Semantic Realism and Kripke's Wittgenstein

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This article argues, first, that the fundamental structure of the skeptical argument in Kripke's book on Wittgenstein has been seriously misunderstood by recent commentators. Although it focuses particularly on recent commentary by John McDowell, it emphasizes that the basic misunderstandings are widely shared by other commentators. In particular, it argues that, properly construed, Kripke offers a fully coherent reading of PI #201 and related passages. This is commonly denied, and given as a reason for rejecting Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein's text. Second, it is pretty universally accepted that Kripke's Wittgenstein is a 'non-factualist' about ascriptions of meaning. The article argues that, when Kripke's discussion is rightly understood and the content of 'non-factualism' is clarified, there is an important sense in which the skeptical solution is *not* committed to non-factualism.

In a recent article, John McDowell states, "...many readers [of Saul Kripke's book on Wittgenstein] would agree that [Kripke's] apparatus of 'skeptical paradox' and 'skeptical solution' is not a good fit for Wittgenstein's texts."[1] McDowell includes himself in this agreement and reminds us that, in an earlier paper, "Wittgenstein on Following a Rule", he had argued strongly for the same failure of fit.[2] More narrowly, McDowell contends in the recent essay, as he had contended earlier, that Kripke's exegetical framework cannot even make good sense of Wittgenstein's crucial remarks in *Philosophical Investigations* #201, when that passage is taken as a whole. After quoting the bulk of #201, McDowell comments as follows: "This looks like a proposal, not for a 'skeptical solution' to a 'skeptical paradox', locked into place by an irrefutable argument, as in Kripke's reading, but for a 'straight solution': that is, one that works by finding fault with the reasoning that leads to the paradox. The paradox that Wittgenstein mentions at the beginning of this pas-

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[1] "Meaning and Intentionality in Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* XVII (*The Wittgenstein Legacy*) (1992): 40–52. Hereafter, this article will be cited as M. McDowell is commenting upon Saul A. Kripke, *Wittgenstein: On Rules and Private Language* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982). Hereafter, this will be cited as K.

[2] "Wittgenstein on Following a Rule," *Synthese* 58 (1984): 325–63. reprinted in *Meaning and Reference*, ed. A. W. Moore (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 255–93. All citations are to the latter.

sage... (is) something we can expose as based on 'a misunderstanding'." (M, p. 43)

Although #201 is fast becoming the most frequently cited passage in twentieth century philosophy, for the readers convenience I will quote it, in full, still another time.

This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule. The answer was: if everything can be made out to accord with the rule, then it can also be made out to conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here.

It can be seen that there is a misunderstanding here from the mere fact that in the course of our argument we give one interpretation after another; as if each one contented us at least for a moment, until we thought of yet another standing behind it. What this shows is that there is a way of grasping a rule which is *not* an *interpretation*, but which is exhibited in what we call "obeying a rule" and "going against it" in actual cases.

Hence there is an inclination to say: every action according to the rule is an interpretation. But we ought to restrict the term "interpretation" to the substitution of one expression of the rule for another.[3]

McDowell makes two broad claims about what we do and do not find in these remarks, claims that form the basis of his criticisms of Kripke's reading. First, he thinks that Kripke's interpretation provides us with no account of the 'misunderstanding' that Wittgenstein characterizes as the basis of the apparent paradox that opens the passage. That is, it seems to him that Kripke offers no account of why the paradox is supposed to arise only when we fail to see that "... there is a way of grasping a rule that is not an interpretation." Second, McDowell tells that "...there is no hint" in #201 that we can escape the paradox "...by ridding ourselves of the inclination to think of grasping a rule or meaning as a *fact* about the person who grasps it." (M, p. 43) Here McDowell is supposing that it is a crucial part of the position of Kripke's Wittgenstein that there are no facts about a speaker that constitute his or her grasp of a rule. But, this radical sounding thesis, he urges, is nowhere to be found in #201 nor in other associated remarks. Hence, we can see from this alone that Kripke must be pretty badly off the track in his explanations of the Wittgensteinian texts. As McDowell notes, many other writers have made the same or similar complaints about Kripke's exposition. Elizabeth Anscombe, Colin McGinn, and Crispin Wright are in this number.[4]

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3   Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (third edition), trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1968): 81e.

4   Anscombe, "Critical Notice of Saul A. Kripke, *Wittgenstein: On Rules and Private Language, Canadian Journal of Philosophy* XV (1985): 103–9; McGinn, *Wittgenstein on Meaning* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), see chapter 2; Wright, "Critical Notice of Colin McGinn, *Wittgenstein on Meaning,*" *Mind* 98 (1989): 289–305. The same or similar criticisms of Kripke's book are also made in G. P. Baker and P. M. S. Hacker, *Scepticism, Rules and Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), see chapter 1; Arthur Collins, "On the Paradox Kripke Finds in Wittgenstein," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* XVI (1992): 74–88; Edward Minar, *Philosophical Investigations #185–202: Wittgenstein's*

I am sympathetic to the author who asserted that 'the rule-following' passages in Wittgenstein have become a kind of Rorschach test for philosophers,[5] and I am as little inclined here to unveil the workings of my unconscious (even my philosophical unconscious) as I am in other contexts of my life. Nevertheless, in the remainder of this paper I will repress these misgivings and proceed ahead. More specifically, I will try to show that McDowell is simply wrong about the first of these claims and that the second claim, as he develops it, rests upon a misunderstanding of his own about Kripke's larger line of thought. However, whatever interest my discussion has depends less on correcting McDowell on this point or that and more on setting out Kripke's expositional strategies within a framework quite different from those favored by many other readers of his book. Understood along the lines I will be expounding, both the views and the argumentation articulated in the book strike me as much more forceful and interesting than they might otherwise appear to be. Further, although I will attempt no overall assessment of the success of Kripke's discussion as exegesis of Wittgenstein, I do believe that it is far less obvious than others have imagined that his discussion is not substantially 'a good fit' to the well-known section of the *Investigations*.

1. The Structure of Kripke's Exposition

Leaving McDowell for the time being, let me outline what I take to the general architecture of Kripke's reconstruction of Wittgenstein.[6] We start with the Kripkean skeptic. It is important to observe that this skeptic consistently works within a skeletal, but not implausible, conception of what would have to be the case if someone were to mean something by a term. We get some sense of what this conception comes to from the following remarks, remarks that occur as Kripke is setting up the skeptic's puzzle. Kripke says,

I, like almost all English speakers, use the word 'plus' and the symbol "+" to denote a well-known mathematical function, addition.... By means of my external symbolic representation and my internal representation, I 'grasp' the rule for addition. Although I myself have computed only finitely many sums in the past, the rule determines my answer for indefinitely many new sums that I have never previously considered. This is the whole point of the notion that in learning to add I grasp a rule: my past intentions regarding addition determine a unique answer for indefinitely many new cases in the future. (pp. 7–8)

Treatment of Following a Rule, (New York: Garland Press, 1990), see chapters 1 and 4: Peter Winch, "Facts and Super-facts (Saul A Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*)," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 33 (1984): 398–404. I have the impression that there is a wide consensus that the objections I will be discussing are correct.

5 Mark Wilson, "Predicate Meets Property," *The Philosophical Review* XCI (1982): 556. My indebtedness to my brother's wisdom on these topics is not confined to the diagnostic proposal cited here. I have been greatly aided and encouraged by long discussions with him over many years.

6 The ensuing section is adapted from similar exposition in my "Kripke on Wittgenstein and Normativity," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, XIX (*Philosophical Naturalism*) (1994): 366–90.

