CHRISTOPHER GAUKER

A New Skeptical Solution

Kripke's puzzle about rule-following is a form of the traditional problem of the nature of linguistic meaning. A skeptical solution explains not what meaning is but the role that talk of meaning plays in the linguistic community. Contrary to what some have claimed, the skeptical approach is not self-refuting. However, Kripke's own skeptical solution is inadequate. He has not adequately explained the conditions under which we are justified in attributing meanings or the utility of the practice of attributing meanings. An alternative skeptical solution may be founded on a nonepistemic conception of assertibility. Roughly, a sentence is assertible if it facilitates cooperation. The function of meaning-talk is to resolve certain sorts of conflicts in assertion. Attributions of meaning to persons outside the community may be a proper expression of a practice whose reason for being lies entirely within the community.

§ 1.

Almost everyone writing about Kripke's Wittgensteinian puzzle about rule-following (1982) has wanted either to solve it or to dissolve it. So far as I know, no one other than Kripke has defended in print the sort of *skeptical solution* that Kripke ascribes to Wittgenstein. My own view is that the skeptical approach is the right one but Kripke's version of the skeptical solution is wrong. My main objective in this paper is to sketch a skeptical solution that escapes some of the more obvious problems in Kripke's own. The key idea will be that we ought to conceive of assertibility in terms of cooperation rather than in terms of justification.

§ 2.

Kripke formulates his question about rule-following as follows (12): What fact about myself can I cite to justify my claim that in the past I have meant *addition* by "+" and thus that if I want to use "+" with the same meaning as before, then in answer to a question of the form, "$x + y = ?$" I ought to give the *sum* of x and y? More generally, what fact about myself can I cite to justify my claim that in the past the word w meant m in my idiolect and thus if I want to use w with the same meaning as before, then I ought to say such and such rather than something else? The easiest sort of answer is to say that in the past I have attached a certain interpretation to the symbol in question and that that interpretation dictates a certain use. However, this easy answer fails, as Kripke persuasively argues, because if the meaning of symbols is in question in the first place, then the symbols used in giving the interpretation can be questioned just as well.

In Kripke's formulation, the paradox of rule-following seems to confuse two questions. One question is epistemological: How can I *justify* my claim that in the past I have meant a certain something by my words? The other question is ontological: What kind of *fact* does my meaning something by a given word really consist in? Kripke himself tries to say that the problem is not really epistemological. He says that the problem is one that arises even from a God's eye point of view, where all the facts about my mental history are in (21). This is not a good way of putting the point, however, since it presupposes that the facts do not include any facts about what I have meant. Further, adopting the God's eye point of view is not a good way to focus on the ontological question, because if the God's eye point of view is not to be an irrelevant fiction, then we have to acknowledge that even God will know some things only by means of inference.

But Kripke is right, I think, that the epistemological question is not the main problem. In any ordinary context, if a question arises concerning my meaning, there are straightforward ways of answering. For instance, if a question arises about the meaning of my use of "+", then I can answer by citing a rule I follow in answering questions of the form, "$x + y = ?$". It is true, as Kripke shows, that I cannot explain all of my meanings at once in this way, but why should I ever have to? The epistemological problem about my meaning might indeed arise in the context of foundationalist epistemology. If one wanted to use a private language to describe one's sensory experiences prior to finding any reason to believe that there are other people in the world beside oneself, then one might need to be able

to persuade oneself that one was indeed describing one's experience in a constant manner across time. But this kind of foundationalism is not a motive that moves many people today. The epistemological problem might also arise in the context of the theory of radical interpretation. But when the theory of radical interpretation turns inward and we ask how we might interpret even ourselves, then the serious doubts can only be first of all doubts about what linguistic meaning really is.

This is not to say that the ontological problem, concerning the nature of meaning, is free of epistemological entanglements. As Crispin Wright has emphasized in his discussions of Kripke's paradox (e.g., 1989), the problem presented by the nature of meaning is in part that speakers are supposed to have some kind of authority over their own meanings. The mere fact that someone thinks he or she means addition by "+" is supposed to be especially strong evidence that that is what he or she means. So an explanation of the sort of fact a fact about meaning is will have to provide for such first-person authority.

