



What is
Aretéanism?

A COMPLETE INTRODUCTION - 3rd Edition

THE ASSEMBLAGE OF ARETÉ
A Religion for the Future of Humanity

Hello! In your hands you hold something marvelous: the description of a new way of living and thinking, which is set to transform all of humanity and bring about a far better society for everyone. We're in desperate need of radical new answers, ones which are informed by science and reason, but also ones which are still deeply human and compassionate. These pages propose some solutions, but they will require all of us—they will require *you*—to take the initiative to make use of them.

Perhaps this sounds far-fetched. Perhaps it is. But humanity has made great leaps and strides before, and we can do it again. The most incredible advantage that we have, compared to all other living creatures, is our ability to share ideas with each other. When the first human discovered how to control fire, the next person didn't have to rediscover it all on their own... they were able to learn how to do it from the first person—much easier!

As a species we've been using this technique with exponential gains, gathering not only physical tools like fire and electricity, but also knowledge and even wisdom about how to live good, fulfilling, happy lives... lives of *eudaimonia*; an ancient Greek word for the best life possible. We now know that the secret to this **good life** is (perhaps ironically) to live a **great life**—to strive to be the very best person we can be, holistically. There's another Greek word for this idea: *Areté* (pronounced: are-uh-tay).

Choosing to be a person filled with *Areté*—being the very best version of yourself that you can be—is a noble quest which will bring you happiness and satisfaction. More than that (which is quite enough already), living a life of *Areté* will make the lives of everyone around you better, and even the lives of everyone around them! And when we all start striving for *Areté*, *together*? The world really will change for the better, drastically so.



Be Excellent to Each Other, and Party On!

-Supreme Mugwump N.S. Colin Campbell, 12022 February 5th

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What is Aretéanism?

A Humanist Religion

Aretéanism is a humanist religion, which means that rather than worshipping either supernatural or natural phenomena, we believe that as human beings our focus should be on improving the human experience. Aretéans believe that we should do everything in our power to be both great and good. It is a new approach to an ancient quest for greatness!

Features of Aretéanism

- We meet for Sunday services where we:
 - Sing together
 - Listen to uplifting sermons
 - Develop a close-knit community
 - We use symbolism and ritual
- We are primarily run by volunteers
- We never require donations
- We regularly engage in charitable and educational activities

Unlike traditional churches, we do not:

- Pray to unseen beings
- Worship any kind of supernatural phenomena
- Claim to have a monopoly on truth
- Teach that we should do anything for any reason other than its self-evident, intrinsic good for ourselves and humankind
- Discriminate on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, race, physical or psychological aptitude

Answering the Humanist Manifesto

“Today man’s larger understanding of the universe, his scientific achievements, and deeper appreciation of brotherhood, have created a situation which requires a new statement of the means and purposes of religion... a vital, fearless, and frank religion... To establish such a religion is a major necessity of the present. It is a responsibility which rests upon this generation.” -*The Humanist Manifesto I*

The first Humanist Manifesto was written in 11,933 HE and charged the people who lived way back then to develop a new kind of religion—something that provided the people with purpose and meaning but without all of the false claims that traditional religions are founded upon. Unfortunately, efforts to create such a religion fell short at the time. To finally answer this call to action, Aretéanism was created in 12,016 HE.

Aretéanism was carefully designed from the ground up, in order to make the best use of everything religion can offer, while avoiding the problems religions have fallen into in the past.

Who are we?

The Assemblage of Areté

While Aretéanism is the name of our religion, our community is called The Assemblage of Areté. The Assemblage is a religious non-profit organization, kind of like a church, but for Aretéans. Having an organization helps us to mobilize our community more effectively, and makes it easier for us to all become better people.

The Assemblage of Areté is organized into parishes, which are local geographic areas that create an in-person Aretéan community together. Parishes are led by a “narrator” who helps guide the flow of our meetings, which are called “convocations”.

To keep the whole community organized globally, The Assemblage of Areté is presided over by a “supreme mugwump”, which is an intentionally funny way of calling them the leader of the organization. While we believe that the position deserves some respect for all of the hard work they do, mindless obedience to the Supreme Mugwump is laughable.

None of our leadership positions are permanent, and when it’s time for a change, we call upon trusted members of our community to volunteer their time and energy to take a turn being responsible. It’s a good way to make sure we don’t become stuck in one person’s way of doing things, and it’s an even better way of giving us all a chance to learn through leadership and responsibility!

