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Rule-Following II: Recent Work and New Puzzles

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Abstract

"Rule-following" is a name for a cluster of phenomena where we seem both guided and "normatively" constrained by something *general* in performing particular actions. Understanding the phenomenon is important because of its connection to meaning, representation, and content. This article gives an overview of the philosophical discussion of rule-following with emphasis on Kripke's skeptical paradox and recent work on possible solutions. Part I of this two-part contribution was devoted to the basic issues from Wittgenstein to Kripke. Part II is about recent answers to the skeptical paradox and Boghossian's and Wright's new puzzles.

1 | THE SKEPTICAL CHALLENGES: LINGUISTIC MEANING VS. REPRESENTATION/CONTENT

In the first part I argued that the primary form of Kripkenstein's skeptical challenge is to explain *what it is for an expression to have a particular meaning in a speaker's idiolect (rather than another)* (Kripke, 1982, p. 11; Reiland, 2024a). Having presented the challenge, Kripkenstein goes through and criticizes answers in terms of explicit instructions, dispositions to use, simplicity, experiential states, taking the state to be primitive, and Fregean sense, and concludes that it can't be answered.

The above question about linguistic meaning is related to rule-following since meaningful language use is usually taken to be intentional, *guided* activity (Kaplan, 1989, p. 602; Heck, 2006, pp. 30-32; for dissent see Hornsby, 2005, pp. 118-120). Thus, Kripkenstein stresses that a proper answer to the above challenge is subject to the important *Guidance* constraint. Namely, it must make sense of how the expression's having a particular meaning in one's idiolect both *guides* one in its use and linguistically *justifies* or *rationalizes* it, makes the use rational from your first-person point of view (for recent discussion see Boghossian, 2019, pp. 399-340; Haddock, 2012, pp. 161-

162; Kusch, 2006, pp. 8-10; 62; Miller, 2019, pp. 745-749; Sultanescu, 2022; Merino-Rajme, 2015, p. 170). As we saw in the first part, Kripkenstein's arguments against dispositionalism, the experiential state view, and the Fregean sense view rely centrally on this constraint.

There is a second form of the skeptical challenge to explain mental representation/content. Let's assume that to represent *o* as being a table is to predicate the property of *being a table* of it (Burge, 2010; Hanks, 2015; Soames, 2010). We can then ask for an analogous explanation of what your mind's predicating this property consists in, rather than, for example, the property of *being a tabair*, where a tabair is "anything that is a table not found at the base of the Eiffel tower or a chair found there" (Kripke, 1982, p. 19, for discussion see Hanks, 2017)?

It is commonplace to take the two forms of the skeptical challenge to be very closely related, as if there were no differences between them. For example, Boghossian influentially writes:

> It is hard to see how a convincing meaning scepticism could be confined purely to the linguistic domain, given the intimate relation between thought and language. Philosophers divide, of course, on the precise nature of this relation and, in particular, on the question of priority: Do the semantic properties of language derive from the representational properties of thought, or is it the other way round? Whatever the correct answer, however, there would appear to be no plausible way to promote a language-specific meaning scepticism. On the former (Gricean) picture, one cannot threaten linguistic meaning without threatening thought content, since it is from thought that linguistic meaning is held to derive; and on the latter (Sellarsian) picture, one cannot threaten linguistic meaning without thereby threatening thought content, since it is from linguistic meaning that thought content is held to derive. Either way, content and meaning must stand or fall together. If a sceptical thesis about linguistic meaning is to have any prospect of succeeding, then, it must also threaten the possibility of mental meaning (or content). (Boghossian, 1989: 509-510; compare Hattiangadi, 2007: 14-15, Miller, 2018: section 6.1, Warren, 2020: 280; note also that Boghossian now sees things differently, see his 2019: 399-400)

