Since the death of stringently extensionalist theories of semantic and epistemic content—by that I mean the logical atomist and positivist philosophies of Russell, Ayer and Carnap—post-positivist theories of language and mind rooted in the insights of Quine and the later ruminations of Wittgenstein have flourished. What follows is an analysis of some issues in these “social” theories of language. The seeds of such a view, sown by such visionaries as Sellars, Wittgenstein and Quine, have thrived in our contemporary tradition through the groundbreaking work of such thinkers as Tyler Burge, Alvin Goldman and Robert Brandom, to name just a few. For purposes of space, I intend to focus on two fairly dominant clusters of externalist views, those in the tradition of Quine and Wittgenstein.

It is now relatively uncontroversial to accept Quine's argument for the "indeterminacy of translation" and Wittgenstein's "private language argument" as serious
challenges to any internalist, or perhaps individualist theory of meaning whatsoever;² but what is not so commonly acknowledged is the rather curious and complex relationship between these two arguments. Although the arguments are not wholly incompatible, the two views do have some very discrete and divergent answers about the role of the social practices and institutions in the development of semantic and epistemic content. Thus it seems that any serious “community” theory of linguistic meaning in contemporary analytic philosophy must at least address this question. This “first wave” of post-positivist semantic theory—that of Quine and Wittgenstein—was soon followed by a “second wave.” Donald Davidson built his career by working out the consequences of Quine's thought, and Saul Kripke enlivened the philosophical community with his novel interpretation of Wittgenstein. One of the tasks of semantic theory, relative to our current position within this contemporary semantic tradition, has been to unpack and explicate the possible lessons that can be learned from these sages.

Since the elaboration of Kripke's infamous interpretation of Wittgenstein, the Quine-Davidson and Wittgenstein-Kripke positions have been treated as opposing poles, re-contextualizing the very idea of what language is and how it is constituted. The problem as it has been traditionally analyzed is if linguistic meaning cannot be private, then two possible solutions exist: making it public, or making it social.³ First, I intend to analyze these two views and the tensions between them. I conclude with an analysis of Brandom's role in bridging the gap between these two seemly diametric views, most notably in his acclaimed Making it Explicit.⁴

² Some in this tradition, for instance Bilgrami (1992), accept these arguments against internalism, but do not think that they tarnish the possibility of individualism.
³ I am indebted to the analysis in Fennell (2000) for clarifying the issues as they emerge here.
⁴ Brandom (1994)
Ludwig Wittgenstein is read in as many ways as there are readers; but few would disagree that his cardinal innovation was the so-called “private language argument.” This is where the agreement ends, however, for some find the argument in entirely different places in the *Philosophical Investigations*, and many find different implications of what, if anything, follows from the argument. Kripke's inventive reading of Wittgenstein's argument has created as much interest as controversy. Many philosophers of language descended upon Kripke's argument; the journals filled with articles, one after another trying to show that Kripke's argument is not Wittgenstein's. I do not intend to tear at old scars here, but rather I intend to focus on the less scholarly, but perhaps more practical question, viz., to determine what the consequences of the private language argument are for contemporary analysis of linguistic meaning. For this reason, I shall specify if “Wittgenstein” or “Kripke's Wittgenstein” is speaking throughout.

Although Kripke's Wittgenstein may not be Wittgenstein proper, there should be no doubt that *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* was written in Wittgenstein's spirit. One of Wittgenstein's major objectives in the *Investigations* was to refute two predominant views on meaning: 1) platonism, or looking up to an ethereal realm of objective truth, and 2) solipsism, or looking in to private subjective states or sensations.

---

5 For instance Kripke (1984) argues that “the real 'private language argument' is to be found in the sections preceding §243,” the 'rule-following' passages, contrary to the standard interpretation that the argument is contained in the sections concerning 'sensation language' following §243. cf: p. 2-4

