

The Dilemma Imposed on the Realist by Putnam's and the Kripkensteinian Argument

Henrik Sova

Department of Philosophy, University of Tartu

In this article, I have two aims. Firstly, I argue that Hilary Putnam's model theoretic indeterminacy argument against external realism and Saul Kripke's so-called Kripkensteinian argument against semantic realism have the same dialectical structure and the same conclusion—both force the opponent to face the same dilemma. Namely: either adopt meaning minimalism or postulate unobservable semantic facts (robust realism). Secondly, I analyze more closely the first horn of the dilemma—meaning minimalism. This is the position according to which there are no truth conditions for meaning-ascriptions. It has been suggested that this position is incoherent. However, I argue that there is a coherent option available for the meaning minimalist. As Crispin Wright has proposed, a coherent meaning minimalist has to adopt a structured truth-predicate with at least two levels: one is a minimal or a deflationary truth-predicate for a semantic discourse and the other, more substantial or objective truth-predicate for discourses like natural sciences. Subsequently, this leads to a position close to Huw Price's global expressivism. Thus, the ultimate dilemma that Putnam's and the Kripkensteinian argument establish is the following choice: either meaning minimalism with a structured two-level truth-predicate or robust realism regarding meaning.

Keywords: Putnam's argument, Kripkensteinian argument, meaning minimalism, global expressivism, external realism

1. Introduction

In this article, I have two main aims. Firstly, I argue that Hilary Putnam's model theoretic indeterminacy argument against external realism and Saul Kripke's so-called Kripkensteinian argument against semantic realism have the same dialectical structure and the same conclusion—both force the opponent to face a dilemma which has the same content. The dilemma is: ei-

Corresponding author's address: Henrik Sova, Department of Philosophy, Institute of Philosophy and Semiotics, University of Tartu, Ülikooli 18, 50090 Tartu, Estonia. Email: henrik.sova@ut.ee.

ther adopt meaning minimalism or postulate unobservable semantic facts (robust semantic realism). This first objective takes the biggest share of the article—sections 1, 2, and 3.

Although it has been noted that these two arguments lead to comparable conclusions, the conclusions under the comparison are still taken to be different: that there are no facts about meaning (the Kripkensteinian argument) and that there are no facts about reference (Putnam's argument) (see, e.g., Hale and Wright 1997, 429). However, I argue for the set up which reveals that it is more adequate to interpret these arguments to yield a certain dilemma instead, making thus explicit that the correct conclusions of the arguments are not only comparable, but equivalent.

As for the second aim (section 4), I analyze more closely the first horn of the dilemma—meaning minimalism. This is the position that there are no truth conditions for meaning-ascriptions. It has been suggested that this position is incoherent. However, contra the authors discussed in the article, I argue that there is a coherent option available for the meaning minimalist. As Crispin Wright has proposed, a coherent meaning minimalist has to adopt a structured truth-predicate with at least two levels: one is a minimal or a deflationary truth-predicate for a semantic discourse and the other, more substantial, robust or objective truth-predicate for perhaps discourses like natural sciences, e.g., physics. Coherent meaning minimalism is thus a position that denies substantial truth-conditionality for meaning-ascriptions. I argue subsequently that this leads to a position close to Huw Price's global expressivism. Thus, the ultimate dilemma that Putnam's and the Kripkensteinian argument establish is the following choice: either meaning minimalism with a structured two-level truth-predicate or robust realism regarding meaning.

The article is structured as follows. In section 1, I introduce Tim Button's novel account of Hilary Putnam's model-theoretic argument along with the key concepts. Button's account presents the preliminary dilemma that is imposed on the external realist, but this dilemma needs several subsequent refinements. In section 2, I explicate the dialectical structure of Putnam's argument and derive the revised dilemma. In section 3, I analyze the structure of the Kripkensteinian argument and show, firstly, how this has the same dialectic as the Putnam's argument, and secondly, that both force the opponent to face the same dilemma. In the final section I tackle the second main objective: I analyze the logical consequences of meaning minimalism and argue that meaning minimalism is a coherent position if we adopt minimal or deflationary truth-predicate for a semantic discourse.

2. Tim Button's account of Putnam's model-theoretic argument

In his book *The Limits of Realism* (2013), Tim Button offers a fresh reconstruction of Hilary Putnam's model-theoretic argument against external realism. He claims to have the argument vindicated, reconstructing the argument in such a way as to be able to rebut the "fairly broad consensus" (Button 2013, 29) that the original argument begs the question against the external realist. In this section I introduce the key elements of Putnam's argument, summarize Button's vindication and present the preliminary dilemma that this vindication imposes on the external realist.

The purpose of Putnam's model-theoretic argument is to refute the position called external realism (Putnam 1977; 1980; 1981).¹ This position is defined as the conjunction of three following principles (as they are phrased by Button (2013, 8–10); see also (Putnam 1981, 49):

1. The Independence Principle
The world is (largely) made up of objects that are mind-, language-, and theory-independent (Button 2013, 8).
2. The Correspondence Principle
Truth involves some sort of correspondence relation between words or thought-signs on the one hand and external things and sets of things on the other hand (Button 2013, 8; originally in Putnam 1981, 49).
3. The Cartesianism Principle
Even an ideal theory might be radically false (Button 2013, 10).