But this is too quick. It is correct that there are relations between linguistic meaning and mental representation/content. However, it would be wrong to conclude from this that there are no differences between the two forms of the challenge, nor that any proposed answer works equally well in either case, nor that you couldn't pose a skeptical challenge about just linguistic meaning without having to first threaten content. To start, it should be clearly kept in mind that the notions of linguistic meaning and content are quite different. There are many expressions which have linguistic meanings and don't have anything like contents at all ('Ouch!', 'Goodbye!'), and the rule-following problem arises in their case the same as in the typical case. Thus, the problem about linguistic meaning doesn't have anything to do with the fact that some meaningful expressions have representational properties or contents. More importantly, as we remarked above, meaningful language use, the use of an expression with its meaning, is typically an intentional action. But it is essential to keep in mind that not all mental representation can be an intentional action since intentional action itself already presupposes mental representation. For example, the predication done by your mind, even if analogous to personal-level sorting, can't be an intentional action if it is to be the ultimate ground of representation (for more on the personal vs. sub-personal level distinction see Drayson, 2014). Given this, it is only the primary, language-related form of the challenge that is subject to the *Guidance* constraint while the representation-related form is not (Boghossian, 2012, p. 38, Boghossian, 2019, pp. 399-400; Peacocke, 2012, pp. 71-74).[1] Relatedly, some answers that are implausible in the former case since they fail to satisfy the constraint are much more plausible in the latter case. And all of this means that even on a view which explains linguistic meaning in terms of mental states one *can* pose a skeptical challenge about linguistic meaning without having to first threaten content.

The tendency not to distinguish between the two forms of the challenge and their differing constraints has caused a great deal of trouble in discussion of the potential answers. The problem is that many of Kripkenstein's

central points against typical answers, for example, dispositionalist and experiential answers, appeal centrally to the *Guidance* constraint. But those who have been primarily interested in mental representation/content have rightly pointed out that the constraint doesn't apply in that case. Hence, a typical situation arises: someone who is primarily interested in the secondary challenge about content tends to conclude that there is no such constraint at all (Fodor, 1990, pp. 135-136, for discussion see Zalabardo, 1997). But this is the wrong reaction. The rule-following problem *just is* the problem about making sense of the dual aspects of guidance and normative constraint, usually, by something general. The primary form of the Kripkensteinian challenge is an instance of the rule-following problem and in that case the *Guidance* constraint applies (contrast Boghossian, 1989, p. 516; compare Boghossian, 2019, pp. 399-400). The secondary form in the case of which the constraint doesn't apply is not really an instance of the rule-following problem at all, but simply an analogous question about content.[2]

Thus, it is very important to be clear which form of the challenge a view is supposed to answer and which constraints are relevant. One of the morals that I'll try to draw out in the next two sections is that once we focus on views of representation/content many Kripkensteinian arguments become irrelevant and therefore those views can and should be evaluated on independent grounds.

2 | DISPOSITIONALISM

Historically, the answer to Kripkenstein's challenge that has been discussed most is that facts about meaning or content are constituted by dispositions to use the word in a particular way or have certain non-intentionally characterized reactions like responding to tables with 'table'.

Current discussion of dispositionalism has moved away from linguistic meaning and primarily focuses on content. It is not hard to see why since Kripkenstein's point that the dispositionalist view seems simply off target in the case of linguistic meaning is convincing (Kripke, 1982, pp. 23, 37; compare Boghossian, 2012, p. 45). This is because dispositions simply determine what we will do, but can't guide or rationalize our use from the first person point of view, and therefore can't make sense of how language use is an intentional action.[3] Relatedly, one might think that it is obvious that it is the meaning of a term in our idiolect that explains our dispositions for using it, and not vice versa (Boghossian, 2015, pp. 337-338).[4]

Instead, most dispositionalist views attempt to respond to the secondary form of the challenge about mental representation/content.[5] As Boghossian influentially argues, most naturalistic theories of content are forms of dispositionalism (Boghossian, 1989, p. 528). Kripkenstein's *Finitude* and *Error* problems apply even here. To recap, our dispositions for responding to tables by tokening the mental symbol *TABLE* are finite, but its content is intuitively infinitary in covering all possible tables and non-tables. Second, our dispositions to respond to tables with *TABLE* involve dispositions to make what intuitively count as mistakes like responding the same way to table-like artworks. But if dispositions are constitutive of content then there is no basis for taking these to be mistakes rather than constituting a different content. Thus, the dispositionalist can't make sense of the possibility of mistakes (for more see Reiland, 2024a).

A lot of the early discussion of dispositionalism was focused on the *Finitude* problem and a common suggestion was that since ordinary dispositions like fragility are infinitary, so can our dispositions for responses (Blackburn, 1984, pp. 289-290). However, as Boghossian has forcefully made clear, the crux of the matter isn't that dispositions can't in general be infinitary, but rather that our dispositions for responses simply *aren't* because they're determined by our finite cognitive powers (Boghossian, 2015, pp. 342-343, see the same paper for extensive criticism of different versions of dispositionalism).