6 See Miller and Wright (2002) for an excellent collection of these critiques.

7 Indeed, some great contemporary theorists have done a much better job than I in evaluating the textual significance of Kripke's essay. Further, I think almost everyone agrees that Kripke's argument is not Wittgenstein. My concern here is Kripke's interpretation directly, not the question of the textual accuracy of Kripke's reading. I am satiated by Kripke's disclaimer that he is not claiming his argument is Wittgenstein, but rather “Wittgenstein's argument as it struck Kripke . . .” p. 5
Although the former has been given little esteem in recent years, there still are those who wish to endorse the latter position. The intuitive problem with the platonic conception of meaning is its \emph{prima facie} implausibility that the meaning of a term or sentence can be guided by a “reflection” upon an ethereal, otherworldly realm of truth or meaning. The problem with internalism, or what Sellars calls “the myth of the Given,”\footnote{Wilfrid Sellars, “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” in Sellars (1991). Such a view is also argued at length in Rorty (1989).} is this similar “representationalism.” Consequently, one of the tasks of post-Positivist semantic theory is to avoid such representationalist doctrines, in either form.\footnote{By “representation,” I mean the doctrine that Rorty (1989) develops.} The solution, such that language can be neither 'private' nor 'supernatural,' is to insist that linguistic meaning be constituted externally, and more specifically in the process of interacting with other language-users. The so-called “community view” has thus appeared as a salient alternative to this quandry.

The rule-following arguments specifically concern the difference between following a rule in practice and merely thinking one is following a rule. Wittgenstein makes this explicit in the infamous and often quoted PI §202: “. . . to \emph{think} one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule. Hence it is not possible to obey a rule 'privately': otherwise thinking one was obeying the rule would be the same as obeying it.”\footnote{Wittgenstein (1958) §202} The missing element that completes this picture is the introduction of \emph{normativity}—the relation between grasping the meaning of a word or concept and knowing how to apply it correctly in verifiable ways. The case of the super-rigid machine, which never breaks and or fails in its “correct” performance, is the paradigm of rule-following: the expected function of the machine is always the same as its actual performance (barring its pieces
breaking, melting, etc.\textsuperscript{11}). For the laws of nature or causal physical processes, as with the case of machine, normativity is unnecessary: there is no difference between the rule and the application.\textsuperscript{12}

It was not Wittgenstein's concern to specify which \textit{ways} a practice is subject to verification.\textsuperscript{13} It is on this issue that those in the Quinean tradition take issue with such "community" views. Famously, Quine, Davidson and their students are hostile to the community view, and moreover, any theory of language based on shared "conventions" or "practices." For Quineans, linguistic meaning should be developed through the publicly accessible process of translation, or for Davidson, interpretation. It is only in the act of communication that language is justified. This becomes a more salient view when we realize, with Quine, that there is no one translation manual; that is, translation is indeterminate.

To show the necessary and sufficient conditions for linguistic meaning, often the easiest way is by looking at the possibility of error; the arguments of Kripke and Davidson do just this. However, the concern of Kripke's Wittgenstein is limited to error in terms of meaning, considering the possibility of a systematic misuse of mathematical rules. Davidson's Quine, however, casts the problem of error in terms of communication. So the question might possibly be re-phrased in this way: which is primitive in the process of linguistic use, meaning or communication? That is to say, is it correctness of meaning which establishes communication, or rather is it effective communication which thereby establishes meaning?

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., \textsection 193.
\textsuperscript{12} For an alternate view that accepts the normative character of the 'causal' world, see Rouse (2002).
\textsuperscript{13} This was, to a large extent, a goal of the Tractarian Wittgenstein, but not of his later work.
III

Let us grant the moral of the “private language argument,” that meanings developed on one's own, which are in principle not justified or constituted by interacting with other language users, are indeterminate. Both Quine's anthropologist and Wittgenstein's pupil are unable to establish meaning wholly in isolation. If private languages are conceptually impossible, then two possible, yet seemingly inconsistent conclusions follow:

1) analysis of linguistic meaning is constituted by either publicly accessible rules, or justified by publicly accessible facts.

2) analysis of linguistic meaning is constituted by either social customs, or justified by social practices.
I shall refer to the former as the publicity thesis, the latter as the sociality thesis.

What would it mean for language to be public, but not social? A thorough answer to this question would need more space than I have here, but a few brief comments are in order. Both positions are solutions to the problem of private meanings but both offer very different answers. Since the phenomena of the normativity of meaning requires that the meaning of a given expression must be subject to methods for determining right and wrong applications of it,\(^\text{14}\) the publicity thesis requires that a misused word or a mathematical error will result in a publicly accessible method of determination of its correctness or incorrectness.\(^\text{15}\) That is to say, publicity would deny that semantic content is “shared” in any meaningful sense, but rather subject to public standards of justification by a community which serves to establish the normative regularity of use. Possible

---

\(^{14}\) I remain agnostic here as to what these methods are.

