

Semantic Dispositionalism and Non-Inferential Knowledge*

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In a well-known essay published more than thirty years ago, Kripke challenged the philosophical world to explain what, exactly, it is to mean something by a sign, *e. g.* addition by “+”. Among the possible attempts to meet the challenge he discussed, there were various forms of dispositionalism. According to the simplest of these forms, we have that:

To mean addition by “+” is to be disposed to give the answer “Z” to any addition problem “X + Y”, where Z is the value of the addition function for the arguments X, Y.

Among the objections Kripke moved to such attempts, the main one was that dispositionalism cannot account for the normativity of meaning. According to the common wisdom¹, what Kripke had in mind was something along the following lines:

First premise: it is constitutive of the concept of meaning that its instances imply an ought (or a may²); *e. g.*, if you mean addition by “+”, then you ought to answer “125” if asked for “68 + 57”.

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¹ See, *e. g.*, Paul A. Boghossian, *Is Meaning Normative?*, in Christian Nimtz, Ansgar Beckermann, *Philosophie und/als Wissenschaft – Hauptvorträge und Kolloquiumsbeiträge zu GAP.5*, Paderborn, Mentis, 2005, Anandi Hattiangadi, *Is Meaning Normative?*, in *Mind & Language*, vol. XXI, 2006, pp. 220-240, Alexander Miller, *The Argument from Queerness and the Normativity of Meaning*, in Martin Grajner, Adolf Rami, *Truth, Existence and Realism*, Paderborn, Mentis, 2010, Daniel Whiting, *Is Meaning Fraught with Ought?*, in *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. XC, 2009, pp. 535-555 and Åsa Maria Wikforss, *Semantic Normativity*, in *Philosophical Studies*, vol. CII, 2001, pp. 203-226.

² See Boghossian’s *Is Meaning Normative?*, *cit.*, § 2, p. 208 and Daniel Whiting, *The Normativity of Meaning Defended*, § 2, p. 134, in *Analysis*, vol. LXVII, 2007, pp. 133-

Second premise: it is not constitutive of the concept of a disposition that dispositions imply an ought.

Conclusion: no dispositional analysis of meaning can work.

In the words of Glüer and Wikforss:

[...] Kripke argued that meaning is normative in the sense that it essentially involves certain “oughts”. [...] It was suggested that theories of meaning that do not allow for any genuine “oughts”, such as dispositionalism, could be rejected out of hand [...]³.

Though there have also been those who criticized the argument by arguing that dispositions in ideal conditions do imply oughts⁴, the bulk of the discussion revolved around the issue of the alleged normativity of meaning and, in particular, around the issue of the mere hypotheticality of semantic oughts⁵. Anti-normativists maintained that the argument’s first premise is false, since, true enough, if you mean addition by “+”, then you ought to answer “125” if asked for “68 + 57”, *but only if you want to speak the truth* (or at least communicate). Normativists begged to differ. As for myself, I must confess that, though I sympathize with the normativists’ camp, I am less than satisfied with this argument. However, I will not try to assess it here. What I will do is argue that what Kripke actually had in mind was something different.

In the paper’s first, very brief, section I will argue that the very passage in which Kripke introduces the Normativity Argument is incompatible with the common wisdom. Afterwards, I will give my reading of the argument. I

140. *Is Meaning Fraught with Ought?*, *cit.*, § 5, pp. 544-546 maintains that a formulation in terms of “may” is better.

³ Kathrin Glüer, Åsa Maria Wikforss, *Against Content Normativity*, p. 31, in *Mind*, vol. CXVIII, 2009, pp. 31-70.

⁴ See E. H. Gampel, *The Normativity of Meaning*, § I, p. 224, in *Philosophical Studies*, vol. LXXXVI, 1997, pp. 221-242; the idea is discussed also in my *Kripke’s Account of the Rule-Following Considerations*, § 2, pp. 374-375, in *European Journal of Philosophy*, vol. XX, 2012, pp. 366-388.

