

**ORIGINAL ARTICLE**

# Is semantic correctness descriptive?

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Email: [aleksi.honkasalo@tuni.fi](mailto:aleksi.honkasalo@tuni.fi)**Abstract**

According to the normativists, dispositionalist theories of meaning fail because meaning is normative, not descriptive. One way to understand this notion of normativity is in terms of semantic correctness conditions. Anti-normativists typically accept that meaning implies semantic correctness but deny that this in turn implies that meaning is normative. Jeffrey Kaplan has recently argued that while semantic correctness may not imply full-blown normativity, semantic correctness is not descriptive either. I contend that Kaplan's argument has two main problems. First, his focus on dispositionalism leaves it open for other descriptive facts to provide the basis of semantic correctness conditions. Second, he fails to show that the problems of dispositionalism are connected to semantic correctness in a way that demonstrates problems with descriptive theories of meaning.

**KEYWORDS**

correctness, dispositionalism, normativity of meaning, rule-following

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

In his influential reading of Ludwig Wittgenstein's private language argument, Saul Kripke argues that meaning cannot be explained by relying solely on the facts concerning the behaviour of speakers, because such facts only predict how a speaker will use expressions and not how she *should* use them (Kripke, 1982, p. 37). Based on remarks like these, the normativity of meaning has been seen as playing a crucial role in Kripke's arguments against dispositionalism. Since, allegedly, normativity cannot be accounted for in purely descriptive terms, other naturalistic theories of meaning along with dispositionalism might turn out to give an implausible or at least incomplete account of meaning.

Although Kripke presents his argument using normative terms like "should" and "justification", he does not offer a detailed explanation of what he meant by the normativity of meaning, nor an argument to support it. It has also been questioned whether Kripke himself even

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supported the normativity of meaning (Kusch, 2006). However, regardless of Kripke's stance on the issue, the idea that meaning is normative plays an important role in the debate surrounding the rule-following paradox.

If Kripke left the precise nature of the normativity of meaning open, how should it be understood, and which arguments count in favour of accepting it? According to one influential account by Paul Boghossian (1989), the intuitive support for the normativity of meaning is based on the idea that meaningful expressions have correctness conditions<sup>1</sup>: If "green" means *green*, it applies correctly to some things and incorrectly to others. This in turn allegedly implies how an expression ought to be used. While the argument from correctness is not the only way to support the normativity of meaning, it holds an important position in the debate because several anti-normativists, including Kathrin Glüer-Pagin, Anandi Hattiangadi and Åsa Wikforss, accept that meaningful expressions have correctness conditions. They, however, deny that correctness necessarily implies normative consequences, such as prescriptions or rules, and that semantic correctness can therefore be understood descriptively (Glüer & Wikforss, 2015; Hattiangadi, 2006).

Jeffrey Kaplan (2020) claims that even if we were to grant to anti-normativists that correctness does not imply full-blown normativity, this is not enough to vindicate the anti-normativists' views nor does it guarantee that meaning can be naturalised. He argues that if semantic correctness can be regarded as a descriptive notion, it must also be possible to derive semantic correctness from speakers' dispositions. Since, according to Kaplan, simple first-order dispositions fail to provide adequate grounds for semantic correctness, the burden of proof is on the anti-normativists, who must show that some more sophisticated dispositionalist account of correctness can be given.

I will argue that the issues Kaplan raises do not pose insurmountable difficulties for the anti-normativist trying to maintain that semantic correctness can be understood descriptively. In order to argue that the problems of simple dispositionalism suggest deeper issues with descriptive correctness, the failure of dispositionalist theories of meaning needs to demonstrate some essential feature of correctness that descriptive theories cannot explain.

I will distinguish between failing to assign semantic correctness conditions *correctly* and failing to provide a standard of correctness and argue that only the latter suggests trouble for maintaining that semantic correctness can be regarded as descriptive notion. While simple dispositionalism may fail to assign correctness conditions *correctly* – in the sense of conforming to our pre-theoretical understanding of the meaning of words – it nonetheless can in some sense provide an account of semantic correctness in terms of the meaning assignments the dispositionalist accepts. I will show that the "relativised" correctness satisfies at least two conditions intuitively tied to the notion of correctness. Therefore, it is unclear what essential feature of correctness escapes the descriptive accounts.

