Words and Things
Essay Questions

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Contents

Notes

This document may be updated during the course. Questions may be added, suggested readings may be improved. Please always check you have the latest version from `http://words-and-things.butterfill.com` before completing a task. This version was last edited 21st March 2019.

It is recommended that you consult the lecturer about readings tailored to your interests. If there is an issue you would like to write about not covered here, you are welcome to suggest additional questions.

You may discuss an essay outline with the lecturer. Please do this well before the deadline. Your lecturer may be unavailable in the last three weeks before the deadline.

The readings suggested below are intended only to get you started. You do not need to read all of them, not even to do really well. But to do well, you will need to find additional material relevant to the argument you are presenting. (The reference sections of lecture handouts may be helpful. You can also ask the lecturer.)

Reference

What is reference postulated to explain?

OR

What is the relation between an utterance of a word and a thing when the utterance of the word refers to the thing?

Reading

Gareth Evans. 1973. "The Causal Theory of Names". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 47:187–225

Lectures II of Saul A. Kripke. 1980. *Naming and necessity.* Rev. and enlarged. Library of philosophy and logic. Oxford: Blackwell

Lycan, W. 'Names' in Michael Devitt and Richard Hanley. 2008. *The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Language* [in en]. John Wiley & Sons, April

§§1–2 of Marga Reimer and Eliot Michaelson. 2018. "Reference". In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2018, edited by Edward N. Zalta. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University

Chapter 4 of Michael Devitt and Kim Sterelny. 1999. *Language and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language* [in en]. MIT Press

Gareth Evans. 1982. *The Varieties of Reference.* Oxford: Clarendon Press

Knowledge of Reference

When an utterance of a word or phrase refers to a thing, must the utterer have knowledge of reference?

Reading

Michael Dummett. 1978. "What do I Know when I Know a Language?" In *The Seas of Language,* 94–105. London: Duckworth

John Campbell. 2002. *Reference and Consciousness.* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Hilary Putnam. 1978. "Reference and Understanding". In *Meaning and the Moral Sciences,* 97–119. London: Routledge

Gareth Evans. 1982. *The Varieties of Reference.* Oxford: Clarendon Press

Imogen Dickie. 2011. "How Proper Names Refer" [in en]. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society (Hardback)* 111, no. 1pt1 (April): 43–78. doi:`10.1111/j.1467-9264.2011.00298.x`

Sense and Reference

Why, if at all, might we need a notion of sense?

OR

What is the sense of a proper name like 'Aristotle'?

Reading

Gottlob Frege. 1892 [1993]. "On Sense and Reference". In *Meaning and Reference,* edited by A. W. Moore, 23–42. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Gottlob Frege. 1956. "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry". *Mind* 65 (259): 289–311

Gottlob Frege. 1993. "Letter to Jourdain". In *Meaning and Reference,* edited by A. W. Moore, 43–5. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Michael Dummett. 1975 [1978]. "Frege's Distinction Between Sense and Reference". In *Truth and other Enigmas.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press

Section 3 of Edward N. Zalta. 2018. "Gottlob Frege". In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Summer 2018, edited by Edward N. Zalta. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University

Section 2.2 of Sam Cumming. 2016. "Names". In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Fall 2016, edited by Edward N. Zalta. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University

Nathan Salmon. 1986. *Frege's Puzzle.* Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press

Gareth Evans. 1982. *The Varieties of Reference.* Oxford: Clarendon Press

Hilary Putnam. 1978. "Reference and Understanding". In *Meaning and the Moral Sciences,* 97–119. London: Routledge

Nathan Salmon. 1986. *Frege's Puzzle.* Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press

John Campbell. 1987. "Is Sense Transparent?" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 88 (n/a): 273–292

John Campbell. 1997. "Sense, Reference and Selective Attention". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Supplementary Volume 71:55–74

John Campbell. 2000. "Wittgenstein on Attention". *Philosophical Topics* 28 (2): 35–48

John Campbell. 2002. *Reference and Consciousness.* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Descriptions

What purpose (or purposes) is Russell's theory of descriptions supposed to serve? Does it succeed?

OR

'Even in languages that deploy determiners [like 'the'], it is not clear that the determiners are behaving as quantificational operators' (Ludlow, 2004). Assuming this is not just unclear but untrue, provide an argument in defence of any aspect of Russell's theory of descriptions.