When setting up his argument, Putnam asks us to imagine that we have in our possession a total theory of the world—let us label it as "T" (Putnam 1977, 485). Let us say that T is an ideal theory, which means that it is consistent, satisfies whatever super-empirical virtues we might adhere to (simplicity, elegance, etc.) and is empirically adequate (Button 2013, 32–34). According to the Correspondence Principle, if T is true, then it provides a correct model that captures how the world is. According to the Cartesianism Principle, even if T is empirically adequate, it still might be false, in which case T's model fails to capture how the world is. However, there is a crucial problem for the external realist in this unsuspecting set up that Putnam's model-theoretic indeterminacy argument is designed to reveal. Namely, the argument shows that if there is a model for T available, then, necessarily,

¹ When introducing the argument, Putnam labelled the position as "metaphysical realism" (Putnam 1977, 483).

there are many of them and it is indeterminate which model is the correct one.

One way to formulate the argument for this conclusion is in the form of a permutation argument (Putnam 1981, 33–35, 217–218; Button 2013, 14–15). The idea is that if we have a model for *T*, then we can permute the objects in the domain of the model such that the permutation creates many distinct isomorphic models for *T*. For every such model there is an interpretation function that assigns referents to *T*'s expressions and symbols. Since external realist's concept of truth involves some correspondence relation between symbols of *T* and the domain of the model for *T*, the isomorphic permutation entails that *T* has many interpretations in which exactly the same sentences of *T* are true. We can think of it like this (Button 2013, 14–15):

Imagine that we were to lay out all the objects in the world, together with various labels (names) for them, and with other labels (predicates) for collections of them. Suppose we now shuffle the objects around. So long as we do not disturb the labels, exactly the same sentences will come out as true after the shuffling as were true before the shuffling.

This plurality of models threatens the Correspondence Principle of the external realism—if *T* is regarded as true, then *T* necessarily has many models and it is indeterminate, which one of these interpretations is the intended one that captures the truth in the external realist sense.

At first glance there are options available for setting down a constraint that would restrict the range of different models to one. For example, one can argue that the causal theory of reference restricts the range of the referents of the symbols of *T*. In this case the available interpretation functions are restricted to one, and the permutation argument is thus blocked. Let us call it “the Causal Constraint.” However, Putnam has a notorious countermove in his arsenal labelled as “just more theory” (Putnam 1977, 486–487, 494; 1980, 477; Button 2013, ch 4) or “JMT” hereafter. The point is that whatever further constraints one might presuppose, they all must be constraints that also belong to the total theory of the world and are therefore a part of *T* itself. The problem for the realist is that permutation argument applies to the expressions of the constraints themselves as well. In whatever terms the constraints are stated (e.g., “causation”, “constraints”, “reference”), we can always permute the referents. Thus, the reference is indetermined and the epidemic of plurality of models spreads again. For the current context, I label the indeterminacy argument taken together with JMT as the “Putnam's argument.”

It has been widely claimed that JMT is question-begging (for discussion and references, see Button 2013, ch 4.2). The worry goes as follows. In set-

ting down the constraints, the external realist does not want to claim that the sentences that comprise the reference fixing part of T themselves determine the reference and meaning of the symbols of T, but rather that the sentences of the reference fixing theory are meant to express some extra-linguistic meaning-determining facts. For example, when the external realist offers the Causal Constraint solution, then the problem with JMT is that it does not apply to the *causation* itself that fixes the reference, but only for the word “causation.” The reference fixing forces are already there, outside in the world, and JMT cannot trump this by just hypothetically permuting the references of some terms. In this case JMT is not applicable and if the Putnamian still applies JMT, then s/he just assumes beforehand that nothing in the world fixes the reference, and thus begs the question against the external realist. As Nicholas K Jones notes in reviewing Button’s book: “[T]his kind of response has become orthodoxy, and is largely responsible for declining interest in Putnam’s argument in recent years” (Jones 2014, 722).

Button attempts to vindicate Putnam’s argument against the accusation of question-beggingness. According to him, the root cause of the external realist’s problem is the Cartesianism Principle that introduces the distinction between a theory’s being true and its being empirically adequate (Button 2013, ch 6). This scepticism is a natural consequence of the idea that there exists an independent external world that our theories must represent in order to be true, and is thus an essential part of the external realist’s worldview.

However, this inherent scepticism makes the realist worldview decisively vulnerable to the Putnam’s argument. In order to explicate this, let us consider how is it possible for an empirically adequate theory to be false. An empirically adequate theory has the correct empirical content, which means that the theory entails all the correct observation sentences (see Button 2013, 10, 33). The observation sentences can be evaluated as correct only if they fit with the observable or empirical states of affairs. A theory is empirically adequate only if it is able to provide such sentences. Nevertheless, according to the Cartesianism Principle, this empirically adequate theory can still be false in the external realist sense. For this to be possible, there must be some sort of distinction between the observable or empirical states of affairs (according to which the correctness of the empirical content is evaluated) and the external independent world which contains relevant truth-makers for assessing the truth or falsity of a theory according to the Correspondence Principle. Button suggests that we can think of this as there being a *veil* that separates the observable states of affairs from the objective world (Button 2013, 40–41). This does not necessarily mean a *veil of sensations*, involving some idea of a sense data “woven into an impregnable curtain” that prevents the access to the external world (Button 2013, 45). The external realist can employ all

sorts of veils—the veil of sensations, phenomena, observables, etc. (Button 2013, ch 6). In the context of Putnam's argument, it is not relevant exactly what kind of a theory of empirical content and the respective concept of a veil the external realist chooses to adopt in explaining the dichotomy s/he draws between a theory's being true (corresponding to the external world or truth-makers) and its being empirically adequate. The crucial idea is that the external realist must employ *some* idea of a veil in order to make sense of this distinction.