What are Aretéans like?

Aretéans are great people! It takes a certain caliber of individual to even want to join our community- Aretéanism is not for the faint of heart! We’re not the kind of people who try to do the bare minimum, and we’re always looking for ways to improve ourselves... even when it’s hard.

The members of our Assemblage are brave, courageous people- they literally walk through fire to join our religion! They’re honest, good people- they commit to keeping themselves clean of wrongdoing. Aretéans are smart, hard-working people- they go on real adventures to learn more about the world and themselves! They’re also grounded, practical people who plan for the future and like to take care of the Earth.

They have so many great qualities that we actually call them heroes... Heroes of Areté! But the best way for you to get to know what these heroes are like is to meet one yourself.

The Three Tenets of Aretéanism

What do we believe?

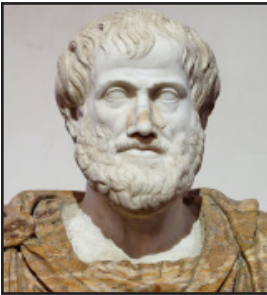
Aretéanism is founded upon three simple precepts, which we call The Three Tenets of Aretéanism. From these first three concepts we derive all of our other doctrines, which we pair with symbolism and ritual so that we can remember our values better throughout our daily lives.

The First Tenet: Be People of Areté



Areté (pronounced: are-eh-tay) is an ancient Greek word meaning excellence in all things. We specifically define Areté through The Six Qualities of Areté, and also The Thirty Aims of Areté. We are on a quest to be the best humans we can be, both individually and collectively. The quest for Areté is a great challenge, but the rewards are well worth it!

The Second Tenet: Seek Greater Understanding



Knowledge allows us to achieve good things. With greater knowledge, better understanding becomes more accessible. We believe that the scientific method is the best available approach for understanding the world around us, and that we should reject superstition as a valid basis for decision making.

The Third Tenet: The Intent of the Law, Is the Law



We put trust in the human capacity for reason. Rather than following dogmatic instructions, Aretéans think for themselves.

The Six Qualities of Areté

What is Areté?

Of course all people wish to be excellent in some way, but what sets Aretéanism apart is the specific values we hold as desirable. There are six fundamental attributes that identify Areté in a person:

We believe in being practical, thoughtful, loving, virtuous, visionary, and great people and peoples.

Practical



We believe that we should be capable of achieving physical success in the world. We can do this by pursuing aims such as Self-Discipline, Preparedness, Fitness, Cleanliness, and Excellence.

Thoughtful



We believe that we should develop a keen mind to improve ourselves and the world. We can do this by pursuing aims such as Perceptiveness, Learning, Critical Reasoning, Consideration, and Creativity.

Loving



We believe that we should have real care for our fellow human beings. We can do this by pursuing aims such as Connection, Compassion, Openness, Responsibility, and Generosity.

Virtuous



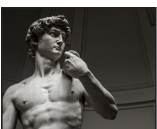
We believe that we should always be altruistic and principled in our behavior. We can do this by pursuing aims such as Honesty, Commitment, Cooperation, Equality, and Courage.

Visionary



We believe that we should look to and plan for the future in order to build greater success. We can do this by pursuing aims such as Hope, Adaptability, Intention, Patience, and Leadership.

Great



We believe that we should be more than simply “good”. Instead, we should strive for greatness in the way we live our lives. We can do this by pursuing aims such as Humility, Gratitude, Grace, Passion, and Joyfulness.

The Thirty Aims of Areté

How do I seek more Areté in my life?

The Thirty Aims are virtues that all Aretéans agree are good things to seek after. Every single one of these is a skill which can be improved with deliberate effort.



Self-Discipline

Self-Discipline is the ability to overrule our impulses when necessary. By better controlling ourselves, we can better achieve greatness.



Preparedness

To be prepared is to be ready for whatever challenges might lie ahead. We should prepare our environments, our bodies, and our minds so that we can best respond to an uncertain future.



Fitness

Being fit means making our bodies suitable for use. With excellent fitness we can enjoy greater ability, confidence, health, and happiness.



Cleanliness

Cleanliness is about the absence of unintentional components. When something is clean, its other excellent attributes shine forth with greater clarity.



