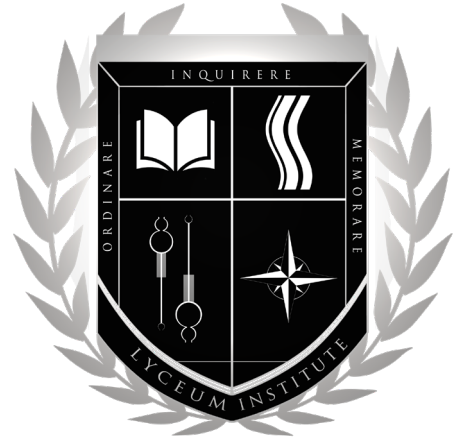


# METAPHYSICS: DISCOVERY OF *ENS* *INQUANTUM ENS*

SEMINAR SYLLABUS

[2026 Q1]



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## DESCRIPTION

What is “being”, and how do we discover it? The term presents ambiguities; as Aristotle says, “being” is said in many ways. And as St. Thomas 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 in a series on metaphysics. Through these inquiries we will strive to develop a starting point for the intellectual resolutions which affect metaphysical coherence.



This coherence proves not mere a nicety, a neat bow with which to tie up a systematic presentation of one’s ideas, but rather an integral necessity to human living. That is not to say that everyone must be a metaphysician, steeped in the scientific inquiry of being; but it is to say that human flourishing needs life to unfold within a right understanding of the metaphysical order. Today, we witness everywhere the *despair* of a metaphysical order to the cosmos, and, within that, an increasing despair over life’s rectitude. Thus, although the object of metaphysics arrives in our consciousness through contemplation, through the stillness and silence of a mind elevated above the distractions of the world, that object redounds to our efforts at rightly ordering all else in life. It is therefore eminently worthy of study, and there is no higher pursuit open to our natural human capacities.

That said, 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 and a great deal of humility. Various Thomists, over the centuries, have interpreted Aquinas’ approach to the unveiling of *ens inquantum ens* and how we situate this science. Their disputes are numerous, and though they may agree on principles, they often disagree on their application. No small part of the difficulty comes from the thorny principal text in the Thomistic tradition,

namely, Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Together with Aquinas' commentary on the same, this abstruse work of the Stagirite forms 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. Supplementing our reading will be various contributions from important Thomists—our focus will, however, remain closely upon the works of St. Thomas himself.

## METHOD

The seminar is 8 weeks long, with one recorded lecture and one discussion sessions each week. Most discussion sessions are structured around selected readings from Aristotle and 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.

It is expected that full participation in this seminar will require a minimum of **10-15+ hours per week** of reading, listening, discussing, and reviewing material.

## READING

The primary texts for this seminar are all available online, primarily from the i.348-30BC *Metaphysics* of Aristotle and Aquinas' 1270/71 [commentary](#) on it (which includes a suboptimal text of Aristotle). Preferred translations for Aristotle are that of [Joe Sachs](#) and W.D. Ross (available in the McKeon-edited [Basic Works](#)). Readings will also be taken from the 1257-59 [Super Boetium de Trinitate](#), the 1259 [De Substantiis Separatis](#), and book two of the 1259/65 [Summa contra Gentiles](#). Secondary readings, as supplemental to those primary will be *suggested* but not required, drawing upon the works of various Thomists and will be provided in PDF. It is also recommended to purchase Rudi te Velde's 2021 [Metaphysics between Experience and Transcendence: Thomas Aquinas on Metaphysics as a Science](#).

## LECTURE

Each week there will also be an audio lecture (ranging in length from 41:25 to 46:33), 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 related issues. The purpose of these lectures is to help orient students in reading and questioning the works of Aristotle and Aquinas, and to import certain fruitful considerations from the broader tradition, as well as to raise specific questions that should help structure and guide our discussion sessions.

## DISCUSSION

The heart of the seminar is the discussion session (**Saturdays 1:30pm-2:30pm ET**, officially: many sessions run longer): where all the thoughts emergent and encountered throughout the week—via the reading, lecture, and on-going textual 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.