Now, the core idea of Button's vindication is that we can apply the permutation argument in such a way that the domain of the model consists of objects behind the veil. For example, let us take the veil of sensations. In this case the interpretation function maps the sensations to objects behind the veil and the permutation argument establishes that we can shuffle around the objects behind the veil, while holding the sensations fixed (Button 2013, 41). This means that a theory can have a plethora of models without making the difference on the level of sensations, and thus in its empirical content. However, as I already mentioned, the applicability of permutation argument does not depend on how the external realist prefers to expound what it means for a theory to be empirically adequate and thus to have empirical content (Button 2013, 52). Putnam's argument is schematic in the sense that it exploits the structural dichotomy of a theory's being true and its being empirically adequate, created by the Cartesianism and the Correspondence Principle. As long as the external realist adopts these principles, s/he at least tacitly employs some idea of a veil and we can apply Putnam's argument.

Given this vindication, how should we interpret the dialectical situation in which the external realist offers his/her Causal Constraint solution and accuses JMT of being question-begging? If the theory of Causal Constraint (or some other restriction) has empirical content in the sense that it entails observational sentences that can be assessed according to observable or empirical states of affairs, then we can apply Putnam's argument for this empirical content and permute the objects behind the veil. For this empirical content, the application of JMT is not question-begging. The result is the unwanted proliferation of unintended interpretations.

Given these considerations, Button concludes that the external realist "must accept that *any statement with empirical content is just more theory and so fails to constrain reference.*" (Button 2013, 32, italics in the original). Thus, according to Button, we arrive at the following preliminary dilemma for the external realist: either external realist's theory of reference has empirical content, in which case JMT applies, and external realist's theory of reference fails to fix the reference, or it lacks empirical content (see Button 2013, 38).

Nicholas Jones in his review of Button's book (Jones 2014) criticises Button's account and offers a revised dilemma for the realist. Jones argues that, it is not correct to claim that in order to avoid JMT, reference fixing theory must be devoid of any empirical content as Button seems to suggest (Jones 2014, 724). Reference fixing theory might consist of non-observable semantic facts that fix the reference and also entail some observation sentences (Jones 2014, 724). This theory then has empirical content. Thus, according to Jones, the realist must face the following revised dilemma: either meaning-determining facts do not rule out deviant interpretations behind the veil, or unobservable meaning-determining facts do that (Jones 2014, 725).²

3. The Dialectic of Putnam's argument

In order to get a better idea about what is going on in applying Putnam's argument to the external realism, it is illuminating to explicate the dialectic of the debate. In this section I present the dialectic of Putnam's argument.³ This allows us to explicitly derive the revised dilemma (which has the same content as the dilemma that Jones proposed) and also explicate the nature of accusations of question-beggingness. I will end this section with a further elaboration of the first horn of the dilemma.

The dialectic starts from the recognition that in order to maintain his/her worldview (comprised in three principles given section 1), the external realist has an obligation to provide an account of how to restrict the models of the T, which effectively means an attempt to offer a suitable reference fixing theory.⁴ The essence of Putnam's argument, in turn, is to offer a model-theoretically rigorous account of how these attempts fail. That means proving that there are always several models available for the theory of reference whereas the truth conditions of the sentences of the theory remain intact. For establishing this, the JMT move is exploited. External realist, however, counters that JMT is not applicable. Given this, and given the fact that the model-theoretic theorems that comprise the logical mechanism of Putnam's argument (the Permutation Theorem and Completeness Theorem, or Löwenheim-Skolem theorems see Button 2013, ch 2) are unobjectionable, the issue comes down to the question about whether the JMT is applicable to the external realist's proposal. Therefore, the dialectic concerning Putnam's argument is essentially the following conditional: if the JMT manoeuvre can be applied, then the external realist proposal must fail to restrict the mod-

² For consistency of the discussion, I have switched the disjuncts of the Jones's original formulation.

³ I have presented a similar version of the dialectic of the argument in (Sova 2016).

⁴ This is also what Bob Hale and Crispin Wright suggest how we should receive Putnam's argument (Hale and Wright 1997, 430).

els of T. We can represent this dialectical structure with the following valid schematic argument:

1. A (external realist's restriction)
2. B (applicability of JMT to A)
3. The dialectic of Putnam's argument: If B, then not-A
4. Therefore (from 3), not-A or not-B (the conditional-disjunction equivalence)

Label this as "the Schema." The Schema makes explicit that the external realist is forced to make the choice (step 4): either s/he has failed to restrict the models of T (not-A) or s/he has to present arguments for the conclusion that JMT is not applicable (not-B). As a result of Button's work, this choice acquires the following interpretation. Given the distinction between a theory's being true and its being empirically adequate, the empirical content always makes JMT in the form of permutation behind the veil applicable for that content. In other words, empirical content of A guarantees the applicability of JMT for that content of A. This means that we can interpret B stating the following: A has the content given only in, or reduced to, observation sentences (in which case JMT is always applicable to A). In this case the Schema is still valid. In this interpretation, applying Putnam's argument to the external realist's proposal entails the following conditional (step 3 in the Schema): if the external realist's restriction (i.e., reference fixing theory) has only empirical content given in observational sentences (B), then this content has several interpretations and the proposal fails (not-A). Or in other words, the dilemma for the realist comes down to the following disjunction (step 4 in the Schema): either the external realist fails to provide an adequate reference fixing theory (not-A) or his reference fixing theory cannot have the content expressed only by observation sentences (not-B). Thus, in opting for the second horn (not-B), the external realist must postulate some unobservable semantic facts that are not reducible to empirical facts.

