

Philosophical Problems of Knowledge and Reality

Philosophy 550

Fall 2006

Dr. Brandon C. Look

Paper Assignment #1

Write an essay (or a dialogue) of approximately six pages on *one* of the following topics. Papers are due in class on Thursday, September 28th.

- (A) Consider the following claims:
- (i) Pegasus is (was) a winged horse
 - (ii) Pegasus does (did) not exist.

Drawing on the articles in the section “Existence” in *Metaphysics*, critically reflect on the following questions: In what sense (if any) can statements about non-existent objects be true? In what sense (if any) *are* there non-existent objects? Can one refer to non-existent objects? What does it mean to say that something *exists* anyhow? Is existence a predicate? [Hint: is existence a predicate *just like* “brown” or “leather” when talking of a football?]

- (B) Drawing on the essays of Kripke, Gibbard, and Yablo, construct a dialogue between at least two characters that addresses the following claims:
- (i) “Water is H₂O” is a necessary *a posteriori* identity
 - (ii) “Goliath is Lump!” is a contingent identity
 - (iii) This computer could not have been made of ice.

You will not be judged by literary quality, but by how well you present the issues and difficulties related to the topic. So, think about, among other things, the special status of names and natural kind terms in this debate, as well as the thesis of essentialism in general.