Warren has recently proposed a sophisticated form of dispositionalism that aims to solve both the *Finitude* and *Error* problems. His idea is that what determines content is the *general* disposition to *stably* respond to tables with *TABLE* in *normal* situations (Warren, 2020, pp. 270-273). The disposition is general iff it manifests in the overwhelming majority of normal situations. It is stable only iff checking and rechecking produces the same response.

And normal situations are those where neither internal nor external factors are interfering with the functioning of the cognitive apparatus. Warren contends that this solves the *Error* problem in ruling out dispositions to make mistakes as content-determining. The *Finitude* problem is then solved by attributing to us complex dispositions composed of simple dispositions (Warren, 2020, pp. 262-263).

Warren's view faces two challenges. First, Miller & Sultanescu have argued that what he needs is a specification of the normal conditions such that TABLE picks out the property of *being a table* and not the property of *being a tabair*. This is needed to make the case that in responding with TABLE to tables at the base of the Eiffel tower one responds correctly and not incorrectly. But it's not clear how to spell out normal conditions that make this the case without appeal to intentional notions (Miller & Sultanescu, 2022: Section 4).

Second, Guardo has argued that dispositionalist views like Warren's face a more general Kripkenstein-inspired problem he calls the *Privilege* problem. Namely, that they have no justification for *privileging* the set of dispositions which don't involve what intuitively count as mistakes over the wider set that does. Why are the former dispositions content-determining and not the latter? It seems that dispositionalists have no answer, and without one their story doesn't work (Guardo, 2022, pp. 865-866). It is not unreasonable to think that this sort of a question is the actual driving intuition behind the original *Error* problem.

A yet different and novel Wittgenstein-inspired problem for dispositionalism about linguistic meaning has been recently raised by Lane who argues that it can't take for granted the idea that one is disposed to use the same word 'table' on different occasions. Consider the disposition to respond to tables by uttering 'This is a table'. The fact that the noise the subject makes counts as an instance of the word 'table' seems itself a matter of their being guided by a rule that groups different physical stimuli together as instances of the same word (Lane, 2022, pp. 692-693). And without a dispositionalist story about what it is to be guided by such a rule we've made no progress. However, here we see another way in which is important to be clear whether we're discussing linguistic meaning or mental content. It is doubtful that this problem generalizes to dispositionalism about mental content where the application of the same mental symbol on different occasions is unlikely to be thought in terms of the mind's being guided by a rule.[6]

Let me conclude the discussion of dispositionalism by emphasizing again that most current discussion of it doesn't even aim to give an account of rule-following and to answer the primary form of the Kripkensteinian challenge about linguistic meaning but rather the one about mental representation/content. And even if dispositionalism about content could be made to work, this wouldn't doesn't address the original challenge which requires a dispositionalist story that would make sense of guidance.

3 | NATURALNESS, PHENOMENOLOGY, AND PRIMITIVISM

Besides dispositionalism, there are three other views discussed in relation to Kripkenstein that are primarily intended as answers to the secondary form of the challenge about representation/content. In this section I will show that these views are mostly untouched by Kripkensteinian arguments, and that their promise therefore depends on independent considerations.

Suppose your mind predicates the property of *being a table* of o and thereby forms the thought that o is a table. What does your mind's operating with this property rather than the property of *being a tabair* consist in? The first answer we'll discuss is Lewis's and appeals to metaphysical naturalness (Lewis, 1983). The idea is that properties like *being a table* are more natural than gerrymandered ones like *being a tabair* in corresponding more closely to the world's own objective structure. In essence, it takes the idea that *being a table* is simpler than *being a tabair* discussed by Kripkenstein but transforms it from an epistemological to a metaphysical thesis. The background view is interpretivism about mental content: that content is constitutively determined by the best theory of the data (Williams, 2017). The idea then is that there is an a priori constitutive constraint on interpretation: one should assign the most natural properties etc. that are consistent with the data. Thus, your mind is operating with the

property of *being a table* because the best theory of our thoughts assigns it since it is more natural than *being a tabair* (Lewis, 1983, pp. 375-376).

Merino-Rajme has argued that Lewis's solution fails because it doesn't satisfy the *Guidance* constraint: facts about naturalness are not accessible and can't guide us from the first-person point of view (Merino-Rajme, 2015, pp. 171-17). I think this is correct. But here we might have the reverse situation to the one mentioned before where people interested in representation argued that the *Guidance* constraint doesn't apply. It is plausible that Lewis appeals to naturalness primarily to solve the problem about content. And in this case the failure to make sense of guidance and related Kripkensteinian arguments leave the view untouched. The prospects of the Lewisian view as applied to content depend instead on more general questions about how plausible interpretivism is and whether the appeal to naturalness makes sense (for recent discussion see Azzouni, 2018: Ch. 4, Boghossian, 2015, pp. 354-355, Weatherson, 2012, Williams, 2017).

