

Moral Living from the Perspective of Thomas Aquinas

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Abstract

Introduction: Ethical living is a lifestyle in which all areas of human existence and work are formed and flow around ethics. That is, a person who wants to live morally, in all areas, tries to know the ethical considerations related to that area and follow them in practice and live according to them. The current article is research on the moral system of Thomas Aquinas with a focus on examining the nature of the moral goal of human life and the moral rationality of such a life.

Material and Methods: The present review study examined bioethics from the perspective of Thomas Aquinas in a descriptive manner. In order to achieve this goal, articles related to research keywords from Thomson Information Institute, Science Direct and Pub Med were examined and books related to the views of Thomas Aquinas were studied.

Conclusion: The results of this study show that according to Thomas Aquinas's view on man, becoming like God and realizing God's image in material life and seeing God in the hereafter is the moral goal and eternal happiness of man. Also, Thomas Aquinas believes in the moral rationality of such a life from both perspectives – having a reason to live morally and the usefulness of such a life.

Keywords: *Thomas Aquinas, Moral living, Moral rationality.*

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INTRODUCTION

Living morally, the goal and purpose of living morally, and the question of why or the cause of living morally, which is interpreted as moral rationality, are among the important issues that are discussed in the philosophy of ethics. The origin of these topics in the history of philosophy goes back to great people such as Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Kant, etc. In this article, we intend to examine this issue from the point of view of Thomas Aquinas. The discussion on this subject brings us into the field of ethics and moral theory of Thomas. In his moral perspective, Thomas is indebted to Aristotle's philosophy [metaphysics, ethics, and politics],

Augustine's teachings, the teachings of the Church Fathers, early Christian scholars and mystics, the Neoplatonists, and the teachings of the Bible itself. It can be said that Thomas's moral theory has three basic pillars. The first pillar is to know the nature of man in the initial stage of creation. The second pillar is that a human being has a goal and a desirable situation towards which he must behave morally in order to reach that final goal. The third pillar is the path and the way in which taking a step will bring a person to his ultimate purpose and goal. This article has been written by focusing on the second pillar of Thomas's moral theory, i.e. the moral end of man and its cause, with references to the first pillar.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present review study examined bioethics from the perspective of Thomas Aquinas in a descriptive manner. In order to achieve this goal, articles related to research keywords from Thomson Information Institute, Science Direct and Pub Med were examined and books related to the views of Thomas Aquinas were studied.

DISCUSSION

Anthropology of Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas' view on the nature of man is an Aristotelian view in which man is a two-dimensional being composed of body and soul, where matter belongs to the body and form belongs to the soul. Instead of the sacred concept of man, which brings to mind the concept of something that comes from another spiritual world, Thomas uses the Aristotelian concept of the soul about man as an aspect of a living organism that is native to this material world [1]. From the point of view of Thomas Aquinas, in the universe, the human soul is at the boundary between different intellects, which are completely different and do not need matter, like philosophers, and forms that are completely included and need matter. Therefore, the human soul in its existence is neither completely separate from matter nor completely dependent on matter. At the same time, the concept of soul is broader than the concept of human soul, and in this context, it is: "The first bodily function with organs that is capable of performing vital actions. Therefore, the soul is a verb like any form and is not immediately known to us like any action. We infer the soul solely based on its works and prove it through rulings" [2].

It also seems that the Platonic- Augustine view denies the relationship between the soul and the body, according to which the essence of man is not composed of matter and form, but the essence of man is only the soul, which uses the body as a tool, like a captain in a ship. He accepts the

Aristotelian view of the soul as the form of the body and emphasizes the close union of the two. In this sense, there is no "physical form", but there is only one material form, namely the speaking soul, which is directly the form of the first matter and is the cause of all human activities in the vegetative, sensory and intellectual levels. Feeling is not the act of the soul that uses the body, but the act of something that is a combination of the two, in this way, we do not have innate concepts, but the mind is dependent on sensory experience in identifying itself [3]. In this sense, if one starts with the Platonic theory of the soul, the immortality of the soul is certain, but it is difficult to understand how the soul and the body are united. Whereas if one starts with the Aristotelian theory of the soul, he may come to the conclusion that he should give up on immortality, because the soul is so closely related to the body that it cannot survive apart from the body. But according to Thomas, because the human breath is a speaking breath and its powers do not dissipate when given to the body, therefore the human breath is permanent and immortal. And the proof of the immortality of the human soul implicitly implies the proof of personal immortality.