A second way in which Kripke's formulation is misleading is that in his presentation a person's meaning something by a certain term is more or less equated with his or her using the term correctly. This is not what Kripke says, of course. On the contrary, he himself emphasizes the possibility of error in arguing against the dispositional solution. Nonetheless, the equation is encouraged by the equation of meaning with rule-following and by Kripke's choice of examples. If a person systematically answered "11" when asked a question of the form "$5 + 7 = ?$" then we might question whether that person really did mean what the rest of us mean by all of the constituent terms. But in other cases, it should be clear that a person's meaning something by a given term is compatible with his or her systematically using it in ways that are strictly incorrect. For instance, to use a famous example from Tyler Burge (1979), a person might well mean *arthritis* by "arthritis" even if he or she is tempted to say something like "Aunt Martha has arthritis in her thigh". (For a defense of Burge on this point, see my 1991 or my 1994.)

The upshot is that the core of Kripke's puzzle is the traditional problem of the nature of meaning. The question is, what kind of fact is the fact that a word has a certain meaning? The new light that Kripke's formulation sheds on this old problem has occasioned many insights. However, the most important feature of Kripke's discussion is in my opinion still not adequately estimated, namely, his concept of a *skeptical solution*. A *straight solution* explains what kind of facts are

the facts that meanings consist in. A skeptical solution, as I see it, declines to give a straight solution and instead explains the role that *talk* of meaning plays in a linguistic community. Obviously, this reorientation of the problem will be fruitful only if we can explain the role of talk of meaning without falling back on the postulation of a special kind of fact that sentences about meanings may correspond to. Kripke's insight is that it might be possible to do just that.

§ 3.

It is not very easy for some people to take the skeptical approach seriously. According to Paul Boghossian, it is even self-refuting. A clearer conception of the skeptical solution will emerge from a refutation of Boghossian's argument.

Boghossian's polemic runs as follows (1989, pp. 525-26): To adopt the skeptical approach is to be a nonfactualist about meaning. But no one who is a nonfactualist about some area of discourse, whether meaning or any other, can adopt a deflationary theory of truth. For on such an account of truth, any significant declarative sentence, even a sentence belonging to the kind of discourse in question, will have truth conditions. In that case, there will be no distinguishing the kind of discourse about which we are to be nonfactualists from plainly factual discourse. So the skeptic must suppose that truth, as it pertains to at least some kinds of sentences, is a robust property. That is to say, at least some statements to the effect that something is true or false must themselves be factual. But if statements about truth are sometimes factual, then statements about meaning must be sometimes factual too (truth and meaning are related in that way). So nonfactualism about meaning leads to a contradiction.

This argument turns on the conclusion that a nonfactualist about meaning cannot be a deflationist. Boghossian defines deflationism as the thesis that the predicate "is true" does not refer to a property (1990a, 180). Boghossian thinks that deflationism so defined is virtually self-refuting. A deflationist can allow only very minimal conditions on a predicate's referring to a property, and the predicate "is true" will satisfy those (1990a, 183). To decide whether deflationism does indeed conflict with the meaning skeptic's nonfactualism about meaning and is indeed self-refuting, we need to consider a little more carefully than Boghossian what kind of deflationism the meaning skeptic might wish to appeal to.

Consider, for instance, a kind of deflationism that assimilates the word "true" to logical words like "every" or "not". The word "true" plays a legitimate role in enabling us to infer sentences that do not contain the word "true" from other sentences that do not contain that word. For instance, from "John believes that *p*" we may infer "*p*" if we may interpose the following additional premise: "Everything John believes is true". The central principle on which these inferences rest is that wherever we may assert "*p* is true", we may assert *p* as well, and conversely. According to this kind of deflationism, the only thing to understand about truth is such logical functions of the word "true" and related terms. Naturally, one might question whether the legitimacy of such inferences can be explained without treating truth as a property with a real essence whose nature needs to be explained, but that is what this kind of deflationism claims.

