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Semantic Non-factualism in Kripke's Wittgenstein

Daniel Boyd

Kripke's Wittgenstein is standardly understood as a non-factualist about meaning ascription. Non-factualism about meaning ascription is the idea that sentences like "Joe means addition by 'plus'" are not used to state facts about the world. Byrne and Kusch have argued that Kripke's Wittgenstein is not a non-factualist about meaning ascription. They are aware that their interpretation is non-standard, but cite arguments from Boghossian and Wright to support their view. Boghossian argues that non-factualism about meaning ascription is incompatible with a deflationary theory of truth. Wright argues that non-factualism about meaning ascription is incoherent. To support the standard interpretation, I'll respond to each argument in turn. To the degree that my responses are successful, Byrne and Kusch have an unmotivated interpretation of Kripke's Wittgenstein. Wilson provides a factualist interpretation that is not based on Boghossian and Wright's arguments. Miller argues for a non-factualist interpretation against Wilson, but I'll show that Miller's interpretation faces a dilemma. Miller's argument cannot be maintained if a coherent interpretation of the skeptical solution is to be provided. I'll show how this dilemma can be avoided and provide an independent argument against Wilson so that a non-factualist interpretation of the skeptical solution can be maintained.

Semantic Non-factualism in Kripke's Wittgenstein

Daniel Boyd

1. Introduction

In *Wittgenstein: On Rules and Private Language*, Saul Kripke develops a “skeptical paradox” about meaning (Kripke 1982, 7–13). Since Kripke distances himself from the ideas in the book, I will attribute the ideas in his book to Kripke's Wittgenstein (KW). In response to the paradox, KW provides a “skeptical solution”. This skeptical solution involves a non-factualist analysis of meaning ascription (where meaning ascriptions are sentences like “Monique means cat by ‘cat’”). As I understand it, the relevant non-factualism is just the idea that meaning ascriptions are not used to state facts about the world.

Paul Boghossian (1989) and Crispin Wright (1984) have argued that the skeptical solution's non-factual analysis of meaning ascription is untenable. Alex Byrne (1996) and Martin Kusch (2006) have endorsed some of the arguments from Wright and Boghossian, but do not see them as a reason to give up the skeptical solution. Rather, they see the arguments as evidence that KW should not be interpreted as a non-factualist about meaning ascription.

As it is my view that KW is a non-factualist about meaning ascription, I am going to argue against Byrne and Kusch's interpretation. I will do this by responding to the arguments they cite from Boghossian and Wright when motivating their views. Byrne cites Boghossian's argument that non-factualism about meaning ascription is inconsistent with deflationary theories of truth. I will show that this argument fails because of

an equivocation in the notion of truth conditions. Kusch cites Boghossian's argument as well as an argument from Wright that non-factualism about meaning ascription is by itself an incoherent position. According to Wright's argument, non-factualism about meaning ascription entails a global non-factualism for all statements. I will show that Wright's argument presupposes the falsity of a deflationary theory of truth that KW explicitly endorses. So these arguments from Boghossian and Wright do not compromise the coherence of KW's non-factualism about meaning, and that undermines the motivation for Byrne and Kusch's interpretation.

Wilson (2002) provides a factualist interpretation that is not based on arguments from Wright and Boghossian. Miller (2010) criticizes this position, and offers a non-factualist interpretation instead. To motivate the criticism against Wilson, Miller employs an argument from Wright. But this argument from Wright cannot be accepted unless the skeptical solution is rejected. I'll provide an independent reason for resisting Wilson's interpretation so that a coherent non-factualist interpretation of the skeptical solution can be provided.

I will first explain the skeptical paradox. I will then outline my own interpretation of KW's skeptical solution. After that, I will respond to the arguments from Boghossian and Wright that Byrne and Kusch cite to motivate their interpretations. Then, I'll look at Wilson's interpretation and Miller's non-factualist criticism. I'll reconstruct the argument from Wright that Miller cites and reply to it by showing how a response can be provided on analogy with KW's resolution of the original paradox about meaning.

2. The Skeptical Paradox

Suppose you had never added any numbers that were higher than 68 or 57. If someone asked you “what is 68 plus 57?”,

then you would probably respond by saying “125”. On past occasions when you used the word “plus”, what you meant by that word was the plus function (which of course returns 125 when 68 and 57 are provided as inputs). Given that you ought to answer in a way that corresponds with what you meant in the past, 125 is not just the answer you would probably give, it is the answer that you *should* give.¹ This all seems commonplace, but a skeptic could suppose that on past occasions when you used the word “plus”, what you actually meant by “plus” was the quus function. The quus function is just like the plus function except for one thing. If either of the two input numbers for the quus function is 57 or greater, the quus function returns 5. Now the skeptic’s proposal that you previously meant quus by “plus” is preposterous. But supposing it was true, and given that you ought to have answered the initial question “what is 68 plus 57?” in a way that corresponded with what you previously meant by “plus”, you should have answered “5” to the initial question. This cannot be right, but is there any fact about your past mental states or behavior that could establish that you meant plus and not quus by your use of “plus” in the past? For various reasons that I will not go into, the skeptic in Kripke’s dialogue concludes that there is no such fact. Now the skeptical paradox is this. If there could not be a fact that established whether you meant plus rather than quus by your use of “plus” in the past, then how could you have meant anything by your use of “plus” at all? Moreover, if there are no facts to establish what you meant in the past, then how could you ever mean anything by any word?