On the other hand, the view of Thomas Aquinas is completely opposite to the opinion of Origena, who believes that God created bodies only for the purpose of imprisoning sinful souls in them. According to Thomas Aquinas, the body is not only a prison of the soul, but also a servant and a tool in its service. The connection between the soul and the body is not a punishment or a punishment for the soul, but rather a relationship that causes good and happiness for the soul and through which the human soul can reach the highest level of perfection [2]. This is subject to the general metaphysical principle of the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas that something fewer perfect moves towards something more perfect - as its own end - for it, not against it.

According to this, matter exists because of form and body because of soul.

In this way, in the vision of Thomas Aquinas, man is a natural being, that is, a physical combination of matter and form - body and soul - which forms a true whole. In this state, an essential unity has been created between the body and the soul, which is called the essence of man. Reasoning in this case can be rightly attributed to humans. Here we are no longer dealing with pure reason, but with simple reason; That is, with a principle of reasoning that is weak in terms of substance and necessarily needs the body to perform its specific actions optimally [4].

The human soul is able to become all objects in a way due to having senses and intellect. In this sense, in the Christian tradition, it is said that the human soul is to some extent similar to God himself, the God in whom there are examples of all the righteous from the eternal covenant. Thomas mentions the human being as a person - with the gift of reason - which is one of God's works, in this sense he makes a divine image of man and believes that man is the most perfect image of God that can be seen in nature.

On the other hand, Thomas Aquinas, while accepting the original sin and its transmission to the children of Adam, uses this to explain the natural state of man and to explain the moral problems of man. The will of the natural man has been damaged by sin and has become weak and confused. For this reason, man cannot always follow reason in all things. According to Thomas, if there was no original sin, our will would of course be able to follow the commands of reason, but this is not the case. However, he believes that by performing the baptism ceremony, this problem will be solved and the ground will be provided for the advancement of man and the achievement of his real goal and happiness [5].

In the universe, in addition to the creative act, the result of which is the creation of beings from nothing, by God. in which the creatures

simultaneously receive a movement "that places them in a relatively independent existence and outside the existence of the creator, they also receive a second movement that brings them back to their point of departure" [2]. Man, as a rational being who is God's creation, is not exempt from this rule. Now, we have to see to which end these actions are oriented and to which destination they find a system.

Man's finality

Thomas Aquinas accepts Aristotle's principle of natural teleism and interpreted it as natural law and used it in his moral theory. Like Aristotle, he considers the goal as the origin of practical considerations and believes that moral rules are rules about how to reach and achieve that goal. Also, the practical evaluation criteria as good or bad is that which can lead to that desired end [6]. According to Thomas Aquinas, the complete order of creatures arises from a single cause that moves towards a single goal. In such a way that the origin of the system of moral behavior is similar and the same as the origin of natural laws. This means that the inner and inner cause that causes the stone to move downwards and the fire to move upwards, the heavens to rotate, and humans to will, are the same [2]. Therefore, all beings in the world, including humans, in addition to having an existential origin, also have an evolutionary goal and destination and are moving towards it.

The moral purpose of living

In fact, the ultimate end drives desire in the same way that the first drive drives all other drives. Therefore, it is necessary to check what is the ultimate goal of man and how man imagines his ultimate goal. According to the teaching of Thomas, the will is bound to join the good, that is, its ultimate goal. This necessity is the decisive and constitutive principle of its essence, and this matter is the origin of all human voluntary

actions. Because "what a being has, according to the requirements of its own nature and in an unchanging way, is necessarily the foundation and principle of all other things, including the characteristics of the actions in it. Because the nature of every object and the origin of every movement always resides in an unchanging principle." [2]. According to Thomas, there is only one subject as good, which is good and appropriate in all respects, and that subject is eternal happiness. There are many good things without which a person can be happy and they are not necessarily related to the happiness of a person, so the will naturally does not seek them. But there are also good things that have a necessary relationship with the eternal happiness of man. These good things are the ones that bring a person to his true happiness, as a result, the will of a person necessarily belongs to it [7].

