

# PHILOSOPHY 330

*Fall 2025*

*Final Essay Assignment*

Due Wednesday, December 17 (4:00 PM)

Write a 6-8 page paper on one of the following topics. All papers must be properly word processed or typed with 1" margins on the top, sides and bottom. Use double-spacing and no larger than 12pt font. Turn in by uploading to Lamakū as a pdf file. Use the following format to title your file: lastname Phil 330 final.

## *Art as Affirmation of Life*

How does Nietzsche develop in the later writings the notion, already suggested in *The Birth of Tragedy*, that art is the means to the affirmation of life? How might his philosophy be summed up in the brief line from his late notebooks: We possess *art* lest we *perish of the truth*? Explain how his notion of the philosophers of the future as artists is connected with the suggestion of the philosopher as lucid dreamer or as courageous seafarer venturing out into the open sea? What do you think of this view about the importance of art in the affirmation of life? What do you think about the paintings of Vincent Van Gogh as examples of Nietzsche's view of art as the means to the affirmation of life?

## *Art as Expression*

Explain Tolstoy's view that art is expression. What are some of the problems with expression theory as developed by Tolstoy, and how did Collingwood try to meet these objections in further developing the expression theory of art? What do you think of this view of art as expression? What do you think about the paintings of Amadeo Modigliani as examples of the expressionist theory of art?

## *Art as Significant Form*

Why does Clive Bell argue that we must have a definition of art, a definition which would enable one to distinguish works of art from everything that is not art? Explain his view that the distinguishing features of works of art is *significant form*. What are some of the examples of various works of art that Bell suggests share this quality of significant form? What do you think of works by Henry Moore and Barbara Hepburn as examples of works that exemplify this notion of significant form? What do you think of this notion of art as significant form? Is it necessary to have a definition of art?

## *Suzanne Langer on Art as Symbol of the Forms of Feeling*

How did Langer develop her theory about music to a general theory about art? How is this expressed in her statement that "music must be more than producing pleasing sounds"? What does Langer mean when she explains how works of art are expressions of symbols of feeling? As Langer herself played cello, and she was certainly familiar with the work of Jacqueline du Pré, how might du Pré's performance of the Elgar Concerto suggest Langer's theory of art? Can you relate in your experience of music or of visual art to what Langer is saying about art?

## *Surrealism*

How did the psychological theories of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung influence the development of Surrealism in art? How is this expressed in Andre Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism*? What do you think of the Surrealist paintings by artists such as Picasso, Klee, Miro, Ernst and Dali? Can art be therapeutic in bringing forth the subconscious to conscious awareness?

### *Heidegger on the Origin of the Work of Art*

How does Heidegger attempt to resolve the raging discordance between art and truth? What does he mean when he suggests that art is a happening of truth? How is this brought out in his interpretation of the Van Gogh painting of shoes? Why does Heidegger think that art can be very important in waking us up to what it means to be in the world, and to perhaps change our very way of being-in-the-world? How is this brought out in the documentary about the films of Terrence Malik? Can you relate to what Heidegger is saying about art in your experience of art? Are there any problems with Heidegger's view?

### *Merleau-Ponty and Modern Painting*

Why does Merleau-Ponty think that modern painting has an "ontological significance"? How does modern painting, particularly the paintings of Cézanne, reveal something important about vision itself? Merleau-Ponty rejects the notion of art as imitation and accepts that it is "a process of expression," but what does he suggest is expressed in modern painting, in the paintings of Cézanne? How is this brought out by Merleau-Ponty in the quote from Cézanne that "Nature is on the inside"? What does he think philosophers should learn from Cézanne's doubt? Can you relate to what he says about Cézanne's paintings?

### *Art and the Political*

According to Walter Benjamin, how has the advancement of technological reproducibility changed the nature of art? What did he mean by the 'aura' of the work of art, and is he right when he suggests that the aura of the work of art is diminished or lost in the age of technological reproducibility? Why does Benjamin think that this development leads to a politicization of art? How is the problem Benjamin calls attention to further complicated in our age of Artificial Intelligence?

### *Jackson Pollock and Abstract Expressionism*

Why did the art critic Clement Greenberg celebrate the drip paintings of Jackson Pollock as fulfilling his view about art in the essays "Towards a Newer Laocoon" and "Modernist Painting"? Why did Greenberg suggest that art should not be political as Benjamin had argued, and thus suggest that "the best of contemporary plastic art is abstract"? What do you think about the abstract expressionist paintings of Jackson Pollock?

### *Jean-Michel Basquiat and Postmodern Art*

How do the paintings of Jean-Michel Basquiat bring out some of the features of postmodern art and yet at the same time be understood through previous theories of modern art? After watching the documentary *The Radiant Child* what do you think of Basquiat's paintings?

### *Feminist Theory in Art*

How might the paintings of Frida Kahlo suggest some of the views of Feminist Theory of Art in the selections by Heide Göttner-Abendroth, Luce Irigaray, and Craig Owens? What do you think of the paintings of Frida Kahlo?