Deflationism, so conceived, contrasts with *correspondence* theories of truth. By this I mean any theory that says that truth can be *explained* in terms of relations of correspondence between sentences and facts or between subsentential expressions and individuals and properties (or sets). Since the correspondence thesis, as I define it, is a claim about *explanation,* the correspondence relation cited will have to be something the nature of which we could go on to explain in a substantive way, perhaps by reducing it to some kind of causal relation between linguistic and nonlinguistic events. The correspondence theory is one way, perhaps the only reasonable way, of treating truth as a robust property in Boghossian's sense. (But see Kraut 1993. Kraut criticizes Boghossian's argument in his 1990a by drawing a distinction between robust conceptions of truth and realist (correspondence) conceptions of truth.)

Quite generally, this sort of deflationist denies that the fact than an object satisfies a predicate can be explained by citing the fact that the object possesses a property that the predicate corresponds to. So, in particular, the fact that a sentence satisfies the predicate "is true" cannot be explained by citing the fact that the sentence possesses a property that this predicate corresponds to. But the deflationist of this kind need not be a deflationist in the sense of Boghossian, namely, one who denies that "is true" refers to a property in any sense at all. Our deflationist may take the same deflationary attitude toward "referring to a property" that he or she takes toward "is true" and thus maintain that any significant predicate, and in particular the predicate "is true", refers to a property. So our kind of deflationism does not refute itself in the manner of the deflationism Boghossian defines.

Whether deflationism is incompatible with the meaning skeptic's nonfactualism about meaning, as Boghossian claims, also depends on what this nonfactualism is supposed to be. Boghossian defines a nonfactualist about a given type of discourse as someone who holds (at least) that sentences of that kind do not have truth conditions (1989, 524; 1990a, 161). A nonfactualist in this sense will indeed be unlikely to be a deflationist about truth in our sense, for such a deflationist will allow that any significant declarative sentence has truth conditions (1990a, 164-5). Boghossian also seems willing to define nonfactualism about a given region of discourse as the thesis that statements in that region of discourse have at most deflationary truth conditions while statements in other regions of discourse have robust truth conditions (1990b, 269, 275). By definition, this kind of nonfactualist too will not be a deflationist about all types of discourse. But if the meaning skeptic has to be a nonfactualist in some sense, then the pertinent nonfactualism will not be either of these kinds, as I will now explain.

Boghossian's nonfactualist adopts, for at least some areas of discourse, a robust conception of truth, presumably, some kind of correspondence theory. But Kripke's meaning skeptic cannot adopt a correspondence thesis. The skeptical solution to Kripke's puzzle says that we should not try to explain what meaning *is* but only the role that *talk* of meaning plays in the community. The skeptic will not hold that in some areas of discourse truth may be explained as correspondence to the facts, for if in some areas truth were correspondence to the facts, then at least in those areas we could give a straight solution to the puzzle. In those areas we could cite the facts corresponded to in answer to the question about meaning. For instance, we could say, "I mean *addition* and not *quaddition* by '+' because the addition function and not the quaddition function is what the '+'-sign, as I use it, *corresponds* to". So in dispensing with all attempts at a straight solution, the skeptic must dispense with the correspondence theory as well.

Still, the skeptic may be regarded as a nonfactualist in a different sense. If there are no facts of meaning to be explained but only useful talk of meaning, then truth is not a property to be explained as correspondence to the facts. Truth and meaning, as Boghossian explains (1989, 524), are related in that way. We could not hope to explain the way in which true sentences correspond to the facts if we could not give some substantive account of the nature of linguistic meaning. So the skeptic may qualify as a "nonfactualist" inasmuch as he or she denies that there are *facts considered as* the sorts of things to which true sentences must

correspond. Someone who is a nonfactualist in this sense need not deny that there are facts *simpliciter*.

