

Question Pool for M.A. Exam in Philosophy of Language / Spring 2001

1. Do elementary logical facts refute non-cognitivist accounts of evaluative and other declarative discourses? Is the conjunction of “deflationism about truth” and any such non-cognitivist view incoherent?
2. Why might someone think that words such as ‘I’, ‘today’, and ‘that’ pose a problem for Frege’s philosophy of language? Is there really a problem here?
3. Exactly what problems do negative existentials pose for semantic theories? Critically discuss some contemporary attempts to deal with these problems.
4. What, if any, connection is there between “theories of truth” and “theories of meaning”?
5. Recently, there has been a resurgence of the idea that *a priori* analysis –“armchair metaphysics” –is of great philosophical significance. Pick a partisan of this view, and clearly and critically discuss his view of analysis. To what extent is the view you discuss refuted by Quine’s work on the *a priori* and the analytic/synthetic distinction?
6. Can semantic relations be naturalized? If so, how? If not, does this justify irrealism about semantics?
7. Must a speaker have complete knowledge of a language in which she is competent? Of what kind of facts does such knowledge consist?
8. Why are meanings sometimes thought to be “creatures of darkness”? Are there compelling reasons for philosophers of language to posit meanings or propositions?
9. “The only necessity is verbal necessity.” What might this mean? Present and critically evaluate a contemporary philosopher who is sympathetic with such a view, as well as one who is not sympathetic.
10. What is minimalism about truth? What motivates the minimalist to be such? What are the principal objections to such a view?
11. Consider the claims:
 - a. Ordinary proper names are rigid designators.
 - b. Exchange of ordinary proper names of the same thing within the scope of ‘believes’ need not preserve truth value.
 - c. If two singular terms are without descriptive content, then, if they name the same thing, they can be intersubstituted anywhere (save in quotation) *salva veritate*.
 - d. If ordinary names are rigid designators, then they are not truncated descriptions, and thus are without descriptive content.

Something’s got to give here. What and why?

12. Does the indeterminacy thesis require one to be a behaviorist about semantic properties?