
Phil 6200

The Medieval Problem of Universals

Uris G26, TR 10.10-11.25

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Office Hours: M, 4-5, or by appt.

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Course Description

In this course, we will examine debates in the medieval period about the existence, nature and theoretical purpose of universals. The “problem” of universals was a consistent feature of medieval philosophical thought, and debates about universals led to a number of sophisticated but very different accounts of them in the medieval period. Those accounts have important implications for topics in metaphysics, of course: issues of individuation, causation and identity, for example. But it also has implications for other areas of philosophy as well: logic and language, epistemology and mind. We will make an effort to connect the debates about universals to those other areas. Our main focus will be on accounts developed in the 12th-14th centuries in the Latin West, beginning with Peter Abelard and ending with two very different accounts (those of William Ockham and Walter Burley) developed in the 14th century.

Readings

All readings will be distributed in English, with Latin editions available on request. Many readings will be made available electronically. But you should purchase the following:

- (1) Spade, Paul Vincent (tr.). 1994). *Five Texts on the Medieval Problem of Universals* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company).

Course Requirements

Presentation: You will be required to provide one 45 minute presentation at some point during this course. Presentations will begin on week 4. A sign-up sheet will be distributed during the second week of class.

Papers: A final paper, due the day of the scheduled exam, which must be at least 15 pages in length for undergraduates / 20 pages in length for graduates. A draft of this paper will be due at the start of Thanksgiving break.

	Topic	Reading(s)
Week 1	Aristotle	Categories
Week 2	Porphyry	<i>Isagoge</i>
Week 3	Augustine; Boethius	On the Teacher; On Eighty-Three Different Questions, q. 46; Second Commentary on Porphyry's <i>Isagoge</i>
Week 4	Peter Abelard	Logica 'ingredientibus' (selections)
Week 5	Peter Abelard	Logica 'ingredientibus' (selections)
Week 6	Ibn Sina; Thomas Aquinas	Commentary on the <i>Metaphysics</i> ; On Being and Essence
Week 7	Thomas Aquinas	On Being and Essence; Treatise on Human Nature
Week 8	John Duns Scotus	Ordinatio II, d., p. 1, qq. 1-2
Week 9	John Duns Scotus	Ordinatio II, d., p. 1, qq. 3-4
Week 10	John Duns Scotus	Ordinatio II, d., p. 1, qq. 5-6
Week 11	William Ockham	Ordinatio, d. 2, q. 4-5; Summa Logicae, p. 1, ch. 15
Week 12	William Ockham	Ordinatio, d. 2, q. 6; Summa Logicae, p. 1, ch. 16
Week 13	William Ockham	Ordinatio, d. 2, q. 7-8; Summa Logicae, p. 1, ch. 14
Week 14	William Ockham	Summa Logicae, p. 1, chs. 1-3, 63-69
Week 15	Walter Burley	Last Commentary on the <i>Physics</i> (selections); Last Commentary on the <i>Categories</i> (selections); On the Purity of the Art of Logic, p. 1, chs. 1-4