First, I will offer a brief outline of the debate concerning the normativity of semantic correctness and how Kaplan reframes this problem. In Section 3, I move on to discuss Kaplan's arguments against descriptive correctness and how they relate to descriptive theories based on non-dispositional facts. In Sections 4 and 5, I will argue that even dispositionalism might be able to account for semantic correctness.

## 2 | IS CORRECTNESS NORMATIVE?

The question of whether meaning is normative can be interpreted in two ways. First, the most natural way is to interpret it as a question about the nature of meaning. Second, it can be understood as a question about theories of meaning: is the normativity of meaning something that

<sup>1</sup>Boghossian has since become much more critical towards the normativity thesis (Boghossian, 2005).

any plausible theory of meaning must be able to account for? In other words, rather than being a feature ascribed to meaning by some theories of meaning, the normativity of meaning is seen as a pre-theoretical criterion of adequacy for all theories of meaning. This latter interpretation, although perhaps less obvious, is how the question is commonly understood in the debate (e.g., Boghossian, 1989, p. 513; Glüer & Wikforss, 2015, p. 64; Hattiangadi, 2006, p. 220; Whiting, 2009, p. 535). The normativity of meaning can be seen as a threat to the naturalisation of meaning only if it is understood as a criterion of adequacy.<sup>2</sup>

The most straightforward argument for the normativity of meaning is grounded on the notion of semantic correctness. The argument can be summarised as follows:

1. The fact that “green” means *green* implies that the expression “green” applies correctly to green entities and incorrectly to non-green ones.
2. Correctness is a normative concept.
3. Therefore, meaning is normative.

Although the first premise is not universally accepted, it has supporters on both sides of the debate. Many influential anti-normativists accept the first premise but reject the second. Glüer and Wikforss argue that semantic correctness is a theoretical concept and therefore linguistic intuition alone cannot decide its normativity. Secondly, the term “correctness” has both normative and non-normative uses; hence an additional argument is needed to establish that the “correctness” in semantic correctness is of the normative and not the non-normative kind (Glüer & Wikforss, 2015). Hattiangadi argues that if correctness has normative implications on how speakers ought to use expressions, those prescriptions are contingent on the speaker’s desire to speak the truth and therefore are not categorical in the sense required for meaning to be normative (Hattiangadi, 2006).

It is worth noting that the anti-normativists who deny correctness is normative argue that correctness does not have normative consequences such as prescriptions or rules, while those who support the normativity of correctness typically insist that there are normative consequences. Kaplan calls these normative consequences “full-blown normativity”. He argues that even if no full-blown normativity is implied by semantic correctness, this does not mean that semantic correctness is descriptive, or that the correctness conditions can be derived from speakers’ dispositions alone. According to Kaplan, if semantic correctness itself proves troublesome for simple dispositionalism, then anti-normativists need to argue that some more sophisticated dispositionalism could do the job or else give up semantic correctness (Kaplan, 2020, p. 82).

In essence, Kaplan’s suggestion can be understood as a claim that correctness itself, not the full-blown normative consequences, is a criterion of adequacy which poses a problem for the naturalistic theories of meaning. Contrary to Glüer and Wikforss, Kaplan claims that it is not the normativist who has to argue that the semantic correctness *must* be understood normatively; the burden of proof is on the anti-normativist to show that semantic correctness *can* be understood descriptively. Moreover, since the anti-normativist critique of the second premise relies on the distinction between normativity and correctness, Kaplan argues that if correctness cannot be understood descriptively, the distinction between correctness and normativity itself becomes untenable (Kaplan, 2020, p. 81). If it looks normative and sounds normative, it might as well be normative.

However, even if we assume that Kaplan’s arguments are successful, declaring the normativist victory would be premature. As Kaplan recognises, the anti-normativists have the option of denying that there are semantic correctness conditions albeit with the high associated

<sup>2</sup>The role normativity plays in such arguments has been left mostly open in the debate. Hattiangadi suggests that an argument against the naturalisation of meaning might rely on Humean and Moorean arguments against naturalism (Hattiangadi, 2007, p. 37).

cost of rejecting a highly intuitive claim. Additionally, we might still wonder if correctness is not normative in the full-blown sense, then in what sense is the semantic correctness normative? To answer this question, the placeholder term “full-blown normativity” would have to be clarified. Of course, it may well turn out that there is not much more to answering this question than stipulating whether correctness counts as real normativity or not. However, since Kaplan’s arguments do not hang on the question about the normativity of semantic correctness, in the rest of this article, I will leave this question aside and focus on the possibility of descriptive correctness.

