5". The conclusion that there is no such thing as my having meant addition by the "+" sign results from the supposedly insuperable difficulty of answering the skeptic on this point. To do so, Kripke claims, I must cite a fact about myself which, as he puts it, "constitutes my meaning plus not quus" (p. 11). What makes it difficult to accomplish this task is that, according to Kripke, anything I cite must satisfy the constraint that I can appeal to it to justify my saying "125" rather than "5". "Any putative candidate for [the fact of my having meant addition] must ... show how I am justified in giving the answer '125' to $68 + 57$... Otherwise, the sceptic has not been answered when he holds that my present response is arbitrary" (p. 11).⁵

Much of the remainder of Kripke's skeptical argument consists in examining various accounts of the supposed fact of my having meant addition, and showing that they fail to satisfy this constraint. As he puts it: "There will be many specific objections to these theories. But all fail to give a candidate for a fact as to what I meant that would show that only '125', not '5', is the answer I 'ought' to give" (p. 11). In developing this phase of the argument, he devotes particular attention to the view that my meaning addition by "plus" is my having a disposition to give the sum in answer to plus questions. The most fundamental problem with the dispositionalist account is that "as a candidate for a 'fact' that determines what I mean, it fails to satisfy the basic condition on such a candidate ... that it should *tell* me what I ought to do in each new instance" (p. 24). In a passage often regarded as the *locus classicus* for the normativity thesis, he claims that it misses the point of the skeptic's demand by offering a merely descriptive, not a normative, account of the relation between what I mean and how I respond to the question. "The point is not that, if I meant addition by '+' I *will* answer '125', but that, if I intend to accord with my past meaning of '+', I *should* answer '125' ... The relation of meaning and intention to future action is *normative*, not *descriptive*" (p. 37).

In his influential 1989 article on the rule-following considerations, Boghossian offers the following interpretation of Kripke's normativity thesis:

⁵This paragraph glosses over an important question about how the skeptic's initially epistemological challenge—how do you know that you ought to say "125" rather than "5"?—is supposed to generate a metaphysical challenge to the possibility of meaning. I take up that question in Ginsborg (2018).

Suppose the expression “green” means green. It follows immediately that the expression “green” applies correctly only to these things (the green ones) and not to those (the non-greens). The fact that the expression means something implies, that is, a whole set of normative truths about my behaviour with that expression: namely, that my use of it is correct in application to certain objects and not in application to others” (Boghossian, 1989, p. 513).

So understood, as Boghossian (1989) goes on to say, Kripke’s normativity thesis amounts to nothing more than the familiar observation that meaningful sentences have truth-conditions or assertibility conditions. “The normativity of meaning turns out to be ... simply a new name for the familiar fact that ... meaningful expressions possess conditions of correct use” where “correct” is understood, roughly, as true or warranted” (p. 513).

But the normativity thesis, so understood, turns out to be problematic. In particular, as has been widely recognized, it does not, as Kripke supposes, rule out reductive dispositionalist or other naturalistic views of meaning. The point is argued by Boghossian himself in two subsequent articles in which he denies that meaning is normative in any interesting sense.⁶ If the thesis is stated in terms of conditions for correct application of an expression, as in Boghossian’s (1989) formulation, then, he says, the label “normativity of meaning” is at best misleading, since “there is nothing obviously normative about the notion of a truth condition” (2005, p. 208). Boghossian also considers a more obviously normative formulation of the thesis, drawn from the “locus classicus” passage from Kripke quoted two paragraphs above: “[I]f I mean addition by ‘+’, then, if I am asked what the sum of 58 and 67 is, I *should* answer ‘125’” (2005, p. 207).⁷ But he points out that the normativity here is merely hypothetical, since it depends on my having a desire to tell the truth rather than to lie or to mislead. And although there may be moral prohibitions against lying or misleading, these clearly do not flow from the nature of meaning itself (2005, p. 207). The situation might be different if it were “a norm of assertion that it should aim at the truth, in the way in which it is a norm on belief that it do so” (2003, p. 39). But this is not the case: “[to decide] knowingly to assert what is false is not to undermine the very possibility of assertion” (2003, p. 39). The upshot is that, whether we formulate the normativity thesis in terms of the correct application of an expression, or in terms of how we “should” apply an expression, it does not function as a substantive constraint on accounts of meaning.

3 | PROBLEMS WITH BOGHOSSIAN’S INTERPRETATION

Difficulties of the kind just described have often been taken as a reason for rejecting Kripke’s thesis that meaning is normative. But that is a mistake, since, as I argue in this section and the next, Boghossian’s interpretation does not capture the normativity which Kripke had in mind. Consider again the opening move of Kripke’s skeptical argument, in which the skeptic invokes the hypothesis that I meant quaddition by “+” as a ground for challenging my confidence in

⁶Boghossian (2003) and Boghossian (2005).

⁷The sentence in Kripke from which Boghossian draws this formulation runs as follows: “The point is not that, if I meant addition by ‘+’ I will answer ‘125’, but that, *if I intend to accord with my past meaning of ‘+’*, I should answer ‘125’” (1982, p. 37; my italics replacing Kripke’s). In quoting this sentence, as well as in his own formulation, Boghossian omits the italicized clause. This is of a piece with his disregard of the transtemporal aspect of the normativity, to be discussed in the next section.

the “metalinguistic” correctness of “125” as an answer to “68 + 57”.⁸ It is this “metalinguistic” notion of correctness which figures in the constraint he goes on to articulate on candidate meaning facts, for example, when he says that the fact of my meaning addition must “show how I am justified in giving the answer ‘125’” (1982, p. 11), and that the various accounts of meaning he considers “fail to give a candidate for a fact as to what I meant that would show that only ‘125’, not ‘5’, is the answer I ‘ought’ to give” (1982, p. 11). Even though Kripke does not use the word “normative” in the initial presentation of the skeptical argument, it is clear that, in articulating this constraint, he is introducing what has come to be described as the thesis that meaning is normative. On the basis of the passages we have looked at, we can characterize the constraint like this: The fact of my having meant addition by “+” in the past has to be such that I can cite it to justify my present conviction that I “ought”—in the “metalinguistic” sense—to say “125” in response to the question “What is 68 + 57?”

