

THEORY OF THOMAS AQUINAS ON HUMAN NATURE AND ITS MEANING IN SOCIAL LIFE TODAY

[A TEORIA DE TOMÁS DE AQUINO SOBRE A NATUREZA HUMANA E O SEU SIGNIFICADO NA VIDA SOCIAL ATUAL]

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Acknowledgment: This research is funded by University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

ABSTRACT: As international integration continues to expand, human development increasingly encompasses economic, cultural, social, and spiritual dimensions. Individuals exist within communities where social relationships shape both material conditions and moral life. As societies evolve, people require a deeper understanding of themselves, others, and the surrounding world in order to contribute meaningfully to social progress. This article examines the philosophical thought of Thomas Aquinas to clarify his conception of human nature and its significance for social life. Using analytical, synthetic, and interpretative approaches, the study explores Aquinas's view that human beings achieve genuine happiness by acting in accordance with reason and moral virtue. Although contemporary societies have become more open and progressive, many individuals continue to encounter injustice, inequality, and psychological distress. While people naturally aspire to live fulfilling and meaningful lives, these aspirations are often challenged by social realities. From Aquinas's perspective, a well-ordered society is founded on respect for law, moral responsibility, and ethical conduct. When individuals regulate their behavior according to justice and the common good, they contribute to a more humane and harmonious social order. These insights provide a valuable philosophical foundation for promoting ethical values and supporting the development of a more just and sustainable society in Vietnam.

KEYWORDS: Aquinas; believers; human nature; reason; rational

RESUMO: À medida que a integração internacional continua a se expandir, o desenvolvimento humano abrange, cada vez mais, dimensões econômicas, culturais, sociais e espirituais. Os indivíduos existem no seio de comunidades onde as relações sociais moldam tanto as condições materiais quanto a vida moral. Com a evolução das sociedades, as pessoas necessitam de uma compreensão mais profunda de si mesmas, dos outros e do mundo ao seu redor para contribuir de forma significativa para o progresso social. Este artigo examina o pensamento filosófico de Tomás de Aquino para esclarecer sua concepção de natureza humana e sua importância para a vida social. Por meio de abordagens analíticas, sintéticas e interpretativas, o estudo explora a visão de Aquino de que os seres humanos alcançam a felicidade genuína ao agir em conformidade com a razão e a virtude moral. Embora as sociedades contemporâneas tenham se tornado mais abertas e progressistas, muitos indivíduos continuam a enfrentar injustiças, desigualdades e sofrimento psicológico. Embora as pessoas aspirem naturalmente a viver vidas plenas e significativas, essas aspirações são frequentemente desafiadas pelas realidades sociais. Na perspectiva de Aquino, uma sociedade bem ordenada fundamenta-se no respeito à lei, na responsabilidade moral e na conduta ética. Quando os indivíduos pautam seu comportamento pela justiça e pelo bem comum, contribuem para uma ordem social mais humana e harmoniosa. Essas reflexões oferecem uma base filosófica valiosa para promover valores éticos e apoiar o desenvolvimento de uma sociedade mais justa e sustentável no Vietnã.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Aquino; crentes; natureza humana; razão; racional

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INTRODUCTION

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AUFKLÄRUNG, João Pessoa, v.9, n.3, Set. Dez., 2022, p.85-96

With the development of society, humans will want a life of freedom, democracy, justice, and happiness, which is becoming a need in the life of every human being in today's community. In modern society, law and morality are both social consciousness used to adjust human behavior according to the needs of society. In the 4.0 technology revolution, problems of human perception in the world are due to human understanding. Humans need to have qualifications, skills, and ethics to meet the requirements of society, and education plays an important role in shaping moral awareness and civic responsibility [4]. Therefore, human nature is always concerned when there are deadlocks that life poses for people that need resolving. Man must struggle between existence and self-development or deny his existence. The article uses methods of analysis, synthesis, interpretation, and justification to clarify Aquinas's contributions to human nature in world perception, human perception by reason to know, laws, and ethics to build a good and ideal society in Vietnam.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1.What are the fundamental characteristics of human nature according to Thomas Aquinas?
- 2.How does Aquinas explain the relationship between human nature, moral responsibility, and social order?
- 3.How can Aquinas's theory of human nature contribute to addressing ethical and social challenges in contemporary society?

