Phil 467/812 Fall Semester 2006
Assignment #3

This assignment is due in class (at the beginning) on Thursday Nov 23rd. You can hand-write your assignments if you wish, but try to be reasonably neat. Please do your work independently. (The three assignments are worth 33% of your grade if you are in 467, and 25% of your grade if you are in 812). The questions on this assignment tend to be more “philosophical” than the previous assignments.

Part A: About vagueness.

1. What is “higher order vagueness” and how is it treated in Tye’s logic, in supervaluation theory, and in fuzzy logic?
2. What is vagueness, anyway? (Don’t write more than a page on this!)
3. What (in a nutshell) is the criticism in Fodor/Lepore about supervaluations? Is it any good? Why? (Don’t write more than a page on this!)

Part B: About existence and non-existence.

4. Discuss this criticism of free logics: “Once you allow that there are things that don’t exist, there is no stopping point and you will have to admit everything. You cannot say that there is Pegasus but there is no largest prime number; you cannot say that there is Sherlock Holmes but there is no God (if you were trying to deny that God is). In short, once you admit that there are some things that don’t exist then you cannot coherently distinguish among types of these objects, and say that some are but others are not.” (No more than a page!)
5. Negative free logic assigns false to every atomic sentence (except identities) that has a non-designating term in it. Does this seem right to you? Can you think of any example sentences that this is implausible for?

Part C: About the difference in translating definite descriptions as terms versus eliminating them as “incomplete symbols” in the Russell manner. For each of these, give a translation of the sentence where the definite description is a term and another where it is “eliminated” à la Russell. Use the schemes of abbreviation given.

6. The hardest problem in Ass3 will not be solved by any student in the class. (P1: x is a problem; H2: x is harder than y; S2: x will be solved by y; T1: x is a student; F: x is in y; c: the class; a: Ass3).
7. The wife of Justinian is the most salacious woman mentioned by Gibbon. (W2: x is a wife of y; S2: x is more salacious than y; M2: x is mentioned by y; O1: x is a woman; j: Justinian; g: Gibbon)

Extra Credit: Here’s another (somewhat more difficult) pair of problems to translate. If you can do them you definitely know about these sorts of translations.

8. [Answer this as if it were a problem in Part C] The fittest fish is faster than the fattest fish. (F: x is a fish; G: x is fitter than y; H: x is faster than y; J: x is fatter than y).
9. [This sentence is thought to be ambiguous. Give different translations for the different ambiguities, and explain why they describe different states of affairs] Exactly two students like exactly two professors. (S: x is a student; P: x is a professor; L: x likes y).