

1. Introduction

Central to the work of Aristotle and other great philosophers, the "good life" (known as Eudaimonia in Greek) is one of the most fundamental aspects of humanity's search for meaning. A life of authentic happiness, the good life entails not only self-fulfillment but also virtue and purpose. It is, in other words, the ultimate end towards which we strive.

Now, you can explore the good life in the Catholic tradition. Goodness relies upon living for God, who has inscribed His law in the human heart and revealed Himself in history. By reflecting upon the good life, you'll deepen your friendship with God, strengthen your relationships with others, and find greater personal purpose.

Following an introduction to the good life in philosophy and theology, you'll explore how the Trinity imbues life with rich meaning. Next, you will explore your friendship with God and your call to holiness. You'll then reflect upon conscience and how it helps us discern between good and evil.

You'll also turn to scripture, learning how the Ten Commandments and Beatitudes provide blueprints for the good life. After an in-depth study of the cardinal and theological virtues, you'll see how prayer can help you overcome evil and how living in the Spirit leads to happiness. Finally, you'll explore the concept of theosis, which immerses us in the threefold path of purification, illumination, and transforming union.

By learning about the good life, you will embark on an infinite journey into the mystery of God's love. As you do so, you will move into ever-deepening realities for all eternity.

Lecture 1. Introduction to the Good Life: How we understand "The Good Life" depends on the tradition from which we speak. Traditions provide the context within which rational discourse can take place. The Catholic tradition affirms that we were created to be happy. It affirms the reality of God and recognizes Him as Goodness itself. God creates, redeems, sanctifies, and wishes us to share in His creative, redemptive, and sanctifying action.

I. Introduction: What is the Good Life?

- Aristotle's Definition: Eudaimonia (Nicomachean Ethics, Book 1)
- The Good Life: What Makes Man Happy
- That Beyond Which Nothing More Can Be Desired
- The Best Possible Life for a Human Being.

There are various interpretations of the good life that should be examined.

1. Aristotle: Pleasure, Utility, Virtue

2. Thomas Aquinas examines the question in depth (Summa theologiae):

(i) Wealth?

(ii) Honors?

(iii) Fame or Glory?

)

(iv) Power?

(v) Any Bodily Good?

(vi) Pleasure?

(vii) Some Good of the

) Soul?

Any Created Good?

The Vision of the Divine Essence (ST I-II, q. 3, a. 8, resp.).

Visio Dei: Objective Good (God's Vision of Us)

Visio Dei: Subjective Good (Beatific Vision)

3. Narrative Presuppositions

- Existence of the Transcendent
- Humanity's Capacity to Receive It
- Humanity's Capacity to Be Filled by It
- Humanity's Capacity to Rest in It

II. Narrative: What is meant by "The Good Life" depends on the narrative from which we speak: What is man? Man is a story-telling animal. Stories Are Passed On: The Role of Tradition. Rational Discourse on the Good Takes Place in the Context of Tradition. Tradition is "the living voices of the dead, not the dead voices of the living" (Jaroslav Pelikan, The Vindication of Tradition)

The Question Is: To Which Tradition Do You Belong? The Failure of the Enlightenment Project (Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory). Liberal Faith in Progress. Optimism as a Cover for Despair. Our Fragmented World. A World without a View

The Power of Aristotelian Philosophy in pre-Modern Thought (MacIntyre, After Virtue, p. 118). The most powerful of pre-modern modes of thought. A focus on the life of virtue. To embrace a life of virtue is to embrace the Good Life.

Thomas Aquinas's Aristotelian-Augustinian Synthesis. The Church adopts no single philosophical/theological system, (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, Veritatis Splendor, 1993, no. 29) He Adapts Aristotle's vision. He Baptizes it, Giving it a Christian Standpoint. The Philosophical Basis of the Christian Narrative. The Narrative Presupposed Here: The Catholic Narrative

III. The Catholic Narrative: A Narrative of Mysteries - A Story Can Be True or Fictional. Humanity's Primal Sin: The Reality of the Fall. The Christ Story is True: A Myth Become Fact (C.S. Lewis)

- Christ Entered Our World (Mystery of the Incarnation)
- Christ Gave of Himself Completely to the Point of Dying for Us (Mysteries of His Public Life and Passion and Death)
- To Become a Source of Nourishment for Us (Mystery of the Eucharist)
- And to Become a Source of Hope (Mystery of the Resurrection).
- Continuation of His Narrative Through the Members of his Body (Mystery of the Church and the Sacraments)

IV. The Good in the Catholic Narrative: Some Presuppositions

Objective vs. Subjective Reality. Danger of Emotivism. The Theology that Ethical Statements Do Not Represent Propositions but Emotional Attitudes. Emotions, Not Reason, Determine Ethical Content.

Danger of Relativism. Everything is Subjective. The Denial of Any Objective Truth. Beware of the Dictatorship of Relativism (Benedict XVI)

The Reality of God: God is Existence. God and the Transcendentals: One, True, Good, Beautiful. God Is Personal and Trans-Personal - More Than Personal God is Love: God's Love Is Self-Diffusive (Pseudo-Dionysius) God Creates: Nature/Supernature (The Creature/Creator Distinction); Exitus/Reditus (The Going Forth and Return); How God Creates Is Another Matter; Science/Scientism; God Created Man in His Image and Likeness; Man is Capax Dei ("Capable of God") God is Man's Ultimate End, Man's Ultimate Good; God Redeems: Goodness of Creation. Man's Fall from Original Grace. Repercussions for Man: Weakness of Mind, Will, Passions, Body; Redeeming Mission of the Son; God Sanctifies: Gift of the Spirit; Gift of the Church; "Grace Perfects Nature"; Process of Divinization {theosis}

V. Conclusion: Why Be Good? The Simple Answer: Because God Is Good and He Created Us for that Purpose: He Allows Us to Share in His Creative,

Redeeming, and Sanctifying Activity; It's Not Simply a Matter of Following the Commandments We Live the Moral Life as a Response to God's Love (i) It's Our Way of Reciprocating God's Love. It's Our Way of Expressing Our Intimacy with God.

The Commandments Are Not Impossible; We Cannot Fulfill Them on Our Own But with God All Things Are Possible (Mark 10:27); With the Grace of God All Things Are Possible; "With Him Is Plentiful Redemption"

Living the Moral Life Testifies to Our Love of God. It Is a Type of Martyrdom It Represents A Dying to Self; It Shows That We Have An Undivided Heart: It is How We Focus On the One Thing That Matters.

Reflection Questions

1. How does the Catholic tradition approach questions concerning the Good Life?
2. What does the Catholic narrative say about living the Good Life?
3. Why should we be good?