

24.400: Proseminar in Philosophy I

Fall 2013

1. P1. That white dot is my house.
P2. I live in my house.
C. I live in a white dot.

Discuss. Readings: *Sense and Sensibilia*; Kripke, *Reference and Existence*, lecture IV (Oxford Scholarship Online).

2. According to Horwich, “for Wittgenstein, the important revelations that are typically promised within our subject are impossible. In so far as *theses* are propounded in philosophy, they should be barely more than observations about the use of words—reminders offered to help loosen the grip of over-stretched analogies. The most we can hope for is the *elimination* of our traditional concerns.” Horwich endorses the view he attributes to Wittgenstein. Is the attribution correct? Is the view correct? Readings: *Philosophical Investigations*; Horwich, *Wittgenstein’s Metaphilosophy*, chapter 2 (Oxford Scholarship Online).

3. According to Boghossian, emotivism (endorsed by Ayer) and the “deflationary” conception of truth (also endorsed by Ayer) are incompatible. Explain and assess. Readings: *Language, Truth, and Logic*; Boghossian, “The status of content”, 159-65 (JSTOR); Smith, “Why Expressivists about value should love minimalism about truth” (JSTOR); Divers and Miller, “Why expressivists about value should not love minimalism about truth” (JSTOR).

4. P1. Health is good.
P2. To learn what health is, we ask scientists.
C. Science can tell us what is good (*Principia Ethica*, section 27)

Discuss. Readings: Sturgeon, “Moore on ethical naturalism” (JSTOR); Darwall, Gibbard, and Railton, “Toward *fin de siècle* ethics: some trends” (posted); Feldman, “The open question argument: What it isn’t; and what it is” (EBSCOhost Humanities Source).

5. What if anything can be salvaged from the ruins of Ayer’s verifiability criterion of meaningfulness? Readings: Lewis, “Ayer’s first empiricist criterion of meaning: Why does it fail?” (JSTOR, niggling); Wright, “Scientific realism, observation and the verification principle” (ask Steve); Wright, “The verification principle: another puncture—another patch” (JSTOR); Lewis, “Statements partly about observation” (Oxford Scholarship Online).

6. According to Russell:

Whenever a relation of supposing or judging occurs, the terms to which the supposing or judging mind is related by the relation of supposing or judging must be terms with which the mind in question is acquainted. This is merely to say that we cannot make a judgement or a supposition without knowing what it is that we are making our judgement or supposition about (“Knowledge by acquaintance and description,” posted)

Judging with a name requires acquaintance in his view; there is no such requirement on judging with a description. Was Russell completely wrong about this? Readings: Donnellan, “Reference and definite descriptions” (JSTOR); Kripke, “Speaker’s reference and semantic reference” (posted); Lewis, “Individuation by acquaintance and by stipulation” (JSTOR); Hawthorne and Manley, *The Reference Book* (Oxford Scholarship Online).

7. Are there sense data? Readings: *Sense and Sensibilia*; Ayer, “Has Austin refuted the sense-datum theory?” (JSTOR); Jackson, *Perception: A representative theory* (lengthy argument for sense data; ask Alex).

8. Other topics must be cleared with instructor.

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