24.119 Minds andMachines

Problem Set 5. Assigned in class #8. Due in class #9.

NB: *no* quotations, *no* paraphrases; answer in your own words.

(1) In a couple of paragraphs, describe a Burge-style example designed to show that whether one has attitudes about laptops (e.g. the belief that laptops are getting cheaper, the desire to have a laptop, etc.) can sometimes depend on one's linguistic community.

(2) Give an objection to the Burge-style description of your example, and either rebut or defend it.

(3) Using the example of cows and horses on a dark night, explain Fodor's disjunction problem (p. 494). Why is it called the "disjunction" problem? (The "disjunction" of two sentences 'P' and 'Q' is 'P or Q'.)

(4) According to Dennett (in "True Believers"):

(a) If someone believes that grass is green, that she has this belief is a perfectly objective matter of fact.

(b) Adopting the intentional stance involves pretending that a system has beliefs it does not in fact have.

(c) It is not possible, even in principle, to adopt anything but the intentional stance to predict successfully the behavior of human beings.

(d) The intentional stance serves to predict the behavior of human beings completely.

(e) Lecterns believe that they are located at the center of the civilized world.

(f) Beliefs are sentences stored in the head.

(g) Sometimes there is no fact of the matter whether a person has a particular belief.

(h) The language of thought hypothesis is ludicrous.

(Answer yes/no.)

(5) Clearly explain the point Dennett is making with the example of the alarm clock pumped full of helium (p. 558). (One shortparagraph.)

(6) "The false beliefs that are reaped grow in a culture medium of true beliefs" (p. 559). What does Dennett mean by this? (One shortparagraph.) Is he right? (Give reasons for your answer.)