Boghossian infers that the skeptic must conceive of truth as sometimes a robust property from the conclusion that a deflationary theory of truth would contradict the skeptic's nonfactualism about meaning. We can now see that there is no contradiction. Yes, the deflationist will grant that statements about meaning have truth conditions. For instance, the sentence "'Schnee ist weiß' means *snow is white*" is true if and only if the sentence "Schnee ist weiß" means *snow is white*. But granting that sentences about meaning have truth conditions in this way is not in itself a retraction of the kind of nonfactualism to which the skeptic is committed. The skeptic's nonfactualism is not the claim there are no truth conditions for sentences about meanings — of course there are. The skeptic's nonfactualism is also not the claim that the correspondence theory of truth pertains to some areas of discourse but not to discourse about meaning. The skeptic's nonfactualism is, rather, the thesis that *quite generally* the truth of sentences cannot be explained in terms of correspondence to facts. Far from conflicting with deflationism, the skeptic's nonfactualism virtually compels the skeptic to be a deflationist about truth since the only alternative to adopting a correspondence theory appears to be some kind of deflationism.

This characterization of Kripke's skeptical solution might seem a little off. The focus of Kripke's discussion is specifically assertions about meaning and the question whether there are any facts for these to correspond to. His intention, someone might say, was not to question the correspondence theory of truth *tout court*. It is true that in a number of passages Kripke describes the skeptical solution as denying that there are specifically meaning facts (70-71, 108) or as denying specifically that there are truth conditions for statements about meaning (86). These passages suggest that, as far as the skeptic is concerned, it is all right to regard other statements as possessing robust truth conditions. But on the other hand, Kripke introduces his skeptical solution by pointing out that Wittgenstein himself intended to deny "the natural presupposition that meaningful declarative sentences must purport to correspond to facts", and Kripke agrees that "the picture of correspondence-to-facts must be cleared away before we can begin with the sceptical problem" (78-79). Kripke is talking about meaningful sentences in general and not just sentences about meaning. In any case, as we have seen, the correspondence theory has to be in question wherever we question the existence of explanatory facts of meaning.

Boghossian's argument in his 1989 against Kripke's skeptical solution is an adaptation of an argument that he originally developed in answer to eliminativism about the mental, published in his 1990. In that context, it might have been appropriate to define nonfactualism as a thesis to the effect that a certain predicate does not express a property (however see Devitt 1990). But Boghossian is mistaken in applying the same conception of nonfactualism in the context of Kripke's skeptical solution to the problem of meaning. Boghossian reads Kripke as expounding a global nonfactualism, which denies that any predicate whatsoever denotes a property, and he expresses surprise that Kripke would "adopt so extreme a view" (1989, 524). But what Boghossian perceives as global nonfactualism in his sense is in fact merely deflationism.

§ 4.

Nonetheless, it is hard to be satisfied with Kripke's sort of skeptical solution. Kripke's skeptical solution, which he attributes to Wittgenstein but does not clearly endorse for himself, has two aspects. "It provides both conditions under which we are justified in attributing concepts to others and an account of the utility of this game in our lives" (95). In the case of the concept of addition, the conditions are given by conditionals such as this: "If Jones means addition by '+', then if he is asked for '68+57', he will reply '125'" (94). In general, the utility of attributing concepts is that in doing so "we take [people] provisionally into the community" (95). But this is not a very satisfactory account of either the conditions or the utility.

Consider first the conditions. According to Kripke, we "maintain" some such conditional as the one about Jones. In what sense do we "maintain" it? Kripke's claim that we maintain such conditionals would seem to be problematic in many of the ways that the assertion that Jones means addition by "+" has proven to be problematic. Since there are infinitely many sums, we cannot actually assert one such conditional for each of them. Nor can we simply argue that we maintain such conditionals as consequences of a decidable set of axioms that we maintain, for we will have to maintain as well that each of these conditionals is a consequence.

In any case, the fact that we maintain such conditionals does not by itself fulfill Kripke's objective. Kripke's objective is to state conditions under which we

will be licensed in asserting "Jones means addition". This means that Kripke must supply sufficient conditions under which we are licensed in making that assertion. Conditionals of the sort in question will not license us in asserting that Jones means addition since they state only necessary conditions and not sufficient conditions. Nonetheless, these conditionals express a test of Jones's meaning that he may pass or fail. For instance, if he is asked for "68+57", and does not reply "125" then he fails a test. According to Kripke, if Jones passes "enough" such tests, then he will be credited with meaning addition (91-92, 108-110). His passing enough such tests is the only sufficient condition for our being licensed in making an assertion about his meaning that Kripke specifies.

