



LYCEUM INSTITUTE SEMINAR CATALOG 2023

The Lyceum Institute’s philosophy seminars, provided four times per year—Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall—offer small groups (8-20 people) the opportunity to engage with a topic, written work, or individual thinker from the history or topics of philosophy under the guidance of a PhD. Seminars are offered to both enrolled and outside participants in a modular format: that is, Lyceum Institute members choose their own course of study, selecting each seminar individually when offered, with advice from the Executive Director. These seminars range from introductory to advanced studies across a wide range of philosophical topics.

Additionally, these seminars are priced on a model of **financial subsidiarity**: pay what you can. Those who can pay more, should, so that those who cannot pay as much, need not.

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WINTER SEMINARS

ETHICS: THE ARISTOTELIAN CONCEPTION OF VIRTUE

BRIAN KEMPLE

“...we are investigating [ethics] not in order that we might know what virtue is, but in order that we might become good”. What does it mean for a human being to be good? This, as human beings, is a question we ought to be able to answer. But even more importantly—having answered it—we ought to be able to *live* it. In bygone eras, we could perhaps rely upon or place our trust in certain authorities to answer this question for us: to look to others for answers about what it means to be good and what actions we must perform in order to become good. But such is not the case today, in which anarchy of thought has become the norm, authorities are seldom possessed of the virtue they themselves need, and individuals are given the ability to discover (but not to critically assess) what is true or false themselves.

Thus there is a great merit and benefit in studying the wisdom contained in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*: a treatise comprising ten books which details the nature of human happiness, goodness, virtue, and the struggle to attain that which fulfills our being. Aristotle—called by Thomas Aquinas “the Philosopher”—was a keen observer of many things, human beings not the least of which; to study his ethics is to study the human being as a concrete reality, and to discover truths not only about *what* a human being is, but about the *who* of the individual self.

AQUINAS' COSMOLOGICAL VISION

BRIAN KEMPLE

Read the news, turn on the television, scroll social media, and everywhere you will encounter—by every medium—a singular message: the message that we ought to make the world, the universe, and especially ourselves in our own image. To be sure, there are countless variations of this message; but its essence is the same. The roots lie centuries deep in Western soil—no later than Francis Bacon (1561–1626)—but today, the message is less often questioned, less frequently challenged, and rarely even noticed. Rather, it is taken for granted.

It is a message that views the cosmos and all within it, perhaps most especially ourselves, as raw matter to be shaped and changed according to the dictates of our fantasies and desires. It is a message provenanted by minds given over to a **background cosmological nihilism**: a nihilism not of the here and now—not of despairing about purpose in one's own life—but of the belief that there *is* purpose independent of our own volitional determination. In other words, the cosmological nihilist disbelieves that the order of the universe has any relevance for his or her life, and how it ought to be lived. This nihilism has become the unquestioned rule of the day.

In contrast is the **cosmological vision** of Thomas Aquinas: a vision which sees in the fundamental principles of the universe an ordered whole, giving governance to all its parts, and perfect in itself. In this seminar, we will examine key texts of Aquinas which illustrate this truth.

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SPRING SEMINARS

QUAESTIONES DISPUTATAE DE VERITATE, PART I

KIRK KANZELBERGER

Thomas Aquinas held his first series of disputed questions, *De veritate*, over the course of the three years of his first regency at the University of Paris, 1256-1259. He was then in his early thirties. The organization of the published disputatio reflects the “dispute” - the continual raising of questions and resolution of difficulties - between teacher and students engaged together in common, probing inquiry.

This particular series of disputations, according to his biographer Torrell, shows us “the genius of the young master... a genius in motion, perpetually in the act of discovery”. Thomas and his students were occupied with two great themes: the true and the good. Each has a transcendental character: each is a name for being itself, under the aspect of a relation to mind (truth) or to appetite (good). These two great themes yielded a total of 253 discussions (“articles”) ranged under a total of 29 areas of inquiry (“questions”).

This seminar is the first of two seminars in which we will read and discuss together a significant portion of this great work of Aquinas. The first, “Truth and Knowledge”, will explore the questions dealing with the first great theme of truth and the relation to mind, concentrating (probably) on questions 1-3, 10-11, and 14-17, though I will make some reference to intervening questions in my lectures.

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN IN FOUR BOOKS

SCOTT RANDALL PAINE

John Henry Newman, living amidst the modern world’s storms of doubt and confusion—marked by repeated but frustrated pursuits of certitude—turned from the attempts at philosophical systematization characteristic of modernity instead to the very act of faith that can lift the mind to assent to doctrines such as the Trinity. What he discovered were insights of such uncommon luminosity that not only theology, but all knowledge, of whatever type, found itself newly vindicated. In a sense, he turned epistemology upside down by showing what happens when the human mind is *also* braced and flexed by supernatural faith. The result was easily his most demanding and, in retrospect, his most revolutionary book: *The Grammar of Assent*.