Two points about this constraint, and correspondingly about the normativity thesis itself, deserve to be emphasized. First, as has often been pointed out,⁹ the fact that I meant addition by “+” stands in a normative relation to my utterance of “125” not just by virtue of making it the case that “125” is (“metalinguistically”) correct, but by virtue of justifying—in an internalist sense—the correctness of “125”. When Kripke says that the fact must “show how I am justified” in giving the answer 125, or that it should “show that only ‘125’, not ‘5’, is the answer I ‘ought’ to give”, the point is that I must be in a position to cite the fact in response to a question regarding my entitlement to regard “125” as correct.¹⁰ This is of a piece with Kripke’s saying that the fact of my meaning addition at any one time must amount to my being guided in, or instructed as to, subsequent uses of “+”. The “basic condition” on such a fact, Kripke says, “is that it should *tell* me what I ought to do in each new instance” (1982, p. 24). I will label this, adapting terminology borrowed from Arif Ahmed, the *internalist* aspect of the thesis.¹¹

The second point concerns the idea of “metalinguistic correctness” itself. When Kripke speaks of what it is “metalinguistically” correct to say in response to “68 + 57?”, or of what I “ought” to say, the “ought” or “correctness” carries an essential reference to how things were with me in the past. The skeptic, in challenging my conviction as to the “metalinguistic correctness” of “125”, is calling into question whether I ought to say “125” if I am to conform to how things were with me in my past uses of the “+” sign. I put this somewhat vaguely because Kripke himself is vague about what it is about me in the past with which I take my utterance of “125” to conform. When Kripke first introduces this “ought”, under the heading of “metalinguistic correctness”, he puts it, as we saw in Section 2, in terms of conformity to my past *intentions* with respect to the term “plus”. In other passages he suggests that it is a matter of conformity to past *meaning*, that is to “[how] I meant ‘plus’ in the past” (1982, p. 12). And he also speaks of it in terms of conformity to past *usage*: The skeptic “questions whether my present usage agrees with my past usage” (1982, p. 12), claiming that, if I meant addition rather than quaddition, then “to accord with my previous usage I should say ‘125’” (1982, p. 12). We will return to the differences among these formulations in Section 5; the present point is simply that metalinguistic correctness—the notion of correctness which figures in the normativity thesis—is understood by Kripke as the correctness of a given use, not relative to how things are

⁸I use scare quotes around “metalinguistic” because, for reasons which will emerge, I think it is a misnomer.

⁹See, for example, Gampel (1997), Zalabardo (1997), Kusch (2006), Ahmed (2007), Verheggen (2011), Bridges (2014), and Jones (2015). The point is also acknowledged in Boghossian (Forthcoming).

¹⁰See also Kripke (1982, pp. 22, 23, 27).

¹¹Ahmed refers to it as the “internal normativity requirement” (2007, p. 105).

with me now, but relative to something about me in the past. Following Colin McGinn, whose early discussion of Kripke takes the point for granted, I will label the corresponding notion of normativity “transtemporal” (McGinn, 1984, p. 174).

This second point is often either ignored or explicitly rejected.¹² One reason is that Kripke himself appears to motivate the transtemporality in a way which suggests that it is not essential to the normativity thesis. In a passage outlining the “ground rules” of the skeptical dialectic he points out that the skeptic cannot directly call into question what I now mean by “plus”, since he cannot coherently pose the skeptical challenge unless the meanings of the terms used to formulate that challenge—including “plus” and “quus”—are taken for granted (1982, pp. 11–12). If the supposed fact of my now meaning addition by “plus” is to be undermined, it can only be by first showing that there is no such thing as my previously having meant addition, and then extending that skeptical conclusion into the present (1982, pp. 13, 21). It might seem, then, that Kripke’s transtemporal formulations are simply an artefact of this strategy, and do not represent a feature of the normativity of meaning as such.¹³

However, this conflicts with the pervasiveness of temporal language in Kripke’s formulations of the normativity thesis, especially in contexts where the meaning of an expression is not being directly called into question. He says that “the meaning I attach to the ‘plus’ sign ... instructs me what I ought to do in all future cases” (1982, p. 22; Kripke’s emphasis omitted) and that the “problem for Wittgenstein is that my present mental state does not appear to determine what I ought to do in the future” (1982, p. 56; Kripke’s emphasis omitted). The problem concerns “a certain nexus from past to future” (p. 62), yielding a form of skepticism “analogous to Hume’s scepticism about the determination of the future by the past” (p. 108). These passages suggest that the relevant normative relation holds, not between meaning and use at any given time, but between what I meant by an expression at one time and my use of it at a subsequent time.¹⁴ Moreover, if Kripke’s sole reason for targeting my past meaning were the impossibility

¹²Critics of a transtemporal reading, either of the normativity thesis itself, or of the skeptical argument, include Heal (1986, p. 417), Boghossian (see below), Ebbs (1997, pp. 19–20) and Gibbard (2012, p. 55). Bridges (2014) is unusual among recent discussions in defending a transtemporal reading, although it differs substantially from the one presented here.

¹³This is specifically argued by Ebbs (1997, pp. 20–23).

¹⁴As Bill Child has pointed out to me, these passages on their own could be interpreted as compatible with a trivial understanding of transtemporality as applying only across the specious present. Since the decision about how to answer a “plus” question on any occasion can never be instantaneous, my answer could be understood as “future” relative not just to what I meant in past uses of “plus” but to my so-called “present” meaning, that is, the meaning I have in mind at the moment the question is asked. However, the fact that Kripke considers an appeal to “going on in the same way” as a conceivable response to the problem (1982, p. 18, n.13; p. 118), as well as his characterization of the problem as concerning how we “extend” a term learned in connection with one group of cases to new cases (p. 117), suggests that the past-future nexus concerns the determination of future uses by what we meant in past *uses* and not what we meant a fraction of a second before giving the answer. Further evidence is provided by Kripke’s remark that “our idea that a rule, or past intention *binds* future choices” has content only if we can be justified in saying, of someone who, “under the influence of a drug, suddenly act[s] in accordance with a quus-like rule changing from his first intentions”, that “he is no longer in accord with the rule that he previously followed” (pp. 88–89). The kind of case Kripke has in mind is one where someone who has been following the addition rule for the use of “plus” suddenly switches to the quaddition rule and, accordingly, says “5” when asked for the sum of two numbers one of which is larger than 57. The idea of a normative relation between intention and use depends on the possibility of our being justified in saying that he is no longer in accord with the rule he followed in the uses before the switch, that is, with what Kripke calls his “first intention”. (The mention of someone’s “remembering his past intention” in the sentence following also suggests that the “past” is not that of the specious present, since if it were then there would be no realistic possibility of his forgetting what he intended.)

