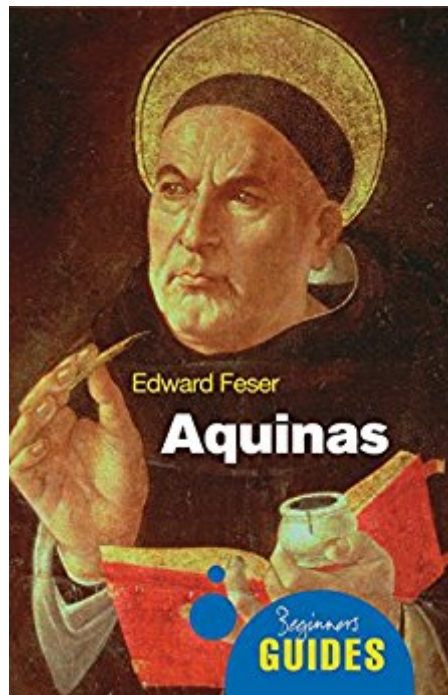




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Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide (Beginner's Guides)



Synopsis

One of the most influential philosophers and theologians in history, St. Thomas Aquinas was the father of modern philosophy of religion, and is infamous for his "proofs" for God's existence. In this cogent introduction to the great Saint's work, Edward Feser argues that you cannot fully understand Aquinas' philosophy without his theology and vice versa. Covering his thoughts on the soul, natural law, metaphysics, and the interaction of faith and reason, this will prove indispensable for students, experts or the general reader.

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Customer Reviews

E. Feser's introduction to Aquinas' thought was exactly what I was looking for: a clear, contemporary introduction (and defense!) of Aquinas' thought which interacts with modern objections. Having read introductions by Ralph McInerny, Henri Renard, F. Copleston, Jacques Maritain, and A. Sertillanges, I can say that Feser's book is better than all of them. First of all, Feser is faithful to Aquinas' thought. In content, Feser's philosophy is aligned with something, say, Garrigou-Lagrange might write, the difference only being style. If you think Garrigou-Lagrange understood Aquinas, then you will think Feser has, too. Most of the authors I mentioned above more

or less understand Aquinas adequately, so far as I can tell. Like them, Feser won't give you any surprises by departing from the tradition (like, say, E. Stump might). Second, Feser's book is better because it is clearer. There are plenty of thinkers who understand Aquinas decently enough---one thinks of Maritain or Renard, for example. But anyone who has tried to read these thinkers is painfully aware that their prose is not always clear. Feser has given us a book which is in a class by itself for clarity. If you are puzzled by 'matter', 'form', 'act', 'potency', and so on, then this is the book for you. Third, Feser's book is better because it understands modern thinkers and their objections to Aquinas. Feser admirably defends the existence of God, the classical attributes of God (including divine simplicity), the immortality of the soul, Aquinas' ethical theory, and so on. Not only this, but he shows why objectors to Aquinas usually have not understood him properly. He treats older objectors like Locke, but also newer ones like Dawkins (and many analytical philosophers, too).

Whenever I picked up *The Last Superstition* by Dr. Feser, I expected a standard critique of the poor reasoning of New Atheists. It excelled in that regard, but went further and opened my eyes to a whole realm of philosophy that I had never even properly considered. Whenever you take a standard introduction to philosophy you are told that Aristotle was largely influential, but that when his understanding of physics fell apart so did his metaphysics. Things like "final causes" had been disproved by modern science. Thus, you are required to read a passage or two, and then quickly move to more "modern" things like Descartes, Hume, Kant and of course the plethora of readings in modern analytic philosophy. It is in these modern readings that you will learn of such things as the "mind-body problem" or the "problem of induction." When studying the philosophy of mind, you will learn of the troubles of accounting for qualia or intentionality on physicalist accounts, and the "interaction problem" for dualists. After reading Feser's book against the New Atheism, my eyes were opened. Aristotle's metaphysics were in no way disproven by modern science, nor were they even adequately argued against by modern philosophy as much as they were simply ignored as the mechanistic view of the world became standard. I learned that these "classical problems" in philosophy were not classical at all, but that they were simply the result of accepting the mechanistic paradigm and were not problems in the Aristotelean-Thomistic tradition.

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