Now there is a great deal that is instructive in just this one passage, and what it tells us is, I believe, confirmed at many other places in the book. Let us first restrict ourselves, as the quoted passage restricts itself, to the exemplary case of addition. In order for me to have meant addition by '+', according to the observations above, I must have established some *standard of correctness* for my actual and potential applications of the term. Meaning something by "+" essentially consists in my having a suitable *intention* or *policy* about what is to count as correct and incorrect application of the expression. Second, the skeptic supposes, the wanted standard of correctness is, in this example, *the arithmetic operation of addition* itself. As a matter of mathematical fact, independently of my or anyone else's linguistic practices, the addition function yields a unique numerical value for any pair of natural numbers. This general arithmetic fact represents the basis for taking addition as a feasible standard of correctness. Third, what I must do to establish the standard for myself, the skeptic asserts, is to adopt a non-defective rule—a non-defective 'metalinguistic' rule, as it were—to the effect that correct answers to queries of the form 'j+k=?' are given by the values of the addition operation for the pairs of numbers that, query by query, are in question. Having adopted this semantical rule for "+", correct applications of the term are settled by the infinite table of values that addition generates. Alternatively, we can say that, if I mean addition by "+", there must be facts about me that have somehow 'singled out' the addition function for me and have done so in such a fashion that I have been able to form the intention, *concerning this very function*, that *it* is to determine correct applications of my use of the term. Hence, my acceptance of the semantical rule embodied in my intention serves to 'justify' my answers to queries framed with "+" (when those answers are correct) in the sense that it supplies me with the standard of correctness that my ascriptions of "+" are supposed to track. Finally, the skeptic assumes in all of this that a certain order of conceptual and explanatory priority is to be observed. Let it be granted, for the moment, that I have formed and adhered to the intention that addition is to be my standard. The skeptic holds that it is *because* I have that intention that I mean what I do by "+" and not the other way around. My intending of addition that it be my standard is the ground-level circumstance that *constitutes* my meaning addition by "+". For the skeptic, the existence of my conceptually prior intention *explains* constitutively how the meaningfulness of "+" arises for me and that *determines* what I mean by that term.[7]

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[7]   It should be emphasized that Kripke's discussion allows from the outset that a speaker's meaning something by a term is a matter of the speaker's having a certain *intention* concerning the term in question. Moreover, nothing in the arguments that follow requires that these intentions (or intentions generally) are to be token-identified with events in or states of the speaker that are themselves not intrinsically intensional, e.g., with brain states, 'pure' states of consciousness, etc. In fact, no special assumptions about the *nature* of

It is precisely at this juncture that the skeptic interposes his skeptical challenge. It is my contention that the skeptic does not ever doubt that his conception of what would constitute meaning addition by "+" is right. What he does doubt is that this schematic conception can be coherently filled in with an account of *how* I (or any other speaker) achieves the establishment of the required standard of correctness. What, he wants to know, does the adoption of such a standard concretely consist in? In particular, what are the facts about me in virtue of which *it is addition* that is the standard of correctness for my prospective use of "+" and not some other initially similar but divergent arithmetic operation? What facts about me make it the case that I employ addition, and not, say, Kripke's quaddition, as my standard? In the discussion above, it was claimed that there must be facts about me that, in some manner, 'single out' addition in such a way as to make it possible for me to form an intention, about that function, that it is to settle correct applications of my use of "+". Well then, the skeptic asks, in what specific fashion does addition get 'singled out' for me so that I form the specified intention concerning it?[8]

The ensuing skeptical argument purports to demonstrate that there are no satisfactory answers to these questions. Some of the proposals that the skeptic considers cite facts about me that do not single out any particular opera-

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intentions are employed. What is assumed is that the 'semantical' intentions in question must be pertinent intentions *concerning* certain properties or conditions-in-the-world. The speaker must intend *of* those conditions that they are to constitute the standard of correctness for her use of the term. Then, the problem has to do with *how* suitable conditions get singled out for the speaker. In the concluding section of his critical notice of Kripke's book, Crispin Wright charges that the skeptical argument in Kripke either ignores the special epistemic and 'normative' properties of intentions or illicitly presupposes that a reductive account of intentions must be correct. See his, "Kripke's Account of the Argument against Private Language," *Journal of Philosophy*, LXXXI (1985), pp. 775–78. I believe that these charges are mistaken.

8   The question of conceptual and explanatory priority is important for the following reason. Notice that, if a term 'T' is meaningful for speaker S, then *inter alia* the bi-conditional
        a) (o) ('T' is true of o iff o is T)
is correspondingly meaningful for S, and, of course, what it says is true. Moreover, in her ensuing use of 'T', S adopts a commitment (in some sense) to a). However, here it is the meaningfulness of 'T' for S, independently settled, that gives rise to S's commitment to a) and not the other way around, as the classical realist requires. Also, for some philosophers,
        b) 'T' is a meaningful predicate for S [give or take some possible qualifications]
is equivalent, more or less by stipulation, to
        c) 'T', as S uses it, stands for the property of being T.
But, for the classical realist, the truth of an instance of c) is to be explained by the fact that the property of being T, if such a property exists at all, has been successfully recruited by S to serve as a standard of correctness for 'T' and that this has been accomplished in virtue of S's independent adoption of a conceptually prior *de re* semantical rule. It is difficult to capture the distinctive character of classical realism without highlighting the explanatory picture upon which it relies. (I am indebted here and at various other places in this essay to extremely helpful comments from Scott Soames.)

tion whatsoever. Other proposals cite facts (e.g., facts about my relevant linguistic dispositions) which, if they do connect with a specific function, wrongly pick out an operation other than addition. All of them fail to explain how I have acquired a semantic intention that is directed, as it should be, upon the addition function. The skeletal conception with which we, following the skeptic, started out, cannot be determinately grounded in facts about me that render it intelligible that it is addition I have meant by "+".

As Kripke repeatedly emphasizes, the skeptic's problem is a general one: it concerns the meaningfulness of any speaker's use of any term. To grasp the wider point of view, it will help to rehearse these last reflections in a more general mode. Thus, let 'T' be any term that a speaker S proposes to use as a general term or predicate. That is, 'T', as S plans to employ it, is to apply correctly or incorrectly, as the case may be, to the members of some open-ended domain of objects D. In particular, and without significant loss of generality, we can assume that 'T' is to be a 'descriptive' term for S, a term that is applied correctly or incorrectly, in a given instance, depending upon facts about the specific character of the candidate item. As before, the skeptic insists that S's meaning something by the term 'T' can only arise from the fact that she has supplied for herself a standard of correctness for the envisaged use. But, from where, in these cases, is the appropriate standard to be derived? Well, let us take for granted (at least at this stage of the argument) that each member of D, considered at a time when the pertinent item exists, exemplifies a range of determinate properties and does not exemplify a host of others. We can presume that the fact that a D-member has a certain property or the fact that it does not obtains independently of our beliefs about the matter and independently of whatever forms of language use we may have put in place. So, it seems, the standard of correctness for the descriptive predicates ought properly to be constituted in terms of the properties of the D-members—in terms of those objective, predicable conditions, realized or not as they may be—by the various objects in D. The skeptic repeats that what S must do if she is to mean something by 'T' is to grasp or have 'singled out' for her certain properties, $P_1 - P_n$, and to adopt the semantic rule that 'T' is to be applied to a D-item o just in case o has precisely *these* properties. Varying the formulation, S is to have the meaning constituting intention, concerning $P_1 - P_n$, that 'T' applies to o iff o exemplifies those conditions.