The Schema also makes explicit the nature of accusations of question-beggingness by critics. Contrary to what has perhaps been generally thought, Putnam's argument does not establish that there are no facts about reference or that external realism is incoherent (as Putnam expressed the conclusion of his argument in Putnam 1977, 483). It only establishes that the external realist must face a certain dilemma of which only the first horn (not-A) might lead to the refutation of the external realism. Considering only the first horn in order to validate the rejection of the external realism, Putnamian actually begs the question against the realist, because the second disjunct is left out

of consideration. The latter still allows reference fixing, but this just cannot be done by facts expressed solely in empirical observation sentences. That seems to be the essence of accusations of question-beggingness by Putnam's critics.

Let us compare the dilemma explicated in the Schema with Jones's dilemma as it was introduced in the end of section 1. I argue that these two dilemmas have the same content. When phrasing the dilemma, Jones used the expression "meaning-determining facts", while in the dilemma delivered with the Schema, we described the situation in terms of reference fixing theory. We can see how these different expressions come down to the same content as follows. The external realist framework is naturally accompanied by the model-theoretic account of semantic facts (Button 2013, ch 1.4; see also Jones 2014, 722). This means that for determining the meanings of the individual constant symbols, predicates and function symbols by which T is expressed, it is necessary to map the symbols of T with objects in the model that makes up the world (standardly, singular objects for constants, sets of objects for predicates and functions). For this to be an available option, it is necessary to have an adequate reference fixing theory that gives us the account of how the mapping is to be performed and fixed. This means that for the external realist, the meanings are determined (in the sense that the deviant interpretations are excluded) only if the reference is fixed. Now, if the first horn of our dilemma states that the external realist fails to provide an adequate reference fixing theory, this means that the realist is not able to provide any meaning-determining facts that rule out deviant interpretations behind the veil. This is exactly what the corresponding Jones's horn states. The same considerations apply to the second horn. Therefore, given the model-theoretic account of semantic facts, Jones's dilemma and the dilemma derived with the Schema are different expressions of the same content.

Let us now consider more precisely what the first horn (that the reference is not fixed) amounts to. As we saw, the upshot of the model-theoretic account of semantic facts was that without the theory of reference, the external realist is not able to determine the meanings of symbols and therefore sentences that comprise T . In other words, without the theory of reference, there is no fixed correspondence relation available for assessing the truth or falsity of the meaning-ascriptions (that some sentence S means p rather than p_1). This means that the external realist cannot make truth-conditional claims about meaning-ascriptions. This conclusion is the position that we can define as follows:

(o) For all S, p : it is not the case that ' S means p ' is truth-conditional.⁵

This kind of meaning-scepticism has many names. We follow Crispin Wright and label it as "the meaning minimalism" (Wright 1992, 213–220). Thus, the dilemma that is imposed on the external realist by Putnam's argument is the following choice: one must either adopt meaning minimalism or postulate unobservable meaning-determining facts that rule out deviant interpretations behind the veil.

The formulation of (o) is originally presented by Paul Boghossian as the definition of non-factualism regarding meaning (Boghossian 1989, 524). Boghossian also seems to take the (o) as the ultimate sceptical conclusion of the Kripkensteinian argument (Boghossian 1989, 524). The latter is the portmanteau for a block of arguments presented by Saul Kripke in (Kripke 1982). There Kripke presents an interpretation of Ludwig Wittgenstein's discussions of following a rule in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Thus, we have a preliminary result that the Kripkensteinian argument and the first horn of the dilemma imposed by Putnam's argument must have some similar content.

4. The Kripkensteinian argument

Considerations presented in the end of the previous section give us reasons to presuppose that there must be some similarities between the Kripkensteinian and Putnam's argument. In this section I argue that the correct conclusion of the Kripkensteinian reasoning is not that there are no facts about meaning (as Kripke himself seemed to conclude Kripke 1982, 21), but that it imposes the same dilemma on the semantic realist that Putnam's argument imposed on the external realist.

Let us first summarize the Kripkensteinian argument as it is presented by Kripke. He illustrates the reasoning that leads to the general scepticism about meaning-ascriptions with an arithmetical thought-experiment (Kripke 1982, 7–9). We are asked to calculate the sum of 68 and 57 given that we have never added numbers greater than or equal to 57 before. The question that we are now confronted with is what would be the correct interpretation of the addition-function, or "+" sign? The natural answer would be that it is determined by our past usage of the sign. But the facts about the past usage of the "+" sign are compatible with the infinite amount of different functions. Kripke illustrates this claim with a quaddition-function according to which the correct way to interpret "+" sign is that it gives 5 as a correct answer every time we add numbers greater or equal than 57 (and it

⁵ Here and in the following formulations, S is a variable that ranges over bearers of propositional content (e.g., a sentence or a thought) and p is a variable that ranges over meanings.