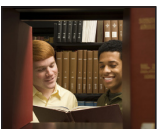
Excellence

To be excellent is to surpass ordinary standards. By performing our activities at an outstanding level, we demonstrate the amazing things that humans can do.



Perceptiveness

To be perceptive is to pay attention to details. By taking the time to observe, we can gain clues and identify patterns in the world around us.



Learning

To learn is to improve our knowledge, our intelligence, and our wisdom. Learning is a gateway to greater understanding, greater choices, and greater actions.



Critical Reasoning

Critical Reasoning is the skill of being able to determine the soundness of any line of thought. By developing sharp logic and a willingness to critically examine our world, we can weed out false beliefs and approach the truth.



Consideration

Consideration is the skill of taking a moment to think about each situation we find ourselves in. The more consideration we exercise in our lives, the more opportunity we have to take meaningful action.



Creativity

To be creative is to make new things and to introduce fresh and original ideas. The human capacity for creativity is an amazing ability that inspires growth and adds spice to life.



Connection

To be connected is to develop a stake in our kindred, our kithren, our communities, and our world. Using these quality connections, we can access greater responsibility, insight, and opportunity.



Compassion

To have compassion is to have genuine concern for others. When we view our neighbors' successes and losses as our own, we are motivated to build a better world for everyone.



Openness

To be open is to communicate our thoughts and desires with others and to genuinely listen to others in return. In all areas of life, the world benefits from reasoned voices speaking up and being truly heard.



Responsibility

To seek responsibility is to be willing to take on new roles of accountability. As we take on more responsibility, we become more personally capable of improving the world.



Generosity

To be generous is to give our time, money, effort, possessions, or care to those who need it more than we do. By making these kinds of trades, we literally grow the wealth of the world, making it a better place for everyone.



Honesty

To be honest is to be both truthful and helpful to others. By sharing accurate information, we give others the opportunity to be the heroes they were meant to be.



Commitment

To be committed is to accept the duty to act upon our good values and to persevere as long as necessary. Being committed ensures that we actually achieve success, instead of merely wanting it.



Cooperation

To cooperate is to work in concert with everyone and everything around us. When we coordinate and work well together, we produce greater results than when we work individually.



Equality

We believe in equal rights for all human beings. By building a world where everyone is treated fairly, we hope to give everyone the keys to success.



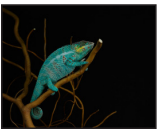
Courage

To be courageous is to do the right thing even in the face of fear. So much of the world's suffering can be avoided if we act with integrity, no matter how uncertain we feel.



Hope

To be hopeful is to actively seek a better reality. By believing that good things are possible, and by trusting in the better aspects of our nature, we allow the good in our lives to flourish.



Adaptability

Being adaptable means being able to change both our plans and ourselves when things don't turn out as expected. By embracing change rather than resisting it, we can better handle the challenges of a dynamic world.



Intention

To live intentionally is to turn our choices into active decisions. If we can make ourselves conscious of our choices and the reasons behind them, we can become the captains of our destinies.



Patience

Patience is the active virtue of doing the correct things at the correct times. Instead of merely waiting, we can make the most out of our limited time and accomplish things that appear impossible.



Leadership

To be a leader is to lead by example and to show others the way. By boldly setting a good example, we make it easier for others to succeed as well.



Humility

To have humility is to be centered enough to not require flattery or attention, and to be humble enough to learn from anyone. By learning what others can teach us, we develop a genuine confidence grounded in reality.



Gratitude

To have Gratitude is to show genuine care and appreciation for the good things we have. By not taking things for granted, we are more likely to protect the things that matter most.



Grace

To be graceful is to act with elegance and respect for ourselves and others. By putting in the extra effort to turn the functional into the beautiful, we can improve everything we come in contact with.



Passion

To have Passion is to embrace our emotions, and to have genuine excitement for the things we engage in. By fully investing ourselves in our experiences, we gain more of what life has to offer.



Joyfulness

To be joyful is to live a happy life and to party on!

The Four Levels of Human Consciousness

What does it mean to gain greater understanding?

Aretéans strive to achieve higher states of consciousness. We map our position in this effort using The Four Levels of Human Consciousness. While our time in any of these levels is always temporary, and sometimes only fleeting, by living with more excellent habits we can make experiencing higher consciousness a habit as well.

Level 1: The Fog



At this level we are self-centered, small-minded, and blinded by our emotions. Many humans spend their lives living in the fog, unable to see just how unhelpful it is.