\(^{15}\) Publicity, in this general sense, is proposed by Blackburn (1984), and also Baker and Hacker (1984).
candidates for this view might be that semantic normativity is based upon the general structure of rationality, made explicit by the rules of logic; or perhaps, subject to a publicly accessible process of justification or evaluation. But since a meaning cannot be shared on the public account, I see no way that meaning can be constituted in any public way without collapsing publicity into sociality. Thus, the publicity thesis must rely upon the community for justificatory (but not constitutive) conditions of language and thought.\textsuperscript{16} This type of argument is often given by those who wish to preserve a reductive account of meaning, usually by the identifying meaning with the introduction of dispositions to act in such and such way. Also, those who feel uncomfortable about “shared” practices or conventions, as Quine and Davidson do, often endorse a version of the publicity thesis.

Roughly, the sociality thesis is the position of Kripke's Wittgenstein. His non-factualist “skeptical solution” requires the interaction of a linguistic agent with a community of language users who constitute meaning. The case of sociality denies the possibility of “individualistic”\textsuperscript{17} theories of meaning. It is this stronger variety of “community view” that has been the focus of serious resistance. But, note that there is nothing barring an account of publicly accessible determination of meaning to then be constituted privately, without the necessity of interacting with the linguistic community. Again, dispositionalist accounts qualify since dispositions are publicly visible, but are not developed by any way that would qualify as “shared.” The major consequence of

\textsuperscript{16} This is the philosophical force of Kripke's “read off” condition. I shall argue this point more fully below.

\textsuperscript{17} By 'individualism,' I mean as Burge did in his (1979), p. 103: “... philosophical treatments that seek to see a person's intentional mental phenomenon ultimately and purely in terms of the what happens to a person, what occurs within him, and how he responds to to his physical environment, without any essential reference to the social context in which he or the interpreter of his mental phenomena are situated.” This definition has been given serious criticism by Bilgrami (1992) cf: Chapter 2.
accepting one conclusion rather than another, as I see it, is between the admission of two very different senses of normativity: a norm which constitutes meaning would be necessary to establish the sociality thesis, whereas the normative element on a public account can only be justificatory, and thus might be explained as derivative of the general structure of rationality or the public criteria in the process of justifying one's use (either to oneself or to another). In addition, the two theses prescribe to the community radically different roles.

IV

A good way to highlight the differences between publicity and sociality is to trace the dispute between Davidson and Dummett in their conversation on Davidson's “A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs.”

Davidson's concern in this paper was the question of malapropisms, “expressions not covered by prior learning, or familiar expressions which cannot be interpreted by any of the abilities so far discussed.” The title, itself, is a case in point. When Ms. Malaprop utters the word 'derangement,' she means “arrangement;” likewise, the word “epitaphs” is a erroneous version of the word “epithets.” Davidson makes the observation that, in most cases, such verbal 'slips' go unnoticed in the process of communication: the interpreter almost automatically makes the adjustment away from the literal meaning of the word. So, for instance, an Archie Bunker joke or a Yogi Berra quip are not to be taken literally, but we understand it nonetheless.

According to Davidson, in the process of communication we formulate both a

18 LaPore (1986). I shall not deal with Ian Hacking's comments on the paper, which Dummett takes great care to refute.
19 Ibid., p. 437
20 A character from Sheridan's play “The Rivals”.
“prior theory,” a theory of how to understand language users in general, and a “passing theory,” a theory for interpreting a specific utterance in a certain way. Both prior and passing theories are required for effective communication, but neither are completely “stable” nor “fixed.” The prior and passing theories “adapt” to accommodate discrete changes in the process of interpreting other's utterances. Each are constantly undergoing revision through the process of interacting with other language users and of finding justifications for one's use in light of the public character of a given language. Davidson, in response to Dummett's commentary, clarifies the differences between their views:

Agreeing with Dummett and Kripke, and perhaps with Wittgenstein, I hold that the answer to the question what it is to go on as before demands reference to social interaction. Where I disagree is on how this demand can be met . . . Those who insist that shared practices are essential to meaning are half right: there must be an interacting group for meaning—even propositional thought, I would say—to emerge. Interaction of the needed sort demands that each individual perceives others as reacting to the shared environment much as he does: only then can teaching take place, and appropriate expectations be aroused, it follows that meaning something requires that by and large one follows a practice of one's own, a practice that can be understood by others. But there is no fundamental reason why practices must be shared. What Davidson means, in the context of the argument so far presented, is that he adopts a version of the publicity thesis while Dummett and Kripke adopt the sociality thesis.