¹See Glüer and Wikforss (2009). There is an issue about whether there are obligations with respect to linguistic use and if so what their source is. I will talk in terms of obligation, but the issue can be raised instead with the notion of correctness.

3. Interpreting the Skeptical Solution

The skeptical solution is best understood as involving three components (Kripke 1982, 55–86). The first is a deflationary theory of truth. The exact nature of KW’s version of deflationism is not so important here, so I will just make some general comments that I think are relevant. There is a metaphor that is helpful for understanding deflationary theories of truth. The idea is that truth has no nature. Unlike certain things, such as gravity or heat, truth is not something for which we can gain any substantive knowledge. Rather, we can at best say something about the meaning of the word “true” or its function in our language. A common idea is that the word “true” is used as a device for committing ourselves to the content of other people’s beliefs, but whatever functions it may serve, for our purposes, we can think of its meaning as being encapsulated in the following disquotational schema:

(DS) “S” is true iff S.

The second component of the skeptical solution is a warranted-use theory of meaning. On such a theory, the meaning of indicative sentences is characterized in terms of their conditions of warranted use. It is not exactly clear how to understand this since there are multiple senses of warrant (Price 2003). Sometimes we call an assertion unwarranted when a speaker does not believe what they assert. Other times we say a speaker’s assertion is unwarranted when they lack some kind of grounds for their assertion even when they believe it. Are either of these the relevant notions of warrant that KW has in mind? Clarifying the relevant notion of warrant looks like a serious puzzle, and we could make even more nuanced distinctions. Fortunately, I do not think it is important to focus on this here. Keeping in mind that there is an issue concerning how to understand the relevant notion of warrant, it is helpful to think about warranted-use

theories as a reaction to truth-conditional theories of meaning. The skeptical solution rejects truth-conditional theories of meaning in a highly specific sense. According to these theories, the meaning of statements is explained in terms of their truth conditions and truth conditions are understood in terms of the early Wittgenstein. The early Wittgenstein idea is that every statement in our language corresponds with a possible fact and that each statement is true if its corresponding fact holds and false otherwise. I will refer to this view as the Tractarian theory of meaning. It gives us a sense of truth conditions that I will call Tractarian truth conditions.

The third component of the skeptical solution is a non-factualism about meaning ascription. When KW is explaining how we have to understand meaning ascriptions to avoid the skeptical paradox he says:

(K1) ... it becomes more plausible that the linguistic role even of utterances in the indicative mood that superficially look like assertions need not be one of 'stating facts'. (Kripke 1982, 73)

This non-factualism is interpreted in various ways in the literature. According to the way I understand it, on a warranted-use theory of meaning, it is open for us to think that meaning ascriptions are not used to state facts, for example, facts about a speaker's psychology or behavioral dispositions.² While some sentences like "Lou weighs less than a ton" are used to state facts, on the skeptical solution, sentences like "Lou means addition by 'plus'" do not play a fact-stating role.

Sentences concerning ordinary objects and theoretical physical entities (like electrons) are typically understood as being used to state facts. But when considering sentences that ascribe taste, humor, numbers, and even morals, some philosophers

²Of course then they must play some other role. I will not delve into this, but notice Frege-Geach worries arise here. Also, there is an issue concerning what explains why non-factual language (or any language) is truth-apt.

have claimed that they might not be used for a fact-stating purpose. It is disputable where the boundary between fact-stating and non-fact-stating language is, but while some may deny the distinction altogether, there does seem to be an intuitive distinction. Nonetheless it would be nice if we could say more than mere explanation by way of example to give an account of what fact stating amounts to.

Some philosophers have invoked causal notions to explain the distinction. For example, Blackburn says that when we use language concerning ordinary objects, "we embrace not only the tables and chairs it posits, but a distinct view about our relation to them. We must think of ourselves as causally influenced by them, and sensitive to their multitude of properties: their position, creation, destruction, properties and changes" (Blackburn 2007, 11). KW does not invoke this theory or any other theory to say what it is to state a fact. It is typically true that when we ascribe meaning to a person, our ascriptions are causally influenced by the person's mental states and behavior. But according to the skeptical paradox, neither mental states nor behavior can be identified with an entity or fact that we could rightfully call a "meaning".