Level 2: Contextual Awareness



When we reach this level we develop awareness of what is going on around us. We see other people as real, and we can make better decisions. Attaining consciousness of this level is often possible through education, reflection, and harmony with our physical bodies and the world.

Level 3: Global Comprehension



In a sudden “whoa moment” the big picture can come into clear view. At this level of consciousness, we see things from a greater perspective. By maximizing our knowledge and our harmony with the world, we are more likely to experience this stage of consciousness. With practice and effort, it is possible to live and work in this stage for extended periods of time.

Level 4: Innovative Ideation



At this level of consciousness, we become innovative, able to discover new knowledge and to build new methods of doing things, that all humans can make use of later, even those in lower stages of consciousness.

The Four Classical Elements of the Ancient World

What symbolism do Aretéans use?

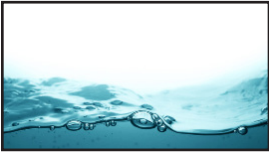
We center much of our symbolism around the Four Classical Elements of the Ancient World: Fire, Water, Air, and Earth. We symbolically link these elements to the levels of consciousness.

Fire



Fire is both powerful and fearsome. It lights our way, but it also creates smoke which can cloud our vision. Likewise, the instincts and emotions of the first stage of consciousness are powerful; and while they can be put to good use, they can also cloud our judgement. For this reason, we associate fire with the first level of human consciousness.

Water



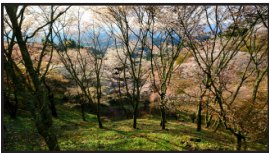
Water is commonly associated with its cleaning properties, as well as its adaptability and natural harmony with whatever environment it finds itself in. Clearing our mind of the fog and existing in harmony with our local environment are key features of contextual awareness. For this reason, we associate water with the second level of human consciousness.

Air



Air, is classically associated with knowledge, and battle. As we gain greater understanding and strive to reach the metaphorical mountaintop high up in the air, our horizons broaden until we understand our context- not just locally, but globally. For this reason, we associate air with the third level of human consciousness. We also associate air with raising our flag for others to follow, and therefore leadership and proselytizing.

Earth



Earth is the element of planting and growing, of stable construction and deep understanding. When we are fortunate enough to experience moments of innovation, we do so because we have fully appreciated all of the relevant and true knowledge at hand, allowing us to build new things and plant new ideas in the minds of all who come after us. For this reason, we associate earth with the fourth level of human consciousness.

Rituals

What kinds of rituals do Aretéans do?

Aretéans use rituals and traditions to impress upon ourselves the importance of our commitments and to give us the psychological power to change our lives. Among other circumstances, we use dedication rituals in our weekly meetings, and also have special rituals for when someone gains a new level of membership in The Assemblage of Areté.

Dedication



A candle is lit to remind us to seek an enlightened world, water is poured into a bowl to remind us to keep clean from wrongdoing, a towel is hung to remind us to raise our flags for others to follow, and some earth is shoveled to remind us to tend the world as the garden it is. Those who wish to participate may pass their hand through the candleflame, submerge their hand in the water, dry their hand on the towel, and remove a pebble from the earth. This ritual serves as a reminder of our journey as heroes and is meant to reinforce our dedication to the principles of Areté.

Flamewalk



The flamewalk ritual is symbolic of the process of forging our lives into the swords wielded by heroes. In this ritual, the participant commits to seek a life of Areté and then literally walks through flames. Though reasonably safe, flamewalking requires bravery, which symbolizes the courage required to get started on the path of Areté.

Immersion



The immersion ritual is symbolic of the process of tempering and quenching our swords of life. In this ritual the participant commits to a life devoted to Areté, and is then completely submerged in water. This symbolizes our complete immersion in the practices and philosophy of Aretéanism.

Pilgrimage



The pilgrimage ritual is symbolic of heroes going to battle to fight for good in the world. In this ritual, the participant commits to fighting for a world devoted to Areté, and then sets out on a journey of two whole days marked by fasting and community service, culminating in a meditative experience at an impressive vista of the participant's choosing.

Stewardship



Claiming stewardship symbolizes the wisdom of heroes to turn their swords into ploughshares, to build a better world and make things grow. In this ritual, the participant commits to giving their work- and life- for a world of Areté. The participant also makes a lifelong commitment of service, to tend and care for a piece of public land. As more heroes claim stewardship, the world literally becomes a better place, bit by bit.