Reading

Peter Ludlow. 2004. "Descriptions". In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2004 Edition)*, edited by Edward N. Zalta. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University

Bertrand Russell. 1905. "On Denoting". *Mind* 14 (56): 479–493

Bertrand Russell. 1910 [1963]. "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description". In *Mysticism and Logic*, 200–221. London: Allen / Unwin

Stephen Neale. 1990. *Descriptions.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT

Keith S. Donnellan. 1966. "Reference and Definite Descriptions". *The Philosophical Review* 75 (3): 281–304

Gareth Evans. 1982. *The Varieties of Reference.* Oxford: Clarendon Press

Wilfred Sellars. 1949. "Acquaintance and Description Again". *The Journal of Philosophy* 46 (16): 496–504

Normativity

How should the claim that meaning (or reference) is normative be understood? Is it true?

Reading

Daniel Whiting. 2016. "What Is the Normativity of Meaning?" *Inquiry* 59, no. 3 (April): 219–238. doi:`10.1080/0020174X.2013.852132`

Saul A. Kripke. 1982. *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language.* Oxford: Blackwell

Kathrin Glüer and Åsa Wikforss. 2018. "The Normativity of Meaning and Content". In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Spring 2018, edited by Edward N. Zalta. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University

Anandi Hattiangadi. 2006. "Is Meaning Normative?" *Mind and Language* 21 (2): 220–240

Anandi Hattiangadi. Forthcoming. "The Normativity of Meaning"

Propositional Attitude Reports

Frege and Davidson are troubled by the fact that "a subordinate clause may not always be replaced by another of equal truth value without harm to the truth of the whole sentence structure" (Frege 1892 [1993]: 77). Why? Is either of their proposed solutions adequate?

Reading

Gottlob Frege. 1892 [1993]. "On Sense and Reference". In *Meaning and Reference,* edited by A. W. Moore, 23–42. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Donald Davidson. 1968 [1984]. "On Saying That". In *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation,* 155–170. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Thomas McKay and Michael Nelson. 2014. "Propositional Attitude Reports". In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Spring 2014, edited by Edward N. Zalta. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University

Saul A. Kripke. 1979. "A Puzzle about Belief" [in en]. In *Meaning and Use: Papers Presented at the Second Jerusalem Philosophical Encounter April 1976,* edited by Avishai Margalit, 239–283. Synthese Language Library. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands. doi:10.1007/978-1-4020-4104-4_20

Tyler Burge. 1986. "On Davidson's "Saying That"". In *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson,* edited by Ernest LePore. Oxford: Blackwell

Kent Bach. 1997. "Do Belief Reports Report Beliefs?" *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 78 (3): 215–241

James Higginbotham. 1986. "Linguistic Theory and Davidson's Programme in Semantics". In *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson,* edited by E. LePore, 29–48. Oxford: Blackwell

Convention vs Lexical Innovation

Suppose there are two people and a word and that when communicating by language the second person once uses the word with the same meaning the first person once used it with, and that the sameness of meaning is non-accidental. Is the existence of such a pair of people and a word necessary for there to be linguistic communication?

Reading

Donald Davidson. 1982 [1984]. "Communication and Convention". In *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation,* 265–280. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Donald Davidson. 1989. "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs". In *Philosophical grounds of rationality : intentions, categories, ends,* edited by Richard Grandy and Richard Warner. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Donald Davidson. 1994. "The Social Aspect of Language". In *The Philosophy of Michael Dummett,* edited by Brian McGuinness and G. Oliveri, 1–16. Synthese Philosophical Monographs. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers

Michael Dummett. 1994. "Reply to Davidson". In *The Philosophy of Michael Dummett,* edited by Brian McGuinness and G. Oliveri, 257–262. Holland: Kluwer

Michael Dummett. 1986. "Comments on Davidson and Hacking". In *Truth and interpretation : perspectives on the philosophy of Donald Davidson,* edited by Ernest LePore. Oxford: Basil Blackwell

Michael Dummett. 1991. *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics.* London: Duckworth

Donald Davidson. 1992. "Locating Literary Language". In *Literary Theory After Davidson,* edited by Reed-Dasenbrock, 295–308. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press

Donald Davidson. 1991. "James Joyce and Humpty Dumpty" [in en]. *Midwest Studies In Philosophy* 16, no. 1 (September): 1–12. doi:10.1111/j.1475-4975.1991.tb00228.x

David Wiggins. 1997. "Languages as Social Objects". *Philosophy* 72:499–524

David Lewis. 1969. *Convention : a philosophical study.* Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press