One need only look to Davidson's notion of “triangulation” to see how he seeks to de-privilege the interaction with one's community in the process of establishing linguistic meaning. According to triangulation, there needs to be three points of similarity in order to ground meaning. In the process of effectively using a term “table,” for example:

\[ \ldots \text{one line goes from the child in the direction of table, one line goes from us in the direction of the table, and the third line goes} \]

between us and the child. Where the lines from the child to the
table and us to table converge, we can pick out 'the' cause of the
child's responses. It is the common cause of our response and the
child's response.22

Thus, for Davidson, the establishment of meaning is reliant not merely upon the
social establishment of meaning, that is, the line between the speaker and interpreter.
Both speakers need a public, “common ground” (the world) in order for understanding to
take place.23 Also, contrary to behaviorist or dispositional theories of meaning, semantic
content cannot be established wholly in private, as a direct relation between the language
user and the world. Rather, all three poles are necessary for any communication
whatsoever to emerge.

In so doing, Davidson charts a course between the accounts of privacy and
sociality. The most plausible reason why Davidson will not accept the latter is his
commitment to the denial of shared “conventions” as a necessary condition for linguistic
usage, a typical feature of the sociality thesis.24 In order to preserve the lessons of
Wittgenstein, he must deny that meaning can be established entirely between the speaker
and world; but unlike Kripke, he also denies that meanings are completely “shared,” in
that the only necessary condition for establishing meaning is the interaction between
speaker and the linguistic community. Both are necessary, and the process of determining
meaning in language use is indeterminate without both.

22 Davidson “The Second Person” in Davidson (2001) p. 119
23 Although Davidson makes this concession to reference theories of meaning, he is by no means a typical
correspondence theorist. His “slogan is: correspondence without confrontation.” That is to say, for
Davidson, the meaning of an expression is not captured purely by its satisfaction conditions. cf:
Kripke, in sharp contrast to Davidson, accepts the sociality thesis; this is part of the mystique of Kripke's reading. The arguments laid out in *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* are dense and difficult to summarize, but the underlying problem broached is to find a fact, either about our mental histories or a disposition to act in a certain way, that determines whether the meaning of any concept that has been used in a determinate way is consistent with the use of this concept in future applications. Kripke sets up the problem in dialogue with a skeptical interlocutor:

Let me suppose . . . that '68 + 57' is a computation that I have never performed before . . . I perform the computation, obtaining, of course, the answer '125' . . . Now suppose I encounter a bizarre sceptic [sic]. This sceptic . . . suggests [that] . . . in the past I used 'plus' and '+' to denote a function which I will call 'quus' . . . It is defined by:

\[
x \text{ quus } y = x + y, \text{ if } x, y < 57 \\
= 5 \text{ otherwise.}
\]

Who is to say that this is not the function I previously meant by '+'? This is what he refers to as the “skeptical problem.” In responding to his imaginary skeptic, Kripke searches in vain for both justificatory and constitutive conditions such that he can answer the quandary with a fact about one's own private usage. It is instructive that Kripke's question is what *fact* determines that my past usage of the function 'plus' as being the same as my current usage. Normativity is presupposed here in the skeptical challenge, since “facts” pertain to the physical and are therefore non-normative. The solution, therefore, cannot be on the order of causes, but must rather be on the level of norms. That Kripke cannot determine a 'fact' is inherently a rejection of

---

26 Kripke (1984) p. 8-9
both the privacy and publicity theses. Since there is neither an 'inner fact' about my mental history which constitutes my present usage of “plus,” nor an 'external fact' that any public observer could formulate about my behavior, then clearly meaning can be taken as neither private nor public.

There are two important objections to the dispositionalist response that Kripke gives. First, the fact that dispositions are finite means they cannot determine every application of my future usage, which closely dovetails on Wittgenstein's attack on rule-governedness as a paradigm of understanding.27 The argument Kripke broaches is that dispositions may be justificatory of future use, but cannot be constitutive, violating his “read off” condition. But another, more important objection is offered when Kripke (rightly) argues that dispositions to act in such and such way are merely descriptive, whereas “[t]he relation of meaning and intention to future action is normative, not descriptive.”28 This is the most serious objection, not only any private standard of meaning, but also to the conclusion that publicly observable facts can constitute my meaning “plus” rather than “quus.” The problem developed by Kripke on Wittgenstein's behalf can be generalized without major difficulty to all semantic meaning: “Wittgenstein's main problem is that it appears that he has shown all language, all concept formation, to be impossible, indeed unintelligible.”29

In the end, Kripke finds no such truth conditions, but rather can only provide a “skeptical solution” to the skeptical problem, concluding that language must be

---

27 Wittgenstein discusses the rule-governedness as “the beginning of a series is a visible section of rails invisibly laid to infinity . . . [where] infinitely long rails correspond to the unlimited application of rules.” Wittgenstein (1958) §218
28 Kripke (1984) p. 37
29 Ibid., p. 62
constituted through a community of language users. The language user learns meaning though the process of being corrected in one's inappropriate applications of meaning. Thus, Kripke's argument hinges upon an explicitly social constitution of meaning, insofar as the language user must conform one's own meaning to the meaning of the community in order to communicate at all.

