MEANING AND JUSTIFICATION

§1

Justificationist semantics are semantics that claim that – at some level of description – the meaning of a declarative sentence is a rule which governs and justifies the usage of the sentence in making a statement in a given situation. Versions of justificationist semantics are traditional verificationism (cf. Carnap 1936/37, Schlick 1936) game-theoretical semantics (cf. Hintikka 1987), anti-realist semantics (cf. Tennant 1987) or radical versions of semantic holism which identify the *meaning* of a declarative sentence with another sentence (cf. Bremer 2005).

The central argument in favour of justificationist semantics stresses the connection between truth and meaning as both being semantic concepts. If truth is (in some aspect) not completely beyond our justificatory means these means have to be *related* to the meaning of the sentence the truth of which is in question. One option then is to *identify* the means of justification of a sentence (or at least some subset of them) with the meaning of the sentence. The paradigm case where this seems to work are basic logical connectives, coming with rules of introduction and elimination, which are said to exhaust their meaning (cf. intuitionists like Dummett 1991).

The central problem of justificationist semantics – especially those of the semantic holist version – is the apparently ensuing regress of rule-following and under-standing sentences. Justification never seems to end and the last rules are never justified themselves. Justification also is complex by being holistic. More and more background knowledge has to be taken into account to evaluate seemingly innocent claims.

The justificationist can solve this problem by two routes. Within the background theory of justification a *principle of sufficient reason* may be justified that blocks unmotivated prolonging of arguments. Further on, the justificationist may concede that there are different ways of justifying (the application of) a sentence. It is here that some version of stimulus meaning or non-discursive cognitions has to play a role. The justificationist not only has to deal with the regress problem, he also has to integrate the common intuition that we ‘just see’ how things stand, that we without hesitation and awareness of intervening thoughts ‘just say’ what is going on. So, in addition to explicit justification and in no contradiction to principled justifiability of sentence use the justificationist may – and should – claim that there are shortcuts to appropriate usage. In these cases sentences or words are employed without justification in the primal sense (of explicit or

implicit rule-following with respect to linguistic rules) – but nevertheless the words are not employed unjustified.

I will not go into details here about justificationist semantics, its philosophical background or its theory of conventions (see Bremer 2005 on all this). Its central idea of *identifying* rules of justification with meanings has to be given up if conceptual atomism is right!

§2

The idea that truth, meaning and justification are tied together in our notion of successful assertions/statements is compatible with any version of realism needed for RTM. Justificationist semantics need not be 'anti-realistic' in any interesting sense. Justificationist semantics defends realism about reference and content. It argument for realism runs as follows:

> (Realism)
>
> To some extent we have epistemic access to reality, which exists independently of us, as well as to its structures and relations.

Justification: We make assertions. We use them to describe what is the case. Statements (or sentences) which are claimed to be true are statements of a specific language and use the vocabulary of this language. They describe by means of the expressions occurring in them what would be the case if they were true. Statements which use different vocabulary describe, except in some cases of synonymy, different facts. The vocabulary (that is the meanings of the employed words) makes all the difference and determines which statements we consider true and which not. Assume the statement "F(a)" is true. If we can intersubjectively refer to *a* as being describable as "F( )", we justify/verify the claim that F(a) is the case (in a weak – and thus not Vienna Circle style – sense of "verification"). We thereby claim that the thing which we consider to be *F* possesses the features, the *structure* mentioned in (Realism), to which the meaning of the expression "F( )" refers. The realistic interpretation of this procedure is: Our claims to knowledge of a reality beyond the confines of our representations are expressed here. The linguistic conventions by means of which we refer are believed to correspond to the composition of the actual entities. We refer to reality by means of language and try to reach an agreement about what is objectively the case and not merely our opinion. This procedure of reaching agreement and the collective and individual practices based upon it are more or less successful. The object *a* might not be exhausted in its features by describing it as "F( )". But we assume with the truth of "F(a)" that it has, at least, this feature in reality. *Definiteness of meaning* is founded on this correspondence. Definiteness of meaning presupposes that different expressions have conditions of application separated by their meanings, and that it is, for example, clearly distinguishable whether to use the expression "round" or to use expression "square". The condition of this possibility is strong realism. Realism as the ontological

