

Natural Law – The role of Virtues and Goods in supporting moral behaviour

By the end of this lesson you will have:

- Understood what is meant by interior and exterior acts
- Considered how this links to the deontological nature of natural law
- Considered the extent to which interior and exterior acts work in today's society



Spec Check

AO1

Aquinas' Natural Law - the role of virtues and goods in supporting moral behaviour:

The need for humans to be more God-like by developing the three revealed virtues (faith, hope and charity) and four cardinal virtues (fortitude, temperance, prudence and justice). Aquinas' definition of different types of acts and goods: internal acts (the intention of the moral agent when carrying out an action) and external acts (the actions of a moral agent); real goods (correctly reasoned goods that help the moral agent achieve their telos) and apparent goods (wrongly reasoned goods that don't help the moral agent achieve their God given purpose).

AO2

- The degree to which laws should be influenced by Aquinas' natural law
- The extent to which the absolutist or deontological nature of Aquinas' natural law works in contemporary society
- The strengths and weaknesses of natural law
- A consideration of whether Aquinas' natural law promotes injustice
- The effectiveness of Aquinas' natural law in dealing with ethical issues
- The extent to which Aquinas' natural law is meaningless without a belief in God

Starter – Speak it out

- With your partner, time how long you can talk about a concept from the list below. Then, let your partner choose another concept and time then – who can speak for the longest?
- **Aristotle**
- **Efficient/final cause**
- **Aquinas**
- **Reason**
- **Primary/secondary precepts**
- **4 levels of law**



The need for humans to be more God like through the virtues

- Aquinas believed that all humans should practice the **cardinal virtues**
- Cardinal is from the latin word 'cardo' meaning 'hinge', therefore these are traits which should hinge upon people's behaviour
- **Cardinal Virtues – accessed through the use of reason:**
- **Prudence – The quality of being cautious**
- **Justice – The quality of being fair**
- **Temperance – The quality of being able to judge rationally between actions**
- **Courage – The quality of being brave**
- **Revealed virtues – accessed through reading holy scripture:**
- **Faith, Hope, Charity**
- People must be diffused by the Divine law to achieve these (i.e. found in the Bible)

Internal and External Acts

- Acting in a good way for the wrong reason is to perform a good exterior act but a bad interior act.
- To help an elderly lady cross the road (**good external act**) to impress someone (**bad internal act**) is wrong.
- It should be done out of charity and not for the sake of admiration for others.
- *Write your own example*



Internal and External Acts

- Good intentions don't always lead to good actions.
- If I steal money (**external act**) to give it to a friend (**internal act**), the theft isn't made good by my intention to help my friend.
- *Write your own example.*
- The only end that Aquinas values is God.



Internal and External Acts

- Aquinas believes that acts are intrinsically good or bad (good or bad in themselves) because when human beings act in accordance with their ultimate purpose, God is glorified.
- The act of helping the elderly lady across the road is good in and of itself, because it accords with the true human nature and in accordance with their final purpose, and that glorifies God.
- This demonstrates Aquinas' **deontological** approach to Natural Law. *Explain how*

The principle of double effect

- This is where there is a good intention, a good action AND a bad action too
- For example, a doctor wants to end a man's suffering so he prescribes him a NON-LETHAL dose of pain killer
- The patient is relieved from their suffering for a while, but then unexpectedly dies
- The doctor wouldn't be to blame
- [Conrad Murray and Michael Jackson Trial](#)

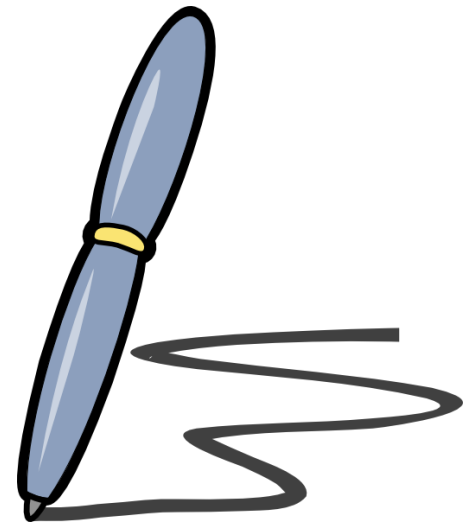
Internal and External Acts

- Try and think of your own examples of interior acts and exterior acts
- What examples of actions can you think of that would be pleasing to God?
- What examples of actions can you think of that would NOT be pleasing to God?



Skill Practise: Essay Planning

- Write a paragraph on Internal and External Acts
- **Include these key words:**
- Deontology
- Truly pleasing to God
- Intention
- Intrinsic



How might these people's actions be seen as 'good'?



Real and Apparent Goods

- Human nature is essentially good because there is Natural Law in everyone.
- Why does Aquinas argue that we would never knowingly pursue evil?
- We are naturally inclined to do good and avoid evil in order to reach the highest good and fulfil our purpose.
- How do we know what is 'good' / how to act?
- REASON

Real and Apparent Goods

- Apparent good = Thinking something is good when it isn't really! Taking us further away from what God intended for us.
- How might this happen?
- **Misguided reason. E.g. The adulterer thinks s/he's in love and it is a good thing to do!**
- Real good = the right use of reason, leading to action that leads us towards perfection.

Real and Apparent Goods

- Apparent good example: Breivik carried out the shootings in Norway because he believed that the governing Labour Party was promoting multiculturalism and thus endangering Norway's identity. He argued that Muslims were destroying European society.
- Apparent goods = SIN!
- What is sin?
- Being less than God intended us to be – seeking apparent good rather than real good.

Re-Cap

- Key words (deontological, absolutist, objective)
- Reason
- 4 levels of law
- 5 primary precepts and secondary precepts
- 4 cardinal virtues and 3 revealed virtues
- Internal and external acts
- Real and apparent goods

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