

## Topic 1: Decoding the Discipline



### Seminar

Seminar Participants:

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## Part I: Applying Historical Thinking Concepts to *The Philosopher*

**Instructions:** This activity will grant you and your seminar members to apply historical thinking to three primary sources. More specifically, we hope to gain a grasp of historical causation within the context of religions and religious thought. Today's primary source readings are meant to introduce to you historical causation. Consider the following questions as you read the sources below: What is Luther's opinion of Aristotle? How does it contrast with what Thomas Aquinas states of Aristotle? What is the relationship between the writings of Aristotle and the ideas of Thomas Aquinas? Why might Luther be reacting the way he does to Aristotle and Aristotelian thought?

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### **Martin Luther - *An Open Letter to The Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate* (1520)**

In this regard my advice would be that Aristotle's *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *On the Soul*, *Ethics*, which have hitherto been thought his best books, should be altogether discarded, together with all the rest of his books which boast of treating the things of nature, although nothing can be learned from the either of the things of nature or the things of the Spirit. Moreover no one has so far understood his meaning, and many souls have been burdened with profitless labor and study, at the cost of much precious time. I venture to say that any potter has more knowledge of nature than is written in these books. It grieves me to the heart that this damned, conceited, rascally heathen has with his false words deluded and made fools of so many of the best Christians. God has sent him as a plague upon us for our sins.

### **Thomas Aquinas – *Summa Contra Gentiles* (1264)**

#### CHAPTER XIII--Reasons in Proof of the Existence of God

We will put first the reasons by which Aristotle proceeds to prove the existence of God from the consideration of motion as follows.

Everything that is in motion is put and kept in motion by some other thing. It is evident to sense that there are beings in motion. A thing is in motion because something else puts and keeps it in motion. That mover therefore either is itself in motion or not. If it is not in motion, our point is gained which we proposed to prove, namely, that we must posit something which moves other things without being itself in motion, and this we call God. But if the mover is itself in motion, then it is moved by some other mover. Either then we have to go on to infinity, or we must come to some mover which is motionless; but it is impossible to go on to infinity, therefore we must



## Part III: Revisiting Historical Thinking

**Instructions:** Check off the aspects of historical thinking (threshold concepts) you have used in this assignment and briefly note how you applied them.

| <i>Threshold Concept – Historical Thinking</i>   | <i>Application</i> |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Applying Historical Perspective<br><br><i>“The ability to connect historical developments to specific circumstances in time and place, and to broader regional, national or global processes.”</i>  |                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding Chronological Reasoning<br><br><i>“The ability to describe, analyze, evaluate and construct models of historical periodization that historians use to categorize events into discrete blocks and to identify turning points.”</i>   |                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Identifying Continuity and Change<br><br><i>“The ability to recognize, analyze and evaluate the dynamics of historical continuity and change over periods of time of varying lengths.”</i>  |                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Analyzing Cause and Consequence<br><br><i>“The ability to identify, analyze and evaluate multiple cause-and-effect relationships in a historical context, distinguishing between the long-term and proximate.”</i>  |                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Establishing Historical Significance<br><br><i>“The capacity to extract useful information, make supportable inferences and draw appropriate conclusions from historical evidence.”</i><br><br><i>“The ability to arrive at meaningful and persuasive understandings of the past by applying all the other historical thinking skills.”</i> |                    |