Supposing that there are no meaning facts or entities, this is still not by itself a reason for thinking that meaning ascriptions function differently from ordinary object statements. There are no ghosts, but this isn't a reason for thinking that statements about ghosts are non-factual. It is a reason for thinking that ghost statements are false. So if there are no meaning entities, why not say meaning ascriptions are systematically false? I take it that this skeptical conclusion is not a live option since it involves the self-undermining conclusion that we never mean anything. Meaning ascription must then operate in a different way. We naturally express this by saying that meaning ascriptions are not used for the purpose of stating facts. This idea, that meaning ascriptions do not state facts is the key to resolving the paradox.

If meaning ascriptions are not properly understood as stating facts, then no paradox will arise from the skeptic's contention that no fact could establish whether a person meant plus or quus by their use of "plus" in the past.

In (K1), it is important that we understand KW as only making a point about *some* indicative statements. Meaning statements are non-factual, but statements about ordinary objects are not. The evidence for this is in a remark about Wittgenstein concerning a distinction between numerals and terms like 'slab'. KW says, "Nevertheless the legitimacy, in its own way, of the expression 'stand for numbers' should not lead us to think of numerals as similar to expressions such as 'slab', 'pillar', and the like" (Kripke 1982, 74). On KW's deflationary theory of truth, no assertion corresponds with a fact that determines its truth value. So for KW, no statement has Tractarian truth conditions. Since some statements are understood as fact-stating, we cannot identify KW's non-factualism with the idea that a statement lacks Tractarian truth conditions. This will be relevant as some interpret KW's non-factualism as only involving the idea that meaning ascriptions lack Tractarian truth conditions.

Before I look at Boghossian's argument, I want to make a comment about how it has influenced Byrne's interpretation of KW. Byrne uses the argument from Boghossian to motivate the idea that it is wrong to think of KW as a non-factualist (Byrne 1996, 341). As evidence for a factualist interpretation, he cites the following passage where KW comments on meaning ascription:

(K2) Can we not with propriety precede such assertions with 'It is a fact that' or 'It is not a fact that'? (Kripke 1982, 86)

It is puzzling to me why the propriety of fact speech would be evidence that KW is a factualist about meaning ascription in any interesting sense. Byrne is aware that his factualist interpretation is in obvious tension with passages like (K1). To explain passages like (K1), he says that KW is . . .

. . . only concerned to deny the existence of a "superlative

fact' . . . about my mind that constitutes my meaning addition by 'plus'." But the lack of a *superlative* fact certainly does not mean, according to Kripke's Wittgenstein, the lack of any fact at all. (Byrne 1996, 342)

Byrne does not say whether this leftover fact amounts to anything more than the idea that it is appropriate to append the phrase "it is a fact that" to our meaning ascriptions. If it is something more, Byrne does not say what this non-superlative fact is supposed to amount to. If it is not something more, it is not clear why we should be motivated to call KW a factualist about meaning ascription. To my knowledge no one denies that KW is a factualist in the very limited sense that it is acceptable to append "it is a fact that" to a meaning ascription.

It makes sense for Byrne to cite Boghossian. Boghossian argues that non-factualism about meaning ascription is incompatible with KW's deflationary theory of truth. If Boghossian were right, and we wanted to maintain the coherence of KW's position, then we would have to read KW as a factualist about meaning ascription.

4. Is Deflationism About Truth Compatible With Non-factualism about Meaning?

Boghossian runs a *reductio* argument against the skeptical solution. His argument relies on the claim that non-factualism about meaning is incompatible with deflationary truth theories (Boghossian 1989, 525–26). I find the argument for this claim unconvincing. Byrne accepts the claim, but rather than seeing this as a refutation of the skeptical solution, he takes it as a reason to read KW as a factualist about meaning ascription.³

³More precisely, Byrne says he uses the claim that "deflationism about truth aptness is incompatible with non-factualism". Boghossian's deflationary theory of truth involves a deflationary theory of truth aptness.

According to how Boghossian understands deflationary theories of truth, meaning ascriptions have truth conditions as long as they are significant and declarative (Boghossian 1989, 525–26). He does not really say what he means by truth conditions, but since meaning ascriptions are significant and declarative, this would entail that they have truth conditions. Boghossian concludes that the skeptical solution must therefore give up its claim that meaning ascriptions lack truth conditions, or else reject a deflationary theory of truth. Since the skeptical solution rejects truth conditions for meaning ascriptions and accepts a deflationary theory of truth, this is an apparent dilemma. But if we look closely we can see that the skeptical solution has not been refuted. It is true that the skeptical solution involves a rejection of truth conditions for meaning ascriptions, but recall that the rejected notion of truth conditions was highly specific.