METHODS

The article uses dialectical materialism methodology to collect the works of Aquinas to have a comprehensive view of Aquinas, thereby clarifying the main content of the human nature perspective to explain his arguments about human nature. Clarification of Aquinas's values and progress compared to the era in which he lived when he conceived of human nature. The study relies primarily on contemporary scholarly analyses and interpretations of Thomas Aquinas's thought concerning human nature, reason, morality, natural law, and theology [6, 12, 18, 24, 25]. From these collected documents, the article clarifies Aquinas's view of human nature in a perfect way formed from material and spiritual factors. Human nature is human behavior, but there is a connection with God when humans die. The matter is finite when a person dies, but a person's true nature reveals in heaven's human condition. In heaven, people see God and are united in a loving relationship, and God and others are also connected. In this contemplation and union, one experiences the fullness of human nature and complete happiness. For Thomas Aquinas, human beings should be considered, by their very nature, to be relational and fully developed. Therefore, the Catholic Church venerates Thomas Aquinas as a saint. [24]. Aquinas is a prominent Western theorist on human nature

associated with theology. He inherited the Aristotelian, Stoic thought on human nature and brought elements from these traditions into a systematic relationship within the framework of the metaphysics of creation and divine providence [10]. Based on the collected literature, this study employs analytical, interpretative, and synthetic methods to examine Aquinas's conception of human nature within the broader framework of his philosophical thought. The analytical method is used to identify and clarify the key components of Aquinas's understanding of human nature. The interpretative approach explains how human beings, through reason, perceive moral principles and natural law, and how this rational capacity shapes ethical judgment, scientific inquiry, legal consciousness, and the realization of human rights in contemporary society. Finally, the synthetic method integrates Aquinas's views on reason, knowledge, morality, law, and religious faith to demonstrate their dynamic interrelationship and their significance for understanding human nature and social life today.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Human nature is a generalized concept of humans with essential characteristics, including ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that humans are said to be natural only in humans; this approach clarifies human nature by philosophers. Human nature remains a central topic in contemporary philosophical inquiry and interdisciplinary studies [9]. Firstly, human nature is a concept used to explain the importance of genes and the living environment that comprehensively determines a person's development. Second, human nature is general and inherently abstract, not to mention individual human beings. Human nature is immutable and metaphysical, so each individual, each community with a good working environment will be good. Third, human nature is to fix, and people are also changeable and malleable, such as modernists such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Concept of human nature. Thomas Aquinas is one of the most influential Catholic philosophers and moralists in medieval philosophy. His theory is a successor to Aristotle's views when he argues about politics, ethics, and Christian beliefs. Aquinas occupies a central position in medieval philosophy, and his thought continues to influence contemporary discussions on metaphysics, ethics, and human nature [2]. He is also widely regarded as one of the most influential theologians in the history of the Christian Church, whose intellectual legacy has continued to shape Christian thought across generations [23]. The above concepts about human nature are focused on the following perspectives:

First, the view of human nature shapes laws, creation, and people's belief in a creator. Aquinas believed that law plays a role in helping people perfect their nature through free actions (actions in which they have a certain degree of control and influence). Aquinas believed that human nature, a psychological unity, is perfected or fully realized through excellence, harmony, and consistency in the application of each person's inherent capacities and abilities (e.g., cognition, creativity, practice, production). The highest of these, with the greatest potential to enrich and expand human nature, and to realize it most fully, is human intellect, with its capacity to understand the nature of all things. Inheriting Aristotle's view, Aquinas holds that through reason, the human soul is capable of being all things:

it embraces the entire universe in terms of what it is, and by acts of understanding and inference, In a way, it brings the whole universe into the soul. In other words, combined with the will, the mind expands the soul to become all that is cognitive and emotional, but not physical, united. Aquinas gives the laws of eternal law, natural law, and human law and shows the relationship between these laws with morality to clarify human nature. Aquinas indicates that human nature is valued independently positive, directed to reach for the enacted laws of a state or society [1]. So Aquinas thinks natural law is all people have inherent rights, conferred an act of legislation, but God law, natural law, and human law dominate people to create people to do good things. Natural law is that humans should strive to do good and avoid all evil [1]. Aquinas says a human nature wants eternal happiness, God's lofty goal [14]. Contemporary natural law theory continues to emphasize the relationship between reason, morality, and legal norms in guiding human conduct [15].