The second answer appeals to experiential states and phenomenology. Here the central idea is that of the *phenomenal intentionality* program: it is consciousness that grounds content (Horgan & Graham, 2012). Roughly, the idea could be put by saying that it is your consciousness of the property of *being a table* is what makes it the case that your mind operates with it, rather than with the property of *being a tabair*. Now, to recall, Kripkenstein's main problems with experiential, phenomenological views had again primarily to do with the *Guidance* constraint: he argued that the special experience of meaning something by a word "would not tell me what to do in new cases", and that if we introspect, we find no such thing (Kripke, 1982, p. 43). But it should be clear that these problems do not straightforwardly carry over to the idea of consciousness determining what property your mind operates with. The moral here is the same as in the case of the Lewisian view. The prospects of the phenomenal intentionality view as applied to content depend on more general questions about how plausible it is to take consciousness to ground content and how to exactly do it (for recent discussion see Mendelovici, 2018).

The third answer is a combination of primitivism and an appeal to innate capacities. Burge has recently argued that representation is the basic ground-level notion of psychology which is not amenable to further explanation or reduction and that at least some of our representational capacities are part of our evolutionary endowment (Burge, 2010, for his discussion of Kripkenstein see 2010: 128-129). In the most basic cases, your mind operates with a property like *being a body*, rather than a bent property similar to quaddition because this is what it has been evolutionarily selected to do. Again, it should be clear that Kripkensteinian arguments about guidance leave this view untouched, and its prospects have to be evaluated independently.

Having discussed answers to the secondary form of the challenge, we will now look at Ginsborg's interpretation of the Kripkensteinian problem and her intriguing novel solution.

4 | GINSBORG'S COMBINATION OF DISPOSITIONALISM WITH A PRIMITIVE NORMATIVE ATTITUDE

In a series of recent papers, Ginsborg has offered a particular interpretation of the Kripkensteinian problem and solution that combines aspects of dispositionalism with aspects of primitivism. She mostly frames her discussion in terms of language use, but also suggests that it extends to mental content (Ginsborg, 2012, p. 127fn). However, given her view, it's clear that she can have in mind only personal-level conceptual thought rather than all mental representation (see fn. 1, Ginsborg, 2011b, p. 239, for discussion of how her view applies to concepts see Ginsborg, 2018). As I will suggest in the end, I think her view is best taken to be about conceptual thought and phenomena like continuing a series and not about language use at all (for a reading that focuses explicitly on the conceptual aspect see Lauer, 2021). She rejects the *Guidance* constraint, which she interprets as requiring consulting an intervening item that guides us in our language or concept use (Ginsborg, 2012, pp. 128-129; for critical discussion see Haddock, 2012, pp. 161-62, Lauer, 2021, pp. 131-132, Miller, 2019, pp. 745-749, Sultanescu, 2022). However, she retains a weaker analog of it: namely, that an answer to the skeptical challenge has to

make sense of the difference between automata and us qua language users who use language or concepts with "understanding" and thus not blindly (Ginsborg, 2012, pp. 134-135). Her solution combines dispositionalism with the idea of a primitive normative attitude.

Consider again what it is to be following the +2 rule rather than a bent one or for 'table' to have a meaning in your idiolect that makes it for predicating the property of *being a table* rather than the property of *being a tabair*. Ginsborg's answer is as follows. First, these things consist in one's disposition to continue the series by writing down '2' and the disposition to *respond* with 'table' to the presence of tables. This part of the view is supposed to determine the rule you follow or the meaning that the word has. Second, they consist in one's disposition to *take* continuing the series by writing down '2' and to take responding with 'table' to the presence of tables to be *correct* in the light of one's previous usage, where such taking amounts to a primitive normative consciousness of correctness. This part of the view is supposed to make it the case that your use is one with "understanding" and not blind.

