

THOMISTIC PSYCHOLOGY: COGNITIVE LIFE

SEMINAR SYLLABUS

[FALL 2020]

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DESCRIPTION

In his 1854 *Institutes of Metaphysic*, James F. Ferrier introduced the term “epistemology” to describe the study of knowledge, and opposed it to “ontology” (a term introduced in 1606 and popularized in the 18th century by Christian Wolff) as the two main branches of philosophy. Of these two, Ferrier gave a chronological priority to the study of epistemology. As he writes: “we are scarcely in a position to say what is, unless we have at least attempted to know what is; and we are certainly not in a position to know what is, until we have thoroughly examined and resolved the question—What is the meaning of *to know*?”



This prioritizing of knowing what it means to know follows upon the severance of knowledge from being. This unnatural segregation undermines the philosophical project. In this seminar, we will take up an opposed standpoint in studying the nature of philosophical knowledge, a standpoint indicated by the title: *cognitive life*. There is no living apart from being, and, as we will show, no thinking apart from living. We cannot understand human thinking apart from the context of human life, and we cannot understand human life apart from its immersion in being—an immersion not only of its substantial existence, but also its cognitive living. Therefore, this seminar will cover the topics of the specifically **intellectual** nature of the human **soul**, the **operations of intellectual discovery**, the **formation and development of concepts**, and the **integral union of intellectual and perceptual** faculties in the human person.

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 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, primarily from the 1256-59: *Quaestiones disputatae de Veritate* and the 1266-68: *Summa theologiae, prima pars*. Supplemental texts to the primary readings will be given from the 1259/65: *Summa contra Gentiles*, the 1265: *Quaestio disputata de anima*, the 1268: *Sententia libri de anima, De sensu et sensato, De memoria et reminiscencia*, and the 1270: *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*. Additional required and supplemental readings will be provided via Teams. **Readings are subject to change.**

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 1:30-2:30pm 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

October 17	<p>The Nature of Cognitive Life</p> <p>Lecture 1: The Human as Knowing</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Primary] 1256-59: <i>DV</i>, q. 16 • [Secondary] Jacques Maritain 1949: "On Human Knowledge"
October 24	<p>Intellectual Souls</p> <p>Lecture 2: Knowing and Being</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Primary] Aquinas 1266-68: <i>ST Ia</i>, q.75-76 • [Secondary] Aquinas 1265: <i>Quaestio disputata de anima</i>, a.8
October 31	<p>Perceptual Habituation</p> <p>Lecture 3: Being towards Knowing</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Primary] 1266-68: <i>ST Ia</i>, q.77-78 • [Secondary] 1268: <i>De sensu et senato</i>, lec.2 and <i>De memoria et reminiscencia</i>
November 7	<p>Operations of Intellectual Discovery</p> <p>Lecture 4: Contact with the Universal</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Primary] 1266-68: <i>ST Ia</i>, q.79 and 1259/65: <i>SCG</i>, lib.2, c.73 and 76 • [Secondary] Kemple 2017: <i>Ens Primum Cognitum</i>, 170-215
November 14	<p>Concept Formation as Discursive Discovery</p> <p>Lecture 5: Contours of the Universal</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Primary] 1266-68: <i>ST Ia</i>, q.84-86 • [Secondary] Kemple 2017: <i>Ens Primum Cognitum</i>, 216-48
November 21	<p>Concept Elaboration as Recursive Reflection</p> <p>Lecture 6: Elaboration of the Universal</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Primary] 1256-59: <i>DV</i>, q.1, a.1-3 and q.4, a.1 and a.4 • [Secondary] 1256-59: <i>DV</i>, q.1, a.9-12 and 2017: <i>Ens Primum Cognitum</i>, 248-76
December 5	<p>Union of Intellectual and Perceptual Relations</p> <p>Lecture 7: The Act of Understanding</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Primary] 1256-59: <i>DV</i>, q.15 and 1268: <i>Sententia de libri anima</i>, lib.3, lec.12-13
December 12	<p>Habits of Cognitive Life</p> <p>Lecture 8: Habits of Understanding</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Primary] 1256-59: <i>DV</i>, q.10, a.9 and q.11.