Third Paper Assignment

Write a paper, following all of the instructions below. E-mail it as an attachment to david.braun@rochester.edu by 5:00 pm, Thursday, November 29. (Graduate students: your paper is due at 5:00 pm on Monday, December 10.) Late papers will be strongly penalized. Please keep an electronic copy of your paper, for your own protection.

Format Instructions

For undergraduate students without upper-level writing: Your paper must be a Word or pdf document. It should be about 6 pages or 1,750 words long. It must be produced in 12-point font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides. Its pages must be numbered by your word-processor. Your e-mail address must appear on the first page.

For undergraduates with upper-level writing: Same as above, except that you should also clearly mark your paper with ‘Upper-Level Writing’. After I correct your paper, you will rewrite it in light of the comments I give you. (The due date for the rewrite will be 5:00 pm, Tuesday, December 11.)

For graduate students: Same as for undergraduate students without upper-level writing, except that (i) your paper should be about 10 pages or 3,000 words, and (ii) it will be due at 5:00 pm, Monday, December 10.

Content Instructions (for all students)

Write your paper on one of the topics below. (You may write on another topic, but if you wish to do so you must get my prior approval. This if for your own protection.) Each of the topics below mentions a target paper. For each paper, I describe some issues that the paper raises that you might want to address in your own paper. You should feel free to discuss those issues or to discuss other issues raised in the target paper. Above all, your paper should focus on an interesting topic that can be thoroughly discussed in the space that you have. Some of the papers mentioned below are in the Martinich anthology. The rest are available on Electronic Reserve at Rush Rhees. Your paper must use proper citation techniques.

1. Read Gareth Evans’s “The Causal Theory of Names” (in Martinich). Present and critically evaluate one or two of his best criticisms of Kripke’s causal theory of names. If space allows, you may also describe Evans’s theory of proper names and critically evaluate it.

Topics continue on next page
2. John Searle discusses Saul Kripke’s and Keith Donnellan’s views on proper names in his “Proper Names and Intentionality” (in Martinich). Do one of the following: (a) Present and critically evaluate some of Searle’s criticisms of Kripke’s and Donnellan’s causal-historical theory of proper names. (b) Present and critically evaluate Searle’s responses to Kripke’s and Donnellan’s criticisms of descriptivist theories of proper names.

3. Michael Devitt criticizes direct references theories of proper names, and presents an alternative causal theory, in his “Against Direct Reference” (Midwest Studies vol. 14, 1989). What is the theory of direct reference, according to Devitt? Briefly explain why Devitt rejects it. What is Devitt’s causal theory of meaning? Present one (or more) of Devitt’s attempts to use his causal theory to solve the problems that he thinks direct reference theory has. Critically evaluate Devitt’s attempted solution(s).

4. Keith Donnellan gives a theory of names that fail to refer in his “Speaking of Nothing” (Philosophical Review 83, 1974). Describe Donnellan’s theory of proper names, and describe the problem(s) that non-referring names present for his theory. Present and critically evaluate Donnellan’s solutions to those problems.

5. Read Keith Donnellan’s “Reference and Definite Descriptions” (in Martinich). Do as much of the following as space allows: Present Donnellan’s criticism of Russell’s theory of definite descriptions. Present Donnellan’s theory. Critically evaluate his criticisms of Russell and Donnellan’s positive view.

6. Frank Jackson defends the description theory of reference in “Reference and Description Revisited” (Philosophical Perspectives 12, 1998). Describe the sort of description theory he is defending. (On his view, do descriptions give the meanings of proper names and other nouns, or do they merely fix the references of these terms?) Critically discuss some of his replies to criticisms of description theories. Pay particular attention to the Objection from Ignorance and Error.

7. Kent Bach, in “Giorgione Was So-Called Because of His Name” (Philosophical Perspectives 16, 2002), defends a Nominal Description Theory of proper names. This theory says (roughly) that the name ‘Aristotle’ is semantically equivalent with the definite description ‘the bearer of “Aristotle”’. Describe and critically evaluate his theory. Does Bach successfully defend his theory from Kripke-style objections? Does his theory solve the Frege puzzles?