

Primitive normativity and scepticism about rules

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Riverside Conference, February 24-25, 2006

(Draft of Feb. 21, 2006)

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In his Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language, Saul Kripke describes and attributes to Wittgenstein what he calls a skeptical paradox casting doubt on the possibility of meaning, and of rule-following more generally. Kripke develops the paradox in terms of the arithmetical function *quus* or *quaddition*, which is defined so that the value of x *quus* y coincides with that of x plus y where x and y are less than 57, but is otherwise 5. Suppose that all your previous uses of the word 'plus' and of the 'plus' sign have involved numbers less than 57, and that you are now asked the question 'what is 68 plus 57?' You add the numbers and give as your answer '125.' But now imagine a skeptic who challenges your answer on the grounds that by the word 'plus,' or the 'plus' sign, you previously meant *quaddition* rather than addition. If you are to use the word 'plus' as you used it in the past, the skeptic says, you ought to answer '5.' Against your insistence that you know you meant addition, the skeptic replies by challenging you to provide some fact in virtue of which you meant addition. All your previous answers, he points out, were consistent with the hypothesis that you meant *quaddition*: so what can you appeal to in order to show that you meant addition instead? The upshot of the considerations developed by the skeptic is not merely that you do not know that you meant addition, and hence what you ought to say if you are not to change your usage, but the metaphysical conclusion that there is no fact about what you meant by plus. And this conclusion generalizes to all facts about meaning or rule-following, past or present. There can be no

fact as to whether anyone means anything by any word, or is following any one rule rather than any other.¹

The argument Kripke develops to support this conclusion proceeds mostly by elimination: he considers, and rules out, various proposals as to what the fact of meaning addition might consist in. Two in particular are worth highlighting. One proposal, which Kripke discusses in detail, is that your meaning addition by the word 'plus' is a fact about your dispositions with respect to that word. You meant addition in the past, on this proposal, because you were disposed to give the sum rather than the quum in answer to questions using the word 'plus.' If you had been asked 'what is 68+57?' you would have answered '125,' and that determines that you meant addition rather than quaddition. Kripke raises three objections against this proposal, turning respectively on the supposed finiteness of our dispositions (26-27), on the fact that we are sometimes disposed to make arithmetical mistakes (28-32), and most importantly on the proposal's apparent failure to account for what he calls the 'normativity of meaning': how one is or was disposed to respond on a given occasion cannot determine how one ought to respond (23-24, 37).² The second proposal, which Kripke treats much more briefly, is that your meaning addition by 'plus' is a primitive or sui generis state (51). This proposal can be regarded as a form of nonreductionism: the fact that you

¹ I assume throughout, with Kripke, that there is a close connection between skepticism about meaning and skepticism about rules. More specifically, I take it that meaning something by a word is a matter of adopting a rule for its use, so that meaning skepticism is a special case of skepticism about rules. Other writers, while accepting that there is a close connection between meaning and rule-following, have taken the relation between the two to be one of analogy only (Gampel 1997, 229-230; Miller 2002, 15). Boghossian denies the connection altogether on the grounds that following a rule, at least according to our ordinary conception of it, "involves the intentional attempt to bring one's behaviour in line with the dictates of some grasped rule" (1989, §8, 151). Since one cannot make such an attempt unless one has previously grasped a contentful mental state, the concept of following a rule presupposes the concept of meaning. But for reasons that will emerge in what follows, I disagree with the view that rule-following must be intentional in the way Boghossian supposes.

² Boghossian classifies both the second and the third objection as turning on the normativity of meaning (1989, §20, 166-168), although he goes on to treat them separately, discussing the third in §21 and the second in §§22-26.

mean addition, on this proposal, cannot be reduced to facts about your behaviour or dispositions, or to any nonintentional psychological facts about you. While Kripke acknowledges that this proposal may be "irrefutable," he says that it seems "desperate": it leaves the nature of the sui generis state "completely mysterious" (51).

Many of the responses to Kripke's skeptical puzzle have been aimed at defending one or the other of these two proposals.³ Kripke's attack on the dispositional view has been countered by invoking a notion of disposition standardly used in science, on which dispositions are ascribed on the basis of behaviour in ideal conditions, or subject to ceteris paribus clauses. We can say, for example, that common salt has a disposition to dissolve in water even though it fails to dissolve in a saturated solution, or if something interferes with the electric charges on the water molecules. Appeal to this scientific model addresses both the finiteness objection and the objection regarding dispositions to make mistakes: we can say that I am disposed to give the sum even though that disposition is not realised if I am given numbers that are too large for me to grasp, or if my habitual carelessness interferes with my calculations.⁴ And it has also been thought to address the objection regarding normativity, since the claim that a person is doing as he ought might seem to be grounded in the idea that he is responding as he would under ideal conditions.⁵ In support of the nonreductionist proposal, that meaning is a sui generis state, Kripke's critics have simply accused him of

³ I will refer to the skeptical puzzle as Kripke's, even though Kripke ascribes it to Wittgenstein. I do not try to address here the question of whether this ascription is correct.