⁵ See, e. g., *Semantic Normativity*, *cit.*, Boghossian’s *Is Meaning Normative?*, *cit.*, Hat-tiangadi’s *Is Meaning Normative?*, *cit.*, *The Normativity of Meaning Defended*, *cit.*, *Against Content Normativity*, *cit.*, *Is Meaning Fraught with Ought?*, *cit.*, my *Is Meaning Normative?*, in Piotr Stalmaszczyk, *Philosophy of Language and Linguistics*, Frankfurt, Ontos, 2010, vol. II and *The Argument from Queerness and the Normativity of Meaning*, *cit.*

will then move on to discuss some passages that might seem to support the orthodox interpretation. Finally, I will give what I take to be a better formulation of the argument.

I – Why the Orthodox Interpretation Is Wrong

This is the first formulation of the Normativity Argument Kripke gives in his essay:

[...] «“125” is the response you are disposed to give, and [...] it would also have been your response in the past». Well and good, I know that “125” is the response I am disposed to give [...], and maybe it is helpful to be told [...] that I would have given the same response in the past. How does any of this indicate that [...] “125” was an answer *justified* [...], rather than a mere jack-in-the-box unjustified and arbitrary response? Am I supposed to justify my present belief that I meant addition [...], and hence should answer “125”, in terms of a *hypothesis* about my *past* dispositions? (Do I record and investigate the past physiology of my brain?) Why am I so sure that one particular hypothesis of this kind is correct [...]? Alternatively, is the hypothesis to refer to my *present* dispositions alone, which would hence give the right answer by definition?⁶

Here Kripke does not explicitly speak of normativity. However, it is beyond doubt that he saw this passage, with which he opens his discussion of dispositionalism, as a formulation of the Normativity Argument. The following excerpt, which comes right after a paragraph that ends with the statement that «The relation of meaning and intention to future action is *normative*, not *descriptive*»⁷, is quite clear:

In the beginning of our discussion of the dispositional analysis, we suggested that it had a certain air of irrelevance with respect to a significant aspect of the sceptical problem – that the fact that the sceptic can maintain the hypothesis that I meant quus shows that I had no *justification* for answering “125” rather than “5”. [...] Our conclusion in the previous paragraph shows that [...] we have returned full circle to our original intuition. Precisely the fact that our answer to the question of which

⁶ Saul A. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language – An Elementary Exposition* (1981), Oxford, Blackwell, 1982, 2, p. 23. Another pretty explicit formulation of the argument is the one Kripke gives in the context of his discussion of what we may dub the “Simplicity Answer” to his challenge (*ibidem*, p. 40).

⁷ *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language, cit.*, 2, p. 37.

function I meant is *justificatory* of my present response is ignored in the dispositional account and leads to all its difficulties⁸.

Now, how does the orthodox interpretation fit this passage? Well, there is no doubt that in it we find something very close to a statement of the orthodox interpretation's first premise ("how does any of this indicate that "125" was an answer *justified*?", "I meant addition, and hence *should* answer "125""). Some may want to stress that Kripke does not even discuss the issue of the mere hypotheticality of semantic oughts, but, actually, this is no big deal: it may well be that he had never thought of objections such as the anti-normativists', or that he regarded them as clearly off target. And as for the orthodox interpretation's second premise, Kripke comes, once again, very close to stating it explicitly. But what about the passage's emphasis on the fact that I know my past, and unmanifested⁹, dispositions only through a hypothesis? The orthodox interpretation seems to have no place for this side of Kripke's argument. And since Kripke clearly gives no little weight to it, this shows that the orthodox interpretation, at least as it stands, is defective.

Of course, it is not that the orthodox interpretation is *inconsistent* with what Kripke says about justifying my belief that I should answer "125" in terms of a hypothesis. The point is, rather, that it gives it no role whatsoever. But, in the passage in question, the remarks revolving around the notion of a hypothesis seem to be meant to explain why the fact that "125" would have been my response in the past does not imply that that is the response I *have to* give now, the *right* response; they thus seem to be an essential step of the argument, since, of course, what the argument wants to prove is exactly that the concept of *correct* answer (and, *a fortiori*, the concept of *what I meant*) cannot be analysed in terms of the concept of *what I was disposed to say*. Therefore, there must be something wrong with the orthodox interpretation.