of calling my present meaning in question, then he would not need to invoke a past-future dimension at all. He could simply formulate the skeptical challenge entirely in the past, questioning the correctness of my having yesterday said “125” in answer to “68 + 57” on the grounds that I then meant quaddition rather than addition.¹⁵ The fact that he formulates the problem in terms of what I ought to say now, even though the skeptical hypothesis is directed to what I meant in earlier uses, suggests that the transtemporal dimension is essential to the normativity.¹⁶

Boghossian disregards both the internalist and the transtemporal aspects of the normativity thesis.¹⁷ The thesis that meaningful expressions have conditions of correct use has no implications for the role of meaning in justifying, guiding, or instructing me in my use of expressions, and Boghossian’s explication of correctness in terms of truth or warrant leaves no room for the idea that correctness depends on accordance with previous usage, meaning or intention: a use is correct, on this explication, just in case it accords with the meaning the expression has at the time it is used. How does he justify this stripped-down conception of the normativity thesis? Regarding the transtemporal aspect, the closest thing he gives to a justification is an objection against McGinn’s transtemporal reading, on which Kripke’s notion of normativity is “the idea of present use being in accord with past meaning” (McGinn, 1984, p. 174). According to McGinn, “we have an account of this normativeness when we have two things: (a) an account of what it is to mean something at a given time; and (b) an account of what it is to mean the *same* thing at two different times” (p. 174). Boghossian points out that we can supply these two elements mentioned for any arbitrary account of meaning, and since Kripke thinks that the normativity of meaning places a substantive constraint on accounts of meaning, McGinn’s interpretation cannot, according to Boghossian, capture what Kripke has in mind with the idea that meaning is normative. But this is insufficient motivation for disregarding the transtemporal aspect. First, as will become clearer in the next two sections, the idea of *meaning the same thing now as one did earlier* is not the only way of spelling out the idea of *according with past meaning*, so the inadequacy of McGinn’s interpretation in particular is not a reason for ruling out the possibility of any transtemporal interpretation at all. Second, as we saw at the end of Section 2, Boghossian’s own interpretation is no more successful than McGinn’s in showing how the normativity thesis can constitute a substantive constraint on accounts of meaning, so the objection is not a reason for preferring an atemporal understanding of the normativity.

As for his disregard of the internalist aspect, the closest Boghossian comes to a justification is his criticism of what he calls the “dialogic setting” of the skeptical challenge, which he regards as having a distorting influence in that it leads us to suppose that the skeptical

¹⁵This is in fact how Ebbs presents the skeptical challenge (1997, p. 23).

¹⁶Why, then, does Kripke say that he “put[s] the problem this way”—that is, without directly questioning present meaning—“so as to avoid confusing questions about whether the discussion is taking place ‘both inside and outside language’” (1982, p. 12)? Perhaps what he is explaining here is not his putting the problem in terms of past usage or meaning, but rather his specifically exempting present meaning from the scope of the skeptical hypothesis. A simpler skeptical hypothesis would be: “Perhaps in all your uses of ‘plus’, up to *and including* the present use, what you have meant—and *still mean*—is quaddition, not addition”. This would have the same effect as the actual skeptical hypothesis, that of calling into question what I ought to say now to accord with my past meaning or usage, without requiring us to suppose not only that I meant quaddition in my previous uses but also that, inexplicably, I have just now undergone a change from meaning quaddition to meaning addition. However—and this is what Kripke’s point may be in the passage under discussion—since this simpler hypothesis would involve our querying the meaning of a word which we were also using to formulate the query, the more elaborate hypothesis is to be preferred.

¹⁷Here as elsewhere in this section I refer exclusively to Boghossian (1989). Boghossian (forthcoming) acknowledges the internalist aspect.

argument depends on epistemological considerations rather than being purely metaphysical or constitutive. As he himself remarks, his own statement of Kripke's skeptical problem about meaning makes no reference at all to Kripke's "notorious skeptic" (1989, p. 515). But this is again insufficient motivation, since the question of the role of epistemology in Kripke's argument is at least controversial, and to leave the skeptic out of the "skeptical problem" is to risk ending up with a problem quite different from what Kripke had in mind.¹⁸ In any case, the elements of the normativity thesis which I have identified from the opening passages are too pervasive in Kripke's text for them to be easily dismissed as part of the "dialogic setting" rather than as part of the real substance of Kripke's view.

It might still be argued, though, that Boghossian's reading is the most charitable one, even if it departs from the letter of Kripke's text. First, Kripke motivates the internalist aspect of the normativity constraint by appeal to what seems like a highly implausible view of our ordinary intuitions about language use. "Ordinarily, I suppose that in computing '68 + 57' as I do ... I follow directions I previously gave myself that uniquely determine that in this new instance I should say '125'" (1982, p. 10). The idea that we "follow directions" in our use of expressions looks like a philosopher's conception of what is involved in the meaningful use of language, not like something which language-users "ordinarily" suppose.¹⁹ Second, a closer look at how transtemporality figures in Kripke's presentation of the normativity thesis can leave the impression that it represents an unnecessary complication. Kripke says both that the meaning of "+" for me at one time tells me how I ought to respond to "+" questions at later times, and that the "ought" involves a reference to my past meaning, intentions, or usage. As he sometimes puts it, it is conditional on my wishing, at the later time, to accord with what I meant by "plus" at the earlier time. In these formulations there is a kind of circularity: The meaning of an expression tells me what I ought to do in the future *to conform to that very meaning*. Now if, we disregard the internalist aspect, this leaves us with the idea that a meaning fact determines what I ought to do in the future to conform to it, without any implication that it must put me in a position to justify the claim that I am conforming to it. And now the reference to "in the future" looks superfluous, since there is no longer any question of my later self consulting my earlier meaning to decide, given my wish to conform to that meaning, what I should say. The idea might just as well be put atemporally, by saying that a meaning fact determines what I ought to do to conform to it. But that is just the idea that meaningful expressions possess conditions of correct use, so we seem to have arrived at the normativity thesis as Boghossian understands it.