⁴ The response is developed in detail by Forbes 1984. See also Blackburn 1984 (35-37), Fodor 1990 (94-95). For a criticism of this response, see Kusch 2005.

⁵ See Goldfarb 1985, 98: the identification of some states as competency states, and others as interfering mechanisms, can "ground the notion of how the person would ideally respond, as different from how the person the person actually responds. In the difference, the normative force of an ascription of meaning can be lodged."

an unargued reductionism.⁶ Why should we suppose that fact of someone's meaning something, or the fact of her following a rule, should be specifiable in purely naturalistic terms? These facts are, in a metaphor which McDowell draws from Wittgenstein, "bedrock." We should not suppose that we can dig down below them to find more fundamental facts, about verbal behaviour and accompanying feelings, on which the facts of meaning rest.⁷

The availability of these responses might lead us to think that skepticism about rules has been sufficiently addressed. Those with reductionist inclinations, it might seem, can address Kripke's worries by adopting a dispositional view; those who still find something missing from the dispositional view can adopt a nonreductionist approach. But the very existence of a choice here might make us suspicious that the root of the problem has not yet been addressed. Moreover, as some of their proponents have recognized,⁸ neither proposal is fully satisfactory. On the one hand, it is not at all clear that the kinds of modifications to the dispositionalist view that address the objections about finitude and mistakes, also address the normativity problem. The idea that someone is responding or not responding as she would respond under ideal circumstances does not on its own license the idea that she is responding, or failing to respond, as she ought. We do not say of a sample of salt that dissolves or fails to dissolve in water that it is doing or not doing as it ought to do, but only that it is or is not realising its disposition to dissolve. The nonreductionist approach, on the other hand, suffers from the converse difficulty. For it fails to accommodate the fact that ascriptions of meaning and rule-following are

⁶ See especially McGinn 1984, 150ff. Goldfarb accuses Kripke, more specifically, of assuming that meaning facts must be reduced to a "modified physicalist conception of fact" and thus of failing to recognize Frege's notion of fact (1985, 95). For other versions of the nonreductionist approach see McDowell 1984 and Boghossian 1989.

⁷ McDowell 1984, §7, 61ff. McDowell makes this point in connection with a criticism of Wright rather than Kripke, but I think that the point is applicable to Kripke also.

⁸ See for example the reservations about nonreductionism expressed in Boghossian 1989, §31, 185ff.

responsible not only to intuitions about what people ought to do, but to what they in fact will do. We say of someone that she is following the rule for addition, say, only if she does, in most cases, respond with the sum. As Crispin Wright puts it, "content-bearing psychological states... resemble dispositions in the manner in which they have to answer to an indefinitely circumscribed range of behavioural manifestations."⁹ And this is a feature of them which the nonreductionist approach is completely unable to account for.

My aim in this paper is to propose a solution to the skeptical puzzle which offers a middle way between these two approaches. The solution which I shall suggest attempts to do justice to the way in which meaning and rule-following resemble dispositional states, while still accommodating what Kripke calls the normativity of meaning. While my approach is partly reductionist, in that it aims to reduce facts about meaning to facts that are in a sense more primitive, it does not attempt a reduction of meaning to facts conceived purely naturalistically. "Bedrock" on this approach is located below the level of facts about meaning, but as we shall see it is still irreducibly normative, and hence it remains above the level of mere behavioural responses and their psychological concomitants. My solution centers on a notion which I call "primitive normativity" and which I take to be Kantian in origin. In the first of the four sections which follow, I introduce this notion in the context of the dialectic initiated by Kripke's skeptic. In section two, I say more about the notion of primitive normativity in its own right before going on, in section three, to show how it can be used to meet the skeptical challenge. In section four I will address an objection and then go on to explain briefly why I take the view to be a Kantian one.

I

⁹ Wright 1989, 113.

I want to begin by questioning an assumption which Kripke makes early in the development of the sceptical dialectic, an assumption which I think is widely shared by Kripke's critics as well. The assumption is implicit in a passage where Kripke describes the sceptical challenge as "taking two forms." "First, [the skeptic] questions whether there is any fact that I meant plus, not quus, which 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" (11). Now as the development of the dialectic makes clear, Kripke's main concern is with the first of these challenges: to show that there is a fact that you meant plus.¹⁰ The relevance of the second challenge is that it imposes a constraint on any satisfactory answer to the first challenge. If any fact counts as the fact of your meaning addition, it must serve to justify your confidence that you ought to say '125' rather than '5'.

What I want to question here is the way in which Kripke takes these two challenges to be related. Kripke assumes that the first challenge must be met as a precondition of rebutting the second: if you are to show that you ought to say '125' you need first to establish that you previously meant addition. This is because he assumes that your claim about what you ought to say must rest on a claim about what you meant. As he puts it in the passage just quoted, "I am confident that I should answer '125' because I am confident that this answer also accords with what I meant" (11, my emphasis).¹¹ The skeptic can thus challenge your confidence about the former

¹⁰ Although Kripke refers in this passage to "two forms" of the skeptical challenge, I will refer to them, for ease of exposition, as "two challenges."

