

# RETHINKING HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS: FAMILY, SOCIETY AND STATE BEYOND THE MYTH OF “NEUTRAL” PUBLIC SPACE

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## I. DESCRIPTION

The aim of this course will be to focus on the category of the “political” beyond the limits imposed upon it by a secular understanding of human life. From an Aristotelian and Thomistic perspective we will explore the implications of the relational nature of human beings, thereby envisaging perspectives able to overcome the myth of a “neutral” public space, that is, a political realm ruled by bureaucracy and laws that are putatively “neutral” because governed by “impersonal” procedures. The latter pretends to be the unique instrument able to guarantee peace especially within a multicultural society. The possibility to reflect together on the common good is disqualified from that space, since it is understood as a treat to neutrality that risks provoking conflicts based on contrasting views of the good. Social life has been thus absorbed within the realm of the “political,” conceived as sheer power (rather than a dimension of life in which human beings fulfill their relational nature); and this up to the point at which different forms of human association, capable of gathering together various families for the sake of the common good, have been cancelled or absorbed within the dominion of the “political.”

This forgoing view of social life, it will be seen, is not the result of a “neutral” historical process, nor simply of secularization intended as a progressive loss of faith in western societies; on the contrary it is the result of a political project with deep roots in the field of theology and philosophy that needs to be challenged. Rather than considering such a challenge as in “opposition” to the world in which we live, we will attempt in this course to think about this challenge as a means of discovery of the real meaning of familiar and social relationships from the inside of our daily experience. Only by living them in a fascinating way we will be able to invite others to take part to this adventure.

## II. CONTENTS

- The relational nature of human beings: identity and recognition
- ‘Public’ and ‘private’ spheres: overcoming the myth of a “neutral” public space
- The good beyond the norms
- Freedom as access to truth: retrieving human relationships from the inside of human experience

## III. METHODOLOGY

Seminar discussion

## IV. EVALUATION

Participation in the discussion