The skeptical solution's rejection of truth conditions was a rejection of the early Wittgenstein's ontology of possible facts that correspond with statements and determine their truth values. But does a rejection of truth conditions in this Tractarian sense prevent one from being a deflationist about truth? This is far from obvious. The deflationary theory of truth that Boghossian outlines entails that statements have truth conditions when they are significant and declarative. The reasoning behind this is that we can interchange a significant declarative sentence *S* with "It is true that *S*". As far as I can tell, the only sense in which this fact about interchangeability entails that *S* has truth conditions is that the disquotational schema applies to *S*. But then it has only been shown that significant declarative statements have truth conditions in the sense that the disquotational schema applies to significant declarative statements. This does

It is worth mentioning that Alexis Burgess defends the claim that non-factualism is compatible with a deflationary theory of truth in Burgess (2010). However, he defines non-factualism as the denial of bivalence. This is not the non-factualism in KW.

not amount to an acceptance of truth conditions in the sense envisioned by the early Wittgenstein, so it should be open for an adherent of the skeptical solution to accept truth conditions for meaning ascriptions in the disquotational sense and still deny that meaning ascriptions have truth conditions in the Tractarian sense. That is unless there was some argument that the applicability of the disquotational schema to a statement entailed the existence of a possible fact that corresponded with it, making it true if it obtained, and false otherwise. Boghossian at least does not provide such an argument. So even if we (wrongly) identified KW's meaning non-factualism with the idea that meaning ascriptions do not have Tractarian truth conditions, we would still be left without a reason for thinking that deflationism about truth is incompatible with non-factualism about meaning. So we lose Byrne's motivation for reading KW as a factualist about meaning ascription.

Before looking at Wright's argument, it will be worth commenting on how it relates to Kusch's interpretation of KW. Kusch, being influenced by Boghossian and Wright, has like Byrne, interpreted KW as a factualist about meaning ascription (Kusch 2006, 158). Kusch is also aware that this is difficult to square with passages like (K1). He has suggested that passages like these be understood as denying that meaning ascriptions have Tractarian truth conditions (2006, 168–75). Surely this is part of KW's view, but I think Kusch is missing a key feature of KW's non-factualism about meaning. As I argued previously on the basis of the slab passage, KW's non-factualism is not global, even though KW does globally reject that statements have Tractarian truth conditions. Part of Kusch's hesitance to read KW as a non-factualist about meaning ascription is based on Wright's argument that non-factualism about meaning requires global non-factualism for all statements. I will turn to this argument now.

5. Does Non-factualism About Meaning Entail Global Non-Factualism?

Wright interprets KW as holding the view that meaning ascriptions are not used to state facts. I think this is correct, but Wright argues that such a view entails a global non-factualism for all statements. Wright sees this as a reason to think the skeptical solution is incoherent. But Kusch cites this point to argue that KW was never a non-factualist in the first place. My view is that Wright's argument fails. So, it is not a reason to reject the skeptical solution or read KW as a factualist. I will reconstruct Wright's argument as I understand it.

- (A1) The skeptical solution is a form of projectivism about meaning ascription.
- (A2) Projectivism about meaning ascription entails projectivism about the truth of all statements.
- (A3) The skeptical solution entails projectivism about the truth of all statements.
- (A4) Projectivism about the truth of all statements is incoherent.
- (AC) Therefore, the skeptical solution is incoherent.

Wright explains projective statements by saying that they "are actually used not to state facts but rather to *project* various aspects of speakers' attitudes and affective responses" (Wright 1984, 761). So Wright's projectivism involves two ideas. One is that projective statements are not used to state facts. The other is that projective statements are used to "project" some kind of psychological state. I do not think the skeptical solution involves the idea that meaning ascriptions are used to project psychological states, but the non-fact-stating aspect is what is relevant in Wright's argument.

So on Wright's view, the following corollary of (A2) will hold:

- (A2*) If meaning ascriptions are not used to state facts, then truth ascriptions (i.e., sentences like "S is true") are not used to state facts.

As far as I can tell, the negation of (A2*) is unproblematic. Why couldn't we hold a view where some truth ascriptions are used to state facts even if meaning ascriptions are not? Wright supports (A2*) with a conditional claim about truth. He says, "If the truth value of S is determined by its meaning and the state of the world in relevant respects, then non-factuality in one of the determinants can be expected to induce non-factuality in the outcome" (Wright 1984, 769).

This conditional is only relevant if its antecedent is true, but why think a statement's truth value is determined by its meaning and the state of the world? On deflationary theories of truth, a statement's truth value is not really "determined" by anything because truth has no nature. Wright gestures at the idea that deflationary theories of truth would be difficult to work out, but he does not offer an argument for the needed antecedent. While Wright's argument for (A2*) is inconclusive at best, Boghossian has provided an independent argument for (what *prima facie* looks like) the same claim (Boghossian 1989, 524 note 30). It is therefore important for me to say something about this.