Despite frequent comparisons with Augustine, the seminar’s focus will be on Newman’s four books, since the former’s thought has been folded into the fields of Christian thought for 1400 years; Newman’s, on the other hand, is just beginning to be fully appreciated. We shall read selections chosen from each of the four works in sequence—the *Apologia*, the *Essay*, the *Idea*, and the *Grammar*—and meditate on their importance for thinking about things theological—and epistemological!—in the 21st century.

SEMIOTICS: THE *TRACTATUS DE SIGNIS* OF JOHN POINSOT

BRIAN KEMPLE

What is a sign, and how does it function? It is a question which grew in importance throughout the Latin age of philosophy, and reached its culmination in arguably the last great thinker of that tradition: João Poinot, better known as John of St. Thomas—a name adopted to signify his fidelity to the great Dominican Doctor around whose thought John based his own. In a work painstakingly retrieved, edited, and translated by John Deely, John Poinot presents a systematic treatise on signs, the *Tractatus de Signis*, which answers many questions modernity had not anticipated, and which would not be revisited by a capable thinker for another 200 years (C.S. Peirce). In this seminar, we will closely and rigorously examine the entirety of this text of Poinot. It is strongly recommended that all interested parties have familiarized themselves with Thomistic Psychology and/or prior semiotics seminars before registering, as this seminar will prove quite challenging without these antecedents.

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SUMMER SEMINARS

PHENOMENOLOGY: AN INTRODUCTION

DANIEL WAGNER AND BRIAN KEMPLE

This course treats the post-modern philosophical tradition of phenomenology with a primary focus on the work of its founder, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). The course begins by reviewing the classical sense-realist epistemology of the Aristotelian tradition, and idealism of Descartes, Hume, and Kant, which sets up the historical context necessary for understanding the phenomenological movement in general. The work of the contemporary Husserian phenomenologist, Robert Sokolowski is then utilized as a via for interpreting and understanding the difficult text of Husserl. Turning to the text of Husserl itself, the course gives special attention to the phenomenological method (ἐποχή/epoche), and the concepts of transcendence and immanence, intentionality, noetic-noematic analysis, and the phenomenon of empathy as a basis for philosophical realism. Finally, a survey is given of the diversity of phenomenological approaches, with attention paid particularly to the differences of Husserl and Martin Heidegger, which survey is against the backdrop of the broader philosophical inquiries of the twentieth century and the question of twenty-first century relevance and application.

ETHICS: THE MORAL NOETIC OF THE NATURAL LAW

MATTHEW K. MINERD

Heinrich Rommen once spoke of “Die Ewige Wiederkehr Des Naturrechts,” the eternal return of the natural law. No matter how often philosophical speculation and cultural imagery casts aside the idea of “that kind of action which is fitting to the nature of human agents,” it cannot help but return—sometimes with great embarrassment—to this perennial tradition of moral philosophy. However, it has also been said, in jest, that there are as many theories of the natural law as there are booksellers. In this seminar, we will engage with some important texts of the natural law tradition and attempt to articulate the first principles of the natural law noetic: first at the level of general philosophical insight, and then in the specific nexus of thought in the Thomist Tradition. In so doing, our goal will be to provide a solid framework which overcomes the idiosyncrasies and rabbit-holes of any particular debates concerning the meaning or importance of the natural law.

POLITICS: A THOMISTIC DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACY

FRANCISCO PLAZA

In the middle of the Twentieth Century, the University of Chicago published several monumental works in political thought by authors such as Jacques Maritain, Hannah Arendt, Eric Voegelin, Leo Strauss, and Yves Simon. Out of them all, Simon’s *Philosophy of Democratic Government* remains the definitive defense of contemporary democracy on a Thomistic basis. While Maritain, as the other notable defender of Christian democracy, is remembered for providing it a philosophical “big picture,” Simon gave Christian democracy further precision while heeding Maritain’s warning to not drift too far into its particulars. For this seminar, we are proposing a detailed look at Simon’s *Philosophy of Democratic Government*, revisiting the work with the purpose of exploring how it could address the current crisis of Western democracy. We will also consider parallel readings alongside Simon, both from the Catholic, post-liberal “integralist” crowd who look beyond democracy, as well as the typical defenders of secular democracy (such as Rawls), with the aim to contrast Simon against both. It is our expectation that Simon’s defense of democracy would still provide for the Catholic today a path to work toward the rebuilding of Catholic culture, and more specifically, the formation of a genuinely Christian democratic regime.