claim that reality comes with entities and structures not up to us explains the first aspect of definiteness of meaning as follows: descriptions of facts (sentences) are definite because the expressions composing the description refer to components (parts) of reality. The difference of the reference *situations* guarantees the difference of the meanings of the descriptions, since an aspect of these meanings is reference. Linguistic expressions are referentially or extensionally definite. We still have to say something, however, about our ability to use expressions in the appropriate situations. The definiteness of use and application refers us on to the epistemic access claim in (Realism). In this respect *meaning* in the narrower sense consists in instructions for the application of the expression mentioning some decisive features or criteria to be fulfilled. We must in some way or other be able to decide or discriminate the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of these criteria to use the expression definitely. This ability might be instantiated in explicit linguistic reflection or perceptual or sub-doxastic processing (that is, it might be a not directly conscious process of information processing). We must, however, be able to recognize the structures and relations of reality to some extent, whichever way this happens.[1]

This is a strong version of realism. We intentionally employ specific expressions in distinction to others. That the use of a specific expression makes a difference in what is said and that it is founded on real differences in the situations of application we cannot deny without dissolving our intentional linguistic behaviour in an arbitrary utterance of some expression or other. That is: (Realism) must be true if we are able to speak a definite language.

[1] Note that even if meaning is not constituted but "only" linked – in a sense to be explained – to some routes of access or procedures of 'verification', the argument still goes through. Conceptual atomism of course denies that meaning is *constituted* by criteria of use etc.

We can give another short argument:

1. Making statements works (sufficiently well).
   [undeniable fact]
2. Intentionally stating something implies making distinctions.
3. Non-definiteness of meaning implies inability to make sufficient distinctions.
4. Definiteness of meaning.
   [from (1)-(3)]
5. Intentional application of an expression is successful only if we employ the expression (dominantly) in specific appropriate situations to the structure of which we have (reliable) cognitive access.
   [Meaning Principle]
6. We have (reliable) cognitive access to the structure of the situations we make statements about. ■

Premise (1) reports an undeniable fact in the sense that if you tried to deny this you would immediately refute yourself. Premises (2) and (3) are true *by definition* or at least *central* to our concepts of intentional talk and definite meaning. The consequence, (6), again expresses strong realism. The argument establishes *some* access to reality, but this is enough for (Realism) to be true. Given some access and lacking justified doubt we may claim access as an ordinary phenomenon.

Conceptual atomism can agree with most of that. It just takes definite content in terms of externalist semantics. Conceptual atomism is even better equipped to defend realism. And one should better hold faith onto realism than to forsake realism because of one's semantic theory.

§3

Once – by adherence to conceptual atomism and its share of semantic externalism – a clear separation of semantics, pragmatics and epistemology is (re-)established a new option arises: One of the main motivations to stick to justificationist semantics even in the light of contravening evidence has been the conviction that ultimately a theory of justification has to be internalist, whatever elements of reliability are partially inserted. Given the separation of semantics, pragmatics and epistemology one may try to be some kind of semantic externalist and nonetheless be an *internalist about justification*! That option will be explored here.

Both the concept of semantic rules and the idea of justificatory procedures have to play a role once conceptual atomism is related to making assertions in a natural language, using words held to express some concepts and being true on the occasion of utterance.

One of the core arguments for this internalism about justification runs as follows:

> (Internalism)
>
> Our access to reality as well as its structures and relations is *limited* by *our* cognitive faculties (particularly our linguistic and our perceptual faculties). ASSERTION is conceptually tied to JUSTIFICATION.

Justification. If truth were a completely non-epistemic concept there could be entities and qualities which *we* talk about without us ever being able reasonably to state this correspondence of language and reality. Truth could not even be *prima facie* established, since there would be no way of introducing *any* criteria of truth: to introduce such criteria we would have to judge them in their reliability against other candidates, but if we were not able to access truth in the first place, we could not establish anything as being truth conductive. Nevertheless, we keep on claiming things to be true. And to claim that something is true requires justification. If a speaker A asserts α, she claims that α is the case, that it objectively obtains and is not merely A´s opinion. To claim objectivity concerning α makes not only the difference between mere belief that α and α being the case, but also claims that α will be the case for any speaker B of the linguistic community. This is exactly what "objective" means in contradistinction to "(merely) subjective".

Two questions then have to be answered:

(i) How is it possible to distinguish mere opinions from opinions to which facts correspond?

(ii) How can one decide between A´s assertion α and B`s assertion ψα?

