

PHIL 4233: Philosophy of Language
Prof. Funkhouser
4/1/08
Longer Paper Assignment

Longer Paper (300 points)

The topic for this paper assignment is much more open-ended than for the first paper. Any material covered in the Meaning and Truth, Speech Acts, and Propositional Attitudes sections is fair game. I expect this paper to go beyond mere exposition of some assigned reading. Instead, you are to make a contribution like the following: raise an objection by counter-example or argument, provide a further argument/reason in favor of a position, press for clarification where needed, generalize the author's conclusion to another domain, etc. Further, you might want to do some research and reading beyond the assigned articles.

I have included some sample topics below. However, I also encourage you to develop your own paper topic. If you do so, run it by me for approval before you start working on it. And, whatever your paper topic happens to be, feel free to contact me for help with finding additional sources on your particular topic.

The recommended length is approximately 8 to 12 pages. Your paper can be a bit shorter or longer, but I will not read past the 14th page (seriously). Again, make sure your paper is typed, double-spaced, written in proper English, stapled, with the pages numbered.

Paper Due Date: Thursday, May 1, 2008

Some Topics:

1. Quine's attack on the analytic-synthetic distinction: Did Quine overlook any ways of accounting for analyticity? Is Quine mistaken in his evaluation of one of the proposals (e.g., definition, interchangeability, etc.)? Is there something wrong with Quine's standards for a proper account of analyticity? Are Grice and Strawson correct in their criticisms?

2. Quine's attack on reductionism: Is Quine correct in his claims that belief and meaning are *holistic* and *underdetermined by the evidence*? Does it follow from this that every belief can be saved, though none is immune from revision? Moreover, does it follow that analyticity is an illusion? What about Quine's standards for belief revision/theory acceptance? Are Grice and Strawson correct that there are two fundamentally different ways of revising a previously accepted belief/sentence — e.g., rejecting it as false or changing its meaning?
3. Grice and Strawson on meaning — intention-based semantics: In general, are they correct in claiming that language should be understood as essentially serving the function of conveying thoughts? Is Grice correct in the details of his proposal, as outlined in "Meaning" and elsewhere?
4. Speech acts: Provide a (somewhat) novel account of some particular speech act (such as Searle does for promising, in his "The Structure of Illocutionary Acts") or class of speech acts, or provide an interesting taxonomy of speech acts in terms of illocutionary force, etc. Make a case for the importance (or, conversely, the relative unimportance) of speech act theory. Critically evaluate Grice's distinction between what is said and what is implicated.
5. Propositional attitudes: Give a complete characterization of Quine's concept of an *opaque context* and the philosophical problems they engender. (That one is more expository, but that is okay.) Do problems about propositional attitudes present an insoluble problem for Kripke's theory of names (from *Naming and Necessity*)? Are Kripke's Disquotational and Translation Principles true? Defend an answer to Kripke's puzzle about belief (the case of Pierre). Or, if you believe that Kripke's puzzle cannot be solved, explain the larger lessons we can learn from this.