⁸ Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language, *cit.*, 2, p. 37. For "quus" see *ibidem*, pp. 8-9.

⁹ See Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language, *cit.*, 2, p. 8.

II – An Alternative Reading

The alternative reading I am going to sketch puts Kripke's remarks about our knowledge of our own dispositions at center stage. Here is its first premise:

It is constitutive of the concept of meaning that its instances can justify the speaker's, usually unhesitating, use of the relevant word; *e. g.*, it is constitutive of the concept of meaning that your meaning addition by "+" justifies your, usually unhesitating, utterance of the sentence " $68 + 57 = 125$ ".

Which is what Kripke seems to have in mind when he asks "how does any of this indicate that "125" was an answer justified, rather than a mere jack-in-the-box unjustified and arbitrary response". This premise is somewhat akin to the orthodox interpretation's first premise. However, this time the development of the argument will make it clear that also mere hypothetical justifications would do (note that hypothetical justifications are not necessarily justifications in terms of hypotheses: it may well be, *e. g.*, that even if I non-inferentially know that I have always meant addition by "+", this fact justifies my utterance of the sentence " $68 + 57 = 125$ " only if I want to speak the truth). Moreover, while the common wisdom sees a formulation in terms of justifications as a sloppy way to say something that should be said in terms of oughts, I believe that the notion of justification is better suited to making Kripke's point; in fact, I believe that Kripke speaks of normativity just because «The term "justified" [...] is an evaluative term, a term of appraisal»¹⁰.

The second premise makes it clear why it is important to phrase the first premise in terms of justification. This second premise, in fact, is an internalistic¹¹ assumption on this very notion:

My meaning a certain thing by a certain word can justify my, usually unhesitating, use of that word only if I non-inferentially know what I mean by it.

¹⁰ Alvin Goldman, *What Is Justified Belief?*, p. 1, in George S. Pappas, *Justification and Knowledge – New Studies in Epistemology*, Dordrecht, Reidel, 1979.

¹¹ See José Zalabardo, *Kripke's Normativity Argument*, § V, p. 484, in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. XXVII, 1997, pp. 467-488.

Which, together with the first premise, leads to the argument's first lemma. But before taking a look at this lemma, it may be of some use to see how these first two premises fit Kripke's text. This may be useful especially because, since the orthodox interpretation's first premise is, in a certain sense¹², weaker than the conjunction of these two premises, it seems that, in absence of strong evidence for the latter, the common wisdom has to be preferred.

So, how does the idea that my meaning addition by "+" must justify, in the internalistic sense of the word, my utterance of " $68 + 57 = 125$ " fit Kripke's text? Quite well, in fact. Consider, *e. g.*, the following passages:

The basic point is this. Ordinarily, I suppose that, in computing " $68 + 57$ " as I do, I do not simply make an unjustified leap in the dark. I follow directions I previously gave myself that uniquely determine that in this new instance I should say " 125 "¹³. In the discussion below the challenge posed by the sceptic takes two forms. First, he questions whether there is any *fact* that I meant plus, not quus, that will answer his sceptical challenge. Second, he questions whether I have any reason to be so confident that now I should answer " 125 " rather than " 5 ". The two forms of the challenge are related. I am confident that I should answer " 125 " because I am confident that this answer also accords with what I *meant*. [...] The "directions" mentioned in the previous paragraph, that determine what I should do in each instance, must somehow be "contained" in any candidate for the fact as to what I meant¹⁴.

Here Kripke explicitly says that my meaning addition by "+" must "contain" what he, metaphorically, labels "directions", which not only determine what I should do in each instance, but also *prevent my applications of "+" from being "an unjustified leap in the dark" and make me "confident" that I should use that sign in a certain way*. This seems to prove that Kripke assumes that my meaning addition by "+" must be something I can *consciously* regard as a *reason* to employ the sign in question in a given way. Which is exactly what our two premises assume.

We can now turn to the argument's first lemma, namely:

¹² See my answer to those who "may want to stress that Kripke does not even discuss the issue of the mere hypotheticality of semantic oughts", in the previous section.

¹³ Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language, *cit.*, 2, p. 10.

¹⁴ Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language, *cit.*, 2, p. 11.