There must be means to answer these questions if understanding is at all possible. For any attempt of communication about what facts obtain to succeed, these questions must have been answered already. The means sought for are reasons. We accept, ideally, those assertions which have been better justified than their competitors. To give reasons is beneficial to establishing the truth of a statement which claims that a certain fact obtains. We are interested in assertions because we establish by their means that which we shall consider as being the case. To doubt that we are seeking objectivity is a move in the language game that undercuts itself. We call statements "true" or "well-founded" to distinguish between mere opinions and facts.[2] We are thus lead to

[2] This justification is no final verification in the sense of some absolute external access to truth, which no realist would allow for. What is meant by "truth conductive justification" and

(Internalism). Its concept of truth aims at correspondence but connects this idea with criteria of consenting to statements, and possession of *reasons*. We have, therefore, reached a dual aspect theory of truth which corresponds to (some version of) *internal* realism.
The above argument presupposes:

(i) That we take seriously the claim that statements are/can be *true* (i.e., we should not reinterpret truth as actually being assertability, or some kind of constructability).

(ii) That it must serve a *purpose*, when we claim truth, and that the purpose of asserting something to be true is truth itself (as an epistemological basic value) or something which we need it for (e.g., successful manipulation of our environment).

(iii) That we *can* realise this purpose; otherwise we would not persist in trying.

(iv) That we know about the contrast (merely) *subjective* vs. *objective*.

The acceptance of (iv) hinges on conceptual analysis being possible in a minimal extent at least [cf. §10]. Accepting (i) expresses a conservative attitude. Whoever wants to substitute assertability for truth can do so, but then he has already incorporated an epistemological feature into the concept of truth. The acceptance of presuppositions (ii) and (iii) depends on taking seriously evolutionary or transcendental functionalism searching for the conditions of possibility of something which has worked historically. Any justificationist takes (i) to (iv) to be acceptable and rather weak assumptions indeed. The argument centres on the *normativity* of meaning: since we should use an expression only on some occasions, we have to justify that our using the expression concerns an occasion of the appropriate type.

"verification" in such a narrow sense is to engage in putting forward reasons why some belief is true, and which so long as being undefeated allow for assuming the corresponding facts to obtain.

A shorter version of an argument for (Internalism) might concern the *felicity conditions* of assertions:

1. I assert α if and only if I claim α to be true.
   [by definition]

2. For any speaker, sentence, event: if event *e* consists in A claiming α to be true and *e* is successful, then it is possible to justify α.
   [*Felicity Condition* of Assertions][3]

In some steps we get:

3. For any sentence α: If it is not possible to justify α, then there is no event *e* such that there is a speaker A such that *e* consists in A´s claiming α to be true. ■

This conclusion makes epistemically transcendent statements/sentences *unassertible*. And if strong external – or modal – realism depends on sentences which are *unassertible* we should give it up, according to the justificationist. Having semantics set apart from epistemology a conceptual atomist need not worry about this internalism. It can even be made stronger.

[3] This condition would, of course, have to be argued for. A theory of speech acts might do so (cf. e.g. Searle 1969, Searle/Vanderveken 1985). Asserting would lose its *point* if I am not taking responsibility for what I assert. Without the requirement of justification and justification being decidable I could assert just anything.

One of the central arguments of justificationism runs as follows:

(J_1)

1. The primary semantic unit (of appraisal) is the assertion (the statement made).
2. Assertion is conceptually linked to justification.
3. Justification has to use intersubjectively accessible procedures
4. These procedures have to relate to the statement in question.
5. These procedures relate to the statement's connection to reality.
6. Thus these procedures concern the referring and the reference of the statement.
7. Rule governed procedures which concern the referring and the reference of the statement are the meaning of the statement.
8. Thus the intersubjective procedures *of justifying* the statement *are* the meaning of the statement.

Premise (1) repeats a common observation, this being a starting point for semantic arguments from Frege on. Premise (2) links the evaluation of statements made (in asserting a sentence) to commitments of justification, a claim that stems from speech act theory (for arguments along these lines cf. Searle 1969, Searle/Vanderveken 1985). Premise (3) expresses the notion that ultimately only intersubjective agreement can distinguish mere opinion from shared reference. Premise (7), of course, will not be accepted by a conceptual atomist. It expresses the idea that meaning consists in semantic rules. Even if that is not the whole truth – especially if these rules are considered to be cognitively penetrable – still there is room for the presence of semantic rules, as argued above. The crucial step to (8) is *not* deductive, but appeals to plausibility and simplicity.

