

What is the significance of the claim that meaning is a 'normative' notion? Is there any way for a Wittgensteinian 'nominalist' to defend the normativity of meaning (NoM)?

Starting with Parmenides, the thought that if a word is used significantly, it *must* be something, not 'nothing', what that word means must in a sense exist; hence the extravagant metaphysical conclusions that have since been drawn from the surface structure of language.

But, post Wittgenstein (and Kripke on his reading of him), once you accept the claim that *meaning is a 'normative' notion*, from a metaphysical perspective the conclusion to be drawn is that, there is nothing 'mystical out there' that guides us, we humans decide what words mean and when it is words change meaning and how it is that they link together, that is a perpetual process. The proof of this perpetual change is adequately shown in our literary history. So meaning is not *god given*, and there are no Platonic eternal *real* forms or ideas as a basis for language. As language and meaning are human constructs, the words we use are essentially contingent and could have been completely different.

With meaning as a normative notion, we say meaning pertains to a norm or rule, we as authoritative language users have the power to correct and prescribe these rules. So when we speak we are operating within standards and norms that are in place, we can't opt out, once inside language there is no way out, therefore when I speak or assert *incorrectly*, sanctions or criticism from others would be appropriate and *due*. Therefore the rules are not idle or passive, there are consequences if *the* norms aren't met; there is a criteria of correctness (which include assertability and justification conditions). If *a* means *x* by saying *y*, that implies there are 'conditions' for the correct application of *x*, therefore *x* ought to be used within those conditions. We as both legislators and moderators of language are bound charitably to keep other *users* on track (but, this is not something we can do for ourselves, the other has the authority).

If we ask if there is any way for a Wittgensteinian (W) 'nominalist' to defend the normativity of meaning and we take the weak W Nominalist view, that there are 'just' no *real* abstract objects and that we agree that *meaning is correct use* and that phenomena have not 'just' a mere nominal meaning and there is not 'just' an arbitrariness about things, then a defence of NoM from a Nominalist perspective may be possible, but unlikely. This is probably too much to concede; from a more narrow traditional view of a stronger Nominalist, who denies the existence of universals, has problems with synonyms, and that equivocation is impossible, the word is the meaning and if there is 'just' an arbitrariness about things. Then how can we account for the complex rules that we discover about the world? Dummett thinks it is futile to dispense with abstract objects 'and that reference may be ascribed to them only as a façon de parler', nominalism is crippling to our powers of expression. (Dummett, Frege, #508 & 509).

Wittgenstein (W), thought that both Realists (Platonists) and Nominalists make the same mistake (they mistake the grammar of the numerals in the case of mathematics), for example to say that either, 'numbers exist' or 'number don't exist' (they both make a mistake), because we are not describing a posited reality (i.e. something must have meaning only it corresponds to some sort of object or entity), but the *rules* of grammar, something that makes sense in the appropriate framework when we use certain terms in certain ways. Don't look for entities and facts corresponding to assertions, look at the circumstances and the utility of making them under which the utterances are made. (Kripke, W, On rule and Private Language, #77)

W was said to be a Nominalist or a Quasi Nominalist, of which there is strong evidence certainly in the case of mathematics with his refusal to refer to 'mathematical objects'. So if the Nominalist doctrine was about, 'there are no *real* abstract objects' and they are thought of as superstitious or mystical, so this would also apply to properties, classes, relations, kinds, rules, and concepts then there is a question as to how we divide up and

account for these phenomena. But the solution has already been stated above, if the Platonist accounts for P because they correspond to forms or ideas, the conceptualist or mentalist accounts for P because they are in the head, W rejects both of these, the answer lies in *forms of life*, 'the speaking of a language is part of an activity, or of a form of life' (PI #23). 'Wittgenstein's notion of 'forms of life', fulfils the role of a non-metaphysical alternative to Plato, concepts exist 'out there' to be discovered and not in our heads' (Klempner). This is important because 'this brute fact that is given' provides the bedrock and foundation for the individual embedded in reality with others and that the words, expressions, assertions we use *together* mean something 'objectively' in the contexts they are used. Humans from different eras (which accounts for change of meanings and attitudes through time) and cultures vary in their forms of life, necessitated by the different educations, interests, languages, that are all facts of living. (Baker & Hacker, W, Rules, Grammar and Necessity, #222)

So the use of language by humans to *act* out in the world, the various language games and the rules that bind them together, once in language and active in the 'forms of life', I no longer have a choice, once I have been trained and achieved linguistic competence, that being mastery of rules usage, 'This is how it *strikes* me, when I obey a rule, I do not choose, I obey the rule blindly' (PI #219).