

NEW STUDIES IN ETHICS

AQUINAS AND NATURAL LAW

Aquinas and Natural Law

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Considerate la vostra semenza:
fatti non foste a viver come bruti
ma per seguir virtute e conoscenza.

Dante, *Inferno* (Canto 26)

(Reflect on your origins. You were not
made to live like brutes but to pursue
virtue and knowledge.)

EDITOR'S PREFACE

St. Thomas Aquinas is indisputably one of the most impressive and influential figures in the history of thought. In a sense, he bridges the gap from antiquity to modern times, for his thought is rooted in Aristotle and still bears fruit in contemporary Thomism and neo-Thomism. His moral philosophy is of particular interest. It is dominated by the concept of natural law, and what Aquinas has to say on this subject is related, on the one hand, to practical questions, such as sexual conduct, about which moralists argue, and, on the other hand, to logical questions, such as whether or not judgments of moral value can be deduced from statements of empirical fact, about which lively discussion goes on among moral philosophers.

Professor O'Connor has provided an admirably clear study of Aquinas on natural law and related concepts in morals. His analysis is detailed and his criticisms penetrating. Aquinas' appeal was to the rationality of his arguments and Professor O'Connor tests them by this criterion. His study is valuable as an introduction for those who come new to Aquinas; but it will interest scholars and moral philosophers no less.

W. D. HUDSON

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