

M.A. EXAMINATION 2004

for Internal Students

PHILOSOPHY**Philosophy of Language**

Thursday, 27 May 2004: 10.00 – 1.00.

Answer THREE questions. Avoid overlap in your answers.

1. 'Since expressions of the form "the F" are ambiguous, there can be no unified semantic treatment of such expressions.' Discuss.
2. 'The claim that proper names and demonstratives are rigid designators is incompatible with the claim that such expressions have sense.' Is this true? If it is, which claim(s) should we reject? If it isn't, explain why.
3. EITHER (a) What is the best argument for the claim that linguistic meaning is indeterminate? Is that argument compelling?
OR (b) 'Indeterminacy of translation is one thing, indeterminacy of syntax another.' Discuss.
4. What problems arise for Davidson's account of meaning from the fact that 'Snow is white' is true if and only if grass is green? How should a defender of Davidson respond to them?
5. Is it possible to give a unified account of the semantics of proper names and definite descriptions?
6. What difficulties are raised for semantic theory by context-sensitive expressions? How should a theorist cope with those difficulties?
7. EITHER (a) Expound Dummett's reasons for thinking that the notion of a speaker's knowledge plays an indispensable role in providing a theoretical account of a speaker's language. Are they convincing?
OR (b) 'Linguistic meaning must consist in publicly observable facts about use or else we could never come to know what others mean by their words.' Discuss.
8. Does Lewis provide a satisfactory account of the actual language relation?

9. Why does Chomsky think that language resides within the mind of the individual speaker? Is he right?

TURN OVER

10. Does Evans succeed in showing that a compositional theory of meaning for a language should be a theory of its speakers' competence?
11. Why does Davidson claim that there is no such thing as a language? Is he right?
12. 'What a word means for a speaker is often determined, in part, by facts external to the speaker. Therefore speakers can only have partial knowledge of their own languages.' Discuss.

END OF PAPER