James Pearson

Topics in Analytic Philosophy: Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein
Spring 2010
Instructor: James Pearson

DUE: Tuesday, March 2, 2010

General Guidance

       This take-home exam is designed to test both your grasp of the material that we have covered, and your ability to construct clear, concise, well-defended philosophical arguments in support of the position which you believe to be true. Avoid mentioning without explaining. Demonstrate your understanding of key concepts in your own terms, rather than assuming that the meaning of those concepts is self-evident. (You may find it helpful to refer to other answers in your exam to avoid repetition.) Avoid pontification and polemic; instead, carefully plan your responses to each question, including (where space allows) judicious discussion of objections that someone might bring to bear against your view. Be sure that you have answered the question in your response. Proof-reading your exam will be essential, not only to avoid spelling and grammar mistakes, but to ensure that you are using technical Fregean and Russellian terms correctly.

       It is your responsibility to cite *all* sources that you draw from on the last page of your exam. These might include the texts themselves, other books or articles you find, internet research, and conversations with your classmates. All of the written work you hand in as part of your exam must be your own. If you are in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, consult the syllabus and/or contact me *before* you turn in the exam.

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You must choose THREE questions to answer from section A. You must choose ONE question to answer from section B.

A: Your answers to questions in this section should be approximately one page. Each answer is worth 20 points.

1) Using examples, explain the three principles that Frege claims will guide his investigation in *Foundations of Arithmetic.*
2) Why does Frege think that arithmetical truths are not synthetic *a posteriori*? Are his arguments compelling?
3) Does Frege's "Julius Caesar" objection place too high a demand upon what constitutes an acceptable definition?
4) How does Frege resolve the paradox that units are both identical and different from one another? Is his solution better than the alternatives he discusses?
5) Does Frege satisfactorily distinguish thoughts from ideas?
6) Is the sentence "Luke Skywalker is a rebel" true, false, neither true nor false, or meaningless?
7) How does Russell's theory of descriptions account for proper names, like "Luke Ravenstahl"? Does the theory make communication using names problematic?
8) Ought we to follow Russell and distinguish our knowledge of things into knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description?

B: Your answer to the question you pick in this section should be an essay of approximately three pages. It will be worth 60 points. You should defend your viewpoint from at least one objection that you can imagine a critic raising.

1) Contrast Frege's account of "I" thoughts in "Thought" with Russell's account of acquaintance with the self in "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description." Do Frege and Russell agree or disagree? If they agree, are they right? If they do not agree, is one of them right?
2) Frege and Russell agree that the following argument is invalid:
   P1) Mrs. White suspects that the murderer is Mr. Green.
   P2) Ms. Scarlett=the murderer.
   C) Mrs. White suspects that Ms. Scarlett is Mr. Green.
   However, they explain its invalidity in different ways. Which explanation is preferable?
3) Strawson's critique of Russell in "On Referring" is not only a criticism of the account of denoting phrases Russell gives in "On Denoting," but also of the ideal language program pursued by both Russell and Frege. How might a Russellian respond to Strawson's theory of reference? Is assertion the primary use of language?
4) "The following analogy will perhaps clarify [idea, sense, and reference]. Somebody observes the Moon through a telescope" (Frege, "On Sense and Reference," 9). How does the telescope analogy work? Does it clarify or obscure the sense/reference distinction?
5) What is Number?