### 3 | IS CORRECTNESS DESCRIPTIVE?

According to Kaplan, in order to maintain that semantic correctness is not a criterion of adequacy which places constraints on the descriptive theories, the anti-normativist must show that “(a) it can be fully accounted for in terms of how people behave and are disposed to behave and (b) it does justice to the intuition that the meaning of an expression entails facts about which uses of that expression are correct or incorrect” (Kaplan, 2020, p. 81).

Kaplan argues that these two requirements are at odds: regularities and dispositions seem to be unable to determine whether an action is correct or incorrect. He invites us to consider Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, who did something highly irregular by walking on the moon, but we tend not to think that they did something incorrectly. Likewise, even if Armstrong and Aldrin did not have the disposition to walk on the moon, this would only make walking on the moon unlikely, not incorrect (Kaplan, 2020, p. 82).

Kaplan admits that this argument only applies to simple first-order dispositions, and a more sophisticated dispositionalist account might succeed in giving an account of semantic correctness. Nevertheless, he insists that this argument suffices to put the burden of proof on the anti-normativist, who must show that semantic correctness can be accounted for in dispositionalist terms (Kaplan, 2020, p. 83). Notice, however, that anti-normativists could still maintain that semantic correctness can be understood descriptively. Even if dispositions fail to do the job, it is not clear why other descriptive facts such as causal facts or facts concerning biological functions could not provide a basis for a descriptive account of semantic correctness. Perhaps dispositionalism itself could be salvaged by rejecting the identification of dispositions and correctness in favour of a reductive account.

This issue has not gone unnoticed by Kaplan. He also recognises that there might be “broadly naturalistic resources” available beyond dispositions which could prove more successful (Kaplan, 2020, p. 84). Despite keeping this option open, he takes the defence of dispositionalism to be a goal shared by most anti-normativists, and therefore the possibility of a non-dispositionalist, descriptive account of correctness would not realise their goals (Kaplan, 2020, p. 81, fn 15). However, regardless of whether dispositionalism is widely supported by the anti-normativists or not, the success or failure of anti-normativism should not be tied to the success or failure of dispositionalism. If semantic correctness cannot be accounted for in dispositionalist terms, but it can be accounted for with some additional descriptive resources, then it seems that the inability of descriptive theories to explain correctness cannot be the source of troubles for dispositionalism.

Based on the considerations presented above, is Kaplan’s argument better understood as an argument against dispositional correctness rather than descriptive correctness? What Kaplan argues, however, is that if anti-normativists are right and correctness is a descriptive notion, then there should be no reason why even a simple dispositionalist could not *in principle* give an account for semantic correctness (Kaplan, 2020, p. 81). Additionally, since dispositionalism would offer a relatively simple descriptive account of correctness, its failure might suggest a more general tension between descriptive facts and correctness (Kaplan, 2020, p. 83).

However, extending the argument along these lines is only warranted if the problems of dispositionalism are directly linked to the *in-principle* impossibility to account for semantic correctness. Clearly not every descriptive fact can provide a plausible basis for semantic correctness, yet this fact itself does not suffice to place the overall plausibility of descriptive correctness into question. What needs to be shown is that the failure of simple dispositionalism demonstrates a fundamental problem of descriptive correctness that threatens the plausibility of all descriptive theories. To do this, we need to take a closer look at what exactly it means to do justice to the intuition regarding semantic correctness.

In the next section, I will argue that Kaplan's argument is not sufficient to establish that there is a fundamental problem with the dispositionalist account of correctness. I will argue that while simple dispositionalism is not a plausible theory, this is not because semantic correctness cannot be explained dispositionally.

## 4 | HOW DISPOSITIONS MIGHT DETERMINE CORRECTNESS

Recall that according to Kaplan, (first-order) dispositions fail to decide correctness in the special case of walking on the moon, and this indicates a more general incapability of dispositions to decide the correctness of actions. While the first part seems initially plausible, it does not necessarily warrant the generalisation of the claim. First, it is unclear in what sense the actions of the astronauts would be correct or incorrect. While it seems clear that dispositions cannot determine whether astronauts did something morally or prudentially correct, perhaps some other standard of correctness might be applicable. It might be the case that once we know in what sense astronauts' behaviour is to be assessed, we arrive at the conclusion that descriptive facts like dispositions and regularities do in fact determine whether walking on the moon is correct or incorrect. For what it is worth, at least trivially, dispositions do manage to decide whether astronauts did something semantically incorrect by walking on the moon. Since walking on the moon is not verbal behaviour, it is not against astronauts' dispositions to use meaningful expressions. Hence, the dispositionalist assignment of semantic correctness conditions implies the intuitively right conclusion that walking on the moon is not semantically incorrect.