is compatible with the addition-function for numbers less than 57) (Kripke 1982, 9). Since we have never added numbers greater or equal than 57 before, both functions are compatible with the facts of our past usage. This illustrates the point that the meaning of “+” sign is indeterminate—there are several interpretations available how to apply the sign in future cases. The obvious objection according to which what was meant by “addition” or “+” sign was not defined by a finite number of examples but by a general rule or algorithm is rejected by the sceptic on the same grounds (Kripke 1982, 15–16). The meanings of the terms used when defining the rule or algorithm are also subjected to incompatible interpretations, and the problem simply emerges on a next level. According to Kripke, this manoeuvre can be re-applied for any objection to the Kripkensteinian sceptic. I interpret this move as the Kripkensteinian equivalent for JMT. I think this is how we should receive Wittgenstein’s remarks regarding interpreting a rule in *Philosophical Investigations*, like this one: “Any interpretation still hangs in the air along with what it interprets, and cannot give it any support. Interpretations by themselves do not determine meaning” (Wittgenstein 2009, §198a).

Kripke suggested that the general conclusion of this Kripkensteinian reasoning is that the meaning of any sign is indeterminate, because there are always several candidates available (e.g., *addition* and *quaddition* for a “+” sign): “There can be no facts as to what I mean by “plus”, or any other word at any time” (Kripke 1982, 21). However, I argue that this is not quite correct. In what follows, I will present the Kripkensteinian reasoning in a more concise form in order to make explicit what is the exact conclusion of this line of scepticism.⁶

From the nature of the Kripkensteinian reasoning it is evident that the target of the sceptical arguments is the idea that meaning-ascriptions have some determinate truth conditions. Thus, the point of attack of the Kripkensteinian sceptic is the factualism or semantic realism, which opposes to (o) and can be defined like this:

- (1) For some S, p : ‘ S means p ’ is truth-conditional.

In order to support (1), the realist must come up with an acceptable truth condition TC for some instance of (1), that is, for some particular claim that “ S means p .” For example, the realist might propose that the truth condition for the claim that the meaning of “+” sign is *addition* (rather than *quaddition*) consists of certain facts about the past usage of that sign. And, consequently, the Kripkensteinian sceptic argues that some other meaning, e.g., *quaddition*, is also compatible with that truth condition. The crucial idea

⁶ I have already presented an analogous formulation of the Kripkensteinian argument in (Sova 2016).

behind the Kripkensteinian argument is that whatever observable, or empirical, truth conditions one might presuppose (whether this involves the phenomenology of internal or external observable facts),⁷ there are always deviant meaning-ascriptions available such that the truth conditions remain the same. We can express this as follows:

- (2) For every observable truth condition TC for every instance of (1), there exists some p' such that 'S means p' ' is also true for that TC , and p and p' are incompatible.

From (2) we can conclude this:

- (3) Since for every observable TC there exist incompatible p and p' , no observable TC can be a truth condition for 'S means p '.

It might be thought that (3) would force us to accept meaning minimalism that there are no facts regarding what a sentence or a word means, as seems to be the conclusion suggested both by Kripke (see the quote above, Kripke 1982, 21) and by Boghossian (1989, 523). In other words, the suggestion is that (3) would entail (o), or meaning minimalism:

- (o) For all S, p : it is not the case that 'S means p ' is truth-conditional.

However, the current set up makes it clear that this entailment does not hold because the argument concerns only observable truth conditions. To conclude from (3) that there are no truth conditions whatsoever for meaning-ascriptions is to beg the question against the semantic realist, because there might be an unobservable part of a truth condition that rules out deviant meanings. Thus, the Kripkensteinian imposes the following dilemma on the semantic realist: either meaning-ascriptions do not have truth conditions (that is, (o)) or some non-observable truth conditions must be postulated.

We can schematically represent the Kripkensteinian argument arriving at this dilemma in the form of the Schema. This explicates that Putnam's argument and the Kripkensteinian argument share the same dialectical structure. The dialectic concerning the Kripkensteinian argument is essentially the conditional: if there are always incompatible meaning-ascriptions available for the same truth condition, then meaning-ascriptions cannot be truth-conditional. That is, in the form of the Schema:

1. A (meaning-ascriptions are truth-conditional)

⁷ As Kripke mentions, there are no behaviorist limitations for the application of Kripkensteinian scepticism, all possible internal mental states purported to fix the meaning can be subjected to the same scepticism (Kripke 1982, 14).

2. B (there are always incompatible meanings available for the same truth condition)
3. The dialectic of the Kripkensteinian argument: If B, then not-A
4. Therefore (from 3), not-A or not-B

Thus, the choice for the semantic realist is the following (step 4): concede that meaning-ascriptions lack truth conditions (not-A) or present arguments for the conclusion that incompatible meanings are not always available (not-B). Since the Kripkensteinian considerations show that there are always incompatible meanings available when the realist offers some empirical or observable truth conditions, then opting for the choice not-B, semantic realist must postulate some non-observable semantic facts for truth conditions (this is what (3) essentially states). Thus, the dilemma for the semantic realist comes down to the following disjunction: either meaning-ascriptions do not have truth conditions (not-A or meaning minimalism) or truth conditions must have an unobservable part that would restrict deviant meaning-ascriptions (not-B). This dilemma is the correct conclusion of the Kripkensteinian argument. Claiming that the conclusion of the argument is only the first horn (i.e. meaning minimalism) would mean to disregard the second horn without any additional arguments. This would beg the question against the realist (as was the case with Putnam's argument).

