

Aristotle Seminar II: Phenomenology and Psychology

Prof. Redemer

Course Description: This course is designed to provide a continued exploration of the philosophizing of Aristotle. Along with Plato, Aristotle is the source of the most profound thinking in the West, and because of his influence upon Saint Thomas Aquinas, uniquely influential in the thinking of the Church. In this second Aristotle Seminar we will continue to ground ourselves in his ethical system but we will also explore what modern philosophers call “Phenomenology” or “Psychology” but while it is a subject Aristotle discusses extensively and these are disciplines he shaped profoundly he had no single word to address the subject. Instead he talks about “the soul” or “sensation”. Our course will be a bit like studying grammar along with learning a language while speaking it. No one needs grammar to speak their native tongue, but a new language usually requires knowledge of grammar along with speaking. Philosophy, because of its self-reflexive nature, is always a new language, so its grammar or method cannot be neglected. Nevertheless, Ethics, Metaphysics, Phenomenology are the kinds of things we use this method to talk about; and Aristotle himself will help us to know what these subjects are and how we might talk about them.

Ethics, to Aristotle, has to do with character and virtue and their relation to human well-being or happiness. To speak of “human” well-being, however, we must discuss our nature as humans and distinguish what in us is merely conventional and cultural rather than born into us by nature. All these questions lead up to the question of our political nature and the question of justice. What is justice? What is it to be just? Is there a difference between “social justice” and justice per se? Put differently, Ethics inquires into the nature of the good, both the particular good of individuals and the common good we share between us.

Psychology or Phenomenology is a study first and foremost of what *we* are as inquirers. Philosophy is never fully abstracted from the philosopher and philosophical inquiry is never fully divorced from the all-too-human quest for self knowledge.

The class will be part lecture, part discussion seminar, depending on the particular subject matter and the disposition of the class and instructor.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course the student will be able to:

- Recognize a distinctly philosophical question.
- Ask and answer philosophical questions regarding virtue, politics, nature and being.
- Distinguish between asking “what should we do” and “who should we be” ethical questions.
- Raise the question of the good, particular goods, common good, and the good in general
- Recognize a performative contradiction, especially in relation to questions of being
- Understand the structure human perception in Aristotle’s accounting

Classroom Decorum

Philosophical inquiry is a text based, and conversation based endeavor, so you must read and converse (in the form of notes in margins or notebooks) *outside* of class with your texts, in the same way you will be expected to read and converse with your professor and fellow students *in* class.

Required texts:

The Basic Works of Aristotle, Aristotle, Modern Library Edition

The Eudemian Ethics, Aristotle, Oxford World Classics

Parva Naturalia, Aristotle, translated by Bolotin

Course Requirements: Attentive and sustained participation in class is the primary requirement. Hence no more than one unexplained absence will be tolerated. This also assumes you have done the reading before class and can be called upon any time to demonstrate you have done so. There will be a final paper for credit bearing students.

Grading: There will a final paper for credit bearing students. Your grade will be determined as follows: One third for the final paper, and one third for participation, and one third for the weekly written work.

CALENDAR

Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Discussion Topics	Reading
1	1/11	Reading Aristotle, <i>Telos</i> , & Virtue	Aristotle's <i>Eudemian Ethics</i>
2	1/18	An Exploration of the Virtues	Aristotle's <i>Eudemian Ethics</i>
3	1/25	The Natural Ends of Man	Aristotle's <i>Eudemian Ethics</i>
4	2/1	The Relation of Ethics and Politics	Aristotle's <i>Eudemian Ethics</i>

5	2/8	The Constitution of the Regime	Aristotle's <i>Politics</i>
6	2/15	What is Man	Aristotle's <i>Politics/De Anima</i>
7	2/22	Sensing	Aristotle's <i>Parva Naturalia</i>
8	3/1	Consciousness	Aristotle's <i>Parva Naturalia</i>
9	3/8	Aristotle on the ends of life	Aristotle's <i>Parva Naturalia</i>
10	3/15	The Problem of Change	Aristotle's <i>De Generation et Corruption</i>