We should notice here that S's meaning something by 'T', thus conceived, ensures that the meaning of 'T' for S enjoys a certain intuitive brand of *normativity*. For an unbounded number of objects in D, S's semantic intention for 'T' determines, when relevant facts about the D-items have been fixed, whether or not, on S's present use, it is correct to apply 'T' to the objects in question. Actually, as the formulation suggests, this determination of correctness is a two stage affair. By adopting her semantic rule, S thereby determines *what has to be the case* if 'T', as she means it, is to apply. It is

determined, as we have said, *which properties* a candidate for 'T'-ascription is to have. But now, whether 'T' does apply to an object o (as it is at a certain time) depends also upon the facts about o's character at that time. It depends, so to speak, upon whether that character 'accords with' the stipulated properties $P_1 - P_n$. With this qualification understood, we can say that, on the present conception, meaning determines correctness and so is, in this sense, 'normative' in relation to the speaker's future practice.[9]

Nevertheless, the skeptic thinks that there is nothing but illusion here. The skeptical argument is meant to show that it is impossible for any set of properties to be established as the standard of correctness for any speaker's use of any term. More, specifically, the skeptic's strategy can be divided into two parts. First, assume that 'T' is a *non-primitive* term for S, i.e., S supposes that she has established a standard of correctness for 'T' because she has formed and adhered to an intention to accept a linguistic formulation F of a rule that purports to define 'T' explicitly in more basic terms. But, the skeptic argues, the rule expressed by F will be defective for these purposes if standards of correctness have not already been established for the terms in the definiens. If those terms do not themselves have established standards of correctness, then the intention to accept F will fail to establish a standard of correctness for 'T'. (See K, pp. 15–17) Second, the skeptic turns his attention to the terms that are *primitive* for S and argues, on his case by case basis, that no facts about the speaker can establish standards of correctness for these primitive expressions. In particular, if 'T' is primitive for S, then, the skeptic claims, the properties $P_1 - P_n$ must be *non-linguistically* 'singled out' for S as the *de re* subject of her meaning-constituting intentions, and the skeptic tries to show that we can make no sense of this. Therefore, he concludes that no general term has application-guiding standards of correctness and, correlatively, that no general terms mean anything at all.

There is one last important observation to be made about the conception of what it is to mean something which the skeptic presupposes in his unfolding argumentation. That is, the skeptic is what Kripke calls "a classical realist" about meaning. Here, for example, is a quotation from the segment in which Kripke introduces classical realism (named as such) into his discussion. He says,

The simplest, most basic idea of the *Tractatus* can hardly be dismissed: a declarative sentence gets its meaning by virtue of its *truth conditions*, by virtue of its correspondence to facts that must obtain if it is true. For example, "the cat is on the mat" is understood by those speakers who realize that it is true if and only if a certain cat is on a certain mat; it is false otherwise. The presence of the cat on the mat is a fact or condition-in-the-world that would make the sentence true (express a truth) if it obtained. (p. 72)

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[9]   I discuss the question of how 'normativity' is treated in context of the skeptical solution in "Kripke on Wittgenstein and Normativity," especially pp. 380–84. Hence, I bypass that tricky issue in the present essay.

I devoted as much space as I did to the skeptic's working conception of meaning partly in order to bring out the way in which the skeptic himself is a classical realist, albeit a skeptical one. It is true that in Kripke's explicit characterization of 'classical realism', he focuses on the idea that the meaning of a *sentence* arises from its supposed conceptually prior correlation with 'realist' truth conditions, i.e., with *a possible fact* whose realization will render the sentence true. That is, I take it that, for the case of ('descriptive') sentences, the classical realist holds the following: i) A sentence U means what it does in virtue of its representing a possible fact F; ii) the possible fact F is *the standard of truth* for uses of U, i.e., U is true iff the possible fact F actually obtains; and iii) the possible fact F is constituted as the standard of truth for U by the system of conceptually prior intentions of relevant speakers which have (purportedly) established standards of correct reference, application, etc., for the various terms in U.

By contrast, I have focused on *general terms* and on the thought that their meaningfulness depends upon a speaker's having established certain *properties* or *objective and exemplifiable conditions-in-the-world* as the standard of correctness that is to govern his/her use of the term in question. However, the difference between the two modes of exposition are negligible, at least for present purposes. Someone who accepts the skeptic's 'classical realism' about general terms can be expected to hold comparably classical realistic views about the semantical status of expressions that fall within the other logical categories. Treating sentences compositionally, he can grant that the semantic values of the sentential components, taken together with the sentence's logical structure, will determine the possible fact or type of possible fact that has to hold if the sentence is to be true. So, to repeat, it is my contention that the skeptic's arguments proceed from a basis of classical realism about meaning.

At this juncture, following our previous discussion of the 'addition example', we can describe succinctly the structure of the skeptic's general negative argument. First, as I have been stressing, he assumes a classical realist account of the meaning of general terms, i.e.,

> CR) If S means something by a term 'T', then there is a set of properties, $P_1 - P_n$, that have been established by S as the meaning-constituting standard of correctness for her application of 'T'.

However, as we also observed in our discussion of "+", the skeptic insists that, if certain properties are thus to function as conditions of correct applicability for S's use of 'T', then there must be some range of concrete facts about S which make it the case that it just those properties that have been successfully 'singled out' for her and about which she has formed a proper semantic commitment. The existence of such conditions of applicability for a

term must be intelligibly *grounded* in facts about the speaker's psychological and/or social history.[10] Therefore, the 'grounding constraint' that the skeptic reasonably enough imposes says that

G) If there is a set of properties, $P_1 - P_n$, that have been established by S as the meaning-constituting standard of correctness for her application of 'T', then there must be facts about S that fix $P_1 - P_n$ as the standard S has adopted.

Endorsing this grounding constraint, the skeptic is now in a position to mount his skeptical attack. As we will see as we proceed, the skeptic holds or is committed to a number of skeptical sounding conclusions, but what I take to be the *basic* skeptical argument attempts to show that this grounding constraint cannot ever be satisfied. In other words, what I will call "the basic skeptical conclusion" asserts that

BSC) There are *no* facts about S that fix any set of properties as the standard of correctness for S's use of 'T'.

This is the conclusion for which Kripke's skeptic argues on a case by case basis. He investigates a range of suggestions, purporting to exhaust the possibilities, concerning the kinds of facts about S that might be thought to establish a set of properties as conditions of correct ascribability, and he tries to demonstrate that each of these suggestions is unacceptable. BSC), then, sums up the purported upshot of these central, extended investigations. In this paper, I will make no attempt to assess the cogency of the case by case argument for BSC).

In the course of Kripke's book, there are numerous references to something called "the skeptical conclusion," but his skeptic patently draws or is

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10   On the whole, Kripke's exposition proceeds in a manner that suggests that the facts about a speaker that might ground her semantical intentions upon a suitable set of properties are restricted to *individualistic* facts about the speaker. This can seem to leave the skeptic open to the charge that he has illegitimately excluded a kind of social version of a 'straight' solution to his puzzle. Thus, one might hope to argue that there are facts about members of a linguistic community—in virtue of their complex, cooperative use of a term 'T'—that establishes certain properties $P_1 - P_n$ as the standard that govern correct applications of 'T' among them or in their language. Given this, it could be proposed that an individual member S of the community will be committed to $P_1 - P_n$ as his or her standard of correctness for 'T' only if his or her linguistic dispositions concerning 'T' situates him/her as a competent user of 'T' within the community. However, it is clear that Kripke's skeptic and his Wittgenstein reject such a line of thought. On page 111, Kripke mentions that the first stage of this approach will involve a 'straight' solution which appeals to the collective linguistic dispositions of the linguistic community as a whole, and, from the perspective of the skeptic, it will be subject to some of the same objections that he raises against an account that relies on the linguistic dispositions of the individual. For this reason, it is my intention that references to 'facts about the speaker' are to be understood as subsuming social or institutional facts about the speaker as well.

committed to a number of skeptical-sounding conclusions, and it is not always clear, in a given context, just which conclusion is being referred to. For example, it is obvious on brief inspection that CR), G), and BSC), taken jointly as premises, together entail the *radical* skeptical conclusion that

RSC)   No one ever means anything by any term.