¹¹ The assumption is equally clear from Kripke's restatement of the skeptic's double challenge: "The skeptic asks why I now believe that by 'plus' in the

of these by challenging your confidence about the latter. On this assumption, a response to the skeptic must proceed by first showing, against the skeptic's first challenge, that you did indeed mean addition. Only then are you in a position to claim, in response to the skeptic's second challenge, that you should say '125' if you are to accord with your previous usage. But I want to deny that this is the order in which the two challenges must be addressed. I want to propose that you can coherently reply to the skeptic that you ought to say '125' independently of any assumption about what you meant previously by 'plus.' That means that you can dismiss the second challenge by pointing out that it is unmotivated: you can maintain your previous confidence that '125' is the appropriate answer regardless of whether or not you can answer the first challenge. Now as we saw it is the first challenge which is most central to Kripke's skeptic, so this proposal on its own does not yet amount to a reply to the skeptical puzzle. But I shall argue in section III that if you can respond to the skeptic's second challenge in the way I have suggested, then that puts you in a position to show that you meant addition rather than quaddition, and hence to answer the skeptic's second challenge as well.

The response I am proposing presupposes, uncontroversially, that you and the skeptic agree on the past history of your use of the term. You both agree, for example, that you previously responded to '2 plus 3' with '5', to '7 plus 5' with '12' and so on. The skeptic challenges you on what you ought to say in the present case by invoking the possibility that in each of those previous uses you meant quaddition rather than addition, and hence were intending to give the quum rather than the sum. Kripke expects you to respond initially to the challenge by rejecting the hypothesis that you meant

past I meant addition rather than quaddition. If I meant the former, then to accord with my previous usage I should say '125' when asked to give the result of calculating '68 plus 57.' If I meant the latter, I should say '5' (12; Kripke's italics removed).

quaddition, and claiming that you meant addition instead. The skeptic will then show that your claim is indefensible, thus forcing the conclusion not only that there is no fact that you meant addition, but also that there is no sense in which you ought to say '125' rather than '5.' But I am suggesting a different initial response which does not involve your claiming that you meant addition. I am suggesting that you point out to the skeptic that your past meaning is irrelevant to what you ought to say now if you are to conform to your past uses of the term 'plus.' You can say that '125' fits, or is appropriate to, your previous usage, regardless of whether you meant addition or quaddition. This undercuts the force of the second challenge, which was motivated by the hypothesis that you meant quaddition. If that hypothesis is irrelevant to what you ought to say now, then you have every right to maintain your previous confidence that '125,' not '5,' is the appropriate response.

In order to be clearer about the proposal I am making, we need to look more closely at the 'ought' which figures in the second challenge. One way Kripke characterizes this 'ought' is by saying that it is associated with metalinguistic correctness as opposed to arithmetical correctness. Part of his point in making this distinction is to deny that we can understand this 'ought' simply in terms of the truth of the claim that $68 + 57 = 125$. The skeptic is not questioning whether that claim is true, that is, whether '125' correctly expresses the result of adding 68 and 57. If that were the skeptic's challenge, then it would be clear that it could be addressed independently of the question of what I meant in the past. We could imagine your accepting the skeptic's bizarre hypothesis about what you meant in the past but still insisting that you ought now to answer the question with '125.' You might agree that you could have been under a delusion; nonetheless, you might say, you now know what 'plus' means, and so you know that the answer to the question you have been asked is '125.' But Kripke

makes clear that the 'ought' is relative to your previous usage, so that it is not affected by your deciding to change your usage as in the example I just gave. You and the skeptic can agree that you now ought to say '125' in the sense that '125' is the correct answer to the question 'what is 68 plus 57?' There still remains a question of what you ought to say in response to the question if you are to conform to your previous usage of the term 'plus.'

Now Kripke himself treats interchangeably the idea that '125' is what you ought to say if you are to accord with your past usage, and the idea that this is what you ought to say if you are to accord with your past meaning or with your past intentions. This is because he assumes that accordance with how you used the term in the past can be understood only as accordance with the meaning with which you used the term, or accordance with the rule which you adopted. But my proposal denies the assumption that the idea of conformity to past usage depends on the idea of conformity to past meaning. We can make sense of your use of a word at a given time conforming to your previous uses of the word without presupposing that you meant anything by those previous uses. I agree with Kripke that the 'ought' in question is relative to something about how things were with you in the past. My disagreement is with the assumption -- which is of a piece with Kripke's assumption about how the skeptic's two challenges are related -- that the 'ought' has to be relative specifically to your past meaning. I want to maintain that there is a sense in which you can take '125' to accord with the finite list of your previous uses, regardless of what meaning, if any, those uses expressed.