We should first note how Boghossian uses the term "non-factualist". He says, "The canonical formulation of a non-factualist view—and the one that Kripke himself favors—has it that some targeted declarative sentence is not genuinely truth-conditional" (Boghossian 1989, 524). By "genuinely truth-conditional", I think Boghossian is referring to something like the early Wittgenstein's conception of truth conditions. I have already argued that KW's non-factualism has to be something more than the mere rejection of Tractarian truth conditions, but we can in any case formulate Boghossian's canonical non-factualism about meaning ascription like this:

(NFMA) For any S, p : '[S] means that p ' is not genuinely truth-conditional.

Boghossian thinks this implies the following:

(NFTC) For any S, p : '[S] has truth-condition p ' is not genuinely truth-conditional.

He explains this by saying that "Since the truth-condition of any sentence S is (in part, anyway) a function of its meaning, a non-factualism about meaning will enjoin a non-factualism about truth conditions" (Boghossian 1989, 525). For any sentence S , it should be true that if [S] is genuinely truth-conditional, then '[S] has truth-condition p ' is genuinely truth-conditional. It then follows that:

(GNF) For any S , [S] is not genuinely truth-conditional.

I think Boghossian has shown that canonical non-factualism about meaning ascription entails canonical non-factualism for all statements, but has he shown that (A2*) is true?

(A2*) is the claim that if meaning ascriptions are not used to state facts, then truth ascriptions are not used to state facts. This is not the sense of non-factualism that is operative in Boghossian's argument that non-factualism about meaning ascription entails non-factualism for all statements. There, Boghossian uses the "canonical" formulation of non-factualism. According to this definition, what he established was that if meaning ascriptions do not have genuine truth conditions, then no statement has genuine truth conditions. Given that non-factualism about meaning ascription has only been shown to entail global non-factualism in this sense, Wright's (A2*) has not been established by Boghossian. If one could provide an argument that sentences are not used to state facts when they lack genuine truth conditions, then (A2*) could be shown. But as far as I can tell, it is consistent to think sentences can be used to

state facts even when the statements formed with them lack genuine truth conditions.⁴ If it had been shown that meaning non-factualism entailed global non-factualism, Wright would be correct in thinking that meaning non-factualism was incoherent. But since no such thing has been shown, Kusch's factualist interpretation of KW is unmotivated.

I think we can offer something like a diagnosis of what is going on with Boghossian's argument. On the skeptical solution, meaning ascriptions can be understood as non-factual in two different senses. They lack Tractarian truth conditions, but also, they are not used to state facts. Boghossian may be aware of this distinction. He says, "For consider a non-factualism solely about meaning—the view that, since there is no such property as a word's meaning something, and hence no such fact, no meaning-attributing sentence can be truth-conditional" (Boghossian 1989, 524).⁵ Here he refers to the idea that there

⁴Wilson (2002, 246) draws the distinction between a sentence not having Tractarian truth conditions and it not being used to state facts. He notes that there doesn't seem to be an implication from the former to the later, but does not assume that Wright is making this inference (see p. 249). From the previously cited passage from Wright, it is evident that Wright accepts an implication from the non-factuality of meaning to the non-factuality of truth (given a certain kind of non-deflationary theory of truth). That would also show (A2*), but the point in the text is that a non-deflationary theory of truth cannot be assumed since KW explicitly holds the opposite.

⁵In this passage, Boghossian moves from the claim that there are no meaning facts to the claim that there are no genuine truth conditions for meaning ascriptions. But there is a more general immediate consequence that follows from the claim that there are no meaning facts. If there are no meaning facts, then there are no Tractarian truth conditions for any sentence (meaning ascription or otherwise). Boghossian provides an argument for the claim that if there are no genuine truth conditions for meaning ascriptions, then there are no genuine truth conditions for any claim. But Wilson (2002, 245) has pointed out that this argument does not seem to be in the text of KW. On Wilson's interpretation of KW, the general rejection of Tractarian truth conditions results from a *reductio* on the assumption that any meaningful statement has Tractarian truth conditions. So the rejection of Tractarian truth conditions for meaning ascriptions can be seen as an instance of the general rejection of

are no meaning properties (or facts which could be stated). Because of the lack of facts to be stated, he says meaning sentences cannot be truth-conditional. If there are no Tractarian truth conditions for meaning ascriptions, then Boghossian's argument shows that no statement has Tractarian truth conditions. But even if no statement has Tractarian truth conditions, it does not follow that there is no such thing as fact-stating language. In the case of meaning ascriptions, these two notions of non-factuality overlap. Meaning ascriptions lack Tractarian truth conditions, but over and above this they are not used to state facts. Perhaps this gives rise to the assumption that if a sentence lacks Tractarian truth conditions, then it is not used to state facts. It must be kept in mind though that a global non-factualism has only been shown to follow in the sense that no statement has Tractarian truth conditions. If we had an argument that sentences are not used to state facts when they lack Tractarian truth conditions, then we would have an argument that there is no such thing as fact-stating language. But we have not come across an argument like that.