However, while this reading might make the thesis out to be more plausible, it cannot easily be taken to capture what Kripke himself had in mind, both because it disregards the internalist and transtemporal aspects of the thesis as characterized by Kripke, and because the thesis, so understood, does not function as a genuine constraint on meaning. In the next two sections, I propose an alternative reading of Kripke's normativity thesis which is closer to the text and which does serve as a constraint—indeed an extremely strong constraint—on possible accounts of meaning. This reading draws on a notion of normativity which, as I argue in Section 4, is implicit in Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations and which, because it is a condition of language-use, can be labelled as a version of the "normativity of meaning". Although that notion cannot be identified with Kripke's conception of the normativity of meaning, it offers

¹⁸I expand on this point in Ginsborg (2018).

¹⁹Kripke's reference to "computing" makes the proposal seem less implausible, but the example is supposed to illustrate our intuitions about language use generally, for example, calling something a "table" (1982, p. 19), and here it is much less clear that we intuitively think of ourselves as following instructions.

our best route to an understanding of Kripke's view, since, as I shall argue in Section 5, Kripke's conception of the normativity of meaning is best understood as a partial and distorted version of Wittgenstein's.

4 | WITTGENSTEIN ON GOING ON

Let us begin our discussion of Wittgenstein with the well-known passage from *Philosophical investigations* §185 which describes the behaviour of a pupil learning to write series of numerals.²⁰ As the beginning of §185 makes clear, the passage is part of a longer narrative in which the pupil is being taught arithmetical expressions, beginning with his learning to write the numerals 0 through 9 in the correct order (§143), and going on with his learning the decimal system by being shown how to continue the numerals into the tens and hundreds (§145).²¹ These two cases set the stage for §185 in which, having “mastered the series of natural numbers”, the pupil is learning to respond to commands like “+0”, “+1”, “+2”, and so on by writing the appropriate series of numerals, and has so far demonstrated his competence up to 1000. The passage continues:

Now we get the pupil to continue a series, say “+2”, and he writes 1000, 1004, 1008, 1012. We say to him “Look what you're doing!” He doesn't understand us. We say: “You should have [*sollen*] added two: look how you began the series!” He answers: “Yes, isn't it right? I thought that was how I *should* [*sollen*] do it.”²²

Although the most striking feature of this passage is the aberrant way in which the pupil continues the series, my focus here is not on what he writes after 1000, but rather on his and our attitudes to what he writes. His divergence from us is important only insofar as it highlights the normative character of these attitudes. We think that the pupil *should* or *ought to* write “1002”; he thinks that he *should* or *ought to* write “1004”, or that “1004” is “right” or “correct” [*richtig*]. What kind of normativity is this? Looking at the passage in isolation, we might think that it is the kind of normativity identified by Boghossian, that is, correctness in the sense of truth or warrant. Given that the pupil is writing each numeral in response to the command “+2” we might think that each time he writes a numeral he is implicitly writing a sentence of the form “ $x + 2 = y$ ” so that, when he writes “1004”, he should be understood as asserting the proposition expressed by “ $1000 + 2 = 1004$ ”. The question of whether “1002” or “1004” is correct, or what he ought to say, would then be the question whether the sentence “ $1000 + 2 = 1004$ ” expresses a true proposition. We think the pupil's writing “1004” is incorrect because we understand him as asserting the false proposition that $1000 + 2 = 1004$, whereas he thinks it is correct because he understands himself as asserting a different, true, proposition. Correctness and incorrectness here amount to truth and falsity.

However, several considerations suggest that Wittgenstein has a different kind of normativity in mind. First, in the exchange which follows the pupil's writing what seems like the wrong numbers, the expression “+2” is not mentioned. We say to the pupil, not “Think what

²⁰The line of thought in this section is explored in more detail in Ginsborg (2020).

²¹Unless otherwise noted, numbers preceded by “§” will refer to sections of *Philosophical investigations*.

²²Translations from Wittgenstein are my own, although I have drawn on the translations listed in the references (Wittgenstein 1953, 1958, 1967, 1984, and 2009).

'+2' means!" but "Look how you began the series!". That is, we try to get the pupil to recognize that what he has written is wrong in the light of what he wrote in the early stages of continuing the series, not in the light of the present meaning of "+2" as applied to 1000. This is borne out in a second response which Wittgenstein imagines the pupil might make to our correction: The pupil might say, pointing to the series, "But I went on in the same way!" The issue would seem to be conformity with what was written previously, not with the supposed meaning of the "+2" command.

Second, the pupil's developing the "+2" sequence is presented not in isolation, but rather in the context of the cases described in §143 and §145: the pupil learning to write the digits from 0 to 9, and then learning to continue the series of natural numbers. It is plausible that in these cases too the pupil, if challenged at any point, would say that what he was doing was correct, or what he should or ought to be doing. And in fact, in a passage from *Remarks on the foundations of mathematics* (*RFM*), Wittgenstein explicitly uses normative language in the case of repeatedly copying the numeral "2": "How do I know that after the 500th '2' I should [*sollen*] write '2'?" (*RFM* I §3). In these cases there is no verbal expression occupying the role played by "+2" in the example at §185. The pupil at §143 and §145 is simply going on from the examples he has been given, either to copy the same numeral or row of numerals, or to produce the more complex pattern of numerals required for writing out the sequence of natural numbers. It would be a distortion to regard him, each time he copies the numeral "2", as asserting that $2 + 0 = 2$, or, similarly, with each number he writes down in the integer series, as expressing the belief that it is the result of adding 1 to the number written down previously.²³ And Wittgenstein's explicit signalling, at the start of §185, that we are returning to the example of §143, indicates that we are to treat the §185 case as continuous with these more elementary cases.