It is constitutive of the concept of meaning that speakers non-inferentially know what they mean by their words.

But:

Third premise: in order to answer Kripke's challenge, dispositionalism must take the form of a conceptual analysis claim, rather than that of a mere a posteriori reduction

(the point of Kripke's challenge, after all, is that we do not seem to have a satisfactory understanding of the very concept of meaning). Therefore:

Second lemma: my meaning something by a word can be analysed in terms of dispositions only if I have non-inferential knowledge of these dispositions.

This latter lemma states a constraint that, in Kripke's opinion, any dispositional analysis of meaning should satisfy. However:

Fourth premise: we cannot analyse meaning in terms of manifested dispositions alone

(consider, *e. g.*, the simple version of dispositionalism I sketched in the first lines of the paper and note that the idea is that to mean addition by "+" is to be disposed to give the answer "Z" to *any* addition problem "X + Y"). Hence:

Third lemma: dispositionalism is committed to the thesis that speakers have non-inferential knowledge of their unmanifested linguistic dispositions.

And:

Fifth premise: speakers do not have such a knowledge.

Which would deliver the sought-after conclusion. However, this last premise may benefit from a little discussion. Therefore, let me ask: how can I gain knowledge of my linguistic dispositions? A first way is to observe my linguistic behaviour and exploit the fact that if at T I answer "125" to "68 +

57”¹⁵, then at T I am disposed to answer “125” to “68 + 57”. But this seems a clear case of *inferential* knowledge, and, anyway, there is no doubt that it is knowledge of *manifested* dispositions. A second way to obtain knowledge of my linguistic dispositions is to exploit the fact that I can deduce that at T₂ I will be disposed to answer “125” to “68 + 57” from the assumption that at T₁ I was disposed to answer “125” to “68 + 57” and the assumption that my dispositions are, so to speak, stable. But while this could be knowledge of an *unmanifested* disposition, it is clear that it cannot possibly be *non-inferential* knowledge. The last way to gain knowledge of my linguistic dispositions that we have to consider here consists in keeping track of my brain history. And though this strategy may yield *non-inferential* knowledge of *unmanifested* dispositions, it is a fact that people do not usually keep track of their brain history (which is Kripke’s point when he provocatively asks if «[...] I record and investigate the past physiology of my brain»¹⁶¹⁷). Hence, our last premise seems pretty solid. And we can therefore draw our conclusion:

No dispositional analysis of meaning can work.

III – A Defence of the Alternative Reading

Dispositionalists think that in order to show that meaning a certain thing can be analysed in terms of certain dispositions it is sufficient to show that

¹⁵ ... and there are neither mimics nor finkishly lacking dispositions in the neighbourhood (for mimicking see Mark Johnston, *How To Speak of the Colors*, § 2 (Are Color Concepts Primary or Secondary?), p. 232, in *Philosophical Studies*, vol. LXVIII, 1992, pp. 221-263, for the finkish lack of dispositions see C. B. Martin, *Dispositions and Conditionals*, § II, pp. 2-3, in *The Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. XLIV, 1994, pp. 1-8).

¹⁶ *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, cit., 2, p. 23.

¹⁷ It is worth noting that our fifth premise does not say that speakers *cannot* have non-inferential knowledge of their unmanifested linguistic dispositions. All it says is that *as a matter of fact* speakers *do not* have such a knowledge. This is to say that the form of our argument is not *Semantic dispositionalism entails that speakers cannot have non-inferential knowledge of what they mean by their words, hence it must be rejected*. Rather, the idea is that semantic dispositionalism entails that *as a matter of fact* speakers *do not* have non-inferential knowledge of what they mean by their words and hence it must be rejected. However, this is no big deal, since the notion that we do not have non-inferential knowledge of what we mean by our words is no less absurd than the notion that we cannot have such a knowledge.

those dispositions track the correctness conditions determined by meaning that thing. The argument I sketched seems to show that this is a failure to appreciate the fact that the problem of accounting for meaning is, in Stanley and Szabó's wording¹⁸, a problem in *foundational* semantics and that, though Kripke's challenge is not epistemological in nature, there is an epistemological constraint that any answer to the challenge must satisfy¹⁹. Now, this is, I think, just a more explicit version of what Kripke had in mind when he claimed that dispositionalism cannot account for the normativity of meaning. Readings to some extent analogous have already been advocated. Among the components of the thesis of the normativity of meaning, Kusch lists two assumptions, which he labels "Justification" and "Justification of Unhesitating Application", whose conjunction is quite similar to my first

¹⁸ Jason Stanley, Zoltán Gendler Szabó, *On Quantifier Domain Restriction*, § 2, pp. 223-224, in *Mind & Language*, vol. XV, 2000, pp. 219-261.