When is enough enough? Without an answer to that obvious question, Kripke cannot claim to have achieved his goal. So suppose we tried to elaborate on Kripke's sketch by detailing sufficient conditions under which we would be licensed in asserting "Jones means addition". The threat is that when we were finished we would have an account of the necessary and sufficient conditions for someone's meaning addition. In other words, we would end up offering another straight solution to the problem of the nature of meaning. So if we assume that a skeptical solution is actually necessary, because we despair of all straight solutions, then we should not expect to be able to fill in the details of Kripke's sort of sketch of assertibility conditions.

Maybe this is not right. Maybe there is a way of spelling out the assertibility conditions of a sentence like "Jones means addition" in terms of which we can actually explain the utility of such assertions in our lives and yet which does not amount to just another straight solution. But Kripke's general perspective on assertibility conditions does not encourage us to think so. Kripke thinks of assertibility in terms of justification (74, 77). A sentence is assertible if and only if the speaker would be justified in asserting it. But what would it mean to say that Smith was *justified* in asserting that Jones means addition? One thing it might mean is that Smith has *grounds* for asserting that Jones means addition. But typically we think of having grounds for the proposition that p as a matter of having access to the fact that p. Access to a fact is likely to be explained in turn in a way that depends on the fact's having a definite role to play in the history of our experience. But in that case, our conception of justification for assertions about meaning will presuppose a straight solution to Kripke's skeptical puzzle.

Another thing it might mean to say that Smith is justified in asserting that Jones means addition is that Smith is a reliable reporter of Jones's meaning.

Roughly, Smith will normally report that Jones means something only when Jones does in fact mean that. Here again it looks as though to spell out the theory in detail we would need to explain the nature of the facts that Smith is reliably able to report. Again we would be led back to the question, what kind of fact is the fact that Jones means something?

Perhaps we should say that the only kind of justification at issue is a kind that can be wholly explicated in terms of interactions between members of the community. In particular, the pertinent notion of being justified might be simply that of doing what most people would not object to. This approach is hinted at by some of Kripke's own remarks. For instance, he explains that to say that a member of a community judges that a child has given the "right" answer is only to say that that member judges that the child has given the same answer as that which he or she would have given himself or herself (90). The well-known problem with this is that it seems to entail that no one can be justified in asserting a proposition if the people around him or her deny that he or she is justified. Kripke explicitly denies that doing as others do turns out to be a necessary condition for meaning something (111). But without a clear theory of justification, it is not so clear that he can avoid this result. (Kripke discusses this problem briefly in the note on p. 146, but by his own admission he makes little progress with it.)

These doubts are not the result of any penetrating analysis of justification. Perhaps there is some middle road, an account of justification that does not rest on some independently constituted facts about meaning and also avoids the reduction of justification to conformity. But if so, my hunch is that the best way to find it would be to look for a different way of thinking about assertibility and then consider whether we can explicate justification in light of that.

In any case, Kripke's meager account of the role that assertions about meaning play in the community — their utility — seems wrong. Their role, according to Kripke, is to bestow on people a certain status. When we take a person's words to have a certain meaning, we ascribe to that person an ability, and we rely on that ability in our interactions with that person. This theory might seem reasonable if we consider only the case of addition. If I am licensed in asserting that Jones means addition, then maybe I can accept him into the community in the sense of trusting him to calculate my grocery bill and such (92-93). But, to return to Burge's example, my being licensed in asserting that Art means *arthritis* by "arthritis" certainly does not license me in trusting Art to diagnose and treat the disease. Perhaps there is some other way to explain what acceptance

in the community is supposed to entail, if not this kind of trust, but Kripke has not given us any such explanation.

§ 5.