A series of comments. First, it is paramount in understanding her view that the dispositions are simply dispositions to perform the mere non-intentional actions of writing down the meaningless mark '2' and responding with the meaningless noise 'table' in the presence of tables. One should therefore avoid characterizing the disposition as one to *apply* 'table' to tables, since talk of application is already semantically loaded and something she can't appeal to, given her project.[7]

Second, Ginsborg makes it clear that consciousness of correctness or taking something to be correct is not just a feeling of pleasure etc., but a genuine intentional attitude involving a primitive concept of CORRECTNESS (Ginsborg, 2011b, pp. 237-238). However, talk of consciousness of correctness and taking something to be correct are somewhat in tension. Talk of consciousness suggests passivity, *detecting* that the response is correct where correctness is an objective property of the response (this option is suggested by what she says in Ginsborg, 2011b, p. 247). If she goes this route, the attitude is a *representational* or constative attitude in the sense that it represents the response as being correct and is true or false depending on how things are in pre-existing reality. Another possibility is that taking something to be correct does not consist in detecting objective correctness but rather as *instituting* correctness. If she goes this route, the attitude is more like a performative act in instituting the act as correct, as creating new reality (compare Brandom's phenomenalism about norms in 1994: 33-49; for discussion of both ways of reading her see Haddock, 2012, pp. 167-168, Sultanescu, 2021).

Third, the normative attitude of taking the application to be correct is primitive in the sense that it doesn't rely on the subject's already following a rule or grasping a meaning. Correctness doesn't contrast here with incorrectness, but with lack of correctness (Ginsborg, 2011b, pp. 169, 2012: 139; for discussion and criticism see Lauer, 2021, pp. 130-132). And it doesn't furnish the subject with a reason. Rather, the normative concept of CORRECTNESS and the attitude of taking things to be correct are prior to any talk of rules, meaning, and reasons (Ginsborg, 2011b, pp. 246-247).

Ginsborg's view has been criticized along several lines. First, her view seems prey to all the objections to dispositionalism. For example, in her solution to the finitude problem she appeals to the idea that all dispositions come with ideal conditions (Ginsborg, 2011a, pp. 159-160). However, Miller has argued that she doesn't have a response to Kripkenstein's point which is that the ideal conditions can't be gotten right unless they're specified in terms of intentional notions (Miller, 2019, pp. 739-745). Furthermore, it's not clear that non-intentionally characterized dispositions can distinguish between different, but extensionally equivalent rules one might be following and thus fix a determinate rule at all (Sorgiovanni, 2018).

Second, some worry that the skeptical challenge can be reinstated at the level of the concept of CORRECTNESS. The skeptic may ask about what taking a response to be correct rather than quorrect consists in, where to do the latter is to take it to be correct until time *t* and to lack correctness thereafter (Haddock, 2012, p. 159, Sorgiovanni, 2018, pp. 143-144). Ginsborg responds that the concept of CORRECTNESS is a special case, not q-able (Ginsborg, 2011b, p. 251). But more needs to be said to make this plausible. One idea is to see whether she could

appeal, a la Burge, to an innate concept of CORRECTNESS and to provide an evolutionary story as to why we have it.

Third, some worry that the account of "understanding" in terms of taking something to be correct is insufficient for the response to count as not being blind. After all, from one's first-person point of view this is simply a non-rational response that one can't further explain or justify, and this doesn't seem to do justice to our phenomenology of understanding (Lauer, 2021, pp. 128-129).

Fourth, some worry that this approach can't make sense of the idea of genuine conformity. Suppose I see a table and respond to it by uttering 'This is a table'. What makes it the case that in doing this I conform to the meaning of 'table' in my idiolect?[8] The only sense of conformity here is that in doing this I'm actualizing my prior disposition to respond both with the utterance and the disposition to take it to be correct (Ginsborg, 2011b, p. 245). But what if I see instead a fake table, an artwork, and respond the same way? In this case I've made some sort of a mistake. Sultanescu has argued that Ginsborg has a problem with capturing such a mistake since on her view I've actualized a disposition to use 'table' to respond to tables, actualized the disposition to take it to be correct, yet I've made a mistake. Or consider the opposite case. I see what I take to be a table yet respond with 'artwork' in order to deceive someone, but the thing really is, unbeknownst to me, an artwork, so I did not make a mistake (Sultanescu, 2021, pp. 366-367). Sultanescu argues that Ginsborg has to misclassify this as a mistake. I think this objection pays insufficient attention to the distinction between linguistic and factual mistakes, but also points to a deeper worry about Ginsborg's view that I'll come back to below. What we intuitively want to say in the former case is that I've used 'table' correctly in the linguistic sense and talked about tables and thus have not made a linguistic mistake, but an unintentional factual mistake (for more on the distinction, see Reiland, 2023a). The latter case is more complicated, but one possible view is that I've used 'artwork' incorrectly in the linguistic sense and expressed the thought that this is an artwork, in order to deceive someone, but unintentionally spoke factually correctly.