Now we are in a position to elucidate how Putnam's and the Kripkensteinian dilemma coincide. The first horn of Putnam's dilemma was meaning minimalism (as it was established by the end of section 2) and this is explicitly also the first horn of the Kripkensteinian dilemma. The second horn of Putnam's dilemma was that the realist must postulate unobservable meaning-determining facts that rule out deviant interpretations behind the veil. But postulating unobservable meaning-determining facts means providing unobservable truth conditions for meaning-ascriptions—a meaning-ascription is true if and only if it corresponds to respective semantic facts. Thus, both horns of the dilemmas coincide.

We can make this intuitively more evident with the following consideration. The core idea of the Kripkensteinian argument is that we can ascribe incompatible meanings to words and sentences while holding the observable (whether it involves internal mental states or external states of affairs, see footnote 7) truth conditions fixed. This means that we have established a dichotomy between what a word or a sentence really means and the satisfaction of its observable truth conditions. This is the Cartesianism Principle for the semantic realist—even if all the observable truth conditions are satisfied, the meaning-ascription can still be false. In other words, as

it was the case with the external realist, we can think of it like this: the observable truth conditions for meaning-ascriptions constitute a veil behind which we can permute the meanings while holding the observable part of the truth conditions fixed. Thus, in order to avoid falling into meaning minimalism, the semantic realist must postulate that at least some part of a truth condition for meaning-ascription is unobservable. The satisfaction of this unobservable part of a truth condition constitutes an unobservable meaning-determining fact that allows the semantic realist to eliminate deviant meaning-ascriptions. Therefore, the conclusion of the Kripkensteinian argument is that anyone, who theorizes about truth conditionality of meaning-ascriptions, must face the following dilemma: either meaning minimalism or there must be some unobservable meaning-determining facts that rule out deviant meaning-ascriptions behind the veil. And this is exactly the dilemma that Putnam's argument forced upon the external realist as it was expressed in the end of section 2.

This establishes the first aim of the article, so let us recapitulate. The general idea was to draw some essential similarities between Putnam's and the Kripkensteinian argument. Both arguments ingeniously exploit the Cartesianism Principle that the realist adherers to. In the case of Putnam's argument, the principle creates the dichotomy between a theory's being empirically adequate and its being true; in the case of the Kripkensteinian argument, it is the dichotomy between a meaning being compatible with observable truth conditions (e.g., *quaddition*) and its being true (*addition*). We can think of it as there being a veil between, e.g., observables and unobservables. This in turn creates indeterminacy regarding meaning-ascriptions or reference, which is then exploited against the realist, confronting him/her with a dilemma. The first horn of it states that there are no truth conditions for meaning-ascriptions. The second horn states that the realist has to postulate and deploy some non-empirical, unobservable semantic facts in order to determine meanings. The conclusion of both of the arguments is the same, but the mechanisms of establishing it are slightly different: Putnam's argument supports that conclusion by applying model-theoretic results when explicating the indeterminacy of reference, Kripkensteinian argument by showing that observable truth conditions cannot be sufficient truth conditions for meaning-ascriptions. In sum, we can regard both arguments as the logical mechanisms which force us to choose between meaning minimalism or ro-

bust realism⁸ regarding meaning. They show that there is no intermediate position available.

5. The Ultimate Dilemma

In this section I am going to analyze further the consequences of the first horn of the dilemma presented to us by Putnam's and the Kripkensteinian argument—the meaning minimalism that states that meaning-ascriptions do not have truth conditions. Both Button and Jones have claimed the incoherency of the first horn of their respective dilemmas (Button 2013, ch 7; Jones 2014, 725), while Boghossian has directly argued that meaning minimalism is incoherent (Boghossian 1989, 525–526; Boghossian 1990). In this section I analyze the purported incoherency of the meaning minimalism and argue that this incoherency can be avoided by adopting a structured two-level truth-predicate.

When advancing the dilemma that is forced upon external realist by Putnam's argument, Button goes on to argue that the first horn of the dilemma entails radical reference indeterminacy, or “Kantian scepticism” as Button labels it (Button 2013, ch 7). Radical referential indeterminacy means that no words refer to any object, and according to Button, this idea is “radically incoherent” in a sense that it is self-refuting (Button 2013, 60):

Kantian scepticism is radically incoherent. How can I worry that my words express nothing about the world? Really: *How?* If the worry is right, nothing could express it. No worry could be more self-stultifying.

Jones seems to concede that Button's considerations apply to the external realist who adopts the idea of observation sentences that “report mental phenomena standing in representational and non-constitutive relations to the physical world” (Jones 2014, 725).⁹ According to Jones, in this case

⁸ When analysing the Kripkensteinian argument, Boghossian concluded that we have no other option but to adopt irreducible, factual and judgement-independent conception of meaning, which he labelled as “robust realism” regarding meaning (Boghossian 1989, 547). In our context, this means that Boghossian opted for the second horn stating that there must be some unobservable semantic facts which license meaning determination. As Boghossian expressed the situation: “[T]here is no interesting reduction of *mental content properties* to *physical/functional properties*” (Boghossian 1989, 541; italics in the original), by “physical” meaning all observable or empirical properties.