Second, Human nature is to act according to reason and purpose in social life. Aquinas believes people act according to reason to achieve their goals, so they must use laws to regulate human behavior. Humans are fully aware of our nature. In other words, only humans have the purpose of living to be happy. Therefore, all laws are to serve human happiness. The law also has the recognition and shared use of a social function as it directs collective action towards a common goal [1]. Therefore, the law's real purpose is to serve the community's well-being. But the law does not merely recommend or suggest; it binds and dictates [1]. Thus, the legislators of our familiar experience are the recognized authority figures in a social community who decide for themselves the reasons of the members of that community, ordering them to shape their actions in specific ways because the laws have society function and direction. Aquinas considered the natural law to be how to care about God toward humans; that was a code of God's law for humans in the early days before sinning. Aquinas understood natural law as the law based on human nature; it is to obey natural laws with some universal values, but God guides human action, and then human reason will find ways to apply it to different situations. Through the senses, humans can perceive reasonable to protect themselves from doing righteous things for humanity; Aquinas believes that natural laws are detailed commands, transparent, and immutable.

Third, human nature is to be able to perceive scientific knowledge and act according to scientific knowledge to make progress. Aquinas argued that only humans are creatures endowed with wisdom and will (angels and humans) and so are capable of realizing their full potential only in a conscious and controlled manner Controlling human behavior makes people more and more aware of the world. Aquinas argued that human nature wants to be happy in life. Nowadays, people measure happiness and success as the power of humans; human existence is a part of nature and creates an inorganic human body. Therefore, the changes in nature will affect humans and the existence of humans. Aquinas emphasized that human nature is a perception with the intuitive ability of human when perceives the natural law in life [19]. Human nature regulates rules toward the community's common interests. Aquinas's view is that the law must follow the principles of natural law and that human nature has a relationship with natural law through laws so that people adjust their behavior to good things. Hence, people act according to their shared interests and do better for social purposes, so the law is the basis for evaluating human nature. In Aquinas' view, human nature is subject to regulation and morality, so natural law prescribes and is the will of God, and

human intelligence and the ability to reason intuitively control human behavior to do good [22].

Aquinas did not distinguish between obeying the law and obeying moral conscience. He argued that laws contrary to moral principles are not laws but acts of violence. Therefore, obeying the law is obeying what is right. Law is inseparable from morality, and the ultimate goal of legal regulation is to bring about the common good for all in society. Thus, in the legal system, those in authority are responsible for the welfare of the entire population. Human following the law is the supreme right only in man, man receives God's ultimate command, and human carries out their nature. In human law, the authorized person is responsible for promulgating the law to ensure the community's interests. Law is the supreme right of humans. Humans receive the supreme command of God. Therefore, people realize their nature is to do according to God's will, taking the law as a measure of moral values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Firstly, human nature is action according to reason and having good intentions

Aquinas said humans trust in God but act based on their experience and intuition. Therefore, in human life, they must stick together and live honestly in a community. That's because people cannot achieve their goals by living alone. Therefore, in life, if people want to achieve their goals, they must bring benefits to many people in the community so that everyone is happy. And so, people develop and progress more and more. When people are linked together, it reflects people connecting with God. It manifests itself in the desire to encounter God or the Transcendent. Even those who refuse to acknowledge God have a desire to find out the truth of existence [6].