However, what Kaplan seems to require is that dispositions set a standard of correctness independent of any other standards. That is, regardless of whether or not astronauts did something morally or semantically correct, astronauts must have done at least something incorrect if dispositions can decide correctness at all. In other words, dispositions act as a *sui generis* standard of correctness. However, for the dispositionalist it suffices that dispositions can determine the semantic correctness not the *sui generis* dispositional correctness. The lack of a purely dispositional standard of correctness might be able to establish that it is an open question whether semantic correctness is descriptive. However, without a clear input from the intuitions on the special case of walking on the moon to the case of semantic correctness, this argument fails to make this question any more open than posing it in the first place.

If the astronaut case does not immediately determine the semantic case, how should we determine what, if anything, about semantic correctness escapes the dispositionalists. Perhaps we can gain some insight by turning the astronaut argument into an argument about verbal behaviour. Using addition as an example, let  $m$  and  $n$  be very large natural numbers which exhibit no easily identifiable pattern in their digits<sup>3</sup> and let  $m + n = k$ . Uttering " $n$  plus  $m$  equals  $k$ "<sup>4</sup> is highly irregular and, given that humans are prone to calculation errors with such large numbers, claims that we would be disposed to assert it are at least questionable. Additionally, there are such  $m$ ,  $n$  and  $k$  that no one has uttered aloud, and even numbers so large that saying

<sup>3</sup>This rules out, inter alia, numbers that could be easily represented as powers of ten, therefore making the calculations easier.

<sup>4</sup>With  $n$ ,  $m$  and  $k$  substituted with some suitable actual numerical expressions which would be too long to be written in this paper.

them out loud would be impossible, and therefore, we are more reasonably described as being disposed to not utter them. Yet intuitively, these utterances are semantically correct.

The problems of simple dispositionalism are not tied to the peculiarities of mathematics either. Let us suppose that when asked to describe the colour of the word “green”, written in red letters, Jane has a tendency to call it “green” rather than “red”. A dispositionalist has no basis to claim that she did something incorrect by applying the word “green” to a red object. So, like the case with the astronauts’ behaviour, Jane’s dispositions and regularities do not seem to imply that her use of the word green is semantically correct.

How can we be sure that these problems are symptoms of deeper issues with descriptive correctness and not some other issue relating to simple dispositionalism? In order to assess this, we need to take a closer look at the notion of semantic correctness. A good starting point would be the argument from correctness to the normativity of meaning. That is, we need to ask, does the failure to classify the utterance of “ $m$  plus  $n$  equals  $k$ ” as correct and calling red letters “green” as incorrect relate to a problem of accounting for the first premise, namely if “green” means *green*, then “green” applies correctly to green and only green things? However, it is unclear what problems this premise poses to the dispositionalist. Since, barring full-blown normative implications of correctness, *prima facie* it only requires that a theory of meaning can categorise applications into correct and incorrect ones. While an advocate of simple dispositionalism would have to conclude that some intuitively correct uses count as semantically incorrect and vice versa, this is as it should be, since based on speakers’ dispositions, they do not mean addition by “plus” or *green* by “green”. If, according to such dispositionalists, “green” does not mean *green*, then it should be no surprise that according to them “green” does not apply correctly only to green things.

To elucidate, suppose the advocate of simple dispositionalism is right and Jane means “green” by “green” if and only if Jane is *disposed to apply* “green” to green and only green things. However, since Jane has the disposition to apply “green” to the red text, we must conclude that she does not mean *green* by “green”. Rather, Jane means *gred* by “green” (where  $x$  is *gred* if and only if  $x$  is green and not an inscription of a colour word or  $x$  is an inscription of the word “green”). It now follows straightforwardly that Jane applies “green” correctly to  $x$  if and only if  $x$  is a green non-inscription or  $x$  is an inscription of the word “green”. However, this is nothing more than to say that “green” means *gred* and therefore “green” applies correctly to *gred* and only *gred* things. Similarly, if Mark is a competent adder, but incapable of infinite calculations, the dispositionalist may conclude that by “plus” Mark means  $f$ ; a finite function that is identical to the addition function up to the pair  $\langle m, n \rangle$ . Since  $f(m, n) \neq k$ , “ $m$  plus  $n$  equals  $k$ ” is semantically incorrect. Therefore, if categorising things into those to which “green” applies correctly and incorrectly to is enough to satisfy the criterion of adequacy, then correctness can be given a dispositionalist account.<sup>5</sup>