⁹ This is one way to elaborate the idea of a veil that would explain the Cartesianism Principle, but as I have explained above, Putnam's argument does not depend on a particular version of a veil that the realist chooses to adopt. It is important to realize that the argument exploits the structural dichotomy that the Cartesianism creates, and it might be misleading to concentrate on one particular way how it is preferred to be filled in.

the first horn entails radical indeterminacy for non-observation sentences, which gives rise to doubts that the position is self-refuting (Jones 2014, 725):

Radical indeterminacy for non-observation sentences will then undermine our ability to make truth-evaluable claims about the non-mental, physical world. The notion of a physical world itself becomes incomprehensible. This close cousin of [Kantian scepticism] is plausibly refuted by our ability to entertain it.

The intuitive idea behind these claims is that in the external realist's framework, it does not make sense to entertain the impossibility of making truth-evaluable claims about the external world, because according to Correspondence principle, this idea itself would then not be truth-evaluable, and has thus a self-refuting nature. However, in order to assess the validity of this intuitive idea, we have to take a closer look how exactly we arrive at this conclusion of incoherency.

The first horn of the dilemma delivered by Putnam's and Kripkensteinian arguments was meaning minimalism defined as follows:

- (o) For all S, p : it is not the case that ' S means p ' is truth-conditional.

How from here do we arrive at a position in which we are not able to express anything about the world (Button) or make truth-evaluable claims about the external world (Jones)? There is a rigorous way of demonstrating the alleged incoherency of (o) via showing how it entails global minimalism. Global minimalism means that there are no truth conditions for any sentence, not just for meaning-ascriptions. If we cannot make truth-evaluable claims for any sentence, it follows a fortiori that we can't make truth-evaluable claims for sentences about the external world.

The argument for globalization is presented by Boghossian in (1989, 524–525) and goes like this. It is reasonable to assume that the truth condition of a sentence cannot be more determined than the sentence's meaning is. In this case it is likewise reasonable to suppose that if meaning-ascriptions are not truth-conditional, then ascriptions of truth conditions themselves also cannot be truth-conditional. That is, (o) entails non-factualism or minimalism about truth conditions:

- (1) For all S, TC : it is not the case that ' S has truth condition TC ' is truth-conditional.

Since the (1) states that " S has truth condition TC " is never simply true, and given the disquotational properties of the truth predicate, global minimalism follows:

- (2) For all S : it is not the case that ' S ' is truth-conditional.

Now we can explicate the self-refuting nature of the first horn of the Putnam's argument that Button and Jones are arguing for. Substituting "S" in (2) with the claim that expresses the position of meaning minimalism (that is, (o)), we have the conclusion that meaning minimalism itself is something that cannot be true in the external realist framework (for a more detailed set-up of the whole argument, see Wright 1992, 214–217). If this is a valid argument, then the external realist is forced to choose the second horn of the dilemma in order to maintain overall consistency of his/her worldview.

However, for this reasoning to be a valid *reductio* of meaning minimalism, another condition must be met as is noted by Crispin Wright (1992, 217). This argument would cause problems for the meaning minimalist only if s/he would work with only one unstructured truth predicate, in which case the denial of truth-conditionality of (o) entails unambiguously that the position cannot be true. But there is no need for the meaning minimalist to confine himself to a framework where truth-predicate is unstructured. As Wright suggests, s/he might adopt the additional level of truth which is minimal, or deflationary, and oppose this to some more substantial or objective truth-predicate (Wright 1992, 217). Then the claims expressed by (o) should be understood as minimally or deflationary truth-apt and they convey the content that meaning-ascriptions do not have substantial or non-minimal truth conditions. In order to avoid confusion, let us use the term "correct" for the claim that is minimally true. Thus, the revised formulation of meaning minimalism is as follows:

(o*) [Correct:] For all S, p : it is not the case that 'S means p ' is substantially truth-conditional.

This means that meaning minimalist's claim about the denial of substantial truth conditions for meaning-ascriptions is itself only correctness-apt and is not therefore open to the same evaluation as minimalist's claims about substantial truth. (o*) still entails minimalism regarding truth conditions:

(1*) [Correct:] For all S, TC : it is not the case that 'S has substantial truth condition TC ' is substantially truth-conditional.

However, (1*) does not entail global minimalism because (1*) denies only substantial truth, not correctness—although "S has substantial truth condition TC " is never substantially true, it can be correct in some discourses. This means that disquotational properties are cancelled for the substantial truth and the inference to the global minimalism is thus blocked. In this way the meaning minimalist avoids self-contradiction.¹⁰

¹⁰ It is appropriate to clarify that Boghossian's direct argument in (1989, 525–526, and 1990) for the incoherency of meaning minimalism does not exploit the purported fact that it

Thus, it seems that if we take the first horn of the dilemma, we have to adopt a structured truth-predicate with at least two levels—one of which is a minimal, or deflationary truth-predicate, and another more substantial, something that would suit the external realist. There are several ways to explicate what this means. According to Wright's framework in (Wright 1992), a given discourse is minimally truth-apt if it satisfies two conditions (Miller 2007, 332; see also Wright 1992, 24–29, 33–37; Wright 1998, 185): (a) the discourse exhibits certain acknowledged standards for appropriate and inappropriate uses of the sentences in the discourse; (b) these sentences have certain syntactic features (capable of conditionalization, negation, and so on). If some discourse or set of sentences satisfy these criteria, then these sentences are minimally true or false. For example, discourse about comedy and morality are often regarded as minimally truth-apt. This is contrasted to discourses that are eligible for substantial, or objective truth, by satisfying some additional criteria.¹¹ Physics is standardly considered an example of such discourse.