II

The sense of 'ought' I am invoking corresponds to what I shall call 'primitive normativity': normativity which does not depend on the assumption

of an antecedently adopted rule. We can bring this notion into focus by considering a simpler case of rule-following based on an example of Wittgenstein's. Imagine a pupil who has been learning to count by twos (that is, to develop the series 2, 4, 6, and so on) and who has successfully counted by twos up to 30. She goes on, just as we expect, to say "32," and she does so with confidence, and with an apparent sense that she is continuing the series appropriately. Now she is asked why she said "32" rather than "34." One way she might reply is by describing the rule she had been following, and explaining why it dictated '32' as the next number she should give. For example she might say that she had been adding two, and that 30 plus 2 is 32, not 34. This response would be natural if she had learned to count by twos by having the rule explained to her, and by consciously calculating, at each step, the sum of the previous number and two. But we might also imagine her having learned to count by twos without ever having had a rule of that kind explained to her. Perhaps she just observed other people counting by twos, imitated their example, and then found herself able to do it on her own. In that case she might not be able to respond by citing a rule: she might be able to say nothing more than that 32, rather than 34, is the appropriate next step. If we imagine the case in this second way, it is natural to suppose that her claim to be going on as she ought when she says '32' does not derive from any antecedent recognition of a rule to which her saying '32' conforms; rather, it is primitive in the sense of not being based on the recognition of a rule at all.

We can also imagine an analogue of this case which does not presuppose the use of number words. Children are sometimes taught arithmetical concepts with the help of Cuisenaire rods, wooden rods of different colours ranging from one to ten units in length. Imagine a child lining up these rods in the following sequence: first the two-unit rod, then the four-unit rod, then the six-unit rod. We can imagine her confidently placing the eight-unit rod

beside the six unit one with a clear sense that what she is doing is appropriate; if another child tries to replace the eight-unit rod with the ten-unit rod, she will protest that the ten-unit rod 'doesn't go there.' Her response does not seem to rest on her recognition of a rule dictating that each rod is followed by the rod that is two units longer. Rather, it seems, she simply takes the eight-unit rod to fit the pattern she has made by her placement of the previous rods, in a way which does not rely on a prior conception of this pattern as exemplifying a particular rule.

This case illustrates a phenomenon which seems on the face of it to be pervasive in the kinds of activities by which children learn rules and acquire concepts. Children often learn new concepts by being encouraged to engage in sorting activities. These activities may be nonlinguistic: the child might be given beads of different colours and encouraged to follow the teacher's example in sorting them into different boxes. Or, perhaps more typically, they involve the use of words: the child is encouraged to say the word 'red' when the teacher points to something red. As in the example of the Cuisenaire rods, the child does not produce her responses in a merely mechanical fashion. When she says the word 'red' on seeing a red car, her response is not a mere reflex, like that of a pigeon which is being trained to peck at red patches. Rather, she produces the word 'red' with a sense that this is what she ought to say, that her response is appropriate. But her sense of appropriateness does not seem to depend on her grasp of the concept of red, or even of a more modest rule for the observational use of the word "red." For this kind of activity seems, intuitively, to be precisely what is needed for a concept or rule of this kind to be acquired.

Now my description of the phenomenon might of course be challenged, on the grounds that a child cannot appreciate an 'ought' which doesn't depend on prior recognition of a rule. Surely, it might be insisted, the child's sense of herself as responding appropriately, if it is to be genuine, must depend

on the implicit grasp of a rule for responding to red things, and on the recognition that what she does in saying the word 'red,' or in putting the red bead in one box rather than another, accords with that rule. But if we think that there is something about the possibility of concept-acquisition which needs to be explained or understood, then the appeal to implicit rules just pushes the question back: we now need to explain how those rules in turn are acquired. It seems not only more natural, but also more useful from an explanatory point of view, to take at face value the appearance of a claim to primitive normativity. For we can then account for the difference between acquiring a conditioned reflex and coming to grasp a rule. What makes it the case that the child's training results in mastery of a rule, as opposed to the kind of conditioned reflex exhibited by the pigeon, is that the reactions she produces in the course of the training are informed by a claim to their own appropriateness. It is this normative element to her reactions, missing in the case of the pigeon, which explains her coming to acquire not a mere responsive disposition, but a rule for the use of the term "red."

This defence of the notion of primitive normativity assumes that we are in fact capable of acquiring rules and concepts, and this assumption would of course be rejected by Kripke's skeptic. As he sees it, there is no fact which constitutes your grasping a rule or meaning anything by a term, so there can be no such thing as the acquisition of rules or concepts. This conclusion is forced by what he takes to be your inability to address his first challenge, namely to specify a fact in virtue of which you meant addition. I have been arguing so far that, quite independently of any answer to that challenge, you can answer his second challenge: you can say that you ought to say "125" in just the same sense that the children in our examples can say that the eight-unit rod comes next, or that the red bead goes in this box rather than the other. I now want to argue that this appeal to primitive normativity can be used to answer the first challenge. Using the notion of

primitive normativity, you can specify a fact in which your meaning addition consisted.