According to Aristotle's point of view, the actions of every subject are for an end, and the actions of human subjects are aimed at achieving happiness. In fact, happiness is an activity that completes the highest power of a person, that is, his intellect, which oversees the highest and noblest goal of intellect. Therefore, according to his belief, human happiness is first of all "Theoria" meaning reflection and thought on the highest beings, and actually reflection on the immovable mover, that is, God [3]. Although this does not conflict with having other good things, such as friendship and, by maintaining moderation, external good things, but having them is also necessary for complete happiness. Therefore, the goal of Aristotelian ethics is a rational goal, but it should be kept in mind that the meaning of rational thinking in Aristotelian thinking is not a religious phenomenon like Plotinus' ecstasy.

On the other hand, Aristotelian "telos" is a moral activity that can be achieved in this world. In addition, in Aristotle's ethics, there is no mention of seeing God in the world. In fact, the important issue of human immortality and survival is raised

here, and Aristotle's attitude towards this matter deserves investigation. Finally, it can be said that a truly happy person in the tradition of Aristotelian ethics is a philosopher and not a saint. In fact, Thomas is aware that Aristotle explicitly determined the nature of human happiness; which is reflection and thinking or political action, is the survivor. Therefore, he tries more than Aristotle to determine what the first principles of ethics and politics are [8]. Thomas Aquinas agrees with Aristotle in this context that man has a purpose like other creatures and the purpose of human behavior and actions is rational in some ways. But it seems that the point of gravity of his moral theory is very different from Aristotle. From the point of view of Thomas, only the voluntary and voluntary acts and actions of man, which come from him as a speaking and independent being, are placed in the field of ethics. Thomas, in agreement with Aristotle, believes that the human will belongs to the general good, and the complete satisfaction and happiness of a person is achieved in achieving the general good, that is, happiness. As a result, happiness is the goal of human moral life in the moral teaching of Thomas. But what is happiness?

Human happiness from the point of view of Thomas Aquinas

Since happiness is the end of human will power, according to Thomas, human desire for happiness is self-evident and asking for a reason for it causes astonishment. Thomas is the heir of Aristotle and Augustine in that happiness is the goal of human life, and concepts such as duty and moral obligation were not emphasized by Thomas.

Thomas Aquinas uses the word Felicitas, which is a synonym of the word perfecta beatitudo, and the Aristotelian word eudaimonia, to discuss the ultimate good and happiness of man. According to some thinkers such as John Finnis, Thomas's

moral philosophy is based on Felicitas, and the correct understanding of this word helps us to understand Thomas's moral philosophy correctly. Felicitas is derived from the Latin word Felix meaning happy, blissful, and useful. which was considered a condition of happiness and prosperity in the ancient Roman culture, which was revealed by God [9].

In Thomas' view, the end always corresponds to the origin, so if we know the origin of an object, we will certainly know its end. The absolute good is the goal of all beings, and the only good that is superior to the external world and can have the position of the goal is God. And each of these beings, with their own actions, strives only to realize and reach their own perfection, and in this way moves towards the realization of their own goal, which is the manifestation of being God: Every creature wants to be like God with the desire for perfection [2]. In the case of man, who is a being with the gift of free will, which means reason and will. It can be said that the desire that God has given to man by creating him is not only a natural desire, but it is a desire that is suitable for the nature of the will, as a result, besides being similar to God like other creatures, man is also His image. Therefore, God is the true goal of man and he must strive to reach this goal. It seems that Thomas Aquinas does not mean the ultimate goal or happiness, the study of happiness and its possession, which is completely dependent on the ego, but he means something in which happiness is located. Good happiness does not belong to the self, but is outside of the self and infinitely above it: so "happiness is related to the self, but it is located in something outside the self" [10].

The moral rationality of living

The question of the rationality of moral life is, on the one hand, the question of the reason and why of human life. In other words, why should we search for our moral goal and achieve it, and on the other hand, the question of the cost-benefit of

moral action is to achieve this goal, in the sense of whether or not moral life is profitable and useful. In explaining and examining these questions and getting their answers, it should be said that the subject of ethics and moral affairs is the behavior and voluntary actions of humans, and humans are the only ones in the world whose actions can be attributed to being moral. Because man is the only material being that has reason and is a so-called talking animal. Intellect is the power that forms the level of perfection of the human soul. However, the human soul does not mean the intellect, and the intellect is only one of the powers of the human soul. The human soul has another power called the will, which is the result of the joint work of the intellect and the human will. Therefore, due to benefiting from reason and will, man has free will in performing his actions [11].