An alternative version of the skeptical solution might be developed by starting with a nonepistemic conception of assertibility. Talking often facilitates cooperation. Two people are building a house. To do so, they must coordinate their actions. For instance, to raise a long beam, each must lift his or her end at the same time as the other. Thus, the one calls out to the other, "Lift it now!" In my view, this cooperative function is the fundamental function of language in terms of which we should try to understand the main features of language. In particular, we ought to explain in this way the assertibility of a sentence in a context. A sentence is assertible in a context if and only if, roughly, asserting it is the kind of act that would normally facilitate cooperation in such a context.

The cooperative conception of language does not say that every assertible assertion must actually have some desirable result. Not every correct exercise of a practice that has a certain function need directly serve that function. The practice of stopping at a red light serves to prevent collisions, but at 2 a.m. there are no other cars around. That is why I said that an assertible sentence is *of a kind* that facilitates cooperation. The hope is that in light of a general theory of how language facilitates cooperation, we could specify what kind that is. But moreover, the cooperative function of language does not say that every act of speech aims at cooperation. A practice that has a certain central function admits of variations that serve other functions or hardly any function at all. Wearing clothes serves to keep us warm, but someone might like to add pink buttons. Similarly, the function of cooperation might be what we have to look at when we want to understand the basic structures of language, but jokes and poetry may be accommodated as well.

Certainly there is no *incompatibility* between the cooperative conception of language and the correspondence theory of truth. A chunk of speech, one might say, is like a map. By virtue of its correspondence to reality we can use it to find our way around. Or the languages we speak might be conceived as merely the medium by which we share with one another the maps we form in our heads. On this theory, words will correspond to reality only by expressing certain mental

representations that correspond to reality more directly. So language, one might say, facilitates cooperation by enabling us to share our mental maps with one another.

But the good thing about the cooperative conception of language is that it is not obvious that it *has* to be combined with a correspondence theory in this way. Instead, we can think of language as a tool, yes, a tool, by which speakers manipulate one another's behavior. As such, it can even become an instrument of self-control and thus a medium of a distinctive kind of thought. No doubt some kind of mental processes will underlie this tool-like use of language. In some sense, a speaker must *conclude* that speaking a certain form of words will have a certain effect and *decide* to try bring about that effect. But the mental processes that result in speech need not be conceived as the manipulation of mental representations that may be true or false by virtue of correspondence to reality. Many sorts of mental processes deserve to be called thought. One need not presume that the processes of thought underlying talk are themselves so much like talking that we might as well explain overt speech as the external expression of such internal discourse.

Further, it is not obvious that on the cooperative conception assertibility conditions will reduce to justification conditions. Certainly, a speaker can always supply a justification for a lot of claims that fail to be assertible just because in context they would be irrelevant. Moreover, a speaker might be justified in making an assertion that was not in fact assertible if the speaker had misleading reasons for thinking that the assertion were of a kind that would promote cooperation. Conversely, an assertion might be of the kind that would in fact promote cooperation although the speaker would not in fact be able to supply a justification for what he or she would be claiming (and consequently might not make the assertion).

From this perspective we can begin to understand the function of specific forms of discourse without our having to postulate facts correspondence to which explains the truth of sentences belonging to that form of discourse. Here, for instance, is a sketch of a possible way to think about ascriptions of belief: To ascribe a belief to a person is to make an assertion on that person's behalf. Further, an assertion on someone's behalf need not be conceived as depending for its correctness on whether the person is in a corresponding state. Rather, it may be conceived as doing something for someone that for one reason or another he or she cannot do himself or herself. For instance, the scout is so far out in the savan-

nah that he would not be able to make a round trip to the village and back before nightfall. So an intermediary might meet him halfway and report back to the tribe, "The scout *believes* that hunting will be good in the northern territories". In other words, the intermediary asserts on the scout's behalf, "The hunting will be good in the northern territories". So a sentence about someone's belief will be assertible in a context if and only if, roughly, the assertion made on that other person's behalf would have been assertible in the given context if made by that other person.