For an alternative way to the same conclusion, let us start with the fact that it is semantically correct to utter “ $m$  plus  $n$  is  $k$ ”. Since the meaning of the word plus determines the correctness of the utterance, it follows from the correctness of “ $m$  plus  $n$  equals  $k$ ” that “plus” does not mean  $f$ . We can take this as a starting point either by having a theory of meaning that assigns some other meaning for “plus”. Alternatively, we can take the fact that “plus” means addition to be a pre-theoretical fact. In the first case, dispositionalism fails to get semantic correctness right simply by not agreeing with the meaning assignments of the theory of meaning, which, by the assumption, is the right theory. In the second case, semantic correctness serves as part of the *reductio* argument against dispositionalism. However, neither argument shows that the inability of dispositions to generate correctness conditions is the reason dispositionalism assigns the correctness condition *incorrectly*.

Kaplan could nevertheless argue that the mere categorisation based on whether a speaker disposed to apply the term is not sufficient to guarantee that this categorisation captures the

<sup>5</sup>While dispositionalism might suffice to fill the classification requirement, does this make mistakes impossible and if it does, can this classification really capture the notion of semantic correctness? I will address this concern in the next section.

notion of correctness. It must also be shown that the facts concerning speaker's dispositions conceptually entail the fact of whether a speaker's verbal behaviour is correct or incorrect. Notice, however, that if we, at least for the sake of the argument, accept the meaning assignments of simple dispositionalism, then the dispositional categorisation does at least extensionally coincide with semantic correctness. If we, again for the sake of the argument, assume that dispositionalism is right, then these categorisations coincide necessarily. On the other hand, assuming that dispositional categorisation does not necessarily coincide with correctness is equivalent to assuming that dispositionalism is false, which may have nothing to do with failing to account for semantic correctness.

Is this enough to show that dispositions could plausibly entail semantic correctness? Perhaps not, since it could be maintained that, even if the extensions are necessarily identical, it does not mean that the concepts themselves are analytically tied together. What the equivalence of extensions highlights is the fact that the notion of semantic correctness is closely tied to the theory of meaning. While the pre-theoretical concept of meaning does not imply that verbal dispositions entail semantic correctness, this question need not be settled pre-theoretically. Once we have a theory in place which explains in virtue of which features words have their meaning, it no longer matters whether these features entail correctness on their own. If dispositionalism is right, then together with the fact that dispositions are the meaning-determining feature, dispositions determine the semantic correctness as well.

What seems to be a common thread in the considerations above is that if we take meaning assignments of simple dispositionalism seriously, then the arguments against descriptive correctness fall apart. On the other hand, if we take for granted that "green" means *green* and "+" means addition, then we no longer need semantic correctness to show that simple dispositionalism fails. While the fact that, contrary to the simple dispositionalist's stance, "plus" means *addition* and "green" means *green*, provide good reasons to reject the theory, these considerations do not rely on some fundamental problem of descriptive correctness. Therefore, if providing a categorisation is all that is needed for the account of semantic correctness, the implausibility of dispositionalism does not support the general conclusion that semantic correctness cannot be accounted for in purely descriptive terms.

## 5 | HOW TO BEHAVE INCORRECTLY

There might be a way to take the meaning assignments of simple dispositionalism seriously and still argue that the theory fails to account for semantic correctness. If a speaker's dispositions determine whether she used an expression correctly, how is it possible for her to do anything incorrectly? Perhaps, in order to do justice to the intuition that meaningful expressions have correctness conditions, it is not enough to show that an expression applies incorrectly to some entities; it must also be shown that a speaker can apply the expression incorrectly.

We can accept that the dispositionalist does not have to conform to the usual dictionary definitions of "green" and "plus", but if by giving incorrect answers to addition problems the speaker ends up meaning a different function by the word "plus", how is it possible to use "plus" incorrectly? If Jane happens to call a red apple in a dark room "green", must the dispositionalist now conclude that she means neither *green* nor *gred* and instead she meant *grepple* (entity that is *gred* or an apple in a dark room). In other words, if every apparent misuse leads to the revision of meaning facts, can dispositionalists' correctness be genuine?