Moreover, this 'skeptical conclusion' figures importantly in the dialectic set up between Kripke's skeptic and Kripke's Wittgenstein. In fact, it is RSC) that Kripke refers to as "the skeptical *paradox*;" BSC) may strike one as surprising and wrongheaded, but this conclusion of the skeptic does not represent his paradox. Now, on the one hand, Kripke's skeptic *is* plainly committed to RSC), but Kripke's Wittgenstein is not a skeptic of this stripe. For example, on pp. 70 and 71, Kripke makes the following remark:

Nevertheless I choose to be so bold as to say: Wittgenstein holds, with the sceptic, that there is no fact as to whether I mean plus or quus. But if this is to be conceded to the skeptic, is this not the end of the matter? What *can* be said on behalf of our ordinary attributions of meaningful language to ourselves and to others? Has not the incredible and self-defeating conclusion, that all language is meaningless, already been drawn?

The question that closes this passage refers, quite overtly, to RSC), and the discussion that ensues affirms unequivocally that Wittgenstein does not embrace it. In this quotation, RSC) is described as 'incredible and self-defeating,' and it is obvious, in the larger context, that this characterization is meant to reflect Wittgenstein's attitude. In fact, it is natural to read Kripke as saying that it is a chief objective of the skeptical solution to explain how BSC) can be accepted by Wittgenstein while RSC), the skeptical paradox, is not.

The short explanation of this is: Kripke's Wittgenstein rejects CR). Or, somewhat more expansively, Kripke's Wittgenstein repudiates the classical realist conception of meaning—the conception, elaborated above, of which CR) is meant to be the succinct summary. The point is very important. On p. 85, Kripke writes,

In this way the relationship between the first and second portions of the *Investigations* is reciprocal. In order for Wittgenstein's sceptical solution of his paradox to be intelligible, the 'realistic' or 'representational' picture of language must be undermined by another picture (in the first part). On the other hand, the paradox developed in the second part, antecedently to its solution, drives an important final nail (perhaps the crucial one) into the coffin of the representational picture.

Now, what does Kripke mean when he tells us that the skeptical paradox 'drives a final nail into the coffin of the classically realist representational picture?' It is my assumption that he means that Wittgenstein rejects classical realism because, perhaps along with other reasons, Wittgenstein supposes that the skeptical argument offers him grounds for a definitive argument

against the classical realist viewpoint. But, how is this argument supposed to run? Well, the skeptic accepts or is committed to the argument from CR), G) and BSC) to the conclusion RSC). But, Kripke's Wittgenstein, naturally enough, sees RSC) as "incredible and self-defeating" and takes the 'contrapositive' argument as a *reductio* of classical realism about meaning, i.e., he endorses the soundness of the inference from -RSC), G), and BSC) to the conclusion -CR). When Kripke says, as he does several times, that Wittgenstein accepts 'the skeptical argument' and endorses 'the skeptical conclusion', he means, on the reading I am suggesting, that his Wittgenstein follows along with his skeptic in his reasoning to BSC), and, for many, this may well seem to be already a sufficiently 'radical' position. But, beyond this point, the two figures diverge in absolutely opposite directions.

In fact, Kripke is pretty explicit that this is how his exegetical strategy proceeds. For example, on p. 77, he notes, "Now if we suppose that facts, or truth conditions, are of the essence of meaningful assertion, it will follow from the sceptical conclusion that assertions that anyone ever means anything are meaningless." And, he continues on pp. 78 and 79,

The sceptical paradox is the fundamental problem of *Philosophical Investigations*. If Wittgenstein is right, we cannot begin to solve it if we remain in the grip of the natural presupposition that meaningful declarative sentences must purport to correspond to facts [i.e., to have classically realist truth conditions]; if this is our framework, we can only conclude that sentences attributing meaning and intention are themselves meaningless.... The picture of correspondence-to-facts must be cleared away before we begin with the sceptical problem.

Thus, the skeptic holds that 'all language has been shown to be meaningless;' Kripke's Wittgenstein thinks that the folly of classical realism has been revealed. This is why Kripke says, as a prolegomenon to the skeptical solution, that Wittgenstein denies, in a quite global fashion, that *any* sentence has classically realist truth conditions. As I explained before, this sort of global 'anti-realism' is already implicated in the acceptance of BSC). At the same time, it is classical realism (CR)) that ties sentential meaningfulness to the having of realist truth conditions (as the classical realist conceives of these), and it is the job of the skeptical solution to explain how the meaningfulness of sentences (and, for that matter, terms) can be preserved after the tie has rightly been severed.

But, where, according to Kripke's Wittgenstein, is the tie to be broken? Although I do not have the space to explore this fully, I will observe the following. It seems to me that Kripke's Wittgenstein *agrees with* the classical realist to this extent: if a set of mind and language independent properties were to be established as the standard of correctness for a term 'T', then users of 'T' would have to have some kind of pre-linguistic 'grasp' of properties-in-the-world that allowed them to form the semantical intentions that purportedly establish certain of the properties as the standard in question. He also

agrees with the skeptic that we can make no sense of the idea that properties can be pre-linguistically 'singled out' in this way nor of the standard-fixing *de re* intentions that classical realism invokes. The mistake of the classical realist (and, therefore, of the radical skeptic), according to Kripke's Wittgenstein, occurs at the very outset. The meaningfulness of a term and the fact about what it means are not engendered by the constitutively prior recruitment of independently existing properties to serve as standards of correctness for a term.

2. The First Objection

These considerations are enough to allow us to return to McDowell's key criticisms of Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein. As I noted at the beginning, the first of these objections asserts that Kripke makes nothing of the clear indications in #201 that Wittgenstein maintains that the 'paradox' mentioned in the first sentence of the passage rests upon a 'misunderstanding' about the role of 'interpretation' in our following of (linguistic) rules. In his earlier essay, "Wittgenstein on Following a Rule," McDowell claims, "But Wittgenstein's point is that this [skeptical] dilemma seems compulsory only on the assumption that *understanding is always interpretation*; his aim is…to persuade us to reject the dilemma by discarding the assumption on which it depends."[11] Or, again, in his more recent paper, McDowell asserts that

We get a more radical divergence from Kripke, however, if we suppose that the thrust of Wittgenstein's reflections is to cast doubt on the master thesis: the thesis that whatever a person has in her mind, it is only by virtue of being *interpreted* in one of possible ways that it can impose a sorting of extra-mental items into those that accord with it and those that do not. (M, p. 45)

Thus, it is alleged that Kripke does not see that it is this 'master thesis' that Wittgenstein primarily attacks.