Here, finally, is a sketch of an alternative account of assertions about meaning. Consider that there are various ways to resolve disagreements. Sometimes a disagreement can be resolved through the exchange of facts and hypotheses. Call this the *standard method*. Applying the standard method may be very complex and take a thousand years. But even with perseverance, the standard method may fail for a variety of reasons. A breakdown might be chalked up to various forms of irrationality. Alternatively, we might discover that the parties in conflict *mean different things by their words*. Putting forward such a hypothesis should have the effect of making language itself the object of discussion. It occasions the defining of terms, the description of paradigm cases and a variety of other devices. My theory about assertions about meaning is that sentences about meaning are assertible in a context just in case they play this sort of role in the resolving of conflicts in assertion.

Naturally, this is only a start. To develop the account in detail we would have to look closely at the various forms of talk about meaning. For instance, we have to distinguish between our talk of conventional word-meaning, our talk of a speaker's meaning on a particular occasion, and the talk of meaning occasioned by the project of translating from one language into another. In addition, there are various related phenomena, such as presupposition, domain of discourse and anaphoric reference, that our account of meaning will have to deal with as well. Moreover, we will have to explain these things without appealing to meanings in ways that might beg the question.

One good thing about the present theory of assertions about belief and meaning is that it seems to provide for first-person authority. A person's assertions about his or her own beliefs may normally be believed because normally no one is in a better position to make an assertion on behalf of a person than that person himself or herself. A person's assertions about his or her meanings may generally be accepted because the whole point of talking about meanings in the

first place is to resolve conflicts in assertion and when a person explains what he or she means, that person is, in effect, laying down certain conditions under which he or she will concede.

The cooperative conception of language provides a framework for understanding the workings of language that need not inevitably rest on a correspondence theory of truth. In particular, since assertibility is to be explained in terms of cooperation rather than justification, the theory will not demand a straight account of the nature of meaning in the way Kripke's conception of assertibility seems to do. Rather, meaning talk may be explained in terms of its function in resolving certain otherwise intractable conflicts in assertion rather than by explaining the nature of the meanings talked about.

The cooperative conception of language might even enable us to fill in the details of a deflationary theory of truth. The deflationist of the kind I have defined takes as a theory of *truth* an account of the logical functions of the word "true". It has been observed (e.g., Gupta 1993) that a primary challenge to deflationism of this kind is to define the concept of logical validity without relying on the concept of truth in a question-begging way. I contend that this can in fact be done by explaining the ways in which the assertibility of a sentence in a context depends on its logical form and the content of the context and then defining logical validity somewhat as follows: An argument is valid if and only for every context in which all of the premises are assertible the conclusion is assertible as well. (For further development of the cooperative conception of language, see my 1994.)

§ 6.

Finally I want to say something about how the issue of community-dependence looks from the perspective of this new skeptical solution. In some passages (1953, §§ 199, 206, 241), Wittgenstein gives the impression of thinking that rule-following is possible only in the context of a community. The worst way to take this is as part of a straight solution: A person follows a certain rule if and only if he or she does what everybody else does. One good thing about Kripke's skeptical solution is that it seems to offer a way to bring the community into the picture, in the spirit of Wittgenstein's remarks, without immediately implying that in order for a person to mean anything he or she must say just whatever everyone else would say.

For Kripke, community comes into the account in that the function of attributions of meaning is supposed to be the bestowing on a person of a certain status in the community. On this account, the sinister implications will be avoided if there may be reason to grant that status to people even if what they say is in some ways different from what others say. I rejected Kripke's account of the functions of assertions about meaning in favor of the idea that their function is the resolution of conflicts in assertion. But on this theory, the sinister implications are even more clearly avoided since we do not need to suppose that all conflicts in assertion are due to a difference in meaning. Some may be disagreements over the facts.

Kripke's own way of bringing community into the account puts Kripke in a difficult position when he considers the likes of Robinson Crusoe. It seems absurd to deny that Robinson Crusoe could invent a language for purposes of keeping records and thus use words meaningfully. What Kripke says about this is that "*if* we think of Crusoe as following rules, we are taking him into our community and applying our criteria of rule following to him" (110). Offhand, this looks like a trick. Crusoe is clearly not really a member of our community. But Kripke has to concede that he means something. So rather than give up his theory, he says that in attributing meanings to Crusoe we are taking him into our community. But this is a phoney solution, since in taking Crusoe into the community in this sense we still do not really interact with him in any way.