Third, and relatedly, the cases mentioned so far are part of a broader group of cases in which people go on, not just with sequences of numerals or other linguistic signs, but also with abstract progressions such as (§208), repeating patterns such as .._.._.._.._.._.. (*RFM* VI-17; see also e.g., *RFM* VI-29), and even simple behavioural routines, such as responding to someone's clapping her hands by clapping one's own (*RFM* VI-17). Wittgenstein uses normative language in connection with these cases as well. If I am training someone to continue a pattern of dots and dashes, my attitude is that "he should [*sollen*] always go on as I have shown him" (*Ibid.*), and, in the clapping activity, that "every time A claps his hands, B is to [*sollen*] do so too" (*Ibid.*). The idea that the people engaged in these activities themselves take a normative attitude to what they are doing is suggested by a remark which, after describing several of these cases, Wittgenstein puts in the mouth of his interlocutor: "I know at every step what I have to do [*zu tun haben*]. I see it quite clearly before me. It may be boring, but there is no doubt what I have to do" (*RFM* VI-47). The idea that there is something I "have to do" in these cases is clearly not the idea of my being governed by a norm of truth or warrant, since my behaviour is not even linguistic, let alone a matter of making assertions.

If the normativity invoked in the example at §185 is not that of truth or warrant, might it be that identified by McGinn, on which using an expression correctly is using it with the same meaning as that with which it was previously used? This might seem to be suggested by the

²³Wittgenstein does describe this as developing the series "+0", but I do not think we are meant to take this seriously: The suggestion that the child copying individual numerals is developing an arithmetical series is meant as a *reductio* of the idea that these elementary activities with numerals already amount to arithmetic. The point is reinforced by Wittgenstein's description of the pupil as learning to "write down series of signs according to a certain formation rule" (§143). The pupil is learning to continue certain patterns of signs; it is immaterial that the signs refer to numbers.

pupil's saying "But I went on in the same way!" Perhaps he means that he was understanding "+2" to mean the same as he understood it to mean in the case of the numbers smaller than 1000. However, the proposal is implausible for reasons similar to those considered earlier. First, the pupil makes no mention either of the present meaning of "+2" or of what he or his teachers meant by "+2" in the past. In fact, the question of what "+2" means or meant does not figure at all in the dialogue with the pupil. The only hint that the past meaning of "+2" might be relevant to the question of whether "1002" or "1004" is the right way to go on comes in the next section, where Wittgenstein considers the question "How is it decided what is the right step to take at any particular point?" and has his interlocutor answer "The right step is the one which accords with the order—as it was meant [*meinen*]" (§186).²⁴ Wittgenstein immediately goes on to challenge the coherence of this answer by asking whether, at the time the order was given, the interlocutor *meant* that the pupil should write 1002 after 1000, 1868 after 1866, 100036 after 100034 and so on. The interlocutor is proposing that the way to determine what should be written at any point in the series is to determine what accords with the meaning of the expression used to give the order at the time the order was given. Wittgenstein's answer is that this is a non-starter, since it would require, *per impossibile*, that we had, present to our mind, and available to be consulted, each and every step in the sequence.²⁵ Second, as with the interpretation of the normativity in terms of truth or warrant, the interpretation of the normativity in terms of conformity with past meaning does not fit the simpler pattern-continuation cases mentioned above.

Consideration of these simpler cases is essential to understanding the kind of normativity Wittgenstein has in mind at §185. Wittgenstein is clear that the activities of "going on" carried out in these cases do not presuppose linguistic competence nor, *a fortiori*, grasp of meaning. In the clapping routine—"every time A claps his hands, B is to [*sollen*] do so too" (*RFM* VI-17)—we naturally think of B as a small child, even a baby. No specification of a rule or any other linguistic instruction is needed in these cases, nor for that of learning to go on with the series of numerals at §143 and §145, in which we teach the pupil initially by "guiding his hand in writing out the series of 0 to 9" (§143) and then by such means as "us[ing] particular emphases, underlin[ing] figures, writ[ing] them one under another", none of which presuppose the pupil's grasp of meaning. The point is made clear in this passage from *Zettel*: "You must remember that there may be such a language-game as 'continuing a series of numerals' in which no rule, no expression of a rule is ever given, but the learning happens *only* through examples" (*Zettel* §295). If I am right in supposing that, like the case at §185, these cases involve the subject's recognition (however inchoate) of normativity, then it is a normativity whose recognition does not depend on grasp of meaning or of a rule.

But the normativity is clearly relevant to meaning and rules, for Wittgenstein also makes clear that these activities, and *a fortiori* the recognition of normativity which they involve, are required for grasp of rules and of the meanings of expressions. The clapping routine in *RFM* is presented immediately following the question "How does one describe the process of learning a rule?" Regarding the pupil at §143, although we begin by guiding his hand in writing out the

²⁴A complication here is that, while in English cognates of "mean" are typically used both for the meaning of an expression and for what a subject means by it, in German the meaning of an expression is typically rendered as *Bedeutung* rather than *Meinung*. However, I do not think that this affects the present point, especially since Wittgenstein himself uses *Meinung* for the meaning of an expression later in §186 (for discussion of a related example see the editorial preface to Wittgenstein, 2009, xvi). Thanks to Tobias Rosefeldt for raising this issue.

²⁵As we will see in the next section, his point is not that we cannot mean, in advance, every step in the sequence; it is only that we cannot mean these steps in such a way that the meaning guides us in determining how to go on.

series 0 to 9, “the possibility of getting him to understand [*Verständigung*]”—Wittgenstein’s emphasis—“will depend on his going on to write it down independently” (§143).²⁶ Both the independence of these activities from language, and their role as conditions of language, are clear in this passage from *Zettel*: “I teach him to continue a series ... without using any expression of the ‘law of the series’; rather, I am forming a substratum for the meaning of algebraic rules or what is like them” (*Zettel* §300). Although Wittgenstein here refers specifically to “algebraic rules”, the point applies to meaning more generally, as suggested in a passage already mentioned from *RFM* I-3. Here, after asking “How do I know that in working out the series + 2 I must write ‘20004, 20006’ and not ‘20004, 20008’?”, Wittgenstein goes on to add, in parentheses, “The question: ‘How do I know that this colour is ‘red’?’ is similar”. The similarity lies in the fact that both the mastery of the expression “+2” and the mastery of the expression “red” rely on our knowing how to continue a pattern, which is in turn a matter of knowing, at each step, what to say or do in the light of what was said and done previously. In the “+2” case the pattern is confined to numerals, but in the expression “red” it involves objects and events in the world. Roughly, the child learning to use the word “red” learns to continue a sequence—albeit one spread out over a considerable time and with many interruptions—of utterances of “red” following or preceding red objects’ being pointed to or fetched.

