



LYCEUM INSTITUTE SEMINAR CATALOG 2024

The Lyceum Institute’s philosophy seminars, provided four times per year—Winter (Q1), Spring (Q2), Summer (Q3), and Fall (Q4)—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 (Q1)

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHICAL THINKING

BRIAN KEMPLE

What *is* philosophy? Is it something we study—as subject, like biology or literature? Is it something each of us has, individually—as in, “my personal philosophy”? Is it a relic of history? An intellectual curiosity? A means to impress at cocktail parties and on social media? The “love of wisdom”? An engagement with the very mystery of being itself?

Or perhaps—as this seminar will attempt to demonstrate—philosophy is a way of thinking relatively easy to identify but very difficult to practice. Mere description of the practice does not suffice for understanding it; one must, rather, engage in the practice itself.

This engagement requires discipline of the mind and the consistent willingness to pursue philosophy not merely as a hobby, but as a **habit**. For those who have the will, this seminar will provide the means:

namely through a schedule of carefully-selected readings and persistent dialogue—both in the seminar discussion sessions and through the Lyceum platform. The incipient practice of philosophy pursued in this seminar will not make you a philosopher; but it will engender in those who receive it thoughtfully the germ of a true **philosophical habit**, without which no one, regardless of how wide or deeply learned, can become a philosopher in fact.

PHENOMENOLOGY: HEIDEGGER'S METHOD – PART II

BRIAN KEMPLE

What is time? As Augustine once quipped, he knows perfectly well what time is—until someone asks him. Putting into words this omnipresent element of our experience proves deeply challenging. Simultaneously, questioning after its nature, frustrated as may be the results, may give us deeper insight into ourselves nonetheless. It is just this depth which we pursue in this seminar.

In the first of this two-part seminar, Heidegger's background, distinction from Husserl, and practice of the phenomenological method were examined primarily through the first division of Being and Time and selected texts. Thereby, we discovered the core elements of the phenomenological method of disclosure.

In this, the second part of the seminar, we will examine how this phenomenological method affects the concrete living person whose life is permeated by the cognitive intentionality characteristic of Dasein. This examination will be accomplished by carefully reading the second division of Being and Time and conclude with a meditation upon Heidegger's Letter on Humanism, which brings Heidegger's philosophy of Being, as conducted phenomenologically, to its "point" of perpetually inconclusive linguistic elaboration. Time and temporality will prove inseparable from our efforts at working through these questions of being and language. Although Heidegger's ruminations upon the nature of time will not satisfy every question which may be asked of it, they nevertheless will sharpen our own understanding with their probing lead.

Thus, through these eight weeks, we will take up a recapitulative (that is, summarizing and elaborating) consideration of Being and Time's first division; the question of authenticity and the coherence of life; the diverse ways in which our experience is permeated by temporality; and the aforementioned unresolved relationship between language and Being.

THINKERS: AQUINAS' *DE VERITATE* – GOOD AND FREEDOM

KIRK KANZELBERGER

Why do we call a thing "good"? We have been calling things good since childhood, but, as with any conception so fundamental, it is challenging to unfold its meaning. Given the multifarious use of this name, "good", is there even a unity of meaning to discover? Is it just that we call anything good merely because it occasions feelings of a certain kind, or is there something in things themselves that justifies calling them good?

Thomas Aquinas proposes that, indeed, the conception of the good has a central meaning – "that which is *perfective* in the manner of a final cause" – and so approves the dictum of Aristotle, that "the good is that which all seek". Affectivity is thus relevant to this central meaning of the good, but affectivity understood, in those beings that have it, as essentially correlated with real possibilities, with the relationship of a thing to *that which would perfect or fulfill it*. This is the *order to an end*, or final cause – a challenge to a reductive modern paradigm in which reality contains no real possibilities, but only "actual facts" of a mechanical kind.

In this seminar, we will follow Aquinas’s treatment of the good in questions 21-26 of his great work known as *De veritate*. Our considerations will include the metaphysics of the good, the divine will, and the human faculties that engage with the good, namely human will and the capacity for free choice, and human sensuality. We will also touch on the connections between some important passages in *De veritate* and the topic of evil.

(NOTE: A previous seminar, *De veritate I*, which considered the theme of the “true” in the same work, is in no way prerequisite to this one.)

