

M.A. EXAMINATION 2003

for Internal Students

PHILOSOPHY**Philosophy of Language**

Thursday, 5 June: 10.00 – 1.00.

Answer THREE questions. Avoid overlap in your answers.

1. Does a compositional semantic theory explain a speaker's capacity to understand novel sentences?
2. Can proper names be directly referential and still be said to possess sense?
3. EITHER (a) Should a theorist of meaning be concerned about the possibility of indeterminacy of translation?

OR (b) Quine claims that there is no indeterminacy of syntax analogous to the indeterminacy of translation. He also claims that there is nothing to choose between different grammars that account for the same grammatical facts about a language. Are these claims of Quine compatible? Are they true?
4. EITHER (a) 'A theory of meaning that described the actual use speakers made of their language would not need to be a theory of understanding, nor would it need to appeal to the notion of speakers' knowledge.' Discuss.

OR (b) 'Language has no existence apart from its mental representation in the mind of the speaker.' Discuss.
5. EITHER (a) 'Davidson tries to reduce meaning to truth.' Discuss.

OR (b) 'A T-sentence which follows from a truth definition that meets Davidson's formal and empirical constraints gives the meaning of the sentence named in it.' Discuss.
6. What role, if any, does the notion of intention play in our understanding of language?

7. Given that speakers only ever use a fragment of their language, what relates them to the language they speak?
8. 'What a word means, even in an individual's idiolect, depends on social or environmental factors beyond the individual speaker.' Discuss.

TURN OVER

9. What adjustments are imposed on a semantic theory by context-dependent expressions?
10. Critically assess Chomsky's claim that all speakers have innate linguistic knowledge.
11. What does a speaker's knowledge of syntactic rules consist in?
12. Is there a coherent and complete treatment for the use of incomplete definite descriptions on a Russellian account of definite descriptions?
13. Are there good reasons to reject any description theory of proper names?

END OF PAPER