

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

577 0100

**MA Examination**  
for Internal Students

**PHILOSOPHY**

**Philosophy of Language**

Friday 23 May 2008: 2.30 – 5.30pm

Candidates should answer **THREE** questions. Avoid overlap in your answers.

1. **Either** (a) ‘The successful use of definite descriptions to refer to individuals who do not fit those descriptions shows that Russell’s theory of definite descriptions is false.’ Discuss.  
**Or** (b) Does the Russellian have a satisfactory solution to the problem of incomplete definite descriptions?
2. Does Frege succeed in defending the principle that any two expressions alike in reference can always be substituted, one for one another, without affecting the truth value of the sentences in which they occur?
3. Is the reference of a name fixed by the first use made of that name? If so, how? If not, how is its reference fixed?
4. Do indexicals and demonstratives make a stable semantic contribution to the truth or falsity of sentences in which they occur?
5. Is Quine right in supposing that all the facts about meaning there are for a given language are facts that could be known by a radical translator of that language?
6. What was Tarski’s aim in providing a semantic conception of truth? In what sense, if any, is it a definition of truth?
7. Davidson claims that the notion of reference plays a merely instrumental role within a theory of truth for a given language. Is he right?
8. **Either** (a) Would knowledge of a Davidsonian theory of truth for a given language suffice for understanding a speakers’ utterances in that language?  
**Or** (b) Is the redundancy theory of truth consistent with the claim that understanding a declarative statement consists in knowing its truth conditions?
9. Assess Davidson’s claim that the basic data to which a theory of meaning must answer take the form ‘*X* prefers the truth of this utterance to the truth of that utterance’.
10. ‘The essence of pragmatism I take to be this, that the meaning of a sentence is to be defined by reference to the actions to which asserting it would lead, or, more vaguely still, by its possible causes and effects’ (Ramsey). Assess the prospects of a pragmatist theory of meaning.

11. Has Dummett refuted the principle of bivalence?
12. Does classical semantic theory treat vague predicates satisfactorily? If not, what other form of semantic theory does?
13. Is telling inviting to trust?
14. How does semantics relate to the theory of speech acts?
15. What do I know when I know a language?

**END OF PAPER**