However, if my outline of Kripke's exegetical strategy is accurate, then it is a mistake to believe that his strategy does not incorporate an attack on a thesis off this ilk. Naturally, we can not expect Kripke's understanding of the 'master thesis' to be the same as McDowell's, and we will learn later how they differ. But Kripke's Wittgenstein *does* mount a comparable attack. As I stressed before, Kripke's skeptic, *qua* classical realist, maintains that, if a speaker means something by a term, then she means what she does in virtue of having a certain kind of intention concerning the standard of correctness that is to govern its application for her. The content of her intention is a semantical rule for the use of the term, and sets of properties, considered as candidates for her intended standard, represent, as we may put it, possible '*interpretations*' of the rule she follows. This special concept of an 'interpretation" is important in the present context. It is this concept, favored

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[11]   McDowell, "Wittgenstein on Following a Rule," p. 272.

by the classical realist, that is, I will urge, considered and repudiated in the first two paragraphs of #201. I have already argued that Kripke distinctly presents Wittgenstein as denying that meaning something involves 'interpretations' of this sort. Kripke's Wittgenstein agrees with the skeptic on this point: the classical realist conception of what it is to mean something by a term, requiring standard constituting 'interpretations,' is incoherent. That conception, summarized in CR), leads to the skeptical paradox registered in RSC).

To fill this in a bit, let me sketch what I take to be a Kripkean reading of #201. I should note at the outset, however, that in what follows I will grant, apparently in harmony with Wittgenstein in this and neighboring passages, that meaning something by a term is properly describable as an instance of 'following a rule.' He seems to treat this much as a part of our ordinary conception of the matter and to allow that such a way of speaking is, in and of itself, harmless enough. From his perspective, our troubles ensue when the assumption is added that the rule in question is to be construed along the lines that classical realism suggests. Once that assumption has been illicitly imported, then, as the opening paragraph of #201 explains, we are led to the following conclusions. Even if all of the facts about a speaker are taken into account, it is possible to assign an indefinite number of extensionally incompatible 'interpretations' to her would-be semantic rule. (This is what BSC) affirms.) Since no one of these varied 'interpretations' is favored by the totality of relevant facts about the speaker, it looks as if no course of correct application for the term has been properly determined.[12] Indeed, when any

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[12]   Notice that, on this reading, Wittgenstein's argument at this juncture is not an argument that invokes a vicious *regress* of interpretations. He is not arguing that no 'interpretation' will assign 'content' to an interpretable item because any such interpretation will require, to give it 'content,' a supplementary interpretation. Rather, the present reading takes the argument to be, as Kripke often stresses, a kind of indeterminacy argument. No facts about the speaker suffice to determine one classical realist 'interpretation,' out of an indeterminate number of possible alternatives, as the one with which the speaker's putative intention is concerned. Confusion is easily engendered for the following reason. When Kripke's skeptic argues that there are no facts that single out any particular 'interpretation,' he investigates, as special cases, some ostensible possibilities that do fail on the basis of 'regress' considerations. For example, it may be a fact about a speaker that she can provide, for herself or others, an explicit *formulation* of the 'interpretation' she has in mind. However, this will institute a limited regress because the skeptic's problem will arise equally for the various terms used in her formulation. This observation that the central argument of #201 is not, for Kripke, an argument from vicious regress will be important when we later look at McDowell's specific understanding of Kripke's exegesis of the passage.

On the other hand, in an unpublished paper, "Skepticism about Meaning: Indeterminancy, Normativity, and the Rule-Following Paradox," Scott Soames argues that the skeptical argument equivocates on the notion that the facts about a speaker do or do not *determine* a standard of correctness for her uses of terms. If "determine" here means 'yields as an a priori consequence', then the argument is sound, but its conclusion is rela-

item whatsoever is taken as a possible subject of an ascription of the term, there will be 'interpretations' of her rule in virtue of which the item is in accord with her standard, and there will be alternative, equally feasible 'interpretations' with which the item is in conflict. So, in effect, since no standard at all will have been established, there will be '...neither accord nor conflict here." And, we can add, if the possibility of 'accord and conflict' is never realized, then it seems that the very possibility of meaning evaporates with it. (This is the claim of RSC)).

In the second paragraph of #201, Wittgenstein offers his diagnosis of the confusions that underlie these thoughts. We have been seduced into the impression that the correctness or incorrectness of the speaker's applications of her term are completely indeterminate, but, this impression is said to be generated by a crucial 'misunderstanding.' That misunderstanding is embodied in our acceptance of the assumption that the speaker's rule is of such a character that it demands a suitable classical realist 'interpretation' to secure the very possibility of accord and conflict. To rectify our conception of what it is to mean something by a term we should drop the hopeless notion that 'grasping a rule (for a term)' involves the assignment of such an extension-determining 'interpretation' of the rule in question, and, correlatively, we should drop the idea that the rule she follows is one that has the function of setting her standard of correctness into place. Thus, meaning something is not a matter of 'interpretations' that constitute the (classical realist) conditions of satisfaction for our words and phrases. If we wish to avoid these entanglements, Wittgenstein recommends, "...we ought to restrict the term 'interpretation' to the substitution of one expression of the rule for another," i.e. to cases in which the former is offered as a paraphrase of the latter. 'Interpretations' in this sense do not even create the illusion of establishing meanings. They may explicate meanings, but they certainly don't create them. (See the first paragraph of #198.)

Finally, Wittgenstein also says in #201 that we can free ourselves from the mistakes of the classical realist if and when we learn to understand that "...there is a way of grasping a rule ... which is exhibited in what we call 'obeying the rule' and 'going against it' in actual cases." It is this proposal that the core of the 'skeptical solution' is meant to elaborate. I have not and will not discuss the details of this strand of the purported 'solution,' but here is a reminder of their gist. Very roughly, Kripke's Wittgenstein contends that our actual linguistic behavior *exhibits* our 'grasp of a rule' in this sense: our uses of the term, and the circumstances in which these uses occur, are employed by us to serve as the *criteria* that warrant (or fail to warrant) our everyday ascriptions of following a rule for a term, i.e., of meaning such-and-

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tively weak. If "determine" means 'yields as a metaphysically necassary consequence', then the argument is simply unsound. I will not try to assess this interesting diagnosis.

such by it. Moreover, on this view, these criteria—these 'assertability conditions'—are regarded as fundamental and primitive within the 'language game' of ascriptions of meaning. Indeed, the very meaningfulness of meaning ascriptions is substantially engendered by our criteria here. All of this is developed at some length in chapter 3 of Kripke's book, especially on pp. 86 to 109.

A great deal turns here upon distinguishing firmly between BSC) and RSC) and keeping track of the places at which they figure in the overall argument. Both McDowell and Colin McGinn[13] seem to me to be seriously confused on just this point. When Wittgenstein says, "This was our paradox," and goes on to state its import, they believe that Kripke holds that he is formulating 'the sceptical conclusion,' i.e., the conclusion that Kripke thinks that both Wittgenstein and the skeptic accept. And then, of course, Kripke has no plausible way of explaining why Wittgenstein goes on to say that this conclusion is based upon a fundamental misunderstanding. However, this all turns upon the conflation indicated above. On Kripke's reading, as I have set it out, the paradox at the beginning of #201 involves a statement of RSC), and Kripke nowhere suggests that Wittgenstein accepts that thesis. It derives from the deep misunderstanding upon which classical realism is based.

None of this shows that the reading of #201 that I have just described renders Wittgenstein's thought accurately. I haven't even argued that it is superior to the reading that McDowell himself prefers. But, I hope that I have said enough to scotch the charge that Kripke does not offer any internally coherent interpretation of the crucial passage.