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SPRING SEMINARS (Q2)

PHILOSOPHERS AND HISTORY

SCOTT RANDALL PAINE

Etienne Gilson claimed that the History of Philosophy serves the philosopher as laboratory experiments serve the chemist and biologist. Ideas are tested in time as reactions are tested in tubes. If this is true for philosophers, might we broaden the question and ask about the protagonists and events of history in general? After all, for any anteriority to be real, it must in some sense also be very present, lest its narration be reduced to mere gestures towards a museum of bygone curiosities. Historical memory, when made genuinely contemporaneous, unveils the extent of the pervasive mystery of human temporality, and how both past and future inhabit – and at times haunt – our every present moment.

While wary of the dangers of historicism (which would reduce reality to the trajectory of its development), the question of history must nonetheless be deeply pondered if philosophy is to gain realistic access to its native topics. By drawing on insights from a handful of historians and philosophers of history, this seminar will attempt to cultivate a robust philosophical approach to the understanding of human time and history. It should enable the student to engage fruitfully both with Biblical and Patristic notions of salvation history, but also, more polemically, with modern projects that tend to overreach themselves when dealing with the past, such as Hegelianism, Darwinian evolution, the countless incarnations of Marxism and the current enthusiasm for post-this and post-thatisms.

Although Aristotle famously denied that there can be a “science” of history, still, just as there is a logos that penetrates the cosmos synchronically (making science possible), there is also a meaning to be found in the diachronic course of the centuries. But this meaning is available only under certain constraints. We must abandon misguided ambitions of exhaustive historical “explanation,” and humbly pursue instead some measure of a far more valuable species of knowing: understanding. Instead of trying to rationalize the cool “facts” of yesteryear, we will instead approach the human story in all its warmth, drama and surprise – a story that is deeply and inalienably our story.

SEMIOTICS: AN INTRODUCTION

BRIAN KEMPLE

What is a sign? Though a seemingly simple question, and one which may receive a technically simple answer, attaining a clear understanding of signs is a task both very difficult and very important; so important, in fact, that the whole future of philosophy (and by extension, human knowledge in general) depends upon our getting the answer right. A great deal of our present difficulty, in the 21st

century, follows from several centuries' failure to attain a true semiotics. To begin rectifying this, I believe we must draw on a handful of key sources: John Poincaré, Charles Sanders Peirce, and John Deely. In this seminar, we will focus on Peirce and his unique contributions to the foundations of the discipline of semiotics proper and show how we must instantiate an understanding of signs in our day-to-day practices, both practically and theoretically.

Among the specific goals for the seminar are to understand the general theory of semiotics—as the study of the action of signs—which was founded in Charles Peirce and has since been developed; to understand the categorical basis of Peirce's thought, or his "phaneroscopy"; and to understand especially how signs play a role in human thinking.

METAPHYSICS: DISCOVERY OF *ENS INQUANTUM ENS*

BRIAN KEMPLE

What is "being", and how do we discover it? The term presents ambiguities; as Aristotle says, it is said in many ways. And as Aquinas, following Avicenna says many times over, it is the first conceived by the intellect, and that into which all other conceptions are resolved. This, too, may be taken ambiguously; and, moreover, it may be conflated and confused with *ens inquantum ens* as the subject matter of metaphysics. Indeed, resolution is said to be the mode of inquiry which belongs to the science of metaphysics most of all! Yet what this means, and in what manner one resolves, requires clarification. Thus, in this seminar, we will examine some seminal texts of Aristotle and of Thomas Aquinas himself, as well as important contributions and questions which have arisen in the Thomistic tradition, as the first of four seminars in a series on metaphysics.

The discovery of being—something implicit in all our cognitive lives, from the very first until the very last—requires a careful process of consideration. Various Thomists, over the centuries, have interpreted Aquinas' approach to the unveiling of *ens inquantum ens* and how we situate this science. No small part of the difficulty comes from the principal text in the tradition, Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Together with Aquinas' commentary, this will form the core of our reading, along with texts from Aquinas' *Super Boetium de Trinitate*, often considered one of the most important texts for understanding Aquinas' whole approach toward science.

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SUMMER SEMINARS (Q3)

CULTURE & POLITICS: A THOMISTIC DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACY

FRANCISCO PLAZA

In the middle of the Twentieth Century, the University of Chicago published several monumental works in contemporary political thought, most notably: Jacques Maritain's *Man and the State*, Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*, Leo Strauss' *Natural Right and History*, Eric Voegelin's *New Science of Politics*, and Yves Simon's *Philosophy of Democratic Government*. Out of all these great works, Simon's stands as the definitive defense of contemporary democracy on a Thomistic basis. Of course, Maritain (Simon's mentor) is likewise remembered for his own vision of a Christian democracy (a vision which Simon shares) which he also defended according to Thomistic principles. The key difference, however, between the approach of Maritain and Simon was that while Maritain's work is a faithful application of Aquinas' political thought, it does not have the same degree of care as Simon's in showing exactly

where these principles are located in the Thomistic corpus. Simon’s work, in contrast to Maritain’s own in defense of democracy, is far more systematic in approach, approximating more the scholastic style which served as the foundation for both philosophers. Thus, we propose for this seminar a detailed look at Simon’s defense of democracy (primarily through his *Philosophy of Democratic Government*), revisiting the work with the purpose of exploring how Simon’s insights can address our current era.