¹⁹ Some readers might find this latter claim downright absurd. After all, does not the notion that there is an epistemological constraint that any answer to Kripke's challenge must satisfy entail that the challenge *is* epistemological in nature? I myself think not. Here below is the passage in which Kripke stresses that "the sceptical challenge is not really an epistemological one": «We have just summarized the problem in terms of the basis of my present particular response: what tells me that I should say "125" and not "5"? Of course the problem can be put equivalently in terms of the sceptical query regarding my present intent: nothing in my mental history establishes whether I meant plus or quus. So formulated, the problem may appear to be epistemological – how can anyone know which of these I meant? Given, however, that everything in my mental history is compatible both with the conclusion that I meant plus and with the conclusion that I meant quus, it is clear that the sceptical challenge is not really an epistemological one. It purports to show that nothing in my mental history of past behavior – not even what an omniscient God would know – could establish whether I meant plus or quus» (*Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language, cit.*, 2, p. 21). Here Kripke makes clear that the sceptic's thesis is a metaphysical one, namely that there is no fact of the matter as to whether I meant plus or quus (see, *e. g.*, the reference to "what an omniscient God would know"), which, so Kripke assumes, would eventually lead to the conclusion that there is no such a thing as meaning something by a sign. Of course, there are ways to phrase the problem that make it seem that the sceptic's thesis is an epistemological one, namely that there is no way to know whether I meant plus or quus; however, this is nothing more than a misleading by-product of a useful rhetorical device. Now, in order to argue for this thesis, the sceptic exploits certain conceptual truths about meaning, *e. g.* that my having meant a given thing by a given sign, if indeed there is such a thing, has consequences about the way in which I should use that sign (which is why the problem can be summarized "in terms of the basis of my present particular response"). And our first lemma is just one of these truths: it concerns, no doubt, our *knowledge* of what we mean by our words, but its role is that of helping the sceptic to establish the aforementioned *metaphysical* conclusion, not its epistemological counterpart.

premise²⁰; and he also maintains that this thesis is closely intertwined with what he calls “Immediate Knowledge”, an assumption very close to my first lemma²¹. In a similar fashion, among the assumptions that Zalabardo argued Kripke’s argument hinges on we find counterparts of both my first and my second premise²². However, such readings are usually ignored. Maybe this is because what ended up becoming the orthodox interpretation fits the old no-ought-from-an-is schema well; and philosophers are always happy when they can conclude that there is nothing new under the sun. But this cannot be the whole story. And, in fact, it is not. The point is that there are passages, in Kripke’s essay, that may seem to provide good evidence for the orthodox interpretation. It is to such passages that I will now turn.

Here is a first one:

A candidate for what constitutes the state of my meaning one function, rather than another, by a given function sign, ought to be such that, whatever in fact I (am disposed to) do, there is a unique thing that I *should* do²³.

Once again, we have something very close to a formulation of the orthodox interpretation’s first premise. However, the context makes it clear that Kripke’s point is another one. For simplicity’s sake, throughout his essay Kripke focuses on a simplified version of his challenge, that of explaining what, exactly, it is to *have meant* something by a sign, *in the past*²⁴. Accordingly, Kripke’s first formulation of his Normativity Argument, which occurs in the paragraph immediately preceding the one to which this passage belongs, aims to prove that having meant something by a sign cannot be analysed in terms of having had certain dispositions, and, as we have seen, it tries to do it by showing that my past dispositions cannot justify my, usually unhesitating, present behaviour (the focus on *present* behaviour is, once again, nothing more than a casualness of Kripke’s exposition). Now, that paragraph ends with Kripke provocatively asking if dispositionalists

²⁰ Martin Kusch, *A Sceptical Guide to Meaning and Rules – Defending Kripke’s Wittgenstein*, Montreal-Kingston, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006, 1, § 3 (Common-Sense Philosophy: Low-Brow Meaning Determinism), pp. 9, 11 and 12.

