Phil 107: Final Paper Assignment
Winter, 2020

Instructions

The paper (4–6 pages long) is due, as an attachment, via the "Assignments" tool on Canvas by midnight Wednesday, March 18.

The following topics are suggestions. If you want to write on another topic, feel free to do so. It might be a good idea, however, in that case, to check with me first.

Note that the topics tend to have many sub-questions. You need not (and probably should not) try to answer all of them. (You *certainly* should not just answer them one after another in order — that would make a bad paper.) I put them there to suggest various directions for thinking about the topic, and in particular to head off superficial or excessively simple ways of thinking about it.

The main intent of the paper assignment is for you to talk directly about the texts we read. You can also use other outside material if you think it helps your paper, though I don't necessarily recommend that. If you do so, you must of course make it clear exactly what you are using and how. Also, it should still be clear that the paper was written for this course.[1]

All of the topics require you to make substantial use of material from at least two of our main authors, or from (at least) two different works by the same author. You can write about more than three if you feel it improves your paper (but you will not get extra credit just for including more authors).

The intent of the paper is to discuss the views, attitudes, styles, etc., manifested in the reading, not to reach a judgment on whether the authors are right or wrong, good or bad, etc. If you are upset by something one of our authors says, or find it ridiculous, you should use that as an excuse to try and understand better why someone would say such a thing. If you can't

[1] If you have any questions about policies on plagiarism and related issues, please see `https://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_misconduct`.

manage that, you should try to write about a topic which doesn't touch on the problem area.

If you're using the editions I ordered and/or links or PDF's I provided, you can refer to the readings just by giving the title and page number. If you use a different edition and/or some other source, please give at least enough bibliographical information, in whatever format you find convenient, that I can find your source if necessary. There's no need for a separate bibliography or title page.

You can find answers to some commonly asked questions about my assignments and grading in my FAQ (`https://people.ucsc.edu/~abestone/courses/faq.html`).

Suggested topics

1. Choose (at least) two of the authors we read, or two different works by the same author, and compare what they say or imply about the original or primary or most important act by which the self or ego relates, or ought to relate, to itself. (Self-consciousness, self-finding, self-reliance, self-superintendence, self-overcoming, self-command, self-obedience, etc.) Some of the issues you might want to consider (but you don't need to mention any of these, and certainly shouldn't try to discuss more than two or three of them): how the self separates from itself and how it recombines (is reconciled to itself, mediates between or merges its separated components) in this act; how the self is both finite and infinite in or as a result of this act (and how it imposes finitude on itself); the method or stages involved in this act (if any); how the self is individual and/or universal in this act; how this act involves the intellect, the passions, and the will; whether this act is dependent on anything beyond the self and if so what.

2. Choose (at least) two of the authors we read, or two different works by the same author, and compare what they say or imply about evil as the way to good. In what sense, according to them, is good, or at least the highest or most complete kind of good, achievable, perhaps *only* achievable, by way of evil? Note you can't assume that it is obvious what "good" and "evil" mean here, or that all our authors means the same thing by them, or that any one author always means the same. One way of seeing evil is as a kind of *madness* (irrationality); another way would be to see it as *rebellion*; another

way would be to see it as *lawbreaking* (breaking the tablets of the law); and there are others. You may also think that some of our authors, although they come close to saying something like this, then deliberately make sure to avoid it (this is basically what I argued in lecture about both Schelling and Coleridge).

3. Choose (at least) two of the authors we read, or two different works by the same author, and compare what they say or imply a "dark unknown force" (e.g. artistic genius, divine grace, the body) that, so to speak, stands behind and acts within the (conscious) will without belonging to it. Recall that in Schelling (*System of Transcendental Philosophy*, p. 222) this force represents the infinite–unconscious self working within the finite-conscious self to produce a finite representation of itself, namely, the great work of art (which represents infinitude insofar as it is perfect, i.e., nothing can be added to it without diminishing it). You don't need to discuss Schelling in your paper, but you could look for versions of that in other authors.

4. Choose (at least) two of the authors we read, or two different works by the same author, and compare what they say or imply about the relationship between men and women: how they are the same, how they are different, whether they . (As far as I can tell, none of them question the validity or exhaustiveness of that gender binary, although you might find places where they could or should have. Nietzsche does mentions eunuchs at one point.) I don't recommend writing the obvious paper that says "Fuller is a feminist and Nietzsche is a sexist," but there are a lot of more interesting things to think about here. Why *does* this come up so often in Nietzsche? Can that throw light on what Fuller is saying in "The Great Lawsuit"? Also note that, whatever kind of feminist she is, Fuller does not seem to be the type who claims that there are no natural or permanent differences between men and women. Are there things she and Nietzsche actually agree about here? (What do we imagine Zarathustra said to women when he spoke to them? It's mentioned that he did, but we don't actually get to see it. Did he talk about men? What did he say? Also: what exactly does Zarathustra mean when he says that life and wisdom are women?) Or you could write about other authors besides Nietzsche and Fuller. For example there is Coleridge's discussion of male and female characters from Shakespeare in *The Friend*.

5. This was one of the choices for the second short essay, but it would work for the final paper, as well: try to describe the difference in "style" or "sound"

between two of our authors. In what different ways are they "easy" or "hard" to read? How are their texts structured? (For example: what determines the order of sentences and paragraphs?) How they use quotation or allusion, and what kind of texts do they quote or allude to? How do they use metaphors, of what kind? What do they expect from their readers? What kind of readers do they expect? Give examples if possible. Try if possible to connect these differences to philosophical motivations. Why couldn't author A says what they want to in author B's style? (For example: why couldn't Emerson write like Schelling? Or like Coleridge? Etc.)

6. Choose (at least) two of the authors we read, or two different works by the same author, and compare what they say or imply about the past, memory, and/or history. What effects does the past have on the present? On the future? What is or should be the relationship between the past self and the present or future self? How can or should we deal with regret? With remorse? With resentment and desire for revenge? With pride in our past? When and how and in what respects should we try to preserve ourselves and when and how and in what respects should we seek change or even destruction?

7. Choose (at least) two of the authors we read, or two different works by the same author, and compare what they say or imply about the true or natural *ranking* of human beings? What characterizes the members of the elite, the elect, the truly wealthy or happy, and/or the true natural nobility? What characterizes the rest of us — the people, the masses, the many? (Or are there more than just two ranks? Or more than one true or natural system of ranks?) What obligations do the different ranks have to one another, if any? In what ways do they represent a danger to each other?