III

My proposal for answering the skeptic's first challenge can be seen as a modification of the dispositional view. Recall that Kripke raised three objections against the dispositional view, turning respectively on the supposed finiteness of dispositions, on the fact that people can be disposed to make mistakes, and, most importantly, on the dispositional view's supposed failure to accommodate the normativity of meaning and rules. We saw that attention to the way in which dispositions are invoked in science offers a plausible answer to the first two objections.¹² But this still leaves the problem of normativity: if one's meaning something by a term is identified with a disposition to use that term in a certain way, then we cannot account for the normative relation between what one means by the term and how one uses it. As Kripke puts it, "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 do" (24). But the dispositional view fails to meet this condition: neither your past disposition, nor the disposition you are now actualizing, can make it the case that you ought to say '125.' To think that they can is mistakenly to "equate performance with correctness" (24).

The point that Kripke is making here applies no less to present meaning than to past meaning; so for simplicity let us consider it in the case of present meaning. The state of your meaning addition now, Kripke is saying, can't be identified with your present disposition to give the sum, since your

¹² See above, introduction and note 4. [Kusch 2005 argues, however, that the objections cannot be met; see also §§23-26 of Boghossian 1989 (on which Kusch draws for part of his argument). I think that this line of objection, as well as the normativity objection, can be avoided on the modified form of dispositionalism I present.]

present disposition cannot make it the case that you ought to say '125,' only that -- barring interference -- you will say '125.' Here once again we need to be clear about the relevant sense of 'ought.' First of all, of course, this is not the 'ought' of truth: your meaning addition doesn't make it the case that 68 plus 57 is 125. But second, and more generally, the 'ought' is not unconditional: what you mean by 'plus' doesn't determine what you ought to say simpliciter. If for example you in fact mean quaddition by 'plus,' while the rest of us continue to mean addition by it in the ordinary way, it is not true unconditionally that you ought to say '5'; arguably, because 'plus' in fact means addition, what you ought to say is '125.' Rather, your meaning quaddition by plus determines that you ought to say '5' if you are to accord with your meaning.¹³ The question of whether you ought to say '5' simpliciter can be resolved only by determining if you ought to accord with your meaning; and this would seem to be a case where it would be better not to accord with your meaning, but to accord with the public meaning instead. The point applies to rules in general. Adopting a rule does not create any unconditional normative requirement or entitlement to do what the rule says. Rather, it makes it the case that there are things that you are required to do if you are to accord with the rule, or equivalently, that there are things you are required to do on pain of violating it.

This might seem to have a suspicious air of circularity about it. If all that a rule does is tell you what you have to do in order to accord with the rule, that is, in order to do what the rule tells you to do, then the notion of a rule might seem altogether empty, or at least devoid of normative

¹³ Kripke usually makes this condition explicit when he is talking about the relation of past meaning to present use. For example, in one of his statements of the normativity objection to the dispositional view, he says that the dispositionalist has missed the point of the relation between meaning and use, which 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'" (37). This makes clear that the "should" is conditional on my intending to accord with my past meaning. But in his initial statement of the objection at 23-24, which is concerned as much with present as with past meaning, the condition is left unstated.

significance.¹⁴ But rules are normative not because they themselves normatively require this or that action, but because we can invoke them in order to characterize normative requirements. The notion of a rule has normative significance because it makes sense to speak of what you ought to do in order to conform to a rule. In other words, a rule is something which can intelligibly be accorded with or violated. The significance of this can be seen by contrasting the notion of a rule with that of a disposition. Someone can act or fail to act as they are disposed, but if they fail to act as they are disposed it does not make sense to say that they have violated or contravened the disposition. Similarly, while we might in fact say that someone acts in accordance with their disposition, this is simply a way of saying that they act as they are disposed: it is not the normative sense of 'accordance' in which we say that someone's behaviour accords with a rule. So it does not make sense to say of a disposition that it determines what you ought to do if you are to accord with the disposition, or on pain of violating the disposition. You cannot fail to accord with the dictates of a disposition, in the way that you can fail to accord with the dictates of a rule, simply because a disposition, unlike a rule, has no dictates. And this contrast, I think, is what Kripke has in mind, or should have in mind, in raising the normativity objection to the dispositional view. Your being disposed to give the sum in answer to questions using the term 'plus' cannot be what it is for you to mean addition by plus, because it does not allow us

¹⁴ I take something like this line of thought to underlie George Wilson's (1994) criticism of the alleged normativity of meaning as a "mythologization of banal linguistic facts" (253). An example of such a banal linguistic fact is the fact that we will not judge that you mean addition by plus unless you say '125', a fact which we might express by saying that you must say "125" if you mean addition. But of course it does not follow that your meaning addition makes it the case that you ought to say '125.' As I go on to indicate, I think there is more to the normativity of meaning than this criticism suggests. In particular it is equally true that we will not judge that you are disposed to give the sum unless you say '125,' and that we might put this by saying that you must say '125' if you are disposed to give the sum. Yet we are not tempted to say that your disposition makes it the case that you ought to say '125.'

to understand '125' as according with your meaning and '5' as violating or contravening it.