Still, there's a different problem about Ginsborg's story of what conformity consists in. How can Ginsborg make sense of the difference between the above case of use with meaning and the case where in responding to a fake table with 'This is a table' and taking this to be correct, I'm changing my usage, so that 'table' is now supposed to be talking about both tables and fake tables? To see the problem, note that even in the case of the novel use I am still actualizing my previous dispositions to respond with 'table' to tables, and to take it to be correct. So, on Ginsborg's account, it should count as a case of using the expression with the meaning that it has in my idiolect. But in such a case this is not what we take ourselves to be doing. What we intuitively want to say is that in the former case my intention is to use the expression with the meaning that it has in my idiolect whereas in the latter case it is to use it with a new meaning. But it's not clear that Ginsborg's account has resources to make sense of this distinction. And it calls into question her view about what conformity consists in general.

All of this points to a deeper worry about Ginsborg's view – that it doesn't really capture the fact that language use is an intentional, guided activity that we perform at will and that is compatible with intentional misuses (compare Jones, 2015, pp. 438-440). Consider again the case above where one takes something to be a table but responds with 'artwork' in order to deceive someone. Note first that the intuitive description of such cases requires appealing to an intervening intentional state between what the thing actually is and your linguistic response: e. g. *taking* something to be a table or an artwork. Such intervening intentional states have to themselves be understood in terms of her story. So in taking the thing to be a table, you're actualizing your dispositions to respond with the concept TABLE, and to take the response to be correct. So far so good. But the second part of the story in which you use 'artwork' can't be given in terms of your actualizing your dispositions to use the word and to take the use to be correct. That is exactly what you're not doing since you're making a linguistic mistake. Your disposition to respond to artworks with 'artwork' are completely irrelevant to such an intentionally mistaken use. But if it's not the actualization of this disposition, what makes it the case that one is using 'artwork' with its meaning in one's idiolect after all? I think the moral of these considerations is that Ginsborg's view is best understood as being about

personal-level conceptual thought and phenomena like continuing a series where intentional misuse isn't a possibility (for her discussion of phenomena of "going on" see Ginsborg, 2020).

5 | BOGHOSSIAN'S AND WRIGHT'S NEW PUZZLES

In recent work both Boghossian and Wright have argued that though Kripkenstein's puzzle can be solved, there are other, different Wittgensteinian puzzles about rule-following that have been overlooked (Boghossian, 2012, 2014; Wright, 2007, 2012). I will mostly focus on Boghossian's presentation.

Remember our initial characterization of rule-following as a situation where one is both guided and normatively constrained by something *general* in performing particular actions. One is *guided* by a rule when one *tries* to act in accordance with it or one's action is somehow otherwise a product of sensitivity to its demands. Such guidance generates, explains, and rationalizes our action. One *follows* a rule when one further actually conforms to it. Boghossian captures this in his model of rule-following by claiming that it requires acceptance, correctness, explanation, and rationalization (the ACER model, Boghossian, 2012, p. 32).

Now, given this characterization of rule-following, both Boghossian and Wright see a new problem. Consider the following remark by Wittgenstein:

> 219. "All the steps are really already taken," means: I no longer have any choice. The rule, once stamped with a particular meaning, traces the lines along which it is to be followed through the whole of space. But if something of this sort really were the case, how would it help?

How to make sense of Wittgenstein's point in the last line? If what was in question was Kripkenstein's problem it would be hard to see how it wouldn't help. Boghossian thinks that this points toward the real problem, which is figuring out how what I'm guided by can show me what to do at a particular step. In other words, the question is:

> Q2) How do we move from our grasp of a general rule to its *application* to a particular case? (compare Wright, 2012: 380-381)

Here's a natural picture one might have of how this happens. Consider the following E-mail rule, the acceptance of which we'll suppose can be captured in terms of an explicit intention to act in accordance with it:

> *Intention*: For all x, if x is an email and you have just received x, answer it immediately!

How can such a conditional intention guide me? Presumably, one has to first come to believe that the antecedent is satisfied:

> *Premise*: This is an email that I have just received.

And then one combines this with the Intention to arrive at the:

> *Conclusion*: Answer it immediately!