²¹ *A Sceptical Guide to Meaning and Rules*, *cit.*, 1, § 3, p. 4 and 2, § 5 (The Inadequacy of the Received View as an Interpretation), pp. 62-63.

²² *Kripke’s Normativity Argument*, *cit.*, §§ IV-V.

²³ *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 2, p. 24.

²⁴ See *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 2, pp. 11-14.

want to switch from past to present dispositions, thereby committing to the notion that our utterances are by definition always correct: “alternatively, is the hypothesis to refer to my present dispositions alone, which would hence give the right answer by definition?”²⁵. And in such a context to say that “a candidate for what constitutes the state of my meaning one function by a given function sign ought to be such that there is a unique thing that I should do” is clearly just to stress that this kind of commitment is absurd: an assumption no doubt weaker than the orthodox interpretation’s first premise.

Analogous remarks hold for the passage that follows:

So it does seem that a dispositional account misconceives the sceptic’s problem – to find a past fact that *justifies* my present response. As a candidate for a “fact” that determines what I mean, it fails to satisfy the basic condition on such a candidate [...] that it should *tell* me what I ought to do in each new instance²⁶.

Here Kripke is just summarizing his argument, which he has introduced a couple of paragraphs before. Therefore, our reading of this passage must be parasitic on the passage I quoted at the beginning of the first section. If I succeeded in showing that that passage must be read in the light of the argument I sketched above, we can then conclude that this passage, too, must be read in the light of that argument. And if the orthodox interpretation is right for that passage, it is no doubt right for this one, too. But, in any case, this excerpt does not provide independent evidence for either of the two readings.

But the most serious challenge to my rendering may seem to come from a third passage:

Suppose I do mean addition by “+”. What is the relation of this supposition to the question how I will respond to the problem “68 + 57”? The dispositionalist gives a

²⁵ In other words, Kripke maintains that if we assume that (1) X’s answering “125” to “68 + 57” at T is correct if and only if at T X is disposed to answer “125” to “68 + 57”, then we have that (2) X’s answering “125” to “68 + 57” at T is correct if and only if at T X answers “125” to “68 + 57”. Now, the inference is legit only if (3) if at T X answers “125” to “68 + 57”, then at T X is disposed to answer “125” to “68 + 57”. And, even if it is not relevant to our discussion, it is worth noting that (3) is false, because of the phenomena of mimicking and of the finkish lack of dispositions.

²⁶ Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language, *cit.*, 2, p. 24.

descriptive account of this relation: if “+” meant addition, then I will answer “125”. But this is not the proper account of the relation, which is *normative*, not *descriptive*. 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*²⁷.

This seems to fit the orthodox interpretation almost perfectly. Kripke starts by noting that the dispositionalist gives a descriptive account of the relation of meaning to future action: what may seem a formulation of the orthodox interpretation’s second premise. Afterwards, he concludes that this is not the proper account of this relation. Finally, he explains that it is so because the relation of meaning to future action is normative, an idea he glosses by saying that the point is that if I meant addition by “+” I should answer “125” to “68 + 57”, which may seem a pretty straightforward formulation of the orthodox interpretation’s first premise. So far, so good. But this is not to say that the passage cannot be made to match my reading, too. After all, the orthodox interpretation’s first premise and the first premise of my rendering are so close that almost any statement of the latter can be seen as a statement of the former, and vice versa. Furthermore, the conclusion of the two arguments is exactly the same. And as for the claim that the dispositionalist gives a descriptive account of the relation of meaning to future action, we can see it as nothing more than a way to summarize the remaining steps of my reading: dispositionalists must give a descriptive account of the relation of meaning to future action because, in their analysis, they must employ dispositions of which the subject has no non-inferential knowledge and that, therefore, are normatively inert.