6. A Factualist Interpretation not Based on Wright or Boghossian

George Wilson (2002, 241, 247) argues for a factualist interpretation of KW that is not motivated on the basis of arguments from Boghossian or Wright. He distinguishes between the following two forms of non-factualism about meaning ascription:

Tractarian truth conditions. I agree with Wilson that Boghossian's argument doesn't seem to be in the text of KW. This way the rejection of Tractarian truth conditions for meaning ascriptions can be seen as an instance of the general rejection of Tractarian truth conditions for all statements, so that we do not need to see Boghossian's argument as filling the place of any gap in KW's reasoning. Miller's reading shares this interpretive advantage of not having to posit such a gap, but I will say more about Wilson and Miller and where I disagree with them below.

- (S₃) Sentences of the form [X means Ψ by $[\Phi]$] do not have classical realist truth conditions. (Wilson 2002, 247)
- (S*) There are no facts about X that assertions of the form [X means Ψ by $[\Phi]$], even when they are correct by ordinary criteria, describe truly. (Wilson 2002, 246)

Wilson's classical realist truth conditions are the same as what I have called Tractarian truth conditions, and he denies that (S₃) implies (S*) (241). According to Wilson (243), there is an argument in KW involving the following two claims:

- (G) If there is a set of properties, $P_1—P_n$, that govern the correct application of $[\Phi]$ for X, then there are facts about X that constitute $P_1—P_n$ as the conditions that govern X's use of $[\Phi]$.
- (BSC) There are *no* facts about X that constitute any set of properties as conditions that govern X's use of $[\Phi]$.

Wilson's KW accepts the negation of (RSC) (the radical skeptical conclusion):

- (RSC) No one ever means anything by a term.

From (G), (BSC), and the negation of (RSC), Wilson's KW infers the negation of (N_s):

- (N_s) If X means something by a term $[\Phi]$, then there is a set of properties, $P_1—P_n$ that govern the correct application of $[\Phi]$ for X.

The rejection of (N_s) is a global rejection of Tractarian truth conditions, so Wilson's KW is globally non-factualist in this sense (245–46).⁶

While I agree with Wilson that KW accepts (S₃), I think KW

⁶If there are no properties governing the correct application of expressions, then there will not be Tractarian facts governing the truth of sentences.

also accepts (S*). So why reject Wilson's claim that KW only accepts non-factuality for meaning ascriptions in the first sense?

KW says at various places things like:

(K3) Wittgenstein holds, with the sceptic, that there is no fact as to whether I mean plus or quus. (Kripke 1982, 70–71)

Wilson (2002, 247) is inclined to interpret passages like this as stating a rejection of Tractarian truth conditions for meaning ascriptions. But I previously drew attention to a passage that makes reference to a form of non-factualism that cannot be identified with a rejection of Tractarian truth conditions.

(K1) ... it becomes more plausible that the linguistic role even of utterances in the indicative mood that superficially look like assertions need not be one of 'stating facts'. (Kripke 1982, 73)

This passage concerns a division between fact-stating assertions and non-fact-stating assertions. The "non-fact-stating" assertions cannot be identified with the assertions that lack Tractarian truth conditions because KW globally rejects Tractarian truth conditions. Wilson is sensitive to the fact that this passage cannot be read in this way, but this constitutes a reason to resist his factualist interpretation.⁷ Moreover, KW seems to analogize Wittgenstein's treatment for meaning ascriptions to the case of numerical language. For example, when explaining how the skeptical paradox is avoided, he says that the tests from *Philosophical Investigations* should be applied to meaning ascriptions.

⁷Wilson (2002, 247–49) also seems to hesitate in certain passages over his attribution of factualism to KW. He takes the notion of fact stating in (S*) to be somehow vague so that the notion can be made distinct in various ways. He thinks that some sentences will turn out factual however the distinction is drawn. But concerning meaning ascriptions, he says "at least in the absence of such a further distinction, the skeptical solution is or should be agnostic about the truth of [(S*)]" (249). I don't see that agnosticism is warranted here given that passages like (K1) cannot be interpreted as a rejection of Tractarian truth conditions.