Aquinas believes that the natural law guides people to move toward good things. But we must recognize the fundamental purposes of the various sects and respect them. Influenced by an Aristotelian look, Aquinas believed that human nature is the reason for faith. But they know when the truth is no longer a revelation but a cognitive process of human nature. Human nature always acts according to reason to achieve its goals and the good things in life. Aquinas believes human nature is towards universal laws to achieve good things, which also obeys natural laws. Humans follow the rules of natural law, but human law regulates human behavior through statutes. And the human law is subject to the provisions of natural law, so the human law will be adjusted to conform to the natural law. One of the essentials of law is openness, and natural law will lose its rationality if human nature is unaware of the principles of natural law. Therefore, Aquinas considered the natural law to be the custom of humans. The natural law exists through tradition and not in the human state of consciousness. Aquinas believed that the natural law would regulate human conscience so that people could act according to the reasonable standards of human morality. Aquinas

argued that the human conscience determines what is right or wrong according to the natural law. In this sense, natural laws are principles common to all times, places, and cultures [17].

Second, human nature is to perceive knowledge

Aquinas argues that it is human nature to learn to accumulate all kinds of knowledge, including scientific knowledge of the highest level (*Scientifica*). But scientific knowledge depends on non-scientific ability, for example, belief attached to understanding the postulates and theorems of nature. Therefore, according to Aquinas, science is associated with religious faith. Religion and science are similar in subjectivity in the process of perceiving things. For example: If I believe that p is true, my faith dictates that I think p is true. In science, too, to conclude, in the research process, you must have faith to conduct research and confidence in the results, which is the law of logical thinking. And science must follow the rules of logic. Specifically: content when researching to conclude, we do not know before conducting research, but when producing research results, that logical process is the process of reflecting our sensory experience. When extracting the research implication, it is necessary to see the rational logic of the laws in the research process. Aquinas calls it a cognitive process. According to Aquinas, both science and human cognitive processes reflect hypothetical behaviors. The human use of knowledge to perceive objects is the process by which people use their senses to experience that is the process of acquiring human knowledge [16].

Science is the act of finding reasons to prove the truth with a statement, which Aquinas calls scientific evidence. According to Aquinas, suppose a person has scientific proof that p is a proposition, not an argument of p . Aquinas inherits Aristotle's views on scientific thinking. Scientific thinking was through the education of thinking habits. But thinking habits have to the results of science, and humans have scientific thinking is implicit according to the law of nature, for example, scientific evidence when conducting a scientific investigation science results from knowledge and reason. Scientific pieces of evidence are the content synthesized as arguments to conclude subject S . Arguments specifying the function of topic S have the following contents (a). Characteristics about (b) are on subject S . Attributes (c) on subject S . Therefore, content is (a), (b), and (c) have a logical relationship to each other. All of the content describes the subject S . Topic S is related to content about (a), (b), and (c) through the scientific knowledge drawn. Aquinas explains the scientific model, the scientific knowledge about organisms. Knowledge of science is knowing basic information is all living things, such as when organisms grow, the organism's rearing and reproduction will understand the different characteristics of the microorganisms. Therefore, according to Aquinas, scientific knowledge is a kind of intellectual virtue, knowledge of a subject obtained from the experience of hard work and discipline of people.

The acquisition of knowledge is due to repeating following teacher instructs. Suppose someone has a scientific knowledge of s and has the systematically controlled experience when one speaks about s quickly, coherently, clearly, and deeply. According to Aquinas, there is a difference between scientific knowledge and theology. Scientific knowledge implies knowledge of science and nature.

Humans are implicitly aware of theological knowledge, but knowledge of natural science and life that humans can gain through education and experience of humans because human nature is determined and governed by God. Aquinas' logical thinking about human nature is a practical experience to gain experiential knowledge. Still, he is confused when explaining people's cognitive processes in a useful life [20]. Specifically, Aquinas argues that in the natural sciences, people use rational thinking. Specifically, with the premise that x, s is the basis for the science to practice knowledge about x, s . For example, optics uses scientific principles in geometry. Music uses principles from mathematics. But, if all musicians were math experts, musicians would never be able to practice music science independently. So musicians take the principles of mathematics as the starting point for their musical science practice. On that basis, he explained the science of theology. Theology is like optics and music. Theology is a scientific principle owned by God and those who are blessed. But unlike optics, music, and other disciplines, knowledge is learned at university. Theology adopts its divine principles, not human reason [12].