VI

As I have presented the issues thus far, the conclusion seems to follow that the publicity and sociality theses are contrary to one another. This is not an inappropriate judgment, and certainly not without precedent. We need a basis to begin communication, a place to “get off the ground,” so to speak; but at the same time, we must account for the fact that we are successful language users, we communicate with one another. It seems that sociality gives an appropriate model of the development of semantic norms, but it is inappropriate to describe linguistic practice once these norms are developed. Likewise, the communicative model of publicity does provide this model at the expense of giving no place for the language user to “get into” the game of communication. One must already know the meaning of many terms in order to use any one effectively. But it is clearly circular to require that meaning must be secured to ensure communication, and also that communication must be secured to enforce meaning. I shall do no such thing. A way out of this quandary might be to suppose that both are 'co-primordial.' But clearly, meaning and communication serve different functions, as outlined so far. So what could be a possible middle ground here?

In order to clarify, one must view the function of Wittgenstein's argument as
fundamentally after *a different aspect of linguistic meaning* than Quine's. A quick look at the arguments will suffice to demonstrate this. Wittgenstein's examples are postured around the *development* of language. A common example of Wittgenstein's is the student-teacher relationship. Wittgenstein's concern (as well as Kripke's) is the *creation* of norms that differentiate correct from incorrect meaning. In contrast, consider that Quine's example in Chapter 2 of *Word and Object*,\(^{30}\) is that of an anthropologist attempting to *translate* the meaning of the term 'gavagai' to a language already understood by the observer. In this sense, Quine's examples require that meaning is already established amongst the native community. The natives know the determinate and correct usage of the word 'gavagai.' It is the anthropologist, the outsider who must learn through ostensive definition, that cannot translate the word in any determinate way. In addition, it also presupposes that the anthropologist already has a first language in order to engage in the process of translation. Meaning is already there; the problem is how to communicate with two different, and imperfectly translatable languages.

I have so far argued that we must view Kripke's arguments as an elaboration and amplification of some of Wittgenstein's core arguments, and the same relationship also exists between Davidson and Quine. Davidson's discussion of malapropisms revolve around competent speakers, whom are already familiar with meaning. In order to understand the meaning of a word in a malapropism, it can only be in the context of an entire language. Thus, one must be a competent linguistic user to have already developed a prior and a passing theory, and in order to have the ability to communicate at all. Perhaps, in this sense, the question of publicity or privacy is misleading. Of course it

\(^{30}\)Quine (1960)
must be the case that meaning must be available to the interpreter in order to communicate; an English speaker who has no knowledge of French words cannot communicate to a French speaker. Likewise, the possibility of communication is presupposed in order to understand another meaningfully. Communication seems to presuppose, and also serves to establish, meanings.

VII

Robert Brandom's dense and challenging book *Making it Explicit* has generated much discussion in recent years. The story Brandom tells is in two parts, starting from a social developmental angle which seeks to establish the implicit normative nature of linguistic practice, and which relies heavily upon Wittgenstein and Kripke. But, he also develops an interpretive account which relies upon what he calls “deontic scorekeeping.” I shall explain both in turn, but first a few comments on the significance of this account.\(^\text{31}\) Brandom sees a strong difference between the account developed by Kripke and the account developed by Davidson, which roughly corresponds to the question of publicity and sociality. Evidence can be garnered from the significance of the arguments used by each thinker, that the Kripke-Wittgenstein account relies upon the student-teacher relationship (that, is the development of normative usage of meanings), wherein the student develops meaning in conformity to the accepted usage of the community. The Quine-Davidson reading, in contrast, relies upon the relationship between speaker and interpreter (the process of communication, wherein meanings are in some sense already “available” to the speaker). Brandom explains that the former is an asymmetric

