

Foundations of Virtue: Aristotle & Aquinas

Summer 2022

Davenant Hall

July 4 – August 26

Thursdays from 10am–12:30pm EST ([Zoom Link](#)) **Passcode: 798183**

Course Description

Modern moral philosophy and theology have been fractured since the Enlightenment. The contemporary virtue ethics movement rightly points to virtue as the proper focus of ethics, but is usually just as fractured and individualistic as other theories, often intentionally distancing itself from its own rich tradition. Part of the problem is divorcing ethics from the natural essences of what things are. It is time to recover the Aristotelian tradition appropriated and developed by Christians throughout history, most notably Thomas Aquinas. This is an ethic rooted in the natural law, how God designed humans to function and reflect his character. Ethics is based on physics. What things are determines what they ought to do.

We will first form a foundation in the natural law with short excerpts from various works of Plato and Aristotle. Next, we'll delve into an analysis of key texts in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Next, we will study Aquinas's explanations of the natural law, happiness, the beatific vision, and virtue in his *Summa Theologiae* with some short excerpts from other works.

This course will be followed by a later course on **Reforming Virtue: Vermigli & Edwards**.

Syllabus Note

The master syllabus is an online Google Doc that will reflect live updates when changes are announced to the students. For the Google Doc, go to www.tljacobs.com. To be clear, this means that the syllabus is subject to minor changes as the instructor sees fit. If changes are made, it will be to make things easier & announcements to students will be given with plenty of advanced notice.

Required Texts

Other editions are permissible, but they must have **line numbers**. Some other excerpts will be included in the readings that are also present in the books below or may be obtained from the instructor.

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross

- [The Basic Works of Aristotle](#)
- [Complete Works of Aristotle, vol. 2](#)
- [Perseus \(Greek & English\)](#)

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*

- Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Benziger Bros, 1947), (Latin & English), found at isidore.co/aquinas or aquinas.cc/la/en/~ST.I or Aquinas Institute.2012.



Requirements (For-Credit Students Only)



Readings

Each week, read the texts listed on the course calendar before the meeting.



Attendance^{5%}

Attendance is required. To allow for maximum participation, meeting times will be established at the start of the course and I will update the **first page of the syllabus** to display the time.



Discussion Questions^{15%}

Each week, submit 5 thoughtful questions based on the readings. Questions must be submitted by the end of the day two days before our meeting to give me a full day to read them, though I will not usually be able to read all of them. Submit on Google Classroom.



Outlines^{40%}

For each reading, create a detailed outline of the numbered sections/chapters. Clearly mention essential points of every numbered section, article, or chapter. Include important quotes. This outline can be as extensive or comprehensive as you like, may include notes, relevant excerpts from other works, etc. **The goal** is to produce a reference for your own later use

1. Submit a rough draft before our second meeting, so I can give early feedback. This is not for a grade. Submit on Google Classroom.
2. Submit all outlines in a single .DOCX, .PDF, or Google Doc link by the Friday of the final week for a grade. Submit on Google Classroom.

The purpose is to create a quick reference resource that you will use far into the future. Make it your own, and make it useful to yourself. Don't include so much you drown out the essentials. Don't be so minimalist that you always have to refer back to the text. I have found this to be one of the most useful tools I myself learned from grad school. Here is a [recent example](#) or [another \(which also includes sample exam questions\)](#).



Oral Exam^{40%}

Each student will schedule a 15–30 minute oral exam for the last week of the course covering essential points of the course. In order to score 100%, students must correctly explain 10 of 12 answers to questions. The format will be conversational, and I will try to discover what you remember rather than asking “gotcha” or “what’s in my pocket” trick questions. More details will be given in class.

Scheduling: Please email me within the first two weeks of the course to begin setting up a time.



Auditing

Assignments are not required, but I encourage you to keep an outline of notes for your own use anyway. Auditors do not need to attend class live, but can participate by watching recordings and joining the online discussion on Zoom. If you had hoped to take the course for credit, but the time does not work for you, you can switch to auditing or switch to another course with a time which works for you. Students are always entitled to a full refund if the chosen time does not work for them as well. Please email Lynette Hughes at registrar@davenportinstitute.org with any changes, requests, or questions.