Aquinas said human nature wants to do good things and be happy; in the innermost heart of the human, it makes explicit decisions for man to decide his own life. Aquinas said it is human nature to be unable to do wrong; human law does not allow it; the law is to do good things and act according to God. Human knowledge is the process of rational perception to grasp the natural law and hold the human conscience. Therefore, humans should do good things according to the natural law and have a good life. Aristotle influenced Aquinas when he said that human nature is to act according to reason, which is also the nature of human creation. The world is good when human nature act to logic, i.e., work according to good faith and happiness. Because God created human nature to do good for God and aims for good things to come to God that the source of the universe, on the other hand, it is in perception that man is self-aware of scientific knowledge, not through God's revelation [18].

Aquinas conception of scientific knowledge is the basis for proof of human intelligence and the proof of human reasoning ability. He thinks scientific knowledge is broader than his contemporaries. In his day, scientific knowledge understands specific fields such as physics, chemistry, and biology. At that time, research science was experimental to learn about nature, space, and time in physics. In schools, subjects such as mathematics, music, philosophy, and theology are science subjects taught by practice to form thinking habits for learners, helping learners to have systematic thinking, orderly, and wise to get experience. From that scientific practice, human nature increasingly advanced to perceive the world more. Aquinas inherited Aristotle's view of scientific knowledge. Specifically, he argued that we know x scientifically only if we have concrete knowledge of x . We learn concepts about x that we know, first of all, from premises that we know for certain through experiential reflection from the senses; for example, not all animals are human. Because human nature is human, we can draw conclusions based on these initial premises. Aquinas argued that human nature encompasses many kinds of knowledge, such as emotional, personal, scientific, and faith knowledge. This is an essential source of scientific knowledge. According to Aquinas, if a person with scientific knowledge argues about a particular proposition p , that person will understand that the argument about p is logically sound and know the premises. Therefore, one of the sources of science for Aquinas is the activity of the intellect to draw a rational conclusion

from various premises.[8].

Objects exist through human consciousness processes in mental form. Thomas Aquinas applied Aristotle's view of the cognitive process through the steps of being a visual perceiving subject to the object selectively. Aquinas argued that consciousness has two forms of existence: one is a sensory form, which is a lower level of consciousness; it has random properties, considering external things with shapes, colors, and smells characteristic taste of the object, from which there is a positive feeling in the cognitive process. The second form is rational perception, rational thinking. This mental perception helps people perceive the object's general law and nature. According to Aquinas, human nature is the process of perceiving things of natural law. Because humans with scientific knowledge have scientific beliefs from which they have faith in life. Based on trust, the ruler has information about the community for the people to trust. Thus, Aquinas' conception of scientific knowledge is fundamental to scientific belief. Humans with scientific knowledge will have ideas for self-development, orienting their behavior. However, the concept of human consciousness exists in two basic categories: religion and science, these two views exist objectively, and the purpose of existence is different. In faith, the activities of indigenous beliefs and living situations are other; the perception is also different, the thought is further, and the society is diverse. Second, scientific knowledge that changes past perceptions will change modern social life. Nowadays, humans have access to scientific and technological achievements, human scientific awareness has also changed, and human lives are increasing. Achievements of science help humans to change their beliefs in life goals. So, scientific and technological research encourages humans to need to live happily and develop comprehensively [24].

Third, human nature is to raise awareness to act rationally to achieve the goal of freedom and democracy to live a happy and civilized life

Aquinas argues that human nature is closely related to morality because the purpose of human beings is to have a good and happy life. Human nature is the process of perceiving reason to achieve moral values. This view of Aquinas was inherited and promoted in later Western philosophy as Jewish, Christian, Greek, and Roman. According to Aquinas, human nature must act according to moral and legal regulations because Aquinas believed that acts of virtue are the perfect acts of every human being. Actions with human nature are good actions, bringing happiness to others while performing their actions perfectly. Ethics is the path to happiness, a human goal towards a good life, and the actions of human intellect and will. Aquinas asserted that it is human nature to strive to perform virtuous actions to achieve happiness. Like Aristotle, Aquinas believes it is human nature to be happy and behave ethically in action [7]. The pursuit of the good life has long been associated with moral development and ethical conduct in philosophical traditions [13].