QUAESTIONES DISPUTATAE DE VERITATE, PART II

KIRK KANZELBERGER

Thomas Aquinas held his first series of disputed questions, *De veritate*, over the course of the three years of his first regency at the University of Paris, 1256-1259. He was then in his early thirties. The organization of the published disputatio reflects the “dispute” - the continual raising of questions and resolution of difficulties - between teacher and students engaged together in common, probing inquiry.

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FALL SEMINARS

THOMISTIC PSYCHOLOGY: HABITS AND WORLD

BRIAN KEMPLE

While the essential structure for human action consists in our faculties—apprehensive and appetitive, sensitive and intellectual—it is our habits that constitute how we exist in the relational world of actual experience. But what *is* a habit? The contemporary vernacular use of the term gives only a thin resemblance to the scholastic and specifically Thomistic conception: that is, the modern notion presents habit as an unconscious and automatic reactivity. By contrast, Thomas Aquinas treats of habit as a coalescent actuality that disposes the human being well or ill, either with respect to itself or with respect to others, that is, with respect to the world; as the development of disposition; as necessary to the fulfillment of every human faculty; as grown or diminished through our action—and therefore under the ambit of our moral responsibility; and as the genus for virtues and vices alike. Most importantly (even though themselves reflexively shaped by action), our habits are the principles of our acts; not as such, but as to those acts’ manner.

Of particular importance in this seminar will be not only a consideration of habits as developing the individual, but as constituting the intersubjective reality of environment, community, and culture: of habits not only as they cause of coalescence of actuality in the human being (*secundum se*) but *between* human beings and the world (*ad aliud*).

PHENOMENOLOGY: HEIDEGGER’S METHOD, PART I

BRIAN KEMPLE

The term “phenomenology” has received a multitude of meanings over the past several centuries but today refers primarily to the loose collection of approaches initiated by Edmund Husserl with his 1900

(and revised in 1913) *Logische Untersuchungen*, or *Logical Investigations*. Yet these approaches, while all see in phenomenology something foundational about how it is that human beings know, vary widely. Prominent among them, and very frequently misunderstood, is the phenomenological approach advocated by Martin Heidegger—who, although perhaps the best-known of Husserl’s students, departs most radically from his one-time teacher.

In this seminar, we will examine the structure and practice of phenomenological method according to Heidegger principally as presented in his *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*): first by contrast with the background against which he developed it, second through his own descriptions, and third in his application of it. We will conclude with a consideration of his essay “On the Essence of Truth”, in which we will see both the value and the limitations of the method. **Part II will be offered in Winter 2024.**

PHENOMENOLOGY: THE CONTRIBUTION OF EUGEN ROSENSTOCK-HUESSY SCOTT RANDALL PAINE

One might ask what philosophical purpose there could be in studying a Jewish convert to Christianity, who spent years teaching the history of medieval jurisprudence in a university of the German Empire, was a World War I veteran (on the German side, incidentally!), hobnobbed principally with Jewish thinkers after the war, emigrated from Nazi Germany to teach in the States, was pressured to leave Harvard because he was too interdisciplinary (long before it became fashionable)—and also because, without apology, he used the naughty word “God” in his classes—and finally ended up at the small but prestigious college of Dartmouth. Until his death in 1973, he produced a vast and rather forbidding cornucopia of works, customarily ignored by the academy. No one quite knows what to do with his oeuvre, but a steady stream of highly qualified critics have lauded him as one of the most seminal thinkers of our time.

We have our systems and our manuals, but ERH¹ won’t fit into any of them. I propose to cull from his works excerpts containing the more enduring insights, and use these to discuss what he means by such topics as the “grammatical method” of understanding as a means of resisting modern reductions of reality to 3rd person “scientific” and propositional statements; the precedence of the second over the first person in our initial encounter with reality; why the prioritization of space over time has misguided modern understanding of the cosmos; how the “Cross of Reality” can serve to resituate our consciousness in a time and space that are truly human; why the origin of language lies more in formal than in informal speech; and why the ear and hearing should have preeminence over the eye and seeing in our most basic approach to the world around us. ERH is often classed among the “speech thinkers” of the last century (with Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig and Ferdinand Ebner). We will discuss what this means. Especially his understanding of history, fed by these readjustments of our sensibilities and mental attitudes, will be presented as the best way to bring all of his insights together.

¹ When referring to this author in writing, it helps to use his initials, or, as also in speaking of him, simply “Rosenstock.”