§4

The relation between justificatory procedures and meaning cannot be identity if CA is true. The correlation is not as simple as the argument claims if there are no definitions. Still even analytic dependencies express necessary conditions for a concept or lexical item to apply. If

(1) $(\forall x)(F(x) \supset G(x)$

was a meaning postulate, the truth of "G(a)" would not imply the truth of "F(a)", but it would *confirm* its truth in a Bayesian sense (that evidence about consequence raises the probability of a

claim). And the absence of "G(a)" may point to counterevidence, since the presence of "¬G(a)" would be a defeater of "F(a)" (by contraposition of (3)).

The argument (J_1), even if not establishing the identity of justificatory procedures and meaning, can be understood – in light of the discussion here – as establishing that justificatory procedures are *intimately linked* to meanings. The strength of this linkage bears emphasis:

1. For definable meanings justificatory procedures taking up the criteria used in the definition may come close to be the proper complete meaning.
2. For other lexical items the analytic dependencies laid down in their lexical entries link them to justificatory procedures making use of the conditions occurring in these analytic dependencies.
3. As there are internal disquotational truth theories for languages with disquotational truth conditions their right-hand sides might be read as manuals for justification, if we possess knowledge about recognizing instances of the property referred to by a concept.

As mentioned, one criterion concepts and theoretical concepts (and the corresponding lexical items) provide a whole field for observation (1) to apply. For the majority of lexical items observation (2) might apply.

Once we start applying justificatory procedures to statements we can discern the crucial roles of singular and general terms for these justifications.

We can spell out (J_1) further into the following subsidiary arguments:

(J_2)

1. Assertions are made to establish intersubjective reference, only thus we have objects.
2. A singular term has to provide us with the object of further determination.
3. Singular terms individuate (they delimit something according to the rule 'Find α!').
4. This delimitation presupposes (a) conditions to single out something, and (b) a system of objects.
5. On the linguistic level (a) and (b) correspond to localisation by means of deictic expressions and a descriptive component within the meaning of a singular term.
6. In as much as objects can be re-identified they have to have conditions of re-identification.
7. On the linguistic level (6) corresponds to the ability to trace the objects by means of a sortal predicate (covering the essential properties of an individual of some sort).
8. Thus, the meaning of singular terms incorporates some general terms (or presupposes some sortal concepts).
9. Thus, some singular terms are more basic in establishing a system of location beforehand (i.e. pronouns, deictic terms).
10. Non-basic singular terms are learned either by description relative to an already established system of localization or by local situations of baptism.

Premise (1) repeats the thesis on the primary semantic unit. As statements are compositional the phrases and constituents have complementary roles in referring, singular terms – as (2) repeats the common wisdom – refer to objects, or at least are supposed to refer to objects. An object should be distinguished from other objects and thus one should be able to single it out from a system of more objects. And being an enduring entity one should be able to come back to it. One should, therefore, be able to trace and/or re-identify some object in question. As we still use the same singular term for this re-identified object the singular term should contain the means for this continued identifying talk. These observations (4) – (7) make the theses plausible that at least some

singular terms have descriptive content and that some other more basic singular terms are employed to introduce the more complex singular terms. The core of the meaning of such a definable singular term is a rule for identification. For those singular terms which are non-definable – some of which may be accounted for by the usual externalist stories about reference – it is not their meaning which consists in the rule for identifying some object, but they still can be linked to procedures of individuation. Even proper names inherited by some 'chain of communication' go back to a situation of initial baptism, which again depended on the applicability of some sortal predicate or concept.

The general term (the predicate) then applies more content to the object identified.

(J_3)

1. General terms provide the situational/empirical content of a statement.
2. Their function is to discriminate already identified objects.
3. Their basic semantic rule is 'Check whether α is *so and so*!'.
4. Such rules contain criteria of justifying the presence of *so and so*.
5. These criteria, distinguishing general terms and analytic dependencies establish a system of general terms.
6. General terms are learned by encountering examples and employing some standard of similarity.

The basic rule coming with a general term is a rule of classification. The "so and so" mentioned in (3) and (4) may be either a linguistic description of a property or may directly employ some concept SO AND SO. Again the semantic rules mentioned in (3) need not be the whole truth about meaning. And claim (6) has to be given up or has to be substantially extended in the light of CA and its critic of the empiricist idea of similarity standards and their role in learning or establishing concepts.

