

1. Consider Fodor's argument about the atomism of concepts, in particular, the notion that "spoiled" and "addled" are in some profound sense *synonymous*, but that their "possession conditions" differ, p 55 of "The Demise of Definitions: the Linguist's Tale" (similarly, that WATER and H₂O are synonymous, but that their possession conditions differ). That is, the fact that many people who use the concept WATER have never heard of the concept H₂O, doesn't mean that WATER in their dialect is "polysemous"; the fact that WATER in one dialect corresponds to two items, H₂O and WATER, in the dialect of someone else, just means that some of us have two variations of the same concept whose use is "context-restricted", i.e. whose possession condition involves also having the concepts H and O (and "2", for that matter).

For Fodor, then, all apparent non-trivial polysemy is the use of a single concept across several different environments, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, whatever. Some speakers/groups may choose to lexicalize this concept in two different ways, dependent on context, but this does not represent a "new concept", rather, it's the old concept with a contextual restriction tacked on.

How might one distinguish between different "possession conditions" and entirely separate concepts? Discuss, in particular, with respect to the concepts, DOG, POODLE, and ANIMAL, and GRAPE, FRUIT and FOOD, mentioned in Lecture 3? How could we go about sorting the "basic" concepts from the "derived" concepts?

(Not more than 1 page)

2. Consider Fodor's argument about question-begging in definitional/conceptual-structure based approaches to lexical meaning, page 58-59 of "The Demise of Definitions: the Linguist's Tale". How can a framework of lexical representation like that of Hale and Keyser provide a non-question-begging characterization of "what it means to be an Agent"? (no more than 1/2 a page)

3. Consider Fodor's discussion of Pinker and semantic bootstrapping, on p. 64. Here, he's making a clear distinction between "concepts as definitions", and "real-world knowledge" or "encyclopedic knowledge" or some such. Fodor argues: Let's say that the kid *does* make syntactic generalizations based on his knowledge about a given concept: let's say the kid has the concept EAT and the concept ACT and has made a connection between them (like, e.g., the connection we might make between the concept DOG and the concept ANIMAL), but that this connection is not *definitional*, i.e. the concept EAT is not made up of smaller parts, one of which is the concept ACT. Fodor says that as long as the child can make syntactic generalizations based on this sort of relationship-knowledge, even *contingent* relationship-knowledge, there's no argument for definitions in the fact that seemingly semantically similar verbs participate in the same syntactic generalizations.

What do our *fill/cover*, *spray/load* and *pour* verb class alternations have to say about what kinds of knowledge a child can use to make a syntactic generalization? Can we say anything reliable about what kinds of knowledge a child *doesn't* use to make a syntactic generalization? Explain. (No more than 2 pages).