Now if we suppose that facts, or truth conditions, are of the essence of meaningful assertion, it will follow from the skeptical conclusion that assertions that anyone ever means anything are meaningless. On the other hand, if we apply to these assertions the tests suggested in *Philosophical Investigations*, no such conclusion follows. All that is needed to legitimize assertions that someone means something is that there be roughly specifiable circumstances under which they are legitimately assertable, and that the game of asserting under such conditions has a role in our lives. No supposition that 'facts correspond' to those assertions is needed. (Kripke 1982, 77–78)

On the immediately preceding page, KW cites the case of numerical language as an example of how Wittgenstein's technique in *Philosophical Investigations* can be applied.

Nevertheless the legitimacy, in its own way, of the expression 'stand for numbers' should not lead us to think of numerals as similar to expressions such as 'slab', 'pillar', and the like, except that the entities 'denoted' are not spatio-temporal. If the use of the expression 'stands for numbers' misleads in this way, it would be best to think in terms of another terminology, say, that an expression 'plays the role of a numeral'. This role, as Wittgenstein describes it, is plainly in strong *contrast* with the role of such expressions as 'slab', 'pillar', 'block', in the language games he describes in his early sections.

The case is a fine example of various aspects of Wittgenstein's technique in the *Investigations*. (Kripke 1982, 76)

This passage shows that KW is contrasting numerical language with ordinary object language. Just as KW distinguishes between fact-stating and non-fact-stating assertions in (K1), he draws a distinction between the denotational function of numerals and expressions like "slab". This difference between fact-stating and non-fact-stating language cannot be accounted for in terms of a distinction between assertions that do and do not have Tractarian truth conditions because no assertions have Tractarian truth conditions for KW.

7. Miller's Non-factualist criticism of Wilson

Miller (2010, 188) distinguishes between the two forms of meaning non-factualism (S_3) and (S^*) and does not assume that there is an implication from (S_3) to (S^*). He interprets KW as rejecting the view that meaning ascriptions have Tractarian truth conditions, but rejects Wilson's factualist interpretation of KW (181). Miller refers to Wilson's interpretation as the non-classical realist view, and claims that it falls prey to a revenge version of the skeptical argument (174).

To understand Miller's criticism of Wilson, it will be important to look at how Miller characterizes the factualism in Wilson's KW. Miller argues that Wilson's KW is committed to a certain conception of what constitutes facts about meaning. The following passage from Wilson is relevant.

The new Sceptical Solution tries to explain the content of meaning ascriptions in terms of their role and utility in the relevant language games, and the normative conditionals about meaning, which the Classical Realist misconstrues as describing a super-rigid semantical determination, are explained in terms of the requirements that our use of standard criteria for meaning ascriptions engender and enforce. (Wilson 2002, 258)

In the passage, Wilson discusses requirements that are engendered by the use of standard criteria for meaning ascriptions. Miller claims that "[i]t is presumably these 'requirements' that on the non-Classical Realist view constitute facts about meaning" (Miller 2010, 174). Miller also describes the factualism in Wilson's KW as a view "that takes the assertability-conditions to be the meaning constituting facts themselves" (174 note 8). Given this characterization, Miller cites the following passage from Wright to build a criticism of Wilson's interpretation.

Could it yesterday have been *true* of a single individual that he associated with the sentence "Jones means addition by '+'" the sort of assertion conditions Kripke sketches? Well, if so, that truth did

not consist in any aspect of his finite use of that sentence or of its constituents; and, just as before, it would seem that his previous thoughts about that sentence and its use will suffice to constrain within uniqueness the proper interpretation of the assertion conditions he associated with it only if he is granted correct recall of the content of those thoughts—exactly what the skeptical argument does not grant. But would not any truths concerning the assertion conditions previously associated by somebody with a particular sentence have to be constituted by aspects of his erstwhile behavior and mental life? So the case appears no weaker than in the skeptical argument proper for the conclusion that there *are* no such truths. (Wright 1984, 770)

According to Miller, Wright's argument undermines the view that meaning facts are constituted by assertability conditions.⁸ This is the basis for Miller's argument against Wilson. According to Miller's interpretation of Wilson, the meaning facts in Wilson's KW must be constituted by facts about assertability conditions. But if Wright's argument undermines the idea that meaning facts are constituted by assertability conditions, then there are no meaning facts for Wilson's KW (at least if we assume Miller's reading of Wilson).

While I sympathize with Miller's non-factualist interpretation of KW, I think the picture faces a dilemma. Either it cannot provide a coherent interpretation of KW, or it will have to abandon the previous argument against Wilson's factualist interpretation. Let me say more about this.