I am suggesting, then, that when we say that the pupil at §185 ought to write “1002” after “1000”, and he insists that he ought to write “1004”, the relevant normativity is that built into what Wittgenstein calls “knowing how to go on”—a kind of knowing which does not presuppose, but is rather required for, knowledge of meaning and grasp of rules. It is a normativity which is primitive in that it cannot be explicated in terms of conformity to a rule exemplified by the previous elements of the series, nor to the meaning of the order to which the pupil is responding, but simply in terms of conformity to what has gone before.²⁷ Recall the remark that “I know at every step what I have to do. I see it quite clearly before me. It may be boring, but there is no doubt what I have to do” (*RFM* VI-47). That there is something I have to do—absent the specification of a rule saying what I have to do—stems from there being a history of previous behaviour (my own or that of my teachers) which I immediately recognize as calling for a certain piece of behaviour from me now. In the situation of having written out the even numbers up to 1000, I simply see “1002” as called for, as appropriate: My knowledge that this is how I ought to go on is not mediated by the recognition of the previous numerals as exemplifying a rule, but is instead a primitive recognition of “1002” as fitting the situation.²⁸

But how can we speak here of *knowing* how I ought to go on if there is no justification for my certainty that I ought to go on with “1002” rather than “1004”? Does there not have to be a ground for that certainty? The answer, according to Wittgenstein, is no. Immediately after the remark, quoted just above, that “I know at each step what I have to do ... It may be boring, but there is no doubt what I have to do”, he goes on to ask “Whence this certainty?”, and then responds with a further series of questions which are clearly rhetorical: “But why do I ask this? Isn’t it enough that this certainty exists? What is the point of seeking a source for it?” (*RFM* VI-47). And in a passage from *Zettel* mentioned earlier, where he reminds us of the possibility of a language-game of continuing a series in which “no expression of a rule is ever given”, he goes

²⁶I follow here Anscombe’s translation of *Verständigung* (Wittgenstein, 1953), rather than Hacker and Schulte’s “communication” (Wittgenstein, 2009).

²⁷I introduce the idea of primitive normativity, although without ascribing it to Wittgenstein, in Ginsborg (2011).

²⁸Rather than this recognition’s being primitive, might it be the recognition that, in writing “1002”, I am conforming to the rule *do the same as you did before* or *do the same as your teachers did*? I address this objection in Section 6 of Ginsborg (2020).

on to say that “the idea that every step should be justified by a something—a sort of pattern [*Vorbild*—in our mind, would be alien to these people” (*Zettel* §295). The implication is that even though, unlike these people, we have expressions like “+2” or “+3” and use them in teaching children how to go on, we should not be misled by these expressions into thinking that they correspond to items we grasp—rules or meanings—from which our uses derive their justification. The point is conveyed succinctly in his response to an interlocutor who says, of someone continuing a series of digits, “He grasps the rule intuitively” (*Zettel* §303). Wittgenstein replies with another rhetorical question: “But why the rule? Why not how he now ought to continue?” Wittgenstein’s thought is that we have done sufficient justice to the phenomenon of knowing how to go on once we acknowledge that the person going on is confident, at each step, of how she *ought* to go on. There is no need to suppose an additional element—grasp of a rule or of the meaning of an expression—by virtue of which her confidence in how she ought to go on is justified.

5 | KRIPKE’S NORMATIVITY THESIS IN RELATION TO WITTGENSTEIN

Let us return to Kripke’s normativity thesis. In Section 3, I highlighted the “transtemporal” nature of the normativity—that it concerns what I ought to say to conform to something about me in the past—but I pointed out that Kripke is unclear about the relevant “ought”, characterizing it variously, and with apparent indifference, as a matter of conformity to past intention, conformity to past meaning and conformity to past usage. I now want to suggest that the formulation which best captures the issue he has in mind is conformity to past usage, and that this should be understood along the lines of the normativity discussed in the previous section. My confidence in what Kripke calls the “metalinguistic correctness” of “125” is my confidence that “125” fits the finite history of my previous responses to “+” questions in the same way that “1002” fits the history of numbers that the pupil wrote down in response to the “+2” command. What the skeptic challenges, at least in the first instance, is not my confidence that I am conforming to my past intentions with respect to the “+” sign, or to what I meant by the “+” sign, but rather my confidence that I am “going on as I ought” in my use of the “+” sign. This represents a point of commonality between Kripke and Wittgenstein. Both recognize that the idea of conformity to previous behaviour represents a distinctive kind of normativity, not to be identified with the normativity associated with truth or warrant.

Where Kripke diverges from Wittgenstein is with regard, not to the character of this normativity, but to whether, and how, claims to this normativity are to be grounded. Recall that Kripke’s skeptic calls into question the correctness of “125” in the light of my previous use of “+” by introducing the hypothesis that what I meant in that previous use was not addition but quaddition. In assuming that the skeptic’s hypothesis will shake my confidence that I now ought, in the relevant sense, to say “125”, Kripke assumes that the correctness of “125”—that is, its conformity to how I used the “+” sign in the past—must depend on *what I meant* by the “+” sign in my past use of it. More specifically, he assumes that, if I am to be entitled to my conviction that “125” rather than “5” is the correct thing to say, I must be able to appeal to *my past meaning* to justify that conviction. It is this assumption that gives rise to the normativity constraint on facts about meaning. To qualify as the fact that I mean addition at any one time, a fact has to be such that its holding both determines the correctness of, and justifies, in an internalist sense, my going on one particular way rather than another at any later time. Or,

which comes to the same thing, it must involve my being guided, or told what to say, to conform to my previous uses of “+”.