Coherent meaning minimalism as expressed in (o*), is thus the idea that the discourse regarding meaning can only be minimally truth-apt. According to this, the question whether the given discourse is meaningful or meaningless is decided by whether the discourse satisfies minimalistic, or deflationary, criteria for truth. In addition to Wright's account of minimal truth, there are other explications for what it means for a discourse to satisfy those minimalistic criteria. For example, we can think of it in terms of Robert Brandom's inferentialism (Brandom 1994 and Brandom 2000) in which case the discourse is meaningful only if it involves structured and regulated inferential moves in a game of giving and asking reasons (that is, making assertions). Enabling assertions would be enough to license minimal truth-aptness, and vice versa. In general, what is common to these different elaborations of meaning minimalism is that they all reject the idea that meaningful expressions somehow have to correspond to the external reality or represent it. They adopt some framework in the vicinity of Wittgensteinian language game instead.

In addition to the question about which discourses are meaningful, there is also a question about which ones among these meaningful discourses are eligible only for minimal truth and which ones qualify for substantial truth.

globalizes, but the fact that it implies contradictory claims about a truth predicate. However, this argument is also cancelled by adopting a structured, two-level truth-predicate, as Wright explicates in (1992, 231–236).

¹¹ E.g., Michael Dummett's influential account of verification-transcendent truth, according to which sentences have substantial or objective truth conditions just in case those truth conditions are potentially verification-transcendent.

If the logical consequence of meaning minimalism (o^*) is also minimalism regarding truth conditions (1^*), then this question is also decided by minimalist criteria. Thus, the consequence of the first horn of the Putnam's and Kripkensteinian dilemma is that we have to adopt deflationary concept of truth not only for meaning-ascriptions, but also for claims that state whether sentences in a given discourse have substantial or minimal truth conditions. This means that the structure and rules of the language game at place in any given discourse determine, which (and whether any) subdiscourses deploy more substantial truth conditions. The latter are the discourses upon which the external realist representational semantic framework is licensed internally—e.g., the discourse of physics, the theories of which might be thought to represent the external physical reality.

These considerations encourage us to take the pragmatic global expressivist attitude as Price has advanced it in (Price et al. 2013). Price suggests us to reject the old representationalist presumption that there are genuinely descriptive sentences that represent or correspond to reality, which are contrasted to non-descriptive uses of language (Price et al. 2013, 30). Price rejects this distinction and suggests that we should adopt global expressivism, which he explains in terms of Brandom's inferentialism (Price et al. 2013, 31). According to this view, the defining aspect of an assertion is that it is a legislated move in a particular game of giving and asking reasons. This contrasts with the traditional idea that proper assertions must be genuinely descriptive, that is, represent the external world or correspond to it. However, in a family of discourses legislated by global expressivism, there can be subsets of discourses which are described as if they were in the business of representing the world, e.g., claims of empirical science (Price et al. 2013, 39). It does not mean that these discourses are somehow more genuinely descriptive, it is just that the sentences in these discourses are interpreted according to the representationalist framework, giving thus an account of the external world in these particular discourses. But then again, the truth and falsity (or rather, the correctness and incorrectness) of the meaning-ascriptions in these realistically inclined discourses of empirical sciences are determined in a deflationary manner, that is, according to the rules of the language game at a place in that discourse. This is what (o^*) states.

In general, meaning minimalism together with minimalism regarding truth conditions establish that meta-semantic discourse can only be minimally truth-apt. If it is licensed by the rules of the language game, representationalist worldview can be maintained on an object level. However, once the representationalist starts to theorize on a meta-level on the truth conditions of his/her meaning-ascriptions, s/he would have to adopt the de-

flationary semantics. The distinctions s/he would then be interested in can only be drawn in minimalist terms.

An overall conclusion would be that the ultimate dilemma presented us by both Putnam's and the Kripkensteinian argument is that we have to choose between meaning minimalism with a structured truth-predicate or robust realism regarding meaning. Or if we push things forward a bit, you have to be either a Pricean global expressivist or a robust semantic realist.

6. Summary

The first objective of the article was to explicate how Putnam's and the Kripkensteinian argument not only share the same dialectical structure, but also impose on the realist exactly the same dilemma content-wise. The nature of Putnam's and Kripkensteinian arguments is that they are both mechanisms that force the undecided minds to choose between two opposing world-views: either meaning minimalism or robust realism regarding meaning. The latter means postulating some unobservable semantic facts.

The second objective was to pursue the logical consequences of the first horn of the dilemma. It turned out that for the sake of coherency, meaning minimalist has to work with a structured truth-predicate. S/he must adopt a deflationary concept of truth for meaning-ascriptions (o^*) and for ascribing truth conditions (1^*), while denying that the discourse of semantics is eligible for a more substantial, or objective truth-predicate. Ultimately, this leads to some form of Pricean global expressivism.

Perhaps choosing between global expressivism and robust semantic realism is just a matter of which worldview someone happens to like. Putnam accused the external realist for being hopelessly esoteric for relying unobservable semantic facts (Putnam 1981, 3–5, 16–18, 51). On the other hand, expressivist language-game-style construal of content might seem unbearably thin for others—although I cannot help but mention that my sympathy resides with this deflationary option.

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