Philosophy 1890d

Second Short Paper

General Remarks

Below, you will find a few short quotations from papers we have read. Choose one of them and write a short (3-5 page, maximum of 1500 word) paper explaining what the author means to be saying in the passage in question (explaining any terms which may be used in unfamiliar or technical ways) and why he says it. Having done this, you should explain, if appropriate, what role the thought expressed plays in the author's overall statement of, or argument for, his position.

As this is a short paper with a defined purpose, you need not worry about writing an introduction, about motivating what you are trying to do, or any such thing. Reproduce the passage about which you will be writing at the top of the first page and then launch directly into talking about it. If you need to introduce or refer to other aspects of the author's position to make sense of the passage, do so. But you should not attempt to explain, or introduce, aspects of the author's position which do not bear upon the interpretation of the passage, and you should not feel compelled to evaluate the position overall.

The Passages

[T]here is a clear sense in which the theory that results from a Tarskian definition of truth...cannot possibly illuminate the semantic properties of the object-language. To appreciate this, we need only take seriously the eliminative nature of the[] definition[]. ...[A]ny consequence of [the] definition must already be a truth of logic, syntax, or set-theory, that is, a truth already provable in a meta-theory that makes no mention whatsoever of semantic notions. (John Etchemendy, "Tarski on Truth and Logical Consequence", p. 56)

Getting from a Tarskian definition of truth to a substantive account of the object language may involve as little as the reintroduction of a primitive notion of truth. For the subsequent claim that all and only the true sentences are members of the set defined may then provide genuine information about the semantic properties of the language.... (John Etchemendy, "Tarski on Truth and Logical Consequence", p. 59)

...[A]n adequate theory must allow our statements involving the notion of truth to be *risky*: they risk being paradoxical if the empirical facts are extremely (and unexpectedly) unfavorable. There can be no syntactic or semantic "sieve" that will winnow out the "bad" cases while preserving the "good" ones. (Saul Kripke, "Outline of a Theory of Truth", p. 692)

Pure disquational truth involves two important features that certain other truth concepts lack. The first is that I can understand "Utterance *u* is true" only to the extent that I can understand utterance *u*; the second is that for me, the claim that utterance *u* is true in the pure disquotational sense is cognitively equivalent to *u* itself as I understand it. ...The second feature...means that this notion is of a *use-independent* property: to call "Snow is white" disquotationally true is simply to call snow white; hence it is not to attribute [that sentence] a property that it wouldn't have had if I and other English speakers had used words differently. (Field, "Deflationist Views of Meaning and Content", p. 266)

...[T]he deflationary arguments against a substantial theory of truth need the support of the Disquotation Thesis and the Infinite Conjunction Thesis read in a strong way; weaker versions of the theses are insufficient. This is a major weakness in the arguments, for on the strong reading the Infinite Conjunction Thesis is false. (Gupta, "A Critique of Deflationism", p. 67)