In carrying out this reasoning you must infer. However, Boghossian claims, inference itself is a matter of rule-following (Boghossian defends this view in his 2014, compare also Broome, 2014, for criticism see Hlobil, 2014, Kietzmann, 2018, pp. 296-298, Valaris, 2017). In inferring, one must use a rule like

*Modus Ponens**: From 'If C, do A' and C, you must conclude 'do A'.

But now we're embarking on a vicious infinite regress. If rule-following requires inference and inference requires rule-following then both are impossible (Compare Wright, 2012: 384-385).

The options are to either reject the claim that acceptance of a rule consists in an intentional state, the claim that rule-following requires inference, or the claim that inference requires rule-following (Boghossian, 2012, p. 42). Boghossian suggests that the only thing we can give up is the claim that acceptance consists in an intentional state and that this was also Wittgenstein's suggestion in the following remark:

> 219 (cont.) No; my description only made sense if it was understood symbolically.—I should have said:
> This is how it strikes me. When I obey a rule, I do not choose. I obey the rule blindly.

If we can't think of acceptance of a rule in terms of an intentional state how should we think of it? First, we could understand acceptance in terms of dispositions. But this doesn't work since dispositions can't play the role of rationalizing our actions from the first-person point of view (Boghossian, 2012, pp. 43-45). Second, we could try to understand it in terms of some sub-personal state, but this would collapse into a dispositional view where this would still face the finitude and error problems (Boghossian, 2012, p. 46). So it looks like there's no plausible non-intentional story about acceptance and we're left with what Boghossian calls *an antinomy of pure reason*: we both must and can't make sense of rule-following. The only option he sees is to give up on the idea that rule-following requires inference and to take it to be primitive.

In a discussion of Boghossian's problem Miller suggests that Wittgenstein's remark about blindness should not be taken to amount to a rejection of the view that acceptance is an intentional state, but rather as claiming that it is not based on an interpretation, on appealing to a further rule like *Modus Ponens** (Miller, 2015, pp. 405-406, 411). Miller's proposal is that we need to reject the idea that rule-following requires inference. Rather, when one moves from *Intention* to *Conclusion* via *Premise*, above, one undergoes a rule-mediated causal transition that is sustained by custom, practice, and training (Miller, 2015, pp. 407-408; compare Broome's dispositional view of rule-following in Broome, 2014). The standard objection is that this makes rule-following a merely causal, and not a rational process. Miller responds by saying that this objection makes sense only if one is worried about deviant causal chains and that these can be ruled out with a "right kind of way" proviso backed up by Wittgensteinian points about custom and training (Miller, 2015, pp. 412-414). Reactions may vary, but at least to me this seems unsatisfactory since the worry about this making rule-following into a merely causal process doesn't have to do with deviant causal chains, but rather the intuition that the movement from *Intention* and *Premise* to *Conclusion* seems like inference in that we *take* the former two to support the latter (Boghossian, 2014, pp. 4-5).

Instead, one might think that the right option to explore is rejecting the claim that personal-level inference involves personal-level rule-following (Wright, 2012, p. 386). After all, there is something overintellectualized in thinking that every time we infer we appeal to an inference rule for guidance. This suggestion has been explored in depth in recent work on inferring with a number of alternative views available (Blake-Turner, 2022; Hlobil, 2019; Kietzmann, 2018; Marcus, 2020; Valaris, 2017).

6 | CONCLUSION: A POSSIBLE PATH THROUGH

The main moral of the discussion in the two-part article is that it is very important to properly understand the questions about rule-following, the notion of normativity, and the differing forms of the Kripkensteinian challenge with their differing constraints, if we're to make any progress at all. Too much ink has been spilled on puzzlement about the relation of the skeptical challenge to rule-following, on questioning the involved normativity and Kripkenstein's mention of justification. Similarly, too many discussions of the challenge don't make clear whether they

intend to primarily engage with the question about linguistic meaning, one about conceptual thought, or about representation/content more generally.

My main aim in this overview article has been to make possible seeing these things aright: the primary form of the puzzle applies in every case which involves guidance and normative conformity, where the latter is to be understood very cheaply, in terms of correctness and incorrectness. Forms of the puzzle relating to representation/content, and possible non-intentional "rule-following" are not subject to the *Guidance* constraint and are therefore beyond the original puzzle.

