

Write an 8-10 page paper on one of the following topics.

(1) Which regularities in behavior are “conventions,” in Lewis’s view? What kind of convention does he think has to prevail in a community for that community to be speaking a certain language? Explain two of the objections he raises to this view of language and evaluate his response.

(2) What is the Kripkenstein paradox? Do you agree with Kripke that it is the most powerful and original form of skepticism yet invented? Explain your answer through a comparison with Goodman’s “grue” paradox. Is Kripke right to settle for a “skeptical” solution? Do you think a “straight” solution can be found?

(3) Searle is not happy with Austin’s theory of illocutionary acts. What are some of the problems he finds in it? Explain Searle’s own view of illocutionary acts. How much of an improvement is Searle’s picture over Austin’s?

(4) What are propositional concepts (Stalnaker, “Assertion”)? What are horizontal and diagonal propositions? How do we decide which of the two a sentence expresses in context? Can we use the horizontal/diagonal distinction to solve Frege’s puzzle about informative identity?

(5) Walton maintains that at least some metaphors can be understood on the model of prop-oriented make believe. Explain his theory and illustrate it with examples, including at least one example of your own. Some object to Walton’s view that “we would know” if were pretending. Develop and evaluate this objection. How conscious and deliberate should we expect semantic pretense to be?

(6) Find a philosophically interesting post on the blog *Language Log*. Explain what philosophically interesting question it raises, and sketch a possible response. Some possible search terms: philosophy , implicature, pragmatics, prescriptivism, Pullum, Nunberg. The URL is languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/. Please run your topic by me before getting started!

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