

PHI101 – A Thomistic Introduction to the History of Philosophy – Part I

Luca Gili, PhD (KU Leuven)

In this historical survey of philosophy, we will look at the slow discovery of the metaphysics of substance from Thales leading up to the synthesis of saint Thomas Aquinas. The course will not focus on a mere series of facts and arguments chronologically arranged, but we will be guided by the idea that there is a true philosophy, i.e. a true understanding of the world, and that this is saint Thomas' synthesis. More concretely, we will concentrate on the history of metaphysics. Saint Thomas distinguishes between being ('esse') and essence and talks about the participation of creatures into the act of being ('actus essendi'). The linguistic counterpart of this metaphysical doctrine is the analogy of being. In our historical survey, we will see that philosopher slowly came to these discoveries: first, they investigated the causes of substance (the Presocratics), second, they grasped the notion of "participation" and of substance (Plato), third, they expounded analogy (Aristotle). We will show that in the late antique period, some thinkers (including saint Athanasius) were working with the distinction between being and essence and that the Neoplatonists started seeing that the analogy is the linguistic counterpart of the doctrine of participation. In following this historical survey, the students will be discovering the philosophies of the major thinkers of the Western civilization up until saint Thomas (1225-1274).

Week 1. 2021/01/11. The beginnings of philosophy on the Ionian coast: Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes. Heraclitus

Week 2. 2021/01/18. Looking for the causes. Empedocles. Xenophanes

Week 3. 2021/01/25. The Eleatic School. Parmenides and the two paths of inquiry

Week 4. 2021/02/01. Parmenides on Being

Week 5. 2021/02/08. The Sophists on Being (Plato's *Euthydemus*)

Week 6. 2021/02/15. Socrates and the Socratic Schools.

Week 7. 2021/02/22. Plato on science (*Theaetetus*)

Week 8. 2021/03/01. What are(n't) Plato's ideas? Plato on Being and the Good (*Phaedrus*; *Sophist*; *Resp. VI*)

Week 9. 2021/03/08. Aristotle on the definition of Change. Matter and Form (*Phys. I*).

Week 10. 2021/03/15. Aristotle on Substance (*Cat.*; *Met. VII*)

Week 11. 2021/03/22. Aristotle on God (*Met. XII*)

Week 12. 2021/03/29. The objections of materialists: Epicurus on reality

Week 13. 2021/04/05. St. Athanasius on Being. Plotinus, St. Augustine and Neoplatonism

Week 14. 2021/04/12. St. Anselm and his argument. St. Thomas on Being and Essence

When ?

On Mondays from January 11 through April 12, 2021 at 21h00 Eastern Time

21h00 Eastern Time (New York/Montreal)

20h00 Central Time (Houston/Chicago)

19h00 Mountain Time (Denver)

18h00 Pacific Time (Los Angeles)

02h00 of the following day (Greenwich time: London/Lisbon)

03h00 of the following day (Western European Time: Rome/Paris/Berlin/Warsaw)

Where?

On the ZOOM platform. Meeting ID and password will be communicated to enrolled students.

Relevant texts will be provided in advance in English translation. Each session there will be a presentation of about 1 hour and 30 minutes followed by questions from the listeners. There will be no exam at the end, but students who so desire will receive a certificate of attendance. Students can write a paper on the topic of the course and they will receive detailed feedbacks on it.

Students are required to enroll by sending a donation through the “donate” button and by sending an email to luca.gili@protonmail.com to arrange for a bank transfer (preferred option, that comes with an extra 10\$ discount).

Luca Gili (PhD, KU Leuven) is an Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Quebec in Montreal (*Université du Québec à Montréal*). He has been working on the history of ancient logic, on Dante and on Thomas Aquinas. His publications include *La sillogistica di Alessandro di Afrodisia* (Hildesheim 2011), *Aristotle’s Comparative Logic* (Classical Quarterly, 2015), *Thomistic Logic in Renaissance Italy (Mediterranea, 2019)* and a chapter on Dante for the volume, *The Ten Commandments in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden 2017).