## AUDITS OR COMPLETES

All Lyceum Institute seminar participants will be able to either *audit* the seminar or *complete* the seminar. To complete the seminar, the participant **must** submit an essay of 2000–5000 words pertaining to the key notions of metaphysics in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition. This essay may be evaluated for publication in *Reality* and will be included in each Lyceum Institute member's profile, along with the mark of auditing or completing.

## SCHEDULE

Week I  01/04–01/10	<p>The Question of Being</p> <p>Lecture 1: The Meaning of the Word</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required: Kemple: Being and Metaphysics</li> <li>• Recommended: Blanchette 2003: <i>The Philosophy of Being</i>, 3-42; Te Velde 2021: <i>Metaphysics between Experience and Transcendence (MET)</i>, 3-7.</li> </ul>
Week II  01/11–01/17	<p>Metaphysics as Wisdom</p> <p>Lecture 2: Understanding from Principles</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required: Aristotle i.348-30BC: <i>Metaphysics</i> I.1-3; Aquinas 1270/1: <i>Super Sententiam Metaphysicae</i> lib.1, lec.1-3.</li> <li>• Recommended: Ashley 2006: <i>The Way Toward Wisdom</i>, 3-21.</li> </ul>
Week III  01/18–01/24	<p>Metaphysics as Science, Part I</p> <p>Lecture 3: Discovery of Principles</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required: Aquinas c.1257-59: <i>Super Boetium de Trinitate</i>, q.5.</li> <li>• Recommended: Aristotle i.348-30BC: <i>Metaphysics</i> II.1-3; Aquinas 1270/1: <i>Super Sententiam Metaphysicae</i>, lib.2, lec.1-5; Te Velde 2021: <i>MET</i>, 21-27.</li> </ul>
Week IV  01/25–01/31	<p>Metaphysics as Science, Part II</p> <p>Lecture 4: The Mode of Intellect</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required: Aquinas c.1257-59: <i>Super Boetium de Trinitate</i>, q.6.</li> <li>• Recommended: Te Velde 2021: <i>MET</i>, 47-67; Wippel 2000: <i>The Metaphysics Thought of Thomas Aquinas</i>, 23-62.</li> </ul>
Week V	<p>Principles of Being as Being</p> <p>Lecture 5: Defining the Subject</p>

02/08–02/14	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required: Aristotle i.348–30BC: <i>Metaphysics</i> IV.1–5; Aquinas 1270/1: <i>Super Sententiam Metaphysicae</i>, lib.4, lec.1–3, 6–7, 11–13.</li> <li>• Recommended: Aristotle i.348–30BC: <i>Metaphysics</i> IV.6–8; Aquinas 1270/1: <i>Super Sententiam Metaphysicae</i>, lib.4, lec.4–5, 8–10, 14–17; Te Velde 2021: <i>MET</i>, 141–67.</li> </ul>
<p>Week VI</p> <p>02/15–02/21</p>	<p>Science of Being as Being</p> <p>Lecture 6: Demonstrating the Subject</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required: Aristotle i.348–30BC: <i>Metaphysics</i> VI.1–4; Aquinas 1270/1: <i>Super Sententiam Metaphysicae</i>, lib.6, lec.1–4.</li> <li>• Recommended: Ashley 2006: <i>The Way Toward Wisdom</i>, 132–71.</li> </ul>
<p>Week VII</p> <p>02/22–02/28</p>	<p>Being as Substance</p> <p>Lecture 7: The Centrality of Substance</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required: Aristotle i.348–30BC: <i>Metaphysics</i> VII.1–4; Aquinas 1270/1: <i>Super Sententiam Metaphysicae</i>, lib.7, lec.1–3.</li> <li>• Recommended: Blanchette 2003: <i>The Philosophy of Being</i>, 264–84.</li> </ul>
<p>Week VIII</p> <p>03/01–03/07</p>	<p>Being as Actus Essendi</p> <p>Lecture 8: Toward a Deeper Center: Existence</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required: Aquinas: <i>De substantiis separatis</i>, c.9; <i>Summa contra Gentiles</i>, c.52.</li> <li>• Recommended: Blanchette 2003: <i>The Philosophy of Being</i>, 334–64.</li> </ul>