Holidays

What do Aretéans celebrate?

Special days bring us together with our kin, kith, and communities; reminding us of the principles of Areté and bringing us greater fulfillment from life. All of our celebrations are times for connection, good food, contemplation, and fun!

Areté Day

On Arété Day we celebrate the formation of the Assemblage and we join together to “Be People of Arété”. This high holiday is celebrated yearly on the 4th Friday of February.

Understanding Day

On Understanding Day we celebrate learning in all of its forms, especially science. On this day we make a special effort to “Seek Greater Understanding”. This high holiday is celebrated yearly on the 2nd Saturday of August.

Reason Day

On Reason Day we celebrate the human capacity for reason, and the nuances of life. We spend time debating important issues while remembering that “The Intent of the Law, Is the Law”. This high holiday is celebrated yearly on the 2nd Saturday of October.

Pyrmera

On Pyrmera we celebrate all of the things symbolically linked to the ancient classical element of fire. Fire often represents light in the darkness, guiding our path both individually and as a people. Pyrmera is celebrated yearly on the Winter Solstice with gift giving.

Hydromera

On Hydromera we celebrate all of the things symbolically linked to the ancient classical element of water. Water often symbolizes its cleansing power, and we traditionally engage in “spring cleaning” on this day. Hydromera is celebrated yearly on the Vernal Equinox.

Aermera

On Aermera we celebrate all of the things symbolically linked to the ancient classical element of air. We traditionally go on small day trips in which we make active efforts to share our Aretéan beliefs and traditions with others. Aermera is celebrated yearly on the Summer Solstice.

Gemera

On Gemera we celebrate all of the things symbolically linked to the ancient classical element of earth. Traditionally we make efforts to improve the Earth by laboring in the stewardships of our community. Gemera is celebrated yearly on the Autumnal Equinox.

Joy Day

Joyfulness is one of The Thirty Aims of Areté, and when its scheduled week arrives (roughly every seven and a half months), we celebrate that Sunday as Joy Day; a day dedicated to partying and happiness. We eat good food, dance to music, do fun activities, spend time with loved ones, and have a great time!

Meditation

How can I reach better consciousness?

Taking time to calmly meditate on the values of Aretéanism can reinforce our intentions and create mental habits of self-discipline. The methods of meditation vary, and may include many different tools and techniques. That said, Aretéans typically end their meditations by reciting the Assertion from memory:

The Assertion

I am a (Courageous/Mighty/Triumphant/Epic) Hero of Areté.

I will seek an enlightened world,

I will keep myself clean of wrongdoing,

I will raise my flag for others to follow,

and I will tend the world as the garden it is.

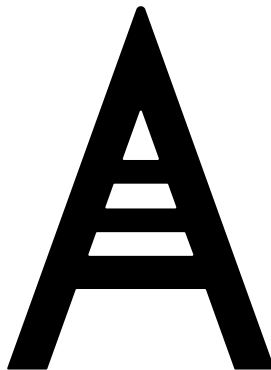
I will follow the intent of the law, using my human capacity for reason;

I will seek greater understanding, through the scientific method;

and I will be a person filled with Areté:

I will be practical, thoughtful, loving, virtuous, visionary, and great.

I will be excellent to others, and I will party on!



Additional Doctrines

Consent

Aretéans believe in respecting each others' agency. We all have the right to own our own lives, including our physical bodies. This is why it is so important to us that no one ever feels forced to engage in our religious beliefs or practices. You should only participate in Aretéanism if you think Aretéanism is good.

The Zeroth Tenet: Do, Not Do Not

Aretéanism is interested in how we should live our life because it gives us an actual direction to travel along, which is much more useful than merely telling us specific destinations to be avoided.

The Delphic Admonition

Aretéans place the words “Know Thyself” near the entranceway of their homes. This advice was once carved in stone, at the entrance of the Temple of Apollo in Delphi.

The Scientific Method

Aretéans firmly believe that the Scientific Method is the best available method for learning about our universe, and even ourselves. The method itself involves a cycle of exploration which includes: asking a question, developing a hypothesis, challenging the hypothesis through argument or experiment, discarding a disproven hypothesis, and repeating the cycle. The Scientific Method is testable, logical, and has an excellent track record of improving the human condition.