Given this limited appropriation of the core ideas of a justificationist semantics, we are not back at justificationist semantics in full force. We have not established some version of *procedural semantics* (cf. Winograd 1973). We have, however, established – or opened up for – the presence

of *semantic procedures*. CA does not forbid, is indeed compatible with and – so the argument went – even better of by incorporating some ideas inherited from the death bed of procedural semantics.

§5

Just as a toy example I present some such procedures in PSEUSO-CODE fashion (related to the programming language PASCAL):

```
function justify(statement): boolean;
var
     sT, gT: expression;
begin
     sT := parse(statement, singTerm);
     gT := parse(statement, genTerm);
     justify := apply(gT, identify(sT))
end.
function identify(singTerm): object;
function apply(genTerm, object): boolean;
function parse(statement, gramTyp): expression;
```

PSEUDO-CODE

JUSTIFYING A STATEMENT

Thus the function `justify` should take us from a statement to a truth value. It does so by employing sub-functions to parse the statement for its constituent terms. The parsing sub-function is merely syntactic and simple (as is well known from parsing natural languages). The main step in `justify` is to apply the so-parsed general term to the result of the sub-function `identify`, which delivers the object referred to by the singular term.

For `apply` to work we need a more general function, which fetches the appropriate procedure for a general term from some lexical look-up table. This table might be thought of as our program's equivalent of a lexicon.

So, we need something like:

```
function lexlookup(expression): procedure;
```

`apply` has to get spelled out to a program of this type:

```
function apply(genTerm, object): boolean;
var
     p: procedure;
begin
     p := lexlookup(genTerm);
     apply := call p(object)
end.
```

PSEUDO-CODE

APPLYING A LEXICALIZED PROCEDURE

Correspondingly there has some such look-up procedure involved in `identify`.

Now, an example.

Take the statement:

(α) The longest word of the hit list starts with a “b”.

`parse(α, singTerm)` will deliver: “the longest word of the hitlist”.

Linked to this singular term we may have the procedure:

```
procedure longestWordHitList(list, OUT object);
var
     ob: object;
     int: integer;
begin
     ob := list[1];
     int := 2;
     while list < > [ ]   do
          begin
          if length(ob) < length(list[int]) then
               ob := list[int];
          int := int + 1;
          end;
     return ob
end.
```

PSEUDO-CODE

EXAMPLE OF IDENTIFICATION RULE LINKED TO A SINGULAR TERM

`parse(α, genTerm)` will deliver "( ) starts with a ‚b'".

The procedure linked to that could be:

```
procedure startsWithB(expression, OUT boolean);
var
     letter: char;
begin
     letter := expression[1];
     if  letter = 'b' then
     return true
     else
     return false
end.
```

PSEUDO-CODE

EXAMPLE OF CLASSIFICATION RULE LINKED TO A GENERAL TERM

A machine implementing a corresponding program would be a (partial) implementation of semantic rule-following in the sense of justificationist semantics.

In CA as presented here there are two ways of connecting up to reality. One concerns the original route the concept was established, the other might give justificationist ideas their place.

§6

Often – and especially in theories under the heading 'semantic holism' – we explain the meaning of a statement by just another statement: "Miezie is a cat" means something like "Miezie is a feline mammal". And we may make use of this second statement as delivering criteria in judging the correctness of applying the first statement ("No, this isn't a cat at all, since this isn't a mammal, but some Martian penguin vaguely looking like a cat."). Thus, linguistic descriptions made in some language occur in our semantic rules for that very language. The problem of the regress starts with the simple question, how this second description is rule-governed itself. If another rule is introduced, we need another one, and so on. So, Wittgenstein, in his discussion of rule-following, considers any theory like semantic holism as inappropriate. Any interpretation would need an

interpretation itself, and therefore leaves us hanging in the air (cf. 1953: §198). On the other hand, according to Wittgenstein, any behaviour could be made fitting any rule if we just re-interpret the rule, since the rules aren't determined enough. For example: If you re-interpret "mammal" as "mammal seen before 2007, and fridge ever after" you are free to come up with strange statements about cats in 2007.

I will consider two solutions to the regress problem, which are also two interpretations of Wittgenstein:

a) the recourse on some *capacity*:
McGinn´s Wittgenstein (McGinn 1984)
b) the recourse on the *praxis* of rule-following:
Kripke´s Wittgenstein (Kripke 1982).