SCIENCE: THE *PHYSICS* OF ARISTOTLE

DANIEL WAGNER

The subject of this seminar is Aristotle’s treatment of *nature* (φύσις/*phusis*) as a *science* (ἐπιστήμη/*episteme*). By first treating the Aristotelian conception of *science* (*Posterior Analytics*), giving special attention to the logical method of *division* (διαίρεσις/*diairesis*) by which the *first principles* (ἀρχαί/*archai*) of a science are grasped as necessarily true, and then the pre-Socratic and Platonic *puzzles* or *problems* (ἀπορίαί/*aporiai*) with which the Stagyrte is primarily concerned, the student will be prepared as a proper *hearer* or *understander* (ἀκροᾶτής/*akroates*), capable of learning the *Physics ex Aristotele*. The course will carefully treat Aristotle’s scientific presentation of the subject-genus, principles, and conclusions of the science of nature in the *Physics*, considering and setting aside major objections arising in post-Humean analytic philosophy.

More Summer Seminars may be added

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FALL SEMINARS (Q4)

SCIENCE: AN EXISTENTIAL THOMISTIC NOETICS – MARITAIN’S *DEGREES OF KNOWLEDGE* AND LATE-LIFE WORKS ON EPISTEMOLOGY

MATTHEW K. MINERD

In his later writings, the French Thomist Jacques Maritain proposed the plan of articulating an “existential epistemology” which would presuppose the noetics—the cognitive operations through which human beings exercise their humanity—which are discussed in a work such as his own *Degrees of Knowledge*. This seminar will be dedicated to reading this great work, the *Degrees*, as well as Maritain’s essays concerning the “existential epistemology”, in the hopes of outlining a general program of understanding in line with Maritain’s own late-life aspirations.

METAPHYSICS: THE DOCTRINE OF ANALOGY

BRIAN KEMPLE

“Being is said in many ways”, Aristotle wrote, and to this assertion the history of philosophy has borne extensive witness. What is the being which is said in many ways? What are the many ways? How are they many, how are they one? These questions have often been asked, and answered, and yet questions of how we predicate sameness in or through differentiated multitudes remain disputed to and likely long past this present day.

For human language, in whatever particular concrete variety, has a capacity to convey all things, from the least possibility to the greatest actuality—nevertheless, imperfectly. The more removed from the objects of our common experience, the less perfectly we may convey the reality intended. Crucial to our linguistic comprise and conveyance, therefore, is the doctrine of analogy: not only this capacity, that is, but an understanding of how it is possible in the first place and precisely what it accomplishes.

In this seminar, drawing not only upon the philosophical tradition of Aristotelian-Thomism but engaging also with works in the Scotistic and Semiotic schools of thought, we will undertake to provide a coherent doctrine of analogy, taking up questions of language, of the “analogy of being”, and more besides.

SEMIOTICS: THE DIFFICULTIES OF TECHNOLOGY

GROUP SEMINAR

Progress and peril for the human future are promised by every new technological development or advance and in seemingly every new conversation, op-ed, thinkpiece, or any other words offered upon the topic. Technology will destroy us—technology will save us. But these promises, no matter how well-articulated, and amplified though they may be by alarmists and enthusiasts alike, yet produce a tone cluster wherein truth and falsity cannot be distinguished. How is it that even the seemingly accurate statements of technologists, scientists, and philosophers alike remain not only insufficient but perhaps also misleading, when it comes to questions of technology and its role in our lives? Why do we continue to miss the mark?

A deep philosophical abyss undermines even the very best technological discussions of today: an abyss caused by ignorance of both human nature and the complexities of causality. We remain trapped in a misunderstanding of technology because we have not adequately grasped its essence; we have continued to conceive it only in incomplete and superficial manners, despite—perhaps even because—of its ubiquity.

Drawing upon the insights of Martin Heidegger, Lewis Mumford, Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, and, most importantly, the traditions of Aristotelian-Thomism and Semiotics, this seminar will strive to unveil the essence of technology and thereby provide means to resolve the persistent technological difficulties which we human beings *naturally* confront.