---

31 A full explication of Brandom's dense arguments would require more space than is prudent here. I apologize for any substantial omissions in my terse summary.
relationship between the individual and the community, whereas the latter is a symmetric relationship between speakers:

. . . traditionally intersubjectivity has been understood in an I-we way, which focuses on the contrast between the commitments of one individual and the commitments of the community (collectively), or those shared by all individuals (distributively). In the broad Davidsonian account offered here, by contrast, intersubjectivity is understood in the perspectival I-thou fashion, which focuses on the relation between the commitments undertaken by a scorekeeper interpreting others and the commitments attributed by that scorekeeper to those others. From the point of view of this latter sort of understanding of intersubjectivity, I-we accounts mistakenly postulate the existence of a privileged perspective—that of the 'we' or the community.  

In short, the “I-we” account of sociality relies upon the individual conforming one's use to that of the community, whereas the “I-thou” account requires that each speaker has equal standing in relation to the other speakers. In terms of my argument, the former is an account of sociality, the latter of publicity.

The development of norms for Brandom is explained in terms of this “I-we” regularity. Until the speaker gains admission into the linguistic community, one needs to develop the normative regularity of use by modeling the usage of others. This is done by the community assessing the usage of others, thorough “assignments to performances of normative significance or status as correct or incorrect according to some norm. The assessing attitudes are then understood as dispositions to sanction, positively or negatively.” 33 The process of sanctioning may take the form either of reacting to one's usage with the emendation of one's normative status as a language user, or (in the case of more obvious normative practices) in terms of sanctions, which Brandom tells us might

32 Brandom (1994) p. 599
33 Ibid., p. 35
take the form of social shunning or even beatings. But this type of assessment is only sufficient to describe the development of normative regularity of use, and is insufficient to describe the justificatory practices that underly everyday communication.

A symptom of this error is the tendency to personify the community, to describe the community's ability to treat a language user in the same descriptive vocabulary as an individual would treat the user. Thus, although this is a plausible account of the development of normative use, it is an implausible account of maintaining the normative regularity of use. We seek to understand meanings of other language users by asking for justification when confronted by non-standard usage, not by beatings.

The social aspects of the process of linguistic communication is developed by Brandom as a normative justificatory space, often referred to in the pithy phrase “the game of giving and asking for reasons,” and the practical dimension of deontic scorekeeping:

Competent linguistic practitioners keep track of others [inferentially articulated] commitments and entitlements. They are (we are) deontic scorekeepers. Speech acts, paradigmatically assertions, alter the deontic score; they change what commitments and entitlements it is appropriate to attribute, not only to the one producing the speech act, but also to those to whom it is addressed. The model of deontic scorekeeping underwrites the public accountability for usage and the commitments that follow inferentially from making a claim (a “move” in the “game”). This underwrites the “I-thou” notion of communication which emerges strongly in Davidson's account. By making a claim, one is making oneself accountable to the justificatory practices that underly linguistic communication. When an error in usage is

34 Cf: Chapter 1 of Brandom (1994)
35 Ibid., p. 142
made, there is recourse to explicate the premises that underly the claim in question: of making justifications when elicited by other members of the linguistic community.

As the themes between the respective linguistic theories of Wittgenstein-Kripke and Quine-Davidson have been analyzed, there is a radical difference between treating linguistic claims on the basis of a meaning based “development” of semantic norms and a communication-based “enforcement” model of these same norms. The former has ties to the asymmetric “I-we” model of sociality, whereas the latter relies upon a symmetric “I-thou” model, which is characteristic of both asking for justifications when necessary and of giving justifications when elicited; this is the force of Brandom's description of linguistic practice as “the game of giving and asking for reasons.” In Brandom's account, the thesis of sociality (Kripke) and the thesis of publicity (Davidson) have been shown to motivate two very different functions of linguistic normativity. Communicative meaning is “empty” without the development of norms, and the development of norms is “blind” without the corresponding public practice of justifying claims to which one is committed. Neither is available in linguistic practice without the other.

It seems that the dichotomies set up in my analysis, between public and social, communication and meaning, justification and constitution, are not real divisions at all, but abstractions based on an incomplete model of linguistic normativity. The lesson we learn from Brandom is not the virtue that one has in priority to another, but rather that each is as structurally important as another; as one needs beams working both vertically and horizontally in the structural integrity of a skyscraper, so too it seems that we need both social constitution of meaning and public justification in order to maintain integrity
of linguistic practice. In this sense, it seems that both Davidson and Kripke are right, just not for the reasons that most take them to be.

Works Cited