In politics, Aquinas argued that natural law does not make specific requirements for all the details of human nature in society. Human nature is to act law rationally; as political regimes differ in time and place, morality and politics must also adjust; human nature has changed over time and place. Since the natural law governs human law, it requires the offender to punish for doing bad

things such as murder, theft, and assault. But the law of nature does not provide a penalty frame for crimes, but human law provides provisions on the penalty frame. According to Aquinas, military service is in different social contexts; for example, treason in one society is a crime, but it is a mistake in another. Thus, the natural law stipulates the existence of human law, but Aquinas does not give us the rules of natural law, and the regulations on human law differ. In addition, human nature law is necessary to fulfill moral and political requirements. Although the natural law has correct rational knowledge, human nature is to express knowledge to operate effectively in social life. Human nature is also subject to the understanding of justice and ethical standards. Aquinas argues that murder is a conclusion from society's moral and justice principles. Therefore, the natural law prohibitions against murder and assault. Still, the natural law does not have a penalty framework for punishing murderers.

According to Aquinas, the eternal law is identical to the mind of God as He sees Himself. It can be called law because God represents the universe He created, just as a ruler represents the community He governs. When God's reason is considered as He understands it, that is, in His unchanging, eternal nature, then it is an eternal law. And divine law originates from the eternal law as it appears in history to humanity, primarily through revelation, that is, when it appears before humanity in the form of divine commands. Eternal Law is generally a collection of conclusions from natural law. Human law is critical to maintaining an organized and civilized society. However, human law has limitations on the scope of the law. To make this clear, Aquinas made a comparison between human law and divine law. The divine law is necessary, supplementing the missing contents of the natural and human laws. In the existence of human law, errors in direction as taking advantage of human law to limit public interests and hinder the development of social justice for everyone. The natural law, the eternal law, and the divine law will contribute to overcoming the mistakes and limitations of human law [3].

According to Aquinas, law is a rational rule that guides and regulates human actions by directing individuals toward appropriate conduct and restraining wrongful behavior. Because human beings act through reason, law is fundamentally grounded in rationality. Its ultimate source lies in divine wisdom, while its practical application depends on the proper exercise of human reason in accordance with the ends established by God. Consequently, the primary purpose of law is to promote the common good rather than merely serve individual interests.

Aquinas distinguishes human law from natural law while emphasizing their close relationship. Natural law expresses universal moral principles derived from human nature and is therefore broader and more fundamental than human law. Whereas natural law provides general and enduring standards of justice, human law translates these principles into specific legal rules suited to particular historical and social circumstances. Human practical reason mediates this process by applying the universal norms of natural law to concrete situations.

For Aquinas, the legitimacy of human law depends on its consistency with natural law. Since human law is an application rather than an independent source of moral authority, it must preserve the spirit and objectives of natural law while responding to changing social conditions. Any legal rule that contradicts or departs from these universal moral principles loses its genuine legal character. Such a rule may possess the appearance of law, but it lacks true moral and rational

legitimacy.

According to him, the law is associated with virtue and obeys the Eternal Law. Laws that violate morality and commit acts of violence or theft cannot be called a law. The law must be fair and have many benefits for society; the law must have a conscience and do the will of God. Law must be associated with morality because it has an effect on human's practical perception, but people are increasingly aware of reality according to the guidance of natural law. Therefore, Aquinas understood the law as an ordinance of the common interests issued by an authorized person [7].