But this conception of meaning is alien to Wittgenstein. As Wittgenstein sees it, at least on the reading suggested in the previous section, there is no need for me to justify my certainty that saying “125” is the appropriate way to go on from my previous uses of the “+” sign, and *a fortiori*, no need for meaning to play this justificatory role. The gap between Kripke and Wittgenstein as regards their conceptions of meaning emerges especially sharply when we consider the resemblance between Kripke’s position on the justificatory role of meaning and that of the interlocutor of §186 who answers the question “How is it decided what is the right step to take at any particular point?” by saying “The right step is the one which accords with the order—*as it was meant*”. As we saw, Wittgenstein goes on to question the coherence of this answer, on the grounds that I could not have had, present to my mind and available for consultation, each and every particular step in the series. Kripke presumably understands this response to the interlocutor as intended, in line with his reading of Wittgenstein as developing a skeptical argument, to undermine the possibility of meaning by undermining the idea that I can mean all the steps in advance. However, the response aims to undermine, not the possibility of meaning as such, but only the idea of meaning as playing a guiding or justificatory role with respect to subsequent use. Not only does Wittgenstein not see a problem with the fact of our having meant something determinate by “+2”, he thinks there is a perfectly innocuous sense in which we *can* mean each and every step in advance. He makes this clear in a further response to the same interlocutor at §187: “When you said ‘I already knew at the time [that he should write 1002 after 1000]’ that meant: ‘If I had been asked then what number he should write after 1000, I would have answered 1002’. And that I do not doubt”. This suggests an account of meaning or grasp of a rule in terms of the disposition to regard certain particular ways of going on (say, writing 1002 rather than 1004 after 1000) as appropriate. The account presupposes recognition of the corresponding normativity, rather than having it be a constraint on meaning that it justify that recognition. But, assuming that Wittgenstein is right to understand the normativity as primitive, this is a perfectly acceptable way to specify a fact in which meaning consists.²⁹

On my interpretation, then, the normativity of meaning for Kripke is neither the normativity associated with truth (or warrant), nor the normativity in our ways of going on whose recognition Wittgenstein sees as essential to meaning. Rather, it is meaning’s supposed role in grounding our recognition of how we ought to go on: a role which Wittgenstein rejects not only as unfillable but also as unnecessary. Kripke’s conception of the normativity of meaning arises from a distorted understanding of Wittgenstein, one which recognizes Wittgenstein’s view that meaningful language use requires the recognition of ourselves as going on as we ought, but fails to see the primitive or ungrounded character which Wittgenstein ascribes to that normativity. If my interpretation is correct, though, why have commentators so far understood Kripke so differently? One reason has to do with a failure to appreciate the distinctive kind of normativity which is associated, for Wittgenstein, with the idea of going on. If, like many commentators on Wittgenstein, we assimilate the correctness of writing “1002” in the example at §185 to the truth of “1000 + 2 = 1002”, rather than seeing it as a matter of the appropriateness of “1002” in the light of what has been written previously, then we are also likely to misidentify the correctness at issue in the parallel case offered by Kripke.

²⁹This is an important element of the “straight” solution to Kripke’s meaning skepticism proposed in Ginsborg (2011), although I do not there ascribe it to Wittgenstein.

A further and more specific reason is that Kripke himself misstates his view in a way which invites misinterpretation along the lines of Boghossian's reading, I mentioned in Section 3, and again earlier in this section, that Kripke characterizes the transtemporal dimension of the normativity in three different ways, that is, in terms of past meaning, in terms of past intention and in terms of past usage. I think that the references to past meaning and past intention are simply a mistake, although one which can be explained by Kripke's conviction—a conviction like that of the interlocutor of §186—that conformity to past use in Wittgenstein's sense must depend on conformity to past meaning. Kripke, on my diagnosis of the mistake, is so convinced that conformity to past use must depend on conformity to past meaning or intention that he at times simply identifies them, treating as interchangeable the idea of what I ought to do to conform to my past usage and the idea of what I ought to do to conform to what I meant or intended. So instead of saying what, on my interpretation, he really means to say, which is that my meaning addition in the past must justify my claim to be conforming to my previous *use* of the “+” sign, he says that my meaning addition in the past must justify my claim to be conforming to *what I meant* by the “+” sign. And, as we saw at the end of Section 3, this leads to the temptation to elide the transtemporal element of the normativity and thus to miss the point that it has to do with our ways of going on from past use. Once that point is missed, it is natural to think, with Boghossian and others, that the normativity of meaning must boil down to the idea that meaningful expressions have correctness conditions, with correctness understood as truth or warrant.

6 | IS MEANING NORMATIVE?

My primary aim in this paper has been to clarify Kripke's thesis that meaning is normative by explaining its relation to Wittgenstein's conception of the normativity relevant to meaning. I have argued in particular that the normativity of meaning for Kripke should not be identified with that of truth or warrant. In the course of making this argument, I have identified, in Wittgenstein, a different conception of the normativity relevant to meaning, one which does not depend on justification by rules or meaning, but which is, instead, a condition of the possibility of meaning and rule-following.³⁰ Kripke's conception of the normativity of meaning, I have argued, results from a distorted reading of Wittgenstein, which leads him to accept Wittgenstein's idea that we must be able to recognize each use we make of a meaningful linguistic expression as appropriate in the light of previous uses, while failing to recognize the primitive or ungrounded character which Wittgenstein ascribes to the corresponding normativity.

What moral can we draw for the debate about whether meaning is normative? If my reading of Kripke is correct, then it is a mistake to see the debate as turning on the idea that meaningful expressions have conditions of true or warranted use. Although that is an idea worth discussing, it is irrelevant to Kripke's normativity thesis. Nor does it have any bearing on the nature of meaning as such, since, as we have seen, it does not constitute a substantive constraint on accounts of meaning. The question of whether meaning is normative in anything like Kripke's sense has to do, rather, with whether the meaningful use of language requires the recognition that we are going on as we ought, that is, the recognition of this or that particular use of an expression as conforming to our own past uses and to those of other members of our community.

³⁰It thus falls under the general head of what Glüer and Wikforss call “meaning determining normativity” (2020, Section 2.2).