Community

Humans are communal animals and Aretéanism is a communal practice. The pursuit of Areté must be done collectively in addition to individually. Therefore, we should regularly be called to gather together for convocations, rituals, business meetings, and parties.

Ripples of Influence

Aretéans believe that all people are constantly creating ripples of influence around them at all times—that their behavior and even the things they say to others creates changes in the way others speak and behave; and that these ripples are sometimes capable of washing over the entire world. We have learned a lesson, we should share it at many levels of influence: with our kindred (chosen family), with our kithren (friends and acquaintances), with our communities, and with the world.

The Human Era Calendar

The Assemblage of Areté uses the Human Era Calendar for all official purposes. It is easy to convert between dates in the Gregorian Calendar and the Human Era calendar. If the year is AD, add 10,000 years to the AD date. If the year is BCE, subtract the BCE year from 10,001. Here are some important events written in the HE (Human Era) system.

- Invention of Agriculture 0 HE (approximately)
- Domestication of Chickens 4,000 HE (approximately)
- Invention of the Wheel 6,500 HE (approximately)
- Completion of the Great Pyramid 7,440 HE (approximately)
- First Olympic Games 9,225 HE
- Rome Sacked by Visigoths 10,410 HE
- William the Conqueror in England 11,066 HE
- Francis Bacon’s “Novum Organum” 11,620 HE
- Darwin’s “On the Origin of Species” 11,859 HE
- Assemblage of Areté Established 12,016 HE

The Human Era Calendar is a big improvement because, while being more culturally sensitive, it also allows us to better see the big picture of human civilization.

Reducitarianism & Meatless Mondays

Aretéans religiously commit to become “reducitarians” which means that we aim to eat less meat. The science is conclusive: the amount of meat consumption in our society is deeply unhealthy. To help cut back on the amount of meat we consume, Aretéans also practice “Meatless Mondays”, which means we do not eat meat on Mondays.

The Metric System

Aretéans use the Metric System for all forms of measurement: distance, volume, mass, temperature, and so on. If all humans adopt this elegant system, it would lead to a more enlightened world.

Saluting

Aretéans salute the praiseworthy actions of the heroes that inspire us. By recognizing the great deeds of others, we can better emulate our heroes, while also encouraging them to continue their mighty acts.

Kindred

Aretéans de-emphasize the concept of biological family ties, instead focusing on what some call “family of choice” or your kindred. One’s kindred can also include biological family members, but choosing to be intentional with whom you let into your life makes these connections more meaningful and much safer.

Kithren

If kindred is the circle of people closest to you, kithren is the next circle out: good friends! The word kith comes from Old English and meant those that you know well. In *The Assemblage of Areté* we use the term kith to specifically refer to small fellowshiping groups that all members get called to join. These small groups take on fun names, like “Kith Phoenix” and wear badges to show pride in their kith, similar to showing pride in a team. Members of a kith meet together as often as it works for them to do so, to do fun activities together and become better friends with one another!

The Abricada

The official symbol of Aretéanism is known as the Abricada. It is a simple design, fashioned from a capital “A” with three crossbars. The symbol reminds us that through Aretéanism we can find our way to better consciousness.

Our Mantra: BETEOAPO

Originally heard in the film “Bill and Ted’s Excellent Adventure” published in 11,989 HE, the saying is portrayed as a farewell blessing for people in a future society that has achieved enlightenment, thanks to the sincere music of Bill and Ted. While the film might be a juvenile comedy to some, the saying perfectly conveys the hopes heroes of our assemblage have: to seek Areté, and enjoy life!

When any speech is given in the context of an Aretéan gathering, the speaker indicates to their listeners that they have finished speaking by saying, “Be Excellent to Each Other...” to which the listeners enthusiastically respond: “and Party On!”

Contact Us!

The World Needs Your Greatness

If you are interested in The Assemblage of Areté, you should email contact@areteanism.org. Someone will reach out to you quickly to answer your questions and help you determine if you are ready to flamewalk and become an official member of The Assemblage of Areté. No donations are ever required to become a member or participate!

Connect With Us Online

- Meetup Calendar: <https://www.meetup.com/The-Assemblage-of-Arete-A-Humanist-Religion/>
- TikTok Short Videos: <https://www.tiktok.com/@areteanism>
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Areteanism>
- The Assemblage of Areté Website: www.areteanism.org

**BE EXCELLENT TO EACH OTHER
AND PARTY ON!**