Once we've become clearer about the terrain the following avenue through the thicket of issues suggests itself as worth exploring. It is orthodox in mainstream philosophy of language to think that public language is primary vis-à-vis individual idiolects and individuals' semantic intentions relating to particular uses (e. g. Dummett, 1991: Ch. 4, Evans, 1982: Ch. 11, Kaplan, 1989, p. 601). Then the question about what it is for an expression to have one meaning versus another in a speaker's idiolect can be answered by saying that it derives from the public language they've learned. The question then reappears as one about meaning in public language. But there are several proposals about what it is for expressions to have meanings in a public language, for example, in terms of conventions or rules of use which relate the expressions to mental states (Keiser, 2022; Lewis, 1975; Reiland, 2023b). Naturally, one would now expect the worry to reappear either at the level of individual "competence" with the language, at the level of meaningful use on an occasion, or at the level of representation/content. Individual competence is a mental state, and it guides us in our language use. There is no problem with thinking of such guidance on an inferential model once we're allowed to presuppose mental content and inference. Furthermore, the normative constraint as far as linguistic meaning is concerned is not a matter of individual competence but public language meaning. In other words, even if you think of speaking a public language in terms of rules of use, that doesn't mean that to speak is to *follow* the rules. Rather, to speak is to intentionally do something that makes one subject to the rules, which is compatible with your being mistaken about what they are (for discussion see Reiland, 2024b). This divorces the aspects of normative constraint, which is due to public language, and guidance, which is due to your "competence", and shows that there is no rule-following problem here.

This leaves representation/content. But as we have seen, in the case of many proposals in this area, most of the Kripkensteinian considerations simply don't apply. For example, one could go along with Burge in thinking that most primitive representational capacities are basic and innate (Burge, 2010). The trick is to figure out how to get from those to more sophisticated conceptual capacities and to language. Perhaps there is something specifically Kripkensteinian to worry about at this stage. But this needs to be spelled out for those working within this constructive program to worry about it at all.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT
There is no conflict of interest.

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ENDNOTES
[1] An instance of the rule-following problem analogous to that about linguistic meaning arises in the case of conscious, personal-level conceptual thought on the assumption that when a subject applies a predicative concept, they are guided

by their grasp of a concept and therefore don't do this blindly (for a masterful articulation of this form of the challenge see Haase, 2011). Peacocke therefore takes the general problem to be one about *understanding-based rational application* in the case of both concept- and language-use and appeals to sub-personal mental content in giving his answer (Peacocke, 2012, p. 50). However, there are differences even between these two forms of the challenge since only language-use allows for *intentional* misuse. We'll come back to this in our discussion of Ginsborg's view below. What matters to us here is that most orthodox views of representation would vehemently deny that something similar is true of perceptual representation and most conceptual thought (Burge, 2010: Ch. 4, Peacocke, 2012, pp. 73-74). Yet, people continue worrying about the Kripkensteinian challenge even in those cases.

2 This was already clearly appreciated by McGinn in his 1984: 146-147, but his discussion didn't have much of an effect due to Boghossian's pointing out that McGinn's transtemporal construal of linguistic correctness is problematic in his 1989: 510-513. I think McGinn was right in essence but did indeed misconstrue what it is to talk about linguistic correctness (for an alternative view see Reiland, 2023a).

3 This is not to say that the fact that Kripkenstein's talk of justification is about guidance has been always clear. For example, see Warren's lengthy discussion of it in the context of dispositionalism where he gets it right only after moving from discussion of meaning to rule-following in Warren, 2020.

4 Dispositionalist views of linguistic meaning have been offered outside the context of discussion of Kripkenstein. For example, Johnson & Nado propose a dispositional view of linguistic meaning in the context of discussion of intuitions (Johnson & Nado, 2014, 2017). However, they seem to miss that all such proposals are straightforwardly open to Kripkenstein's complaint that they don't make any sense of guidance.

5 For a dispositionalist account of rule-following see Yamada, 2010. However, he seems to construe of rule-following more cheaply than is standard and as we construe it here, in not requiring it to be an intentional, guided activity.

6 This is not to say that it is easy to say how we should individuate mental symbols or symbols of the language of thought. For discussion see Schneider, 2009.

7 Similarly, care needs to be taken in putting the idea that the relevant disposition in the case of 'plus' is that of giving the *sum*. All this can mean is that it is the disposition to produce the numeral which we usually take to express the sum (Ginsborg, 2011a, p. 155fn).

8 Ginsborg doesn't think that this is the relevant question at all. She thinks that the real question is what makes it the case that I conform to my *past usage* (Ginsborg, 2011b, p. 247, Ginsborg, 2022). But in that case her answer seems to change the subject given how it is conceived by Kripkenstein and how we're conceiving of it here. So, like other commentators, I will at this point discuss her view as it would apply to our problem.

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