Now Kripke holds that our use of language does require this kind of recognition, but he also assumes that this recognition in the case of any particular use presupposes that we have grasped something—the meaning of the expression—which guides us in that use. To accept the normativity of meaning, understood as incorporating this assumption, is to accept a constraint on meaning which, as Kripke's skeptical argument makes explicit, is so strong as to risk being unsatisfiable. Moreover, as suggested in Section 3, it commits us to a view of meaning which lacks pretheoretical plausibility. But if, with Wittgenstein, we drop the assumption that the recognition of how we ought to go on in our uses of expressions depends on grasp of meaning, then we can respect Kripke's intuition that there is something normative about meaning while avoiding the skeptical consequences he draws from it. For, as we saw briefly in Section 5, it is possible to give an account of meaning which accommodates a speaker's recognition that she is going on as she ought: roughly, as Wittgenstein suggests at §187, by identifying grasp of meaning with a disposition to recognize particular uses of an expression as appropriate to previous uses. The normativity of meaning here operates as a substantive constraint, but not one which is so strong that no account of meaning can meet it. I suggest, then, that we should reject the normativity thesis as understood by Kripke, but accept in its place a related but less demanding conception of the normativity intrinsic to meaning. This is the normativity of meaning as I understand it in Wittgenstein: a normativity built into the idea of conformity to previous uses, and whose recognition is required for grasp of meaning to be possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The material in this paper was first presented in a graduate seminar I taught at Berkeley in the Spring of 2016. Previous versions of the paper itself, under various titles, were presented at the 2016 Pacific Division meeting of the APA; at the 2016 Berkeley-Stanford-Davis Graduate Philosophy Conference; in department colloquia at Pittsburgh, NYU, Texas Tech, and the University of Chicago; and as the 2017 Jacobsen Lecture at the University of London. I am grateful to audiences and participants on all of those occasions for comments and discussion. Bill Child, Paul Horwich, and Mike Martin provided especially helpful comments, and I am grateful in addition to Paul Boghossian, Caitlin Dolan, Stephen Engstrom, Nick French, Kathrin Glüer, Jim Hutchinson, Jeff Kaplan, Richard Lawrence, Jennifer Marsh, Antonia Peacocke, Tobias Rosefeldt, Umrao Sethi, Michael Thompson, Daniel Warren, Ralph Wedgwood, Jennifer Whiting, Åsa Wikforss, Crispin Wright, and Seth Yalcin, all of whom made comments or raised questions which have contributed more or less directly to my thinking about the present paper. Thanks also to an anonymous reviewer for this journal for suggestions which improved the paper.

ORCID

Hannah Ginsborg  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8863-4611>

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, A. (2007). *Kripke*. London: Continuum.
- Blackburn, S. (1984). The individual strikes back. *Synthese*, 58, 281–301.
- Boghossian, P. (1989). The rule-following considerations. *Mind*, 98, 507–549.
- Boghossian, P. (2003). The normativity of content. *Philosophical Issues*, 13, Philosophy of Mind.
- Boghossian, P. (2005). Is Meaning Normative? In C. Nimtz & A. Beckermann (Eds.), *Philosophy - Science - Scientific Philosophy: Fifth International Congress of the Society for Analytical Philosophy*, (pp. 205–218).
- Boghossian, P. (Forthcoming). The normativity of meaning revisited. In B. Dunaway & D. Plunkett (Eds.), *Meaning, decision, and norms: Themes from the work of Allan Gibbard*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

- Brandom, R. (1994). *Making it explicit*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bridges, J. (2014). Rule-following skepticism, properly so called. In J. Conant & A. Kern (Eds.), *Varieties of skepticism* (pp. 249–288). Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Dretske, F. (1981). *Knowledge and the flow of information*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Ebbs, G. (1997). *Rule-following and realism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Fodor, J. (1990). *A theory of content and other essays*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Gampel, E. H. (1997). The normativity of meaning. *Philosophical Studies*, 86, 221–242.
- Gibbard, A. (1994). Meaning and normativity. *Philosophical Issues, Truth and Rationality*, 5, 95–115.
- Gibbard, A. (2012). *Meaning and normativity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ginsborg, H. (2011). Primitive normativity and skepticism about rules. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 108, 227–254.
- Ginsborg, H. (2018). Leaps in the dark: Epistemological skepticism in Kripke's Wittgenstein. In A. G. Bruno & A. Rutherford (Eds.), *Skepticism: Historical and contemporary inquiries* (pp. 149–166). Oxford: Routledge.
- Ginsborg, H. (2020). Wittgenstein on going on. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 50, 1–17.
- Glüer, K. (1999). Sense and prescriptivity. *Acta Analytica*, 14, 111–128.
- Glüer, K. & Wikforss, Å. (2009). Against content normativity. *Mind*, 118, 31–70.
- Glüer, K. & Wikforss, Å. (2020). The normativity of meaning and content. In E. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. Retrieved from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/meaning-normativity>
- Hattiangadi, A. (2006). Is meaning normative. *Mind & Language*, 21, 220–240.
- Hattiangadi, A. (2007). *Oughts and thoughts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Heal, J. (1986). Wittgenstein, Kripke and meaning (review of McGinn 1984). *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 36, 412–419.
- Horwich, P. (1998). *Meaning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Horwich, P. (2005). *Reflections on meaning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jones, M. (2015). The normativity of meaning: Guidance and justification. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 23, 425–433.
- Kripke, S. (1982). *Wittgenstein on rules and private language*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kusch, M. (2006). *A sceptical guide to meaning and rules: Defending Kripke's Wittgenstein*. Chesham: Acumen.
- McDowell, J. (1984). Wittgenstein on following a rule. *Synthese*, 58, 325–363.
- McGinn, C. (1984). *Wittgenstein on meaning*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Millikan, R. G. (1984). *Language, thought, and other biological categories*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Speaks, J. (2009). The normativity of content and “the Frege point”. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 17, 405–415.
- Verheggen, C. (2011). Semantic normativity and naturalism. *Logique et Analyse*, 216, 553–567.
- Wedgwood, R. (2007). *The nature of normativity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wedgwood, R. (2009). The normativity of the intentional. In A. Beckermann, B. P. McLaughlin & S. Walter (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of philosophy of mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Whiting, D. (2013). What is the normativity of meaning? *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, 59, 219–238.
- Wikforss, Å. (2001). Semantic normativity. *Philosophical Studies*, 102, 203–226.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical investigations* (Anscombe, G.E.M., Trans.). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1958). *The blue and brown books*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1967). *Zettel*. (Anscombe, G.E.M., & von Wright, G. H., Ed.; Anscombe, G.E.M., Trans.). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1984). In G. H. von Wright, R. Rhees & G. E. M. Anscombe (Eds.), *Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik (Remarks on the foundations of mathematics)*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Wittgenstein, L. (2009). *Philosophical investigations*. (Anscombe, G. E. M., Hacker, P. M. S., & Schulte, J., Trans.). Revised fourth edition by Hacker, P. M. S. & Schulte, J. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Zalabardo, J. (1997). Kripke's normativity argument. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 27, 467–488.

How to cite this article: Ginsborg H. Going on as one ought: Kripke and Wittgenstein on the normativity of meaning. *Mind & Language*. 2022;37:876–892. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mila.12342>