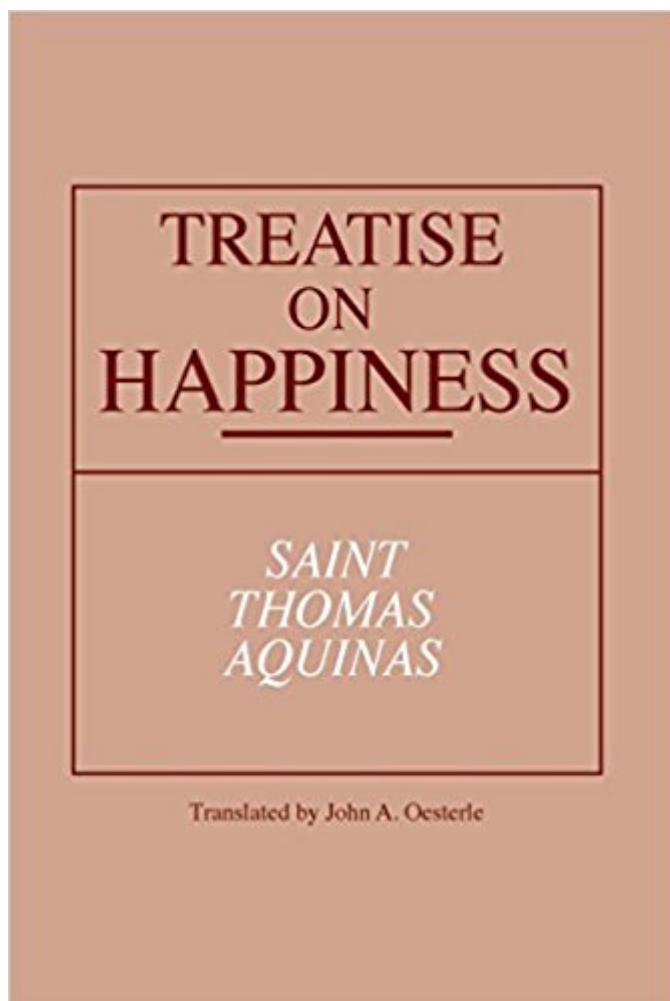


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# Treatise On Happiness (ND Series In Great Books)



## **Synopsis**

The Treatise on Happiness and the accompanying Treatise on Human Acts comprise the first twenty-one questions of I-II of the Summa Theologiae. From his careful consideration of what true happiness is, to his comprehensive discussion of how it can be attained, St. Thomas Aquinas offers a challenging and classic statement of the goals of human life, both ultimate and proximate. This translation presents in accurate, consistent, contemporary English the great Christian thinker's enduring contributions on the subject of man's happiness.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"The translation is lucid and the notes concise and helpful. . . ." -- Church and Synagogue Libraries, May/June 1985 "[T]he excellent translations go far towards capturing . . . St. Thomas' Latin prose: laconic and condensed, but always clear and orderly. . . ." -- Faith and Reason, April 1986

Text: English, Latin (translation) --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Decent version of classic Aquinas works for courses.

Clean book, quick delivery

Aquinas' "Treatise on Happiness", comprising the first 21 questions of the "Summa Theologicae", is

one of the greatest pieces of philosophy. The essence of the questions is the notion that happiness must be found in "a vision of the divine essence", namely, God. While I am skeptical of religious belief, I do find Aquinas' arguments intriguing. The object of happiness, he argues, is to no longer have desires, i.e., one's intellectual and willful curiosity is fulfilled. Because of this, one is not satisfied in merely knowing something, he argues, but in also knowing the cause. Therefore, even if one does know God exists, he states, one cannot be happy without knowing the cause of God. This can only be achieved through unity with God, most likely after death. It's a somewhat grim realisation for those hoping to achieve inner peace within their lifetimes, but a very fascinating and transcendentally Christian one. Aquinas, of course, is best known for his fusing of the philosophy of the Greek rationalists, namely Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, with that of the Christian spiritualists, including Augustine. The "Treatise" is worth reading simply for this fact- that the fundamental system of Western education is based upon the fusion of rationality and spirituality, as first pioneered by Aquinas. The object, to achieve "imperfect", or earthly, happiness, and then attempt "perfect" transcendent happiness, has such import in Western culture that understanding the history of Europe and the West is contingent on a comprehension of Aquinas' theories.

Thomas' Summa theologiae is divided into three parts:I God; creationII la happiness (5 quaestiones) ; virtues and vices IIa specific virtues and vices; moral mattersIII The Incarnate WordThe Treatise on Happiness consists in 5 quaestiones found in the prima secundae:1)The Ultimate End of Man in General ( 8 articles)There must be an end, because to go on forever is a logical impossibility. There can only be one ultimate end; other ends are complementary of that final end (Mt 6:24: "No one can serve two masters"). There is one end that is common to all men: happiness (p.13)2)In What Does Happiness Consist? (8 articles)Can it consist in: Wealth,Power,Honors,Health,Glory,Pleasure or Eudaimonia? NO, since these things bestow only imperfect happiness. (p.38)"Man is not to be loved for his own sake, but whatever is in man is to be loved for the sake of God." (p.24)3)What Is Happiness? (8 articles)Happiness is an activity that resides in the agent. It consists in uniting the will of man to God in one continuous, everlasting activity; in knowing God, which is an act of the intellect (not of the will); in seeing God (p.39) (Wis 8:16)4)What is Required for Happiness? (8 articles)Vision, understanding, rectitude of the will: "Blessed are the pure of heart for they will see God" (Mt 5:8); "Strive for that holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb 12:14)There is no enjoyment in the possession of a good without someone to share it (Seneca, EP 6)5)The Attainment of Happiness (8 articles)There are different degrees of happiness in heaven (p.56)We cannot be perfectly happy in this life, but imperfectly

happy, by knowing and loving God (this is a participatory, not essential happiness) We cannot attain happiness by our natural powers.

With so much emphasis placed on "success" today, this treatise is a welcome response. Many people seem to conduct their lives with a personal agenda that is aimed only at success. Should they fail to succeed, they fear they will fail at life. This fear makes it nearly impossible for them to journey beyond mere needs to discover what they want. Aquinas' more ordered thought allows us to see that it is truly the pursuit of happiness that is the God-given right. By pursuing happiness as treated in this book, the truest success may be accomplished. The common sense of this book's approach to happiness can not be overestimated. Highly recommended.

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