

Introduction to Medieval Philosophy

Dale Tuggy

This course is an introduction to some of the main issues of medieval philosophy, through a careful, and critical reading of primary texts. Issues will include the following: skepticism, causation, necessity, the existence of God and alleged divine properties, the nature of time, free will, the distinction between universal and particular things, and the natures of virtue and vice.

The medieval period, like the modern, contains a number of great conversations between eminent thinkers on deep topics. As much of medieval philosophy takes as its starting points certain key texts from ancient Greek philosophy, we will begin most topics with an examination of these. Throughout, our emphasis will be on the philosophical issues rather than the history as such. An accurate, historically-informed understanding of the text is an important goal, but the ultimate goal is a philosophical evaluation of the positions espoused. Having honestly wrestled with the texts, we will find things of relevance to contemporary philosophical discussions and begin to form views of our own on the issues.

Texts:

Richard N. Bosley & Martin Tweedale, eds. *Basic Issues in Medieval Philosophy*, Broadview Press, 1997.

course packet

Lavenham, Richard. *A Tract on Future Contingents*, trans. Dale Tuggy

de Rivo, Peter. *A Quodlibetal Question on Future Contingents*. (excerpts)

Sorabji, Richard. "Tomorrow's Sea Battle: an argument from past truth"

Class Topics

Reading

UNIT I: Skepticism and Knowledge

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| 1. | Introduction | |
| 2. | Augustine on knowledge, refutation of Academic Skepticism, internal knowledge | 439-465 |
| 3. | Henry of Ghent: knowledge requires divine illumination; Siger of Brabant on sense knowledge | 465-474 |
| 4. | John Duns Scotus vs. Henry, Skepticism; Nicholas of Autrecourt on the Principle of Non-Contradiction | 475-98 |

II. Causation and Necessity

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| 5. | Aristotle on the Four Causes; Avicenna on necessary vs. contingent existence, Siger of Brabant on necessity | 3-18, 47-51 |
| 6. | Abelard: God can do only what he does do; Al-Ghazali and Averroes on the Simple First Cause | 19-39 |
| | Aquinas on necessity, divine freedom, and the will | 40-46 |
| 7. | Condemnation of 1277, Henry of Ghent on the finiteness | 52-62 |

of the past, Scotus on the First Cause

III. Is there a Greatest Possible Being?

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| 8. | Aristotle on the Prime Mover, Anselm
of Canterbury: the ontological argument | 95-104
105-7, |
| 9. | Aquinas' theistic proofs | 113-7 |
| 10. | Scotus and Ockham on infinite power | 118-136 |

IV. Is the World Eternal?

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| 11. | Aristotle and Augustine on time and motion | 139-55 |
| 12. | Al-Ghazali and Averroes: eternal dependence on God
vs. creation of the world in time | 156-77 |
| 13. | Moses Maimonides and Aquinas on the eternal dependence
thesis, | 178-206 |
| 14. | Henry of Ghent, Scotus, Ockham on eternal dependence | 201-14 |

V. Determinism, Free Will, and Foreknowledge

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| 15. | Aristotle on future contingents | 247-50,
Sorabji in
course packet |
| 16. | Boethius, Anselm, Aquinas on foreknowledge and
eternity | 251-71 |
| 17. | Scotus and Ockham on future contingents | 284-308,
Lavenham in
course packet |
| 18. | cont., Peter de Rivo on foreknowledge | course packet |

VI. Universals and Particulars

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| 19. | Plato, Aristotle and Porphyry on universals | 339-64 |
| 20. | Boethius and Garlandus Compotista: realities or mere
utterances? | 365-77 |
| 21. | Abelard and Avicenna on universals | 378-403 |
| 22. | Scotus: essences, universals and particulars | 404-18 |
| 23. | Ockham's nominalism | 419-36 |

VII. Virtue and Reason, Sin and Sex

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| 24. | Aristotle on Virtue | 501-12 |
| 25. | Augustine on the Supreme Good | 512-25 |
| 26. | Al-Ghazali on hope and fear | 536-48 |
| 27. | Abelard on sin and vice | 548-60 |
| 28. | Augustine and Aquinas on pleasure and sexual sin | 525-36,
560-76 |
| 29. | final class | |

Requirements and Grading

There are 400 possible points for the course, which break down as follows:

Required Reading	40
Discussion Section	30
Paper 1 (3 pgs)	50
Paper 2 (5 pgs)	80
Paper 3 (8-10 pgs)	100
<u>Final exam</u>	<u>100</u>
Total	400

Reading 10%

It is important that you keep up with the reading. Lectures will presuppose that you have read the material beforehand. You will be asked at the start of each class to sign a sheet indicating that you have done the required reading for that day. Everyone will be granted three free absences/failures to read without any grade penalty. If you come in late it is your responsibility to find the sheet and sign it. Skipping class equals losing reading points.

Discussion Section 8%

Required discussion sections will meet weekly eleven times, starting the second week of class. The discussion group grade covers attendance only, and everyone gets one free skip.

Exam 25%

There will be a comprehensive final exam. We will observe the reading period, during which there will be an optional review session.

Papers 58%

There will be three papers - 3 pages, 5 pages, 8-10 pages.