

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

088 0120

BA EXAMINATION 2008

for Internal Students

This paper is also taken by Combined Studies Students

PHILOSOPHY

Optional subject (e): Philosophy of Language

Thursday, 15 May 2008:10.00-13.00

Answer THREE questions. Avoid overlap in your answers. Questions beginning with * may not be answered by students taking the Logic and Metaphysics exam.

1. “‘It is true that Caesar was murdered’ means no more than that Caesar was murdered, and ‘It is false that Caesar was murdered’ means that Caesar was not murdered’ (Ramsey). Was Ramsey right to take these equivalences to show that ‘there is no separate problem of truth but merely a linguistic muddle’?”
2. Davidson moved from an account of radical interpretation which presumes we can know when a speaker-hearer holds a sentence to be true, to one which presumes we can know when a speaker-hearer prefers the truth of one sentence to that of another. Expound and evaluate his argument for making this change.
3. ‘Understanding a statement is a matter of knowing what one is intended or expected to know about its truth conditions.’ Discuss.
4. ‘We were to ask what linked together all the multifarious uses and understandings of a proper name for a given person, what not only linked them together but distinguished them from the use and understandings of names for other persons; and it seemed that the only general answer we could give with any confidence is that the name is used on all these occasions to refer to that very person.’ (Strawson). Does this provide the basis for a convincing argument that the meaning of a name is exhausted by its bearer?
5. ‘What was well and truly refuted [by Kripke] was a version of descriptivism in which the descriptive senses were supposed to be a matter of famous deeds and other distinctive peculiarities’ (Lewis). Is this true? Or can Kripke’s argument be strengthened to show that descriptivism as such is false?

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6. Articulate and defend what you take to be the best account of the logical form of propositional attitude reports.
7. Is Grice's distinction between what is said and what is meant adequate to account for the distinction between semantic and pragmatic aspects of meaning?
8. Explain Grice's analysis of speaker-meaning. Can it withstand the various counterexamples that have been proposed against it?
9. EITHER (a) What is said when someone utters 'It's raining' in a particular situation? And why is this what is said?
- OR (b) Are the truth conditions of an uttered sentence determined by the meanings of the words it contains and the way they are put together?
10. Is there such a thing as non-sentential assertion?
- *11. Is there a satisfactory semantic treatment of incomplete definite descriptions?
12. According to Lewis, a language L is the actual language of a population if there prevails amongst them a convention of truthfulness-and-trust-in-L. What does this mean? Is it true?

END OF PAPER