

24.251 – Intro to the Philosophy of Language
Problem Set 5: Davidson – Truth and Meaning

1. Why does Davidson think that a theory of meaning must yield the result that the meaning of the whole depends on the meanings of the parts?
 - (a) Otherwise one couldn't explain how we learn language.
 - (b) Such is the basic principle that Frege laid down.
 - (c) Otherwise there is a risk of infinite regress.
 - (d) Davidson argues AGAINST the claim that the meaning of the whole depends on the meanings of the parts.

2. Which of the following does Davidson take to be part of a theory of meaning:
 - (a) Ascertaining the logical form of sentences in the language under study.
 - (b) Supplying a dictionary for the language under study.
 - (c) Determining which entity is the meaning of each word in the language under study.
 - (d) Eliminating ambiguous words from the language under study.

3. How, according to Davidson, might one motivate the thought that meaning cannot be identified with reference?
 - (a) Otherwise one would get the result that any two false sentences are synonymous.
 - (b) It is required by the view that meanings are not entities.
 - (c) Otherwise one wouldn't be following Frege's footsteps.
 - (d) Otherwise one wouldn't get the result that the meaning of the whole depends on the meanings of the parts

4. What is Davidson's main complaint against a theory of meaning which assigns entities as meanings?
 - (a) The entities play no explanatory role.
 - (b) The entities would be mysterious from a metaphysical point of view.
 - (c) Use of the entities would clash with the project of getting the meaning of the whole to depend on the meanings of the parts.
 - (d) The entities are ruled out by the logical form of certain sentences.

5. According to Davidson's proposal, which of the following is a constraint on a theory of meaning?

- (a) That it yield suitable instances of schema (T).
 - (b) That it yield a dictionary for the language.
 - (c) That it settle ambiguities.
 - (d) No suitable constraints have yet been given by linguists.
6. Why does Davidson think that sentences involving belief-attributions cause trouble for the meaning-theorist.
- (a) Because it isn't clear what their logical form is.
 - (b) Because 'believes' is a vague term.
 - (c) Because belief attributions cannot be formulated in the propositional calculus.
 - (d) Because there is a tight interconnection between belief and truth: we do not know what someone means unless we know what she believes, and we do not know what someone believes unless we know what she means
7. According to Davidson, why is it easier to give a meaning theory for one's own language than it is to give a meaning theory for an alien tongue?
- (a) Because when it comes to an alien tongue it is hard to be sure whether the sentences on either side of the relevant instances of schema (T) have the same truth-value.
 - (b) Because an alien tongue may contain untranslatable concepts.
 - (c) Because of constraints imposed by the principle of charity.
 - (d) Because meanings aren't mind-independent objects, as Frege took them to be.