

PHIL 307 : Metaphysics and Epistemology (F06)

5-Page Essay Questions

1. Describe either a completely new semantical framework, or a pre-existing one other than those described by Carnap in “Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology.” What would Carnap say in response to the question of whether the entities referred to by the names or variables in your framework exist? Is this the right thing to say?
2. What is Descartes’ skeptical argument? What does he use it for? Ought we to accept its conclusion?
3. What is Bouwsma’s thesis about the meaning of the word “illusion”? How does he respond to Descartes’ skeptical argument? Is he right?
4. Does common sense allow us to refute skepticism?
5. Explain and illustrate the difference between weak and strong skepticism. What role can simplicity play a role in refuting either? (If you are considering answering this question I recommend that you read chapter 2 of Russell’s *Problems of Philosophy*, which is available online at <http://www.ditext.com/russell/russell.html>.)

If you would like to write on a different topic you may, but you should clear it with me *before you start writing the paper*. There should be no significant overlap between the content of this paper and the content of any other paper you have written for this course.

Due date: Friday 3rd November.

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