But I now want to suggest that the dispositional view can be modified, using the notion of primitive normativity, in a way that addresses the objection. My suggestion is to identify the state of meaning addition by 'plus' with that of being disposed to give the sum in answer to queries using the word 'plus,' but with the added proviso that in actualizing that disposition, one takes oneself to be responding as one ought in the primitive sense. That is, you mean addition by 'plus' if you are disposed to respond (say) to the query 'what is 68 plus 57', by responding '125,' but where your response involves a claim to its own appropriateness with respect to your previous uses of the term 'plus.' What the proviso does is to build into your disposition the feature that every response you are disposed to give will involve what is in effect a judgment that that very response is appropriate. Your disposition is thus not just to say '125' in answer to '68+57,' '126' in answer to '68+58' and so on; it is also, in each case, to take what you are saying to be the appropriate response to the query in the light of your previous usage of 'plus'. But to take any one of these answers to be appropriate, is implicitly to require or demand of yourself that you give that answer. You are giving your answer, but you are also designating it as the answer that you ought to give, and hence the answer that is required both of you and of anyone else whose past usage matches your own.

Now if meaning is understood in this way then we can indeed make sense of a given response according, or failing to accord with, what you mean. Suppose something interferes with your disposition -- say you forget to carry -- and you say '115.' We can say in this case that your response fails to accord with what you mean by 'plus' because it fails to accord with the normative demand that you are in fact disposed to make, but were prevented from making by your forgetfulness. In other words, your disposition not only

fixes the range of responses that you will, and counterfactually would, make; it also, in so doing, fixes the range of responses that you will, and would, take yourself and others to be required to make. But that is just what we want meaning, and more generally, rules, to do. We want your meaning something by a term, or your having adopted a rule for its use, to determine in advance a set of uses that count as according with your meaning, or your rule, and hence to determine all the uses that go against the meaning or contravene the rule. It might seem that this desideratum cannot be satisfied, given that you cannot represent an infinite number of responses to possible queries. But since you can be disposed to an indefinite number of responses, we can satisfy the desideratum if we allow that each of those responses involves your taking that very response to be normatively required.

If this proposal is acceptable, it provides you with an answer to the skeptic's first, and most important, challenge. When the skeptic asks what it was about you in virtue of which you previously meant addition rather than quaddition, you can say that it was your being disposed to give the sum rather than the quum, and, in so doing, to take yourself to be doing as you ought in the primitive sense. This answer satisfies Kripke's constraint on acceptable answers to the challenge because it allows us to give content to the idea that what you meant in the past determines what you ought to say now. The fact that you meant addition in the past, as I have construed it, makes it the case that you ought now to say '125' if you are to conform to your previous meaning: if you say '5' instead then you are failing to give what you would have regarded as the appropriate response. But it is important to be clear here that the 'ought' is different from the 'ought' that figured in your response to the second challenge. It expresses, we might say, 'derivative' as opposed to 'primitive' normativity. In the proposed response to the second challenge, you claimed that you ought to say "125" regardless of what you meant by 'plus' in the past; the normativity

here was primitive because it did not presuppose an antecedently adopted rule. But I have been arguing in this section that, precisely in virtue of your appreciation of primitive normativity, your being disposed to give the sum amounts to your adopting a rule: that is, the rule which says you ought to respond with the sum. And your acceptance of that rule makes possible an 'ought' which is no longer primitive but derivative. You 'ought' to say '125' not only in the primitive sense that this response fits your previous use of the term 'plus,' but in the derivative sense that your response accords with the rule for addition.

To see more clearly the relation between these two kinds of normativity, let's go back to the pupil who is counting by twos. Earlier I described two ways we could imagine her responding to the question of why she says '32' after saying '30'. On the first, she explains that she has been adding two to each number in the series, and that 30 plus 2 is 32. On the second, she is not in a position to specify any rule that she has been following. All she can say is that 32 is clearly the appropriate continuation. Now my proposal is that in the second way of imagining the case she is in fact following the add-two rule, even though she cannot yet articulate it. She is following the add-two rule in virtue of the fact that she is disposed to add two at each step, and, in so doing, to take what she's doing to be what she ought to be doing. So it is not the case, as my initial exposition might have seemed to suggest, that she does not take her response of '32' to accord with a rule: she does in fact take it to accord with a rule, a rule which is, in fact, the add-two rule. What makes the normativity primitive is not that her claim to be responding as she ought does not involve her appreciation of a rule, but that her claim to be responding as she ought does not presuppose her appreciation of the rule. The relation between her claim to be responding as he ought, and her taking her response to accord with a rule, is, rather, the reverse: she takes herself to be

according with a rule in virtue of her taking herself to be responding as she ought.

In this way of imagining the case, the pupil has no appreciation of what I have called derivative normativity. Even though she is in fact following the add-two rule, she lacks any appreciation that she is following that rule, either because she lacks the concept of a rule altogether, or because she has not yet found a way to characterize which rule she is following. But we can go on to imagine that she becomes more sophisticated and learns to apply a description to what she is doing when she develops the series as she is disposed to do: she learns that she is 'adding two' or 'counting by two' and she comes to recognize the ways in which what she is doing is related to other activities which she has learned to designate as adding or counting. At this point, in giving each response, she not only takes it to be appropriate in the light of her previous responses, and her training more generally, she also takes it to be in accord with the rule she has been following. Her situation is now what it was in the first way of imagining the case. She can now reply to the question "why did you say '32' rather than '34'?" not merely by pointing out that 32 is obviously the appropriate continuation, but by invoking the fact that she was adding two, and that $30 + 2 = 32$.