Course Calendar



Meeting



Readings

I. Aristotle

THURSDAY

JULY

7

1. Foundations

- 1.1. Aristotle, *Categories* 1–5.
- 1.2. Aristotle, *Topics* I.4–5, 8–9.
- 1.3. Porphyry, *Introduction* [or *Isagoge*] to the *Logical Categories of Aristotle*, I–IX. ([Click here](#)).
- 1.4. **Of “Nature”**: Aristotle, *Physics* II.1, 8 (192b9–193b21; 198b10–199a19)
- 1.5. **Four Causes**: Aristotle, *Physics* II.3 (194b16–195a3) & *Metaphysics* I.3 (98.3a24–b5).
- 1.6. Aristotle, *De Anima* (*On the Soul*) II.1.

Resources

- Aristotle's Logic: Categories & Porphyry's Tree (Organon, Part 1)
(It may be more helpful to watch this before reading the texts).
- Handout - Porphyry's Tree (Kreeft)
- Handout - Transcendentals & Categories
- Aristotelian-Thomistic Psychology
- Handout - Thomistic Psychology

Book Recommendations

- [Ed Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*](#)
- [John Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*](#)
- [Steven Jensen, *The Human Person: A Beginner's Thomistic Psychology*](#)
- [Steven Jensen, *Living the Good Life: A Beginner's Thomistic Ethics*](#)

*NOTE: The goal for this week is to lay a foundation for the natural law. It is sufficient to observe the main point of each of these readings by **skimming** as we will not be dissecting details.

THURSDAY

JULY

14

2. The Good for Man, Virtue, Contemplation, The Common Good

- 2.1. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I.
- 2.2. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book X.
- 2.3. *Politics* I.1–2, III.9

Resources:

- Aristotle - Ethics - Osborne Questions Outline.pdf
- Aristotle's Politics

Outline Rough Draft: Submit for feedback.

FRIDAY

JULY

22

3. Moral Virtue

- 3.1. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II.1 – III.5; V.8–9 (**updated**)

Resources

- Aristotle on Virtue

UPDATED

Reschedule? I will be traveling this week. Please see survey on Google Calendar for substitute/reschedule options.

THURSDAY

JULY

28

4. Intellectual Virtue; Continence; Friendship

- 4.1. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI; VII.1–3, 8–10; VIII.1–4, 8; IX.3–4, 8–12. (**updated**)

II. Thomas Aquinas

THURSDAY

AUGUST

4

5. Man's Last End

- 5.1. [Summa Theologica](#) (ST) I-II.1–7, 18.

Note: *Summa Theologica* is divided into four parts: “First Part” (I), “First Part of the Second Part” (I-II), “Second Part of the Second Part” (II-II), and “Third Part” (III). Each part is divided into questions. Each question is divided into articles. Here is an alternate way of saying the above assigned reading:

- ST Ia-IIae, q. 1–7, 18. (This means, read all articles in questions 1–7 and question 18).

THURSDAY



AUGUST

11

6. Virtue

- 6.1. [ST](#) I-II.55–67.

Resources:

-  Thomas Aquinas on Happiness & Virtue
-  Handout - Thomistic Psychology

THURSDAY

AUGUST

18

7. Natural Law & Conscience

- 7.1. The Essence & Kinds of Law: [ST](#) I-II.90–95.
7.2. Conscience: ST I-II.19.5–6;
7.3. [De Veritate](#) 16–17 OR [ST](#) I.79.12–13.

- Optional but Recommended:

[Tim Jacobs, “The Erring Conscience: Aquinas on Freedom of Conscience in Pluralistic Society.” *Lex Naturalis: A Journal of Natural Law* 5 \(Fall 2020\): 23–42.](#)


SIGN UP FOR ORAL EXAMS:  DI-2022SU - Virtue - Oral Exam Signups

THURSDAY

AUGUST

25

8. Will & Free Will

- 8.1. Will & Free Will ([ST](#) I.82–83; [De Veritate](#) 24)
8.2. Video:  Thomas Aquinas on Free Will

Review.

Outline: Submit by Friday.

[Student Feedback Survey](#) ← PLEASE!

[Davenant Feedback Survey](#)