

THOMISTIC PSYCHOLOGY: WORLD AND PASSIONS

SEMINAR SYLLABUS

[SUMMER 2021]

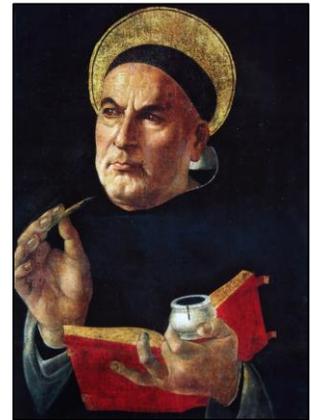
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DESCRIPTION

The passions, though born into us by nature and fitting to our lives, must obey the orders of reason, else they bring disorder to the whole of our being. But since the passions are *not* disordered by nature (though of reason's voice they are hard-of-hearing in a postlapsarian existence), we must uncover the causes of their disorder so prevalent today if we are to understand how they fail, and how they might succeed, in attaining their proper and fitting good.

The approach taken in this seminar to the question of the passions will seek a certain mean between two extreme and opposed perspectives. On the one hand is situated the modern position—and by far the more dangerous of the two—espoused by David Hume (1711–1776), namely, that “Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them” (1739: *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book II, Part III, Section III). On the other hand is that position held generally by the Stoics, which—though we may learn much from it—may holds in its extreme forms that a cause of movement from without ourselves is contrary to our nature and the passions arising therefrom as objects which we ought to master, as the domestication of a beast. In the Humean perspective, we are but gifted animals bound to seek increasingly clever satisfaction of irrational forces; in the extreme Stoic, we are intellectual spirits striving against an unruly flesh.



Contrary to both, the Aristotelian-Thomistic perspective sees in the intellect and human body a hierarchical complementarity, for the passions are a means of receipt and response to the world—and especially the specifically human world—in which we live and by which we pursue our proper ends. Thus, understanding the dynamism of world and passions is essential to understanding the rectitude, and failures, of our passionate dispositions.

METHOD

The seminar is 8 weeks long, with one recorded lecture and one discussion session each week. Each discussion session is structured around a reading from St. Thomas Aquinas. Participants are expected to have read the assigned reading and listened to the lecture prior to the session, so that they may engage in a semi-structured discussion directed and moderated by the instructor. As this is an advanced seminar, one *cannot* participate well without a *deep engagement* with the assigned reading. Moreover, *continual*

discussion will foster that participation and engagement throughout the week. Participants will be expected to partake in these discussions on a regular basis, and will be challenged to do so directly.

READING

The primary texts for this seminar are all available online or will be made available in digital format, primarily from the 1269-71: *Summa theologiae, prima secundae*, with a handful of selections from Aristotle, Cicero, and Augustine being made available in PDF. Supplemental texts to the primary readings will be given from a variety of sources. **Readings are subject to change—more secondary readings will likely be added.**

LECTURE

Each week there will also be a 20-40+ minute audio lecture, posted to Teams at the beginning of the week. This lecture will be based upon the assigned reading, but will also stray into related topics, or may use the reading as a launching point for addressing some related issue (perhaps one more general, or perhaps one more specific). The primary (but not sole) purpose of these lectures is to help clarify some of the more difficult concepts and arguments contained within the reading, as well as to raise specific questions that should help structure and guide our discussion sessions.

There *may* be accompanying visual aids (not necessarily) in order to provide some clarity as to textual points, but one *should* be able, in most cases, to simply listen to the lecture (and perhaps consult the visual aids later). This should allow more flexibility: making the lectures suitable accompaniment for a commute, while doing chores, going for a run, etc.

DISCUSSION

The heart of the seminar is the discussion session (**Saturdays at 8:30-9:30pm ET**): where all the thoughts emergent and encountered throughout the week—via the reading, lecture, and on-going conversations in the Teams channel—are brought into explicit conversation. This allows us to attempt a concerted effort at bringing resolution to our difficulties, and—failing such a resolution—to direct our inquiry further.

Each discussion session will begin with a brief synopsis of the week's material and a focusing on whichever aspects of that material seem most pressing. Beyond the direction provided by the instructor, participants are encouraged to bring their own concerns explicitly into view and to engage with the instructor and one another in civil debate and collective inquiry.

CONTRIBUTION

It is hoped and expected that each participant in the seminar will provide a contribution: a piece of writing, recorded presentation, or something else, within one month of the seminar's conclusion, as a way of coalescing what has been learned in a demonstrative manner. Topics are suggested, and the instructor is available for discussions and assistance in composing your contribution.

SESSION SCHEDULE

June 12	<p>Assessing the Situation</p> <p>Lecture: The Course of the Passions</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Primary] Selections of Aristotle, Cicero, and Augustine. • [Secondary] Lombardo 2011: <i>The Logic of Desire</i>, "Introduction".
June 19	<p>Passions of the Soul</p> <p>Lecture: The Cause of Passions</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Primary] Aquinas 1269-71: <i>Summa theologiae prima secundae (ST Ia-IIae)</i> q.22-25. • [Secondary] Aquinas 1266-68: <i>ST Ia</i>, q.80-81.
June 26	<p>Love and Hate</p> <p>Lecture: Toward Union</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Primary] Aquinas 1269-71: <i>ST Ia-IIae</i>, q.26-29 • [Secondary] On the meaning of "Cathexis" [varied texts]
July 3	<p>Of Pain and Sorrow</p> <p>Lecture: Wounds of the Soul</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Primary] Aquinas 1269-71: <i>ST Ia-IIae</i>, q.35-37
July 10	<p>Redeeming Pain and Sorrow</p> <p>Lecture: Knowledge of Suffering</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Primary] Aquinas 1269-71: <i>ST Ia-IIae</i>, q.38-39
July 17	<p>Of Fear and its Consequences</p> <p>Lecture: To Hide from Love</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Primary] Aquinas 1269-71: <i>ST Ia-IIae</i>, q.41-45
July 24	<p>Anger and the Arduous</p> <p>Lecture: Injury and Redress</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Primary] Aquinas 1269-71: <i>ST Ia-IIae</i>, q.46-48 • [Secondary] Deely 2002: "Definition of Umwelt" in <i>What Distinguishes Human Understanding?</i>
July 31	<p>The World</p> <p>Lecture: Dependent Autarchic Animals</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Primary] Deely 2015: "Cognitive and cathectic dimensions of semiosis". • [Secondary] Aquinas 1271-72: <i>ST IIa-IIae</i>, q.15.