Thomas Aquinas argues that the correct relationship between knowledge and law is the basis for establishing peace without resorting to violence. Violence should only be used as a last resort against evil and must be limited to what is necessary [11]. In Generally, violence is against nature's nature; very rarely is it in accord with the will of nature. That is why, when faced with violence, humans always tend to be lenient and conciliatory. However, one also needs to be aware of the danger and evil when humans enter war. Thomas Aquinas argues that there is a difference between "unjust" laws (immoral or unfaithful) and "adverse" laws (wrong with or detrimental to the interests of specific individuals). As for the bad laws, humans should never accept and obey them. However, concerning unfavorable laws (one of the vicissitudes of human life), the individual's response (according to or denying the will to resist) is a measure of conscience and morality's virtue. An innocent person sentenced to death has good moral reasons to avoid serving a sentence, but a real criminal does not. Human history has recorded many examples of loyal followers, and celebrities with more temper than others - they accepted unjust punishment to protect their noble values and moral principles. Historically, Socrates is one such example. He took the death penalty, using his attitude to honor justice: respecting the majesty of the law and using reason to protest evil instead of denigrating and degrading the divine justice of a judgment.

According to Aquinas, the human capacity to recognize the first principles of natural law is grounded in *synderesis*, an innate intellectual disposition that directs individuals toward moral truth. Rather than being a mere ability, *synderesis* is a stable habit (*habitus*) naturally present in every human being. It enables the mind to apprehend fundamental moral principles and serves as the foundation of ethical reasoning. Drawing on Aristotle's conception of *habitus*, Aquinas understands this disposition as a stable state of the soul that makes moral action possible. A habit represents the soul's enduring potential, whereas conscience is the concrete exercise of that potential in particular moral situations. In this sense, *synderesis* provides the universal knowledge of basic moral goods, while conscience applies these principles when judging specific actions. Unlike ordinary human abilities, which may be directed toward either good or evil, *synderesis* is inherently oriented toward the good. Every person possesses this natural moral disposition, even though the exercise of conscience may vary according to circumstances. Similarly, moral virtues such as courage are not expressed in every action but exist as stable dispositions that become manifest when appropriate situations arise. Thus, Aquinas presents *synderesis* as the intellectual and moral foundation that enables human beings to recognize the good and to act in accordance with natural law.

Aquinas believed that it was human nature to perceive the laws of nature through intuitive perception and not through inference, which allowed man

to know what was suitable for his personality. Perception of human nature in the form of reasoning is either right or wrong in receiving human knowledge. Human nature is ethical behavior and manifests directly through human actions. That tendency is deeply rooted in rational acts, acting according to the calling, command, or principle of conscience, requiring people to do good, and motivating people to resist evil [21]. Human nature is the formation and development of human beings, and the historical creative abilities of people need to be.

Furthermore, the social nature of human beings is an essential aspect that distinguishes them from other creatures in nature. Therefore, humans can be defined as natural entities with social characteristics. Thus, human nature, in reality, is the “total of social relations” because society is human society, composed of all the relationships between people in the economic, political, and cultural spheres... Approached from an analytic perspective from their social relations in history. Humans live in the 21st century with many changes and advancements. But social injustices remain more brutal than human offenses. The law still does not stop the criminal behavior of humans. The ethics of countries are not the same in an integrated, interconnected world; human awareness of human nature, morality, and the law must be closely linked to the process of people living and working. A well-ordered society requires normative principles that promote the common good, social cohesion, human flourishing, and the sustainable development of the community [5, 21]. But in life, the measure of a human’s personality is assessed through work, lifestyle, and socio-political views. After the experience of totalitarian regimes, it recognized that limiting the state’s power was necessary; the condition could not behave like God! Thus the natural law is the opposite of the established direction.

Aquinas view of human nature’s belief in God following God makes human lives happy and good because God aims for the good. Humans perceive the natural world through intuition, but God stipulates the capacity to recognize people. So human nature links to morality, and the law determines the behavior of individuals and communities. Freedom, democracy, and happiness are burning aspirations and, at the same time, the right of each person and nation. In Vietnam, independence, freedom, and happiness are always aspirations, efforts, and sacrifices of many generations of Vietnamese people from past to present. Vietnam became independent in 1945 when the President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh, read the declaration of independence to the nation and the world. Today, peace, freedom, and happiness want the human nature of Vietnam. That consistently embodies the aspiration of a people who want to be independent, the people who want to live in freedom, enjoy the highest human rights, and affirm determination, the result of the efforts and sacrifices of many generations of Vietnamese patriots.

