

**First Paper Assignment**

Your task is to write a paper of 5-7 pages on one of the prompts below. Your paper should be typed, double spaced, and submitted to Brightspace in .pdf form before midnight on Sept.22<sup>nd</sup>.

Option 1: Perfect and Imperfect Happiness

In STh I-II q.1-5, Aquinas refers to the possibility of both a “perfect” and an “imperfect” happiness. Through a careful reading of the text, explain how—according to Aquinas—what “perfect” and “imperfect” happiness are and how they differ. Make sure you address not only what each kind of happiness “is” but also how they differ: what are the prerequisites of each? To what extent does each depend on “external” goods such as wealth, family, friends, etc.? To what extent is each attainable in the present life? Finally, how, if at all, are imperfect and perfect happiness related? Would Aquinas think it possible for someone to achieve imperfect happiness but not perfect happiness, or perfect happiness without ever achieving imperfect happiness? Please choose a specific example to make the case for whatever answer you give.

Option 2: Natural Law

In her essay, “Virtue Ethics: What Kind of Naturalism,” Julia Annas writes:

*“since we are social animals, we will evaluate ourselves on the way in which, and the degree to which, our make up is fitted to serve...(a) our individual survival, (b) the continuance of our species, (c) our characteristic freedom from pain and characteristic enjoyment, and (d) the good functioning of our social group—in the ways characteristic of our species....But, because we are rational animals, we flourish in a way different from other social animals, in a way which involves our use of reason...and this makes a very large difference...Our conceptions of what it is to live a good life are not just given by the way that biology has left us able to achieve our four ends. One striking example of this is that it does seem to be the message of biology that men are by and large more aggressive than women, and that women bear the brunt of reproduction; but this does not land us with having to think that this must be the way the good life for men and for women has to go. This is because we can, and do, transform our conceptions of the good life for men and for women in light of rational considerations, of what we have good reason to do, and ways of thinking about our lives that we have reason to go for.”*

There are clear (and non-accidental) similarities between Annas’s “four ends” and the “precepts” of the natural law described by Aquinas. Would Aquinas also agree with Annas’s conclusion regarding how our rationality transforms our pursuit of those ends? Why or why not? (Note that it will be impossible to answer this question without carefully explaining what Aquinas thinks the precepts of the natural law are, including how they arise/are present in us and what they are ordered to.

(see next page)

Regardless of which prompt you choose:

- **Mark your paper only with your SID#: *do not put your name anywhere on the paper.*** Your paper must be submitted via Brightspace (so that it can be evaluated by TurinIntIn) and must be in .pdf format.
- Make sure you devote a paragraph to your introduction and a paragraph to your conclusion. A good introduction should tell me what position your paper will try to establish (this will be your thesis statement) and the bare details of how you will go about trying to establish that position. A successful introduction will be succinct. An introduction of a page or longer is too long. A good conclusion will tell me what you believe you have shown in the paper. As with the introduction, your conclusion should be clearly separated from the rest of your paper.
- Pay attention to organization: does each paragraph have a clear role in the broader paper? Does each paragraph have a topic sentence? Is there a clear transition from one paragraph to the next?
- Pay attention to style and mechanics. Read your paper aloud, and/or ask someone to read it. Your explanation and argument should be such that it can be easily comprehended by an intelligent person who is not a member of our class. If someone reads it and says “I’m sure it’s great but philosophy is not my thing,” then you need to go back to the drawing board.
- Each prompt asks you to examine and/or explain some portions of text and to use that examination and/or explanation to answer a question. You are asked to offer an opinion, but the opinion you offer should reflect a conclusion drawn on the basis of your exposition of the text, and the bulk of the paper should consist in that exposition.
- Cite the text! As a general rule, any claim you make about what the text says, whether you are quoting it or restating it in your own words, needs to be cited. When citing, include the margin #, if there is one, or chapter, section, and page if there is not. When citing Aquinas cite the text (here, STh I-II) followed by question, article, and location within article (objection, sed contra, body, reply to an objection, etc). You do not have to use a particular style, but you should use *something* and you should use it continuously throughout your paper.
- You should not need to consult outside sources for this paper, and doing so is not recommended.