(ad a)

If one appeals to a capacity of rule-following the regress of rule-following vanishes: We speak the way we speak, since we have a corresponding capacity. This seems to explain nothing. That we swim because we have the capacity to swim, stated thus, does not explain anything (how do we do it?). The same holds for language. Secondly: Inasmuch as the regress should be avoided the capacity to follow a rule must *not* be rule-governed itself. Semantic decisionism (being the opposite of orientation on rules), however, violates our intuition that we have *reasons* to employ this expression and not another. Wittgenstein says himself that when we follow a rule, we don't choose (cf. §219). And understanding 'capacity' as employing a causal mechanism (like our capacity to stand upright) is in danger of giving away on the normativity of language usage: our choice of word can be *wrong*, causality just operates.

(ad b)

In Kripke´s solution, that which determines the correct application of an expression is the *common practise* of a language community. No rule but 'praxis' speaks for itself. Rule-following is specified by a behaviour that *accords* to the rule. We fit in, tune in to our linguistic community. Convergence within the community constitutes the rule in the first place. But is this an alternative to (a) or to semantic holism? Instead of a subjective capacity we now have a social habit. But *how* do I take part in this habit? I seem to need the capacity to participate in the doings of my speech community. Since there are – *ex hypothesis* – no *rules* laid down to which I adjust I have to *tune in* to my community. The notion of 'praxis' is by itself not clearer than that of 'capacity' or that of

'rule-following'. Even if the conformity within the language community is part of securing the proper application of the semantic rules, it cannot substitute for explicit regulations. A *mere praxis* is not better than any other praxis. That people talk this way today about cats does not make it the *right way* to talk so. In the face of rule scepticism we might even say: How can we distinguish between wrong applications and a change of rule? If we orient ourselves to the majority of the speakers, how is it possible to criticise the majority for an incorrect employment of an expression? Why can't Elena be the only left competent user of "cat"? Shouldn't we, at least, require that the majority adheres to its own standards (i.e. rules) of usage so far? The majority might be the institution to change rules, but once it has laid down a rule we should be able to criticise its behaviour with reference to these stipulations. We seem to lose the normativity of rule-following if the majority is in its praxis always right. And the praxis of a community is as re-interpretable as any behaviour. So (b) also leaves the scepticism undefeated.

These are reasons enough to see whether we don't do better in solving the regress problem *within* semantic holism. The main problem of semantic holism is our intuition of a regress. Justification, further on, is *holistic*: We give reasons without going back to some ultimate 'given' or 'incorrigible' facts, we refer to other reasons instead, even if this means going in circles, given that the circles are wide enough. Reasons (statements held to be true) support other reasons/statements, but we *can* always put the last reason given to test.

Nevertheless, we can solve the regress as follows: Because of the holistic procedure of justification (and therefore of meaning something) we are allowed to keep asking for further reasons *in principle*, but in doing so we employ a meta-rule of *sufficient foundations*:

(SR_2) If there is no founded/reasoned doubt, there is no need for further foundation/argumentation.

We employ the semantic rules in some situation and try to conform to the habits of our community. If someone asks us why we do so, we explain our usage by reference to the fulfilment of the criteria of use (i.e. give reasons by citing a second description like "feline mammal"). This duty is part of the normativity of meaning. But if in respect to the fulfilment of some criteria in such an argument after several steps there is no longer reasoned doubt (i.e. no foundation for belief in their non-fulfilment), why should we proceed in founding our claims? Our argument now is (relative to all claims founded in *that* debate) sufficient. Relative to our knowledge of this state of the argument and our knowledge of the rule of meaning it is the optimal logical procedure to evaluate the usage as 'correct'. All reasons we have now speak in favour of this evaluation. This is neither an act of decisionism nor an act of some capacity, but the application of our rule-following procedures which can be taken up again in principle and has been interrupted only at a sufficiently clear point.

So the meta-rule seems to be the lesser evil in comparison to the consequences of (a) and (b). We have *not overcome* the principled problem of the regress, but we can see that it is *harmless* if we employ our rule of sufficient foundation. The regress problem has our intuition of foundation as its driving force. But with respect to our intuitions the meta-rule as a principle that an argument just has to be *sufficiently* clear seems equally strong. Our pre-understanding of rule-following, therefore, doesn't decide the matter. And all other reasons in our comparison of (a), (b) and justificatory holism speak in its favour. There is nothing wrong with stating the justificatory conditions of a sentence by giving another sentence.