CONCLUSION

In Aquinas’s philosophy, human nature provides the foundation for the pursuit of freedom, justice, and the common good, enabling individuals to flourish both personally and socially. Human beings realize their nature through the pursuit of knowledge, the exercise of reason, and the cultivation of moral virtues. The practice of ethical values reflects not only intellectual development

but also the capacity to shape social life through just laws and responsible conduct. In this sense, Aquinas's understanding of human nature represents a significant philosophical contribution, emphasizing that human existence is governed by objective moral principles and directed toward the fulfillment of the good.

For Aquinas, the ultimate source of this moral order is God, whose divine reason governs both the universe and human life. Human nature is therefore oriented toward the good and finds its highest fulfillment in accordance with God's rational order. Within this framework, Aquinas distinguishes four forms of law: eternal law, divine law, natural law, and human law. Eternal law represents God's perfect and universal plan governing all creation, though human reason cannot fully comprehend it. Divine law, revealed primarily through the Bible, provides guidance beyond the limits of natural reason and leads humanity to its ultimate goal: eternal happiness and union with God. Aquinas asserts that the light of reason is placed within man, and therefore God is placed within each person to guide them in their actions. Thus, human nature is unique among God's creatures; it uses reason to manifest its life. This is natural law; Aquinas writes that the central principle of natural law is to avoid both good and evil. Aquinas stated that reason reveals natural laws that are particularly good for humankind, such as self-preservation, marriage and family, and the desire to know God. He taught that reason also helps people understand evils such as adultery, suicide, and lying. While natural laws apply to all humankind and are immutable, human rules can change over time, place, and circumstance. Aquinas defined this latter type of law as "decrees for the common good" issued and enforced by rulers or governments. However, he cautioned that humans are not bound to obey laws they create themselves, as opposed to natural laws.

In social life, human nature is both that of a subject of society and a product subject to the laws of society. Later, Marxist-Leninist theories also addressed human nature, with Aquinas's view of human nature as the exercise of human rights and the human struggle for freedom and happiness. Today, living well is the process of understanding social relationships and behaving according to the laws of society in order to survive. Humanity is evolving; science, economics, law, and ethics are changing, and education, scholarship, science, and knowledge are the goals. Aquinas's limitation is the emphasis on clarification in social life and the belief in the eternal law, the law of nature that is, according to the law of God. That shows his objective idealistic view. But he also contradicts himself when he thinks that man's direction, the nature of man, is because man has trained to have a good nature. From Aquinas's study of human nature, it is shown that for young human nature to be good; it is necessary to: *Firstly*, each country, socio-political organization, and every person must fight against injustices to satisfy human rights such as the right to freedom, democracy, happiness, education, health, culture, art, and philosophy; *Secondly*, people need to educate to develop comprehensively. They need to be fair in accessing information and knowledge to understand the nature of society and realize their tasks in development and Social development; *Third*, the development of 4.0 technology helps people realize their capabilities and abilities more deeply. So it is necessary to educate people in association with science and technology so that people can connect. Real and virtual spaces to understand each other and build a good society together.

Human nature requires faith: faith in religion, faith in culture, faith in the fairness of the law, faith in moral goals, faith in science to fight evil, and even ancient, outdated beliefs in building good things for humanity. At the same time,

human nature needs faith in the change and development of society and faith in good things so that people can constantly strive and work towards a more civilized, ethical, and emotionally richer and happier life, because each of us aims for a happy life, full of good things, scientific knowledge, and trust between people to build a human rights, free, and democratic state. Therefore, as science and technology develop, they provide the foundation for people to have more modern, rational thinking and enhance their cognitive abilities.

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Correction Notice: Minor revisions have been made to the Methods section and reference citations to improve clarity and ensure consistency between in-text citations and the reference list. These corrections do not affect the study's findings, interpretations, or conclusions.