In light of my alternative account of the function of assertions about meaning, we can see that what Kripke says about Crusoe is not really so bad. Since the function of language is to facilitate cooperation, all language is in that way community-dependent. But assertions about meaning are community-dependent in a second way as well. Their function is to ensure a smooth linguistic exchange. So in the normal or paradigm case, they will perform their function only when the speakers they are about are speakers with whom we have to interact. But this does not mean that the attribution of meanings to persons with whom we do not interact is entirely precluded. Compare again the case of stopping at a red light. This is a practice that serves a useful function even if not every correct expression of the practice serves that function — for instance stopping at 2 a.m. when there are no other cars around. The rightness of this practice, we could say, depends on a community even though not every right expression of this practice is *in* the community. Similarly, the attribution of meanings and intentional states to a

person entirely outside of any community may be a proper expression of a practice whose reason for being lies entirely within the community.

By hypothesis, we are not going to get into any disagreements with Crusoe and resolve them by positing a difference in meanings. But as I mentioned, the project of translation may be another appropriate venue for talk of meaning. The meaning of the words of a speaker of a foreign language will be an issue, something we need to talk about, only so long as we do not understand. The paradigm case will be that in which we actually have to interact with those whose language we are translating. The test of our understanding will be our ability to interact cooperatively. Nonetheless, inasmuch as we might try to translate Crusoe's language from afar, he might provide an other-than-paradigm case for assertions about meanings.

A different question is whether Crusoe himself would have any occasion to talk of meanings. Might he not, for instance, wonder whether a symbol, as he uses it now, has the meaning with which he used it in the past? I think that I can concede that he might, for without making my thesis vacuous I can maintain that on these occasions he is engaged in resolving conflicts in assertion with his former self. But no doubt there will be differences between the function that talk of meaning serves for us and the function that talk of meaning serves for him.

§ 7.

The essence of the skeptical solution is the idea that an account of our talk of meaning may qualify as a theory of meaning. This entails abandoning the correspondence theory of truth as an explanatory theory. What we have to understand is the conditions under which our assertions about meaning, as well as our assertions *tout court*, are assertible in a given context. It is a mistake to think of these assertibility conditions as justification conditions, as Kripke does, since this creates anew the need for a straight solution. The alternative is to conceive of assertibility in terms of the cooperative function of language. In particular, our assertions about meaning play a certain role in resolving conflicts in assertion. This approach reveals a sense in which meaning is community-dependent, but it does not rule out the possibility of a solitary language.[1]

References

Boghossian, Paul A. 1989. The rule-following considerations. *Mind* 98: 507-549.

Boghossian, Paul A. 1990a. The status of content. *Philosophical Review* 99: 157-184.

Boghossian, Paul A. 1990b. The status of content revisited. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 71: 264-278.

Burge, Tyler. 1979. Individualism and the mental. In *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, Vol IV, *Studies in Metaphysics*, ed. P. A. French, T.E. Uehling and H.K. Wettstein, 73-121. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Devitt, Michael. 1990. Transcendentalism about content. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 71: 247-263.

Gauker, Christopher. 1991. Mental content and the division of epistemic labor. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 69: 302-318.

Gauker, Christopher. 1994. *Thinking Out Loud: An Essay on the Relation between Thought and Language*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Gupta, Anil. 1993. A critique of deflationism. *Philosophical Topics* 21: 57-81.

Kraut, Robert. 1993. Robust deflationism. *Philosophical Review* 102: 247-263.

Kripke, Saul A. 1982. *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language: An Elementary Exposition*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Wright, Crispin. 1989. Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations and the central project of theoretical linguistics. In *Reflections on Chomsky*, ed. Alexander George, 233-264. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1953. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. New York: Macmillan.

University of Cincinnati.