The previous argument against Wilson is based on Wright's argument. According to Miller, the argument from Wright is supposed to show that meaning facts are not constituted by assertability conditions. Wright's argument can be interpreted as showing this only if it is seen as showing that there are no truths

⁸See Miller (2010, 174 note 8); Miller says that Wright's argument "disables a factualist view of ascriptions of meaning that takes the assertability-conditions to be the meaning-constituting facts themselves."

concerning assertability conditions.⁹ But if Wright's argument showed that there were no truths concerning assertability conditions, then it could not be relied on in an attempt to provide a coherent interpretation of KW (since the skeptical solution presupposes the existence of assertability conditions). The conclusion that Wright draws from his own reasoning is that no coherent interpretation of KW can be given. Soon after the previously cited passage, Wright says "The skeptical solution seems to me, therefore, to be a failure. More: to sustain the skeptical argument is to uncage a tiger whose depredations there is then no hope of containing" (Wright 1984, 771).

So, should it be accepted that Wright's argument rules out truths concerning assertability conditions, so that a coherent interpretation of KW is unsalvageable? Or should this assumption be rejected? It is my impression that we should reject Wright's reasoning, and that it therefore cannot be used to support Miller's critique of Wilson's factualist reading of KW. I'll reconstruct Wright's argument, as I understand it, and point out where I think it goes wrong. I will convert some of the questions Wright asks into statements.

(B1) Truths (if there are such) concerning assertion conditions previously associated by somebody with a particular sentence have to be constituted by aspects of their erstwhile behavior and mental life.

(B2) Truths (if there are such) concerning assertion conditions previously associated by somebody with a particular sen-

⁹Looking carefully at the passage from Wright, the conclusion, explicitly stated, is that there are no truths concerning what assertability conditions a person associates with particular sentences. Is this sufficient to show that there are no assertability conditions? I will say more about this below, but it's worth noting that there is a different way that an argument could undermine the view that meaning facts are constituted by assertability conditions. Instead of arguing that there are no assertability conditions, it could be argued that assertability conditions (even though they exist) are insufficient to constitute meaning facts. Wright's argument, in any case, does not have such a structure.

tence are not constituted by aspects of their erstwhile behavior and mental life.

(BC) Therefore, there are no such truths concerning assertion conditions previously associated by anybody with a particular sentence.

The first thing we should focus on is (B2). To understand the grounds for accepting it, we can think of Wright as a copycat skeptic who challenges us to find a fact that could establish whether a person associated a plus-like rather than a quus-like assertability condition with their use of "plus" in the past. If Kripke's skeptic is correct to think that there could not be a fact about a speaker that established whether they meant plus or quus by their use of "plus" in the past, then it also seems that no facts could establish whether a person associated a plus-like rather than a quus-like assertability condition with their use of "plus" in the past. If Wright's argument were sound, then it could never be true that a person associated any assertability condition with any expression. This is an undesirable conclusion and since the skeptical solution relies on a premise that is just like (B2), we need to examine (B1).

(B1) places a requirement on the truth of statements like "Joe associates assertability condition X with expression Y". The requirement is that these sentences be understood as stating facts about speakers that could establish whether they associated a plus-like rather than a quus-like warranted-use condition with "plus". Is this really required? Wright has not argued for this. Moreover, on a warranted-use theory of meaning it is open for us to think that sentences like "Joe associates assertability condition X with expression Y" are not used to state facts. This is an analysis just like the one given for meaning ascriptions on the skeptical solution. On such a view, facts are not required for the truth of the relevant statements.

Does this mean that sentences ascribing assertability conditions are not used to state facts? It depends which sentences

we are talking about. We may reject (B₁) by holding the view that sentences like “Joe associates assertability condition X with expression Y” are not used to state facts. But even still, it is open for us to think that sentences like “expression X is warranted in condition Y” are used to state facts. It would actually be problematic if the latter sentences were not understood as fact-stating. When the skeptical solution says that meaning is to be understood in terms of warranted use, this is supposed to be an objective claim about the nature of language. So we can consistently hold the view that there are facts about the warranted use of expressions in our language without thinking that sentences like “Joe associates assertability condition X with expression Y” are used to state facts.

Given that Wright’s argument is not accepted, it cannot be used to support Miller’s critique of Wilson. This is desirable since Wright’s argument (if sound) would rule out the possibility of a coherent interpretation of the skeptical solution. The skeptical solution may not be coherent at the end of the day, but this cannot be shown by Wright’s argument.

8. Conclusion

I have argued that Boghossian and Wright’s criticisms have not undermined the skeptical solution’s meaning non-factualism. This removes Byrne and Kusch’s motivation for reading KW as a meaning factualist. I have also argued that Wilson’s factualist interpretation (which is not based on Boghossian or Wright) should not be accepted. Miller argues for a non-factualist interpretation over Wilson’s factualist interpretation on the basis of Wright’s revenge argument. But I have argued that the reasoning from Wright cannot be accepted in conjunction with the skeptical solution. So, instead of rejecting the skeptical solution, a non-factualist interpretation of KW can be maintained as long as we reject the argument from Wright. This is desirable since

KW is more naturally read as a non-factualist about meaning ascription.

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