IV

I now want to address a worry which one might have about the coherence of the notion of primitive normativity on which my proposal depends. The worry is that this notion does not make room for a distinction between what one ought to do, and what it merely seems to one that one ought to do. Take a child who is competent at counting by twos, but who is not yet in a position to articulate what rule she is following. No matter what she says

at each stage in developing the series, she will take it, at that moment, that that is what she ought to say. Her judgments as to what it is appropriate to respond will precisely track what she does in fact respond. But then, we might ask, how can she make sense of the possibility, at any time, that she might be mistaken in her response? If she does not conceive of herself as governed by a rule with respect to which her responses are to be evaluated, then it seems that she cannot think of her responses as potentially subject to criticism. And in that case, she is not genuinely making a judgment as to the appropriateness of what she is saying. Rather, it seems that she is simply inclined to go on in a certain way, where her inclination at each stage is accompanied by, or manifested in, a certain kind of feeling: perhaps of satisfaction, or of constraint, or of a mixture of the two.

The issue here can be brought more clearly into focus if we first consider two children engaging in the same activity, and ask how one of them can make sense of the other as mistaken. So imagine two children who are counting by twos, neither of them in a position to articulate a rule which they are following. Each has counted correctly up to 30: now, prompted for the next number, the first child says '32' and the second says '34.' And each one insists, or at least appears to insist, that he or she has given the right response, and that the other has gone wrong. But how can it so much as make sense for, say, the first child to think of the second child as going wrong? By hypothesis, while she has grasped the add-two rule, she isn't yet in a position to invoke that rule to justify her own response or to criticize that of the other child. So she cannot fault the second child for failing to conform to that rule. How, then, can she take the second child to be going wrong?

Now it is quite true that, from the first child's point of view, the mere utterance of '34' cannot be faulted. There can be nothing wrong, from

her perspective, with the second child's simply saying '34', no matter what the circumstances. What can be faulted, however, is the second child's taking it that '34' is the appropriate utterance to make in that context, that '34' is what ought to be said given what has gone before. From the first child's perspective, what is mistaken about the second child's response is that it involves a claim to its own appropriateness. The second child is indulging a perfectly permissible inclination to say '34,' but mistakenly taking his utterance to exemplify what he, and everyone else, ought to say under the circumstances. And now we can make sense of the first child's conceiving her own response of '32' as potentially mistaken in the same way. While she indeed takes that response to be appropriate, she has to allow the possibility that her claim to appropriateness is misplaced in just the same way that she now takes the second child's claim to be misplaced. [She can conceive, for example, that with more practice in the activity she might come to occupy the point of view of the second child, take '34' as the appropriate response, and regard her own utterance of '32' as the expression of a mere inclination lacking any normative significance.]

From a pretheoretical perspective, there can be no real question about which child is continuing appropriately. Outside a philosophical context, we will have no trouble agreeing that the first child is going on as she ought, and that the second child is going on wrongly. But if we abstract from our own judgments about which response is appropriate, then the situation between the two children is symmetrical. The second child regards the first child as mistaken in just the same way that the first child regards the second as mistaken. And there is no criterion that can be applied to resolve the apparent disagreement. Since the normativity is primitive, neither child can defend her view of the situation by citing a rule according to which her claim to the appropriateness of her response is a legitimate one and the other child's claim is not. This might seem, again, to cast doubt on the

coherence of the notion of primitive normativity. If there is no criterion for resolving the disagreement, it might be supposed, the disagreement cannot be a genuine one. The children are not, after all, making genuine claims about whether '32' or '34' is the appropriate response, but simply following their inclinations, as in the original formulation of the objection.

But here I simply want to reject the supposition. Why should we assume that a disagreement cannot be genuine without a criterion for adjudicating it? Why can't we simply allow that claims can conflict, each calling into question the other's legitimacy, without requiring that there be a rule with reference to which the conflict can be adjudicated? To allow this is by no means to say that the conflict cannot be resolved. Under normal circumstances there will be many ways of getting the second child to change his judgment and so to agree with the first. He can be reminded of how he went on after he had said '20', he can be encouraged to write the sequence of numbers in adjacent columns of ten and to notice the vertical pattern of digits, he can be given blocks two at a time to add to a heap, and so on. None of this of course will amount to presenting him with a proof that his initial response was mistaken. But there is no reason to suppose that we need such a proof either to make sense of the disagreement as genuine, or to favour the first of the two competing claims over the other.¹⁵