As far as I can see, there are no other passages that may be taken in support of the common wisdom. Hence, I believe we can conclude that my reading explains all the facts explained by the orthodox interpretation. And since the orthodox interpretation seems unable to explain Kripke’s emphasis on the fact that I know my past and unmanifested dispositions only through a hypothesis, I think that, all things considered, my reading proved to be preferable to the common wisdom. In the next section I will end the paper by giving what I take to be a better formulation of Kripke’s argument.

²⁷ Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language, *cit.*, 2, p. 37.

IV – The Normativity Argument without Normativity

According to the second premise of the argument I ascribed to Kripke in the preceding section, my meaning something by a word can justify my, usually unhesitating, use of that word only if I non-inferentially know what I mean by it. As I have already noted, this is an internalistic assumption on the notion of justification. Now, since several philosophers rejects internalism about justification, it is worth asking whether Kripke really needs such an assumption. My answer to this question is that no, Kripke does not need anything that strong.

The point is that, even if the setting in which Kripke develops the Normativity Argument makes it seem natural to phrase it in terms of justification, the argument can make it without this notion, the reason being that its first lemma, according to which it is constitutive of the concept of meaning that speakers non-inferentially know what they mean by their words, seems perfectly plausible on its own. We can therefore rephrase the Normativity Argument as follows:

First premise: it is constitutive of the concept of meaning that speakers non-inferentially know what they mean by their words.

Second premise: in order to answer Kripke's challenge, dispositionalism must take the form of a conceptual analysis claim, rather than that of a mere a posteriori reduction.

First lemma: my meaning something by a word can be analysed in terms of dispositions only if I have non-inferential knowledge of these dispositions.

Third premise: we cannot analyse meaning in terms of manifested dispositions alone.

Second lemma: dispositionalism is committed to the thesis that speakers have non-inferential knowledge of their unmanifested linguistic dispositions.

Fourth premise: speakers do not have such a knowledge.

Conclusion: no dispositional analysis of meaning can work.

Phrased this way, the argument is basically the same as an argument put forward by Wright. Here is a quite explicit formulation:

Chomsky's response to the Sceptical Argument is unsatisfying, it seems to me, for reasons which also apply to the dispositional response effectively criticised by Kripke himself. Kripke himself objects to the dispositional response that it cannot

account for the normativity of understanding an expression in a particular way [...]. The reason for dissatisfaction which I have in mind, however, is not this. It is rather that Chomsky's suggestion [...] threatens, like the dispositional account, to make a total mystery of the phenomenon of non-inferential, first-personal knowledge of past and present meanings [...] ²⁸.

Here Wright seems to subscribe to the orthodox interpretation of Kripke's remarks. But then he puts forward, introducing it as a different reason for dissatisfaction about dispositionalism (and Chomsky's response to Kripke's challenge), what we can regard as a very concise formulation of the argument I have just sketched.

What is more important, however, is that such a rephrasing makes the Normativity Argument independent from any assumption about the normativity of meaning. As I have already stressed, in my reading, Kripke speaks of normativity just because "the term "justified" is an evaluative term". And the version of the argument I gave in this section differs from the one I gave in the article's second section in the very fact that it lacks that version's first two premises, the only ones that made use of the notion of justification.

To be clear, I have nothing against the idea that meaning is normative; in fact, I believe I accept this thesis in all the senses in which it has been put forward in the relevant literature. Still, it is a controversial idea. Therefore, at least from a rhetorical point of view, a version of the Normativity Argument that does not employ it is something worth discussing. Of course, "Normativity Argument" is not a good label for such an argument; something like "Non-Inferential Knowledge Argument", or "Epistemological Argument", would definitely be a better fit. Be that as it may, I would like to see philosophers starting to discuss arguments such as Wright's, which in the debate on Kripke's challenge are widely ignored but which, as for myself, constitute one of the main threats to semantic dispositionalism.

²⁸ Crispin Wright, *Wittgenstein's Rule-Following Considerations and the Central Project of Theoretical Linguistics* (1989), § I, p. 175, in Crispin Wright, *Rails to Infinity – Essays on Themes from Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations*, Cambridge-London, Harvard University Press, 2001.

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