3. The Second Objection

This brings us to the other central the objection that McDowell raises against a Kripkean account of #201. Actually, I suspect that the two objections are interconnected: the assumptions that McDowell makes in putting forward the second criticism blind him to the chain of argumentation in Kripke's book that I have been developing. McDowell says,

On Kripke's account, Wittgenstein rescues the idea of understanding [of meaning something] by abandoning the idea that someone's grasping a meaning is a *fact* about her. According to Kripke's Wittgenstein, as soon as we look for a fact about a person that is what her grasping a meaning consists in, we are doomed to have any appearance that what we pick might be the right sort of fact ... crumble before our eyes under the impact of the regress of interpretations. So we should conclude that there can be no such fact. (M, p. 43)

After these remarks, McDowell observes that neither #201 (nor other passages in 'the rule-following section') seem to advocate this sort of escape from 'the skeptical paradox.' So, on this score at least, Kripke must be wrong. However, readers may well have noticed that my outline of Kripke's

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[13]   See *Wittgenstein on Meaning*, pp. 67–68.

overall interpretation does not portray Wittgenstein as responding to the skeptical paradox by denying that meaning something is a fact about the user of the term. Or, at least, given the initial obscurity of the thesis, it is not obvious that this forms any part of that response. What is going on here?

We should begin by clearing away two possible sources of confusion, two mistaken grounds for thinking that Kripke's Wittgenstein must hold that meaning something is not a fact. More carefully stated, I want to argue that nothing in the Kripkean account that I have been sketching presupposes or implies that

> NF) There are no facts about a speaker in virtue of which ascriptions of meaning—even among those that are fully warranted by all our usual criteria—are correct.

Call this thesis "non-factualism about meaning ascriptions." In my opinion, it should not be included as part of the position that Kripke's Wittgenstein defends.

First, Kripke's Wittgenstein, rejecting classical realism, affirms that no sentences have classical realist truth conditions. That is, he denies, for *any* sentence, that there is a possible fact or constellation of possible facts which is associated with the sentence in virtue of the standards of correctness established for the sub-sentential terms and whose realization is thereby required if that sentence is to be true. This entails, of course, that Kripke's Wittgenstein holds that *ascriptions of meaning* in particular do not have classical realist truth conditions. But it is doubtful that it follows from this, at least *for* Kripke's Wittgenstein, that meaning ascriptions are not properly thought of as, in some sense, describing facts about language users—that fully warranted ascriptions of meaning are not true in virtue of such facts. This would follow if one were to buy into the classical realist conception of what it is for a sentence to be fact describing, but there is no reason for Kripke's Wittgenstein to do so. For classical realism, the truth conditions of sentences that have them are just the possible facts those sentences 'represent', as the classical realist conceives of this. Therefore, having (classical realist) truth conditions and purporting to describe facts are taken to be one and the same. But again, there is no reason for Kripke's Wittgenstein to lapse into the perspective of the classical realist at this juncture, and there is every reason for him to keep his vision steady. Notice that agreement on this point will have the consequence that *no* sentences are used to describe facts, given that Kripke has Wittgenstein rejecting classical realist truth conditions quite universally. Presumably, using the resources of the 'skeptical solution', Kripke's Wittgenstein will want to offer his own account of what uses of language can count as fact describing. And, I can not see that anything in the 'skeptical solution' forecloses that option for him.

Actually, it seems to be an important motif in Wittgenstein's later thought that questions of classical realism should be kept distinct from questions about whether sentences of a given class are or are not 'non-factual.' Consider even the most minimal implications of what he says about a 'family resemblance' term like "game." I take it that Wittgenstein maintains that there is no single property and no single set of properties that govern, by semantic rule, the correct application of this word. Thus, "game" does not have classical realist truth (or better: satisfaction) conditions. As a piece of Wittgenstein interpretation, this is not very controversial. Nevertheless, it does not seem to be a part of the 'family resemblance' doctrine that sentences such as "This activity is a game" or "John is playing a game" etc. do not, even when they have been 'rightly' employed, serve to (in some sense) describe facts. On the contrary, the suggestion appears to be that the two sorts of question mentioned above should be prised apart. On the one hand, if, in any given case, we correctly assert the sentence, "This activity is a game," then there will be properties of the designated activity—there will be facts about that activity—in virtue of which our assertion is correct. On the other hand, neither these properties nor any others (neither this type of fact nor any other) have been semantically established as a general standard of correctness for applications of the term. This allows, as we go from case to case, that the facts about activities that support our calling them 'games' may vary significantly. What justifies us, then, in using the same word in each of the different instances? Nothing more and nothing less than the network of family resemblances that exists among the varied sets of features that form the bases of our various 'correct' ascriptions.[14] I conclude, therefore, that the fact

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[14] These remarks should be connected with what Kripke has to say about Wittgenstein's view that there are fundamental uses of language in which the way we apply a term has no independent 'justification' but, is not on that account used *zu Unrecht*, in the sense employed in *Investigations* #289. See K, p. 74, fn. 63, and pp. 87–88. Thus, in actual linguistic practice, we do, as a matter of course, describe or classify certain activities as 'games', and we do so, in each instance, on the basis of certain facts about the activity in question. What is more, we are not 'wrong' in so doing—such applications are not made *zu Unrecht*. After all, despite the absence of independent justification, there is overall agreement within the linguistic community in describing these activities as 'games' on the bases of just those facts about them, and our apprehension of the facts, as we make these judgements, has not, by any normal standards, been distorted or otherwise defective. Moreover, applying "game" in these ways in these cases does not conflict with—indeed, it helps sustain—the language game 'role' of the word and its 'utility' in the language. So, we can say that given activities are classified by us as 'games' *in virtue of* certain salient facts about them (which may differ from case to case), and the term is applied 'not wrongly' in these instances. As Kripke explains, such ascriptions are not "...without proper epistemic or linguistic support," and, as he adds, "... it is essential to the workings of our language that, in some cases, such a use of language is perfectly proper." (K, p. 74, fn. 63) Kripke's Wittgenstein highlights such observations while denying that the meaning of the term "game" involves a requirement, established antecedently to actual applications, that tells us we are right to call these activities "games" because they have the properties upon which, in fact, our ascriptions are based. It is a perspective of this

that Kripke's Wittgenstein affirms that meaning ascriptions do not have classical realist truth conditions yields no reason to imagine, at least in this exegetical context, that he is thereby committed to 'non-factualism' concerning them.

Second, it *is* true that Kripke's *skeptic* subscribes to a sort of non-factualism about meaning ascriptions. He contends that even fully warranted ascriptions of meaning do not and can not describe facts. But the skeptic arrives at this result by way of his basic skeptical argument because he has a background view about the *type of fact* that would have to be realized if meaning ascriptions were to be true. Kripke's Wittgenstein, by contrast, agrees with the skeptic that there can be no facts of the type the skeptic has in mind, but he does not share the assumption that facts of that kind are conceptually required for the truth of meaning ascriptions. So, here once more, he has no reason to infer non-factualism.

This point is of sufficient importance that it deserves expanded exposition. When, early in this essay, I described the conceptual background from which the skeptic launches the basic skeptical argument, I mentioned one facet of his perspective that is not captured by the formulation in CR). The skeptic does not simply hold CR); he thinks that it is a trivial conceptual truth. According to his conception of the contents of statements of the form 'S means such-and-such by 'T'' (and variants thereof), they say that

> S's use of 'T' stands in the meaning-relation to the properties indicated by 'such-and-such,'

where it is presupposed that this meaning-relation incorporates the condition that the indicated properties constitute the standard of correctness for S's use of 'T'. In the light of this 'analysis', the skeptic is prepared to reformulate BSC) as

> There are no facts about S that (constitutively) establish what S means by 'T',

and this, in turn, easily paraphrases into our target non-factualism.