However, the situation is not as bleak as this. The notion of disposition used by philosophers does not suppose that people always act in accordance with their dispositions. The speaker's dispositions can be formulated with the help of *ceteris paribus* clauses: In normal lighting conditions, Jane is disposed to call things "green" only if they are *gred*. Mark is disposed to use "plus" in accordance with the function *f* unless he is under the influence of alcohol.

If Mark under the influence makes a calculation error, his answer is incorrect, for he did something he was not (*ceteris paribus*) disposed to do. Similarly, if Jane calls a dark apple green, dispositionalist can categorise her application as incorrect. Since *ceteris paribus* clauses make it possible for speakers to use expressions incorrectly, dispositionalism passes this test as well.

Of course, this appeal to *ceteris paribus* clauses is not without problems. Kripke argues that on the pain of circularity, *ceteris paribus* clauses cannot fix a unique interpretation of what a speaker means among several candidates which are compatible with her behaviour (Kripke, 1982, pp. 22–32). The dispositionalists' meaning assignments question beggingly presumes that a speaker is disposed to apply the expression one way rather than another. However, the problem of ruling out alternative meaning assignments seems to be a problem for dispositionalism regardless of semantic correctness. Even if the appeal to *ceteris paribus* clauses does not save dispositionalism from Kripke's sceptic's objections, these clauses do make room for the possibility of mistakes in the dispositionalist theory of meaning. Based on the above considerations, it is not at least immediately obvious whether or not Kripke's arguments against dispositionalism demonstrate a fundamental problem with descriptive correctness, and proper treatment of this question would take us too far afield.

Since the goal of this paper is not to offer a defence of dispositionalism, I am content with the conclusion that the fact that dispositionalism does not imply that speakers always act in accordance with their dispositions is enough to show that at least in some sense dispositionalism allows for speakers to act incorrectly. If this is what is required for an account of semantic correctness, then dispositionalism has no problems with it.

## 6 | CONCLUSION

Kaplan argues that the failure of first-order dispositions to determine the correctness conditions in the special case of walking on the moon demonstrates a general tension between descriptive facts and correctness. This spells trouble for not only the simple dispositionalist theory of meaning but to other descriptive theories of meaning as well. What this shows, according to Kaplan, is that those who deny that semantic correctness is normative have nonetheless the burden of proof to show that correctness can be understood descriptively.

In this paper, I have highlighted several weaknesses in Kaplan's argument. First, the intuition that dispositions do not determine correctness in a special case does not clarify what, if anything, escapes the dispositionalist account of semantic correctness. Semantic correctness might be given a dispositionalist account even if disposition do not always determine correctness. Second, even if dispositions fail to determine semantic correctness, it does not follow that semantic correctness cannot be descriptive. Other attempts to naturalise meaning, such as teleosemantics and causal theories, might prove more successful.

The failure of simple dispositionalism to account for semantic correctness could suggest there is a more general trouble for descriptive accounts of semantic correctness, but only if the failure is due to some essential feature of correctness which the dispositionalist cannot explain. I have argued that although simple dispositionalism is ultimately implausible, this is not due to the inability to explain correctness in purely descriptive terms. Rather even simple dispositionalism can explain correctness in two senses:

1. It is able to categorise utterances into correct and incorrect ones  
and
2. makes incorrect behaviour possible.

While the dispositionalist assigns the wrong correctness conditions, it nonetheless assigns them in accordance with its own meaning assignments and therefore satisfies the first criterion.

Similarly, although the dispositionalists' appeal to *ceteris paribus* clauses fails to save the dispositionalist from Kripke's attack, they nonetheless make room for the possibility of incorrect behaviour. Since simple dispositionalism can satisfy these conditions, if this is all there is to semantic correctness, it seems descriptive correctness is possible at least in principle.

Of course, passing these two conditions may not be sufficient to satisfy all the intuitions regarding semantic correctness. What this does show is that if one wishes to argue against descriptive correctness, the notion of semantic correctness requires further clarification. If the reasons given in this paper are not sufficient to satisfy the burden of proof of the possibility of descriptive correctness, opponents might also have the burden to show which conditions the dispositionalist fails to pass. However, any additional conditions might also go beyond correctness and into the territory of full-blown normativity.

Despite the problems with his argument, I agree with Kaplan that the question of whether semantic correctness proves problematic for descriptive theories should be studied independently of the alleged normative implications of correctness.

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