

1. Biographical amnesia about virtue and the artistic imagination.
Gian Lorenzo Bernini and the Confraternity of the Good Death.
St. Robert Bellarmine's *De arte bene moriendi* (1620).
2. The Aristotelian roots of Aquinas on moral virtue.
Virtue as the habit of choosing the mean between the extremes of excess and deficiency in regard to action and emotion, as determined by a person of right reason.
3. Shakespeare's use of the Thomistic account of the passions as the basis of virtues and vices.
Venus & Adonis and the mimetic presentation of the concupiscible (love-hate, desire-aversion, joy-sadness) and irascible (boldness-fear, hope-despair, anger) passions.
4. Beware the modern reduction of Shakespeare's plays to insoluble dilemmas.
Holding *The Taming of the Shrew* as misogynist or ironic risks missing its mimetic rhetoric. The tradition of Aristotle's *Poetics* sees drama as involving transformation of the characters and of the audience through imitation (*mimesis*). *The Taming of the Shrew* as a route to moral breakthrough through love, friendship, and good humor.
5. *The Merchant of Venice*. The Thomistic descriptions of liberality and justice offer special illumination for the action and characters in *The Merchant of Venice*. Learning to read Shakespeare's characters as mimetic representations more than as allegorical types.
6. *Hamlet* and the importance of self-knowledge. Aquinas's insights on the ways we ought to cultivate certain virtues as a corrective to the psychic distortions to which some temperaments are prone; a tragic outcome can result by failing to work/pray for virtue.
7. Political Virtue and the Education of a Prince. Renaissance statecraft frequently involved a multi-pronged education of a young prince in the ways of virtue and practical wisdom. *The First Part of Henry the Fourth* in light of the insights of Aquinas about the development of *fortitude* and *honor*. In Prince Hal and Falstaff, the dramatist show the way to prepare for acting in the public square.
8. The Perils of Ambition. *Macbeth* and the perils of ambition unchecked by virtue. Insights from Aquinas on death, fear, counsel, and fortitude show how Shakespeare stages the *moral struggle* that can emerge within one's passions.
9. Prudence in the Poet and the Philosopher. Reading *The Tempest* as about colonialism risks missing a story about practical wisdom in statecraft and the education of one's children, while justice and forgiveness.