However, since Kripke's Wittgenstein dismisses CR) altogether but acknowledges that our everyday ascriptions of meaning are in order, he surely also rejects the skeptic's conception of the content of meaning ascriptions. Whatever alternative parsing he might propose, he thinks that the skeptic is operating with a misbegotten idea of what we mean in using our ordinary forms of words to ascribe meanings. Hence, he should not accept the 'non-factualist' rendering of BSC). Kripke lays considerable emphasis on the point

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sort that leaves it open for the proponent of the skeptical solution to reject classical realist truth conditions quite universally while affirming that there is a perfectly good sense in which NF) is to be accepted.

that underlies this observation. He stresses that, since the skeptic and the proponent of the skeptical conclusion disagree, almost from the outset, about the semantical import of meaning ascriptions, it is difficult to find non-controversial formulations of some key theses (such as BSC)) to which both characters can unreservedly adhere. (See K, pp. 62–71) I am suggesting, more narrowly but in the same vein, that these difficulties encroach upon the discussion at just this crucial point. While the skeptic may adhere to non-factualism about meaning ascriptions as a variant formulation of BSC), Kripke's Wittgenstein will not.[15]

Some of the nuances that explain why the conceptual territory is tricky here are nicely illustrated by another example that Kripke introduces. I am thinking of his brief discussion of the early passages in the *Investigations* in which Wittgenstein comments on the notion that numerals 'stand for' or 'name' numbers. (K, pp. 75–77) Kripke attends to several features of these passages, but I want to highlight only certain analogies that are especially instructive in the present context. To sharpen the intended morals, I will offer my own elaboration of the example.

So let us imagine a certain debate between two philosophical opponents, Phineas and Dexter. Both of them assent to the form of words

    i)   The numerals name (are names of) the natural numbers.

This is something that we often say and think, and Phineas and Dexter are prepared to acquiesce in this. Where they differ is over the content of these words. Phineas believes that i) tells us that

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15   But, doesn't Kripke quite explicitly assert that his Wittgenstein agrees to 'non-factualism?' After all, Kripke states, "Nevertheless I choose to be so bold as to say: Wittgenstein holds with the sceptic that there in no fact as to whether I mean plus or quus." (p. 70) It is important to keep in mind the state of play at this point in Kripke's dialectic. He has just been discussing the difficulties that are created by the situation characterized in the text, i.e., that the skeptic and Wittgenstein disagree, from first to last, about the content of ascriptions of meaning. This ground-level disagreement makes it difficult for them to concur about the proper interpretation of various key philosophical theses in which meaning ascriptions are themselves implicated. In the course of this discussion, Kripke several times voices his own doubts about 'skeptical' analyses of classes of philosophically contested statements, and he makes it plain that his doubts include the treatment of the content of meaning ascriptions offered by the skeptical solution. Now, I have been pointing out that BSC), when combined with a classical realist perspective on the content of meaning ascriptions, does lead to non-factualism about meaning ascriptions and, the skeptical solution (Kripke's Wittgenstein) avoids this consequence only because it rejects this perspective. Thus, when Kripke makes the statement quoted above, I take it that he is affirming his own belief, based upon his doubts about the feasibility of the skeptical solution's account of meaning ascriptions, that Wittgenstein's acceptance of BSC) does commit him to the truth of non-factualism, no matter how much he (Wittgenstein) might ("perhaps cagily") wish to deny it. I take this expositionally unfortunate remark to be a piece of commentary by the narrator (Kripke) about what, in his opinion, Wittgenstein is committed to by his arguments and not an attempt to explicate the content of the commitments that his Wittgenstein would explicitly endorse.

ii) The numerals function as *proper names* of entities called "natural numbers,"

and, in asserting this, he has a conception or a picture of the way in which expressions get established and used as proper names. Dexter thinks that this is all a muddle. The form of words in i) to which he grants assent is used, he asserts, to register certain fundamental facts about the surface grammar of the numerals and, especially, facts about their distinctive, non-proper-naming use in language, i.e., their use in counting, in arithmetic calculation, and in sentences that record the results of these countings and calculations. He charges that Phineas misconstrues sentences like i) in terms of a primitive model of 'naming-in-general' and winds up with bogus metaphysical problems on his plate.

Now, suppose that Dexter comes up with a Benacerraf-type argument to back up his position.[16] Surveying the arithmetic facts and facts about the numerals' various linguistic roles, he argues at length that

iii) There are no facts that (constitutively) establish any object as that which bears the numeral 'n' as its name.

When Phineas is presented with Dexter's 'skeptical argument', then, given his reading of i) as ii), he will reformulate the new 'skeptical conclusion' as

iv) There are no facts that (constitutively) establish what the numeral 'n' names.

Moreover, if he continues to hew to his original semantical conception, Phineas will probably infer that, although the numerals function as proper names, they fail to name anything at all—a new form of radical skepticism about the language of arithmetic.

On the other hand, if Dexter remains faithful to his alternative views about the meaning of 'Numeral 'n' names the number N,' he will refuse to make the critical transition from iii) to iv). Having his own impression of what i) says, he does not equate the contents of i) and ii). Indeed, it is a striking feature of the example that Dexter judges that iii) is true and iv) is simply false. Dexter does continue to affirm that, e.g., the Roman numeral "III" names the number 3, and he believes that there *are* facts about the Romans' use of "III" that establish this as the case. After all, he explains, "III" is the *third* numeral in the system of numerals that Romans used in counting, calculating, and so on. He opines that these and related facts make it the case that "III" names the number 3, and we can grasp this truth, he insists, when

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16   Paul Benacerraf, "What Numbers Could Not Be," *Philosophical Review* LXXIV (1965): 47–73, reprinted in *Philosophy of Mathematics: Selected Readings*, ed. Paul Benacerraf and Hilary Putnam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 272–94.

we have correctly understood the concept of 'naming a number.' In other words, from his standpoint, it is false that

iv´) There are no facts in virtue of which statements of the form 'Numeral 'n' names the number N', even when warranted by all our usual criteria, are correct.

If Dexter's position is right, then the inference from iii) to either iv) or iv´)— to 'non-factualism,' as it were, about the numerals used as names—is invalid.

In the setting of our original complex of problems, the skeptic is the counterpart there of Phineas, and Kripke's Wittgenstein plays Dexter's role. Thus, Kripke's Wittgenstein maintains, in effect, that, if the meaningfulness of S's term 'T' *were* to require that S's use of 'T' stand in the meaning-relation (as the skeptic conceives of this) to a particular set of properties, then there could not be any facts that *would* establish which properties satisfy the requirement. Nevertheless, he can be sanguine about this result since he judges that the supposed requirement arises from a confused conception of the content of meaning ascriptions. Hence, he is not committed to the claim that there are no facts in virtue of which it is true (when it is) that S means such-and-such by 'T'. Still, there is a pertinent difference between the upshot of the two cases. In the 'numeral' case, Dexter provides a positive gloss of 'Numeral 'n' names the number N' that makes it clear that, for him, there *are* facts in virtue of which such statements are true. However, when we inspect the account that the skeptical solution gives of the content of meaning ascriptions, it seems to me that its implications for the parallel issue are less clear. We would probably have to go beyond what Kripke says about the specific character of the skeptical solution to resolve the matter. Be this as it may, we have seen the following: Kripke's Wittgenstein is entitled to remain altogether agnostic about the correctness of non-factualism about meaning ascriptions.