¹⁵ [Passage omitted for space reasons: This is not to exclude the possibility of skepticism about the legitimacy of such claims. My discussion throughout has rested on the pretheoretically plausible assumption that our actual claims about primitive normativity -- for example, that "32" is the appropriate continuation of the series, or that "125" is the appropriate answer to the query involving "plus" -- are in fact legitimate. But this assumption could be questioned: perhaps we are under an illusion in supposing that "32" is any more appropriate than "34" or that "125" is any more appropriate than "5." Perhaps no claims of this kind are legitimate; or, if any are, our actual inclinations are of no help in determining which. If that is so, we are again in the situation described in the original objection. It does not make sense to think of ourselves as making genuine claims at all; all we are doing is following our inclinations, and doing so with feelings of satisfaction or constraint. Now I do not take myself to have provided any answer to this kind of skepticism. As I have mentioned, the view I am offering is at least to some extent non-reductionist. I am taking for granted that our responses to the world involve an irreducible element of normativity, that in having each responses we are at the same time judging the response to be appropriate. But

I want to conclude by indicating briefly the Kantian antecedents of the view I am presenting. The notion of primitive normativity is drawn from the Critique of Judgment, and in particular from Kant's account of judgments of beauty. According to Kant, a judgment of beauty makes a claim to universal agreement which does not, as he puts it, "rest on any concept" (§8, 5:215). When you respond to an object in such a way as to experience it as beautiful you respond to it in a way which involves taking it that everyone ought to respond to the object in the same way that you do. But the claim to agreement implicit in your response is not based on your recognition of the object as falling under a concept or satisfying a criterion. In my terms, then, you make a claim to primitive normativity. Your response is analogous to the first child's responding '32' in the example we just considered: it involves your taking yourself to respond as you ought, but where the 'ought' does not depend on the assumption that you are bound by an antecedently specified rule. And there is a similar analogy between the kind of disagreement I imagined in the case of the two children, and aesthetic disagreement as Kant understands it. There are no criteria that can be applied to resolve aesthetic disagreements: the parties can come to agree if at least one of them comes to experience the object differently from the way she experienced it before.

Aesthetic judgments are, of course, a special case, so one might wonder about the propriety of drawing on Kant's model of aesthetic judgment to make a

this should not be taken to undermine the effectiveness of the view as a response to Kripke's kind of skepticism. For his kind of skepticism takes a much more specific form. When Kripke's skeptic claims that you cannot take "125" to be the appropriate response, he is not offering a flat denial of our pretheoretical intuitions about the normative dimension of our ways of going on, but rather giving an argument intended to undermine those intuitions: you cannot take "125" to be the appropriate response because it is appropriate only relative to what you meant by "plus", and there is no fact which determines what you meant by "plus." It is a sufficient reply to Kripke's skeptic to point out a sense in which "125" can be appropriate independently of what you meant by "plus," and this reply is not undermined by the possibility of a further skeptical attack on the notion of appropriateness to which it appeals.]

point about rules and meaning in the nonaesthetic domain. But Kant makes clear that he takes his account of aesthetic judgment to have broader implications. The principle of aesthetic judgment, he says, is the "principle of the faculty of judgment in general" (5:286), and the faculty judgment has a significance for Kant that goes far beyond the aesthetic domain. Judgment, in its most general definition, is the faculty for "thinking the particular as contained under the universal" (Introduction IV, 5:179); that is, it is our capacity for subsuming particular things under rules or concepts. Now in the first Critique judgment is treated either as subordinate to the faculty of understanding, or as identical with it. The rules or concepts under which judgment subsumes particulars are thought of as already grasped by the understanding, and the role of judgment is simply to apply these concepts to the particular instances that satisfy them.

But in the third Critique Kant introduces the idea that judgment can also function independently of the understanding, that is, in situations where the relevant rules or concepts are not already specified. To exercise judgment in this way is to judge particulars to be contained under rules or concepts which are, so to speak, not already in the understanding but rather made possible by those act of judging themselves. Aesthetic judgment is the paradigmatic exercise of judgment in this autonomous capacity. It is in aesthetic judgment, Kant says, that the faculty of judgment "reveals itself as a faculty which has its own special principle" and thus as deserving a place of its own, beside understanding and reason, in the critique of the higher cognitive faculties (First Introduction XI, 20:244).

Kant's claim that aesthetic judging reveals the faculty of judgment as an independent capacity obviously deserves more discussion than I can give it here. But I believe that what lies behind it is the idea that the apparently anomalous character of aesthetic judgments -- that they involve normative claims to agreement which do not rest on rules or concepts -- indicates something which is required for the possibility of rules or concepts in the first place. For I understand Kant to hold that the possibility of grasping rules or concepts, which can in turn be applied in particular cases, depends

on the possibility of our taking our responses to those particular cases to be normative in a way which does not itself rest on the assumption of rules or concepts. And that is the point which I have been trying to make by applying the notion of primitive normativity against Kripke's skepticism. Kripke's skepticism, I have argued, is motivated by an unexamined assumption about the proper relation between rules and meanings on the one hand, and claims to the normativity of one's particular responses on the other: such claims are coherent, for Kripke, only in relation to antecedently adopted rules which determine how we ought to respond in particular cases. Kant's conception of judgment as a faculty which can function independently of understanding reverses that relation. Our claims to the normativity of our own responses ultimately make possible, rather than presupposing, our grasp of the rules by which those responses are seemingly determined.

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