I have devoted a great deal of space to this last point because McDowell, like most other commentators on Kripke's book, depicts the fundamental strategy of 'the skeptical solution' in a manner I believe to be mistaken. He reads Kripke as contending that Wittgenstein accepts some argument whose conclusion is non-factualism about meaning ascriptions. And then, from that skeptical base, Wittgenstein is supposed to seek to avoid the apparently disastrous consequences of his conclusion by constructing a theory according to which ascriptions of meaning do not even *purport* to state or describe facts. The positive theory of 'the skeptical solution', thus understood, tries to explain how meaning ascriptions are, in fact, meaningful, but the meanings that the theory grants these sentences are, in Austin's terminology, entirely non-constative. This depiction of Kripke's exegesis is the familiar one, but it is all awry.

McDowell sees Kripke's Wittgenstein as sharing an argument for non-fac-
tualism with Kripke's skeptic, but, to be accurate about this, we should
notice that his is an argument different from any that we have canvassed. Here
is a summary statement by McDowell of the argument he imputes.

Kripke in effect assumes that the only way someone's understanding [meaning] something
could even seem to be a fact about her would be if one thought her understanding [her mean-
ing something] was a matter of her having something in mind. He finds in Wittgenstein an
argument, based on the presupposition, to show that a person's having something in mind can-
not constitute her understanding [meaning] something, on pain of the regress of interpretations.
And he concludes in Wittgenstein's behalf that a person's understanding [meaning] something
cannot be a fact about her. According to Kripke's Wittgenstein, we must stop conceiving attri-
butions of understanding [meaning] as candidates for truth in a sense that brings into play facts
or states of affairs in which their truth would consist. (M, p. 44)

Patching in some pieces merely mentioned in the quote, the argument that
McDowell is sketching runs as follows. If we ask what it is for my use of an
expression to have content, then the platitudinous first answer is that I have
somehow 'interpreted' the expression so that it has the content in question.
Sound and inscription types do not have contents intrinsically. As McDowell
puts it, they just 'stand there'. And they acquire their contents only because
some speaker or speakers assign them an interpretation. Still, this patently
doesn't take us very far. We ask in turn, "What is it for me to 'interpret' an
expression so that it has content?" Surely, it is at least a necessary condition
here that I must somehow have the relevant content 'in mind.' But, this
apparently trivial condition may not be as innocent as it looks. According to
McDowell, Kripke's Wittgenstein presupposes that any content grasped by
the mind is like the content of an expression, i.e., there has to be some vehi-
cle that expresses it. More fully, *if* there is to be a fact about me that I have
some content 'in mind', then this fact must consist in my mind's containing
or having before it some item that expresses that content, an item, what is
more, that does not *intrinsically* bear any content at all. However, as
McDowell explains, this is where what he calls "the regress of interpreta-
tions" gets it start. If the content-bearing item in my mind does not,
'considered in itself,' have content, then it too must have come to have its
content because I have already given *it* an interpretation. What now does my
interpreting this 'mental' item consist in? It too will need interpretation from
me. With all the relevant premises in place, it appears that the chain of
needed 'interpretations' will never end. Hence, in McDowell's version, Krip-
ke's Wittgenstein concludes that there can be no *fact* about anyone that they
interpret expressions and thereby give them content, i.e., there can be no *fact*
about them that they mean something by a term.

McDowell is right in finding this argument quite implausible, and he is
right that no such argument is present in the *Investigations*. But, for reasons
I have already elaborated at length, this is also not an argument that Kripke

attributes to Wittgenstein. The reader will remember that I earlier quoted a proposition that McDowell calls "the master thesis," a thesis he thinks that Kripke wrongly has Wittgenstein endorsing and deploying in a skeptical argument. To quote once more, that thesis says, "...whatever a person has in her mind, it is only be virtue of being *interpreted* in one of possible ways that it can impose a sorting of extra-mental items into those that accord with it and those that do not." As McDowell intends the 'master thesis' to be understood, it claims that any state, event, or object that has intensional content has the content that it does only because a process of 'interpretation' has assigned that content to it. In my opinion, no such general 'master thesis' figures in the account that Kripke gives of Wittgenstein, and Kripke's Wittgenstein does not arrive at a 'non-factualism about meaning ascriptions' by this route either.[17] If my reconstruction of Kripke's 'drama of skepticism' is on the mark, then McDowell has misunderstood both the structure of the skeptical argument and the content of the skeptical conclusion that it reaches. Non-factualism is not a component of the modest semantic skepticism that Kripke attributes to Wittgenstein, and it is not a thesis to which the skeptical solution offers a mitigating reply.

4. Conclusion

There are three broad lessons to be learned from these reflections.

First lesson. If I am right about the central topics I have broached, then the question, "Does Kripke's exegesis, considered in detail, capture the essence of Wittgenstein's thought about 'rule-following?'" is badly in need of serious reassessment. I have focussed only on the possibility of a Kripkean reading of *Investigations* #201, and another essay of at least the length of this one would have to be written to adjudicate the broader question competently. The critics, and they are many, who have judged that Kripke's account of Wittgenstein is not 'a good fit' with the texts he scrutinizes have themselves read Kripke in a badly distorted fashion. Several of the elements of Kripke's interpretation that may seem not to mesh with Wittgenstein's remarks fall easily into place when the worst distortions have been eliminated. Since Kripke's interpretation, as I have presented it, is subtle, powerful, and interesting, we do well to take care to see how the various pieces might fit, both with one another and with Wittgenstein's own words.

Second lesson. Let us stipulate that a philosopher is a '*realist*' about ascriptions of meaning if she satisfies two conditions. She must hold that a) meaning ascriptions, when true, are true in virtue of facts about the speaker or speakers in question, and b) the basis of her acceptance of a) is not built upon a deflationary or minimalist account of truth or facts or both. The usual

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[17] In particular, he is wrong in thinking that, on Kripke's reading, the basic argument of #201 is structured by an appeal to a regress of interpretations. See note 11 above.

way of being such a 'realist' is to be an advocate of classical realism about meaning, but, if Wittgenstein's skeptical argument is sound, then this is hopeless. What our recent discussion reveals is that there may be a different form of 'semantic realism,' a form that may turn out to be available to a proponent of the skeptical solution. Naturally, a great deal of work would have to be carried out to decide if this option is genuinely coherent. One would have to do a lot to clarify and solidify the two conditions adumbrated above, and one would have to fill in a host of details about what the skeptical solution actually proposes and how it is supposed to work. Still, even this dimly glimpsed possibility is intriguing.[18] There may be a position on the conceptual map whose environs have not been adequately explored because it lies at some distance from the all-too-familiar trails that recent investigators of these matters have slogged and re-slogged in fruitless repetition.

Third lesson. The seas of language run very high along these rugged shores.[19]

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[18]   But these issues are delicate. For example, notice that, while Dexter is a 'realist' in this sense about statements of the form 'Number 'n' names the number N,' he is not an ontological realist about the numbers; it is essential to his position that he denies that there are entities called "(natural) numbers." Correlatively, he holds that the fact that these statements have the apparent logical form of simple relational propositions is deeply misleading. Their 'real' logical grammar is quite different from what it seems to be. I suspect that this sort of trade-off between 'realisms' of different stripes is characteristic of many similar disputes. In particular, even our strong intuitions about the logical form of statements within a given category may be undermined by our desire to preserve 'factualist' realism about the statements at issue. For a broad survey of the complex issues that can arise in this connection, see Mark Wilson, "Can We Trust Logical Form?", *Journal of Philosophy* XCI (1994): 1–23.

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