To understand free will from Thomas Aquinas' point of view, it is necessary to understand the relationship between reason and will in Thomas's thought. Intellect and will are both powers of the soul. Intellect's task is to perceive and surround existence and truth with regard to their totality, and the will has a desire for general good. In this sense, the intellect is higher and nobler than the will, because the object of the will's attention, i.e. good, is included in the object of the intellect, because the good requires existence - a good and desirable existence - and existence is the special object of the intellect. And the good truth that the will tends to is the same thing that the intellect understands. From this point of view, it can be said that it is the subject of absolute reason and the subject of relative will. On the other hand, since the nature of the powers of the soul is subject to their subject, as a result, if considered in itself, the intellect is superior and nobler than the will. In terms of the subject, reason is superior to will. Because the will and its subject are under the subject of reason, which is existence. On the other hand, if we consider the will in terms of the

totality of its subject, which is good, and if we consider the intellect as a special faculty of the soul, the relation of perfection is reversed. Because individual reason and intellectual knowledge and every subject of knowledge constitute partial goods that are included under the set of general good - that is, the subject of will. In this sense, the will is superior to the intellect and can be the stimulus of the intellect [2]. In this way, when Thomas says that reason and will mutually embrace and move each other, he means that reason moves will. Because the good that the intellect understands is the subject of the will and moves it as the goal. On the other hand, the will moves the intellect, because the powers that aim at the general end move the powers that aim at the partial ends.

The will moves the intellect and other powers of the soul towards their actions, except for the natural actions of plant life, which are outside of our free decisions. Here, the discussion of human actions and human free will and the morality or immorality of human actions is raised. According to the discussed material, it becomes possible to understand what freedom and agency are and the conditions of voluntary and optional human action, that is, moral action in Thomas's moral theory. Therefore, from Thomas' point of view, the human will is free from any restrictions and is not subject to any coercion. Second, human will is free from necessity. Therefore, human actions are reprehensible or deserve to be praised. Because by doing actions that we do not have the power to avoid, we will not be worthy of criticism or praise. In fact, if we do not have free will in any of our actions and are necessarily forced in our will, we will not be worthy of praise or criticism. As a result, according to Thomas, counseling and negotiation, persuasion and encouragement, moral teachings, punishments, praises, condemnations, and in short, all the subjects of moral philosophy immediately disappear and become meaningless. As a result, opinions that

lead to the elimination of value and worthiness and moral traits are against philosophy and anti-philosophy according to Thomas [2]. On the other hand, the denial of human freedom and agency has no reason other than man's inability to tame his sensuality, and looking for other reasons for it is entering the valley of sophistry and neglecting ignorance regarding the actions of the soul and the relationship between actions and their subject.

In this way, in Thomas's moral vision, the place of human agency and freedom is free will or free will. Free will is the same will with this mental distinction that will refers to a power that is the basis of all human agency, whether necessary - regarding the end, that is, happiness - or free - regarding the choice of means to achieve the end. According to Thomas' point of view, although man necessarily wills his end, that is, happiness, he is free to choose the means to achieve this end without being forced from outside or inside [12]. Therefore, from the point of view of Thomas, the freedom of man is due to the fact that he is wise and can rule based on the voluntary action of his intellect, unlike animals who instinctively seek good or ward off evil and harm. Intellect has the ability to examine various means to achieve its ultimate goal, which is happiness, and decide whether it should be chosen as good or whether it should be considered as evil and discarded. With this definition, it may be thought that freedom is related to reason and not to will, but Thomas believes that freedom is related to free will. Because free will is a force with which a person can decide freely, and that decision is the definite selection of a case that ends the consideration and examination of various cases. As a result, free will is actually the same will, but the will determines it not absolutely, but in relation to the intellect. In this case, the ruling belongs to the intellect, but the freedom of the ruling is directly related to the will [12]. In this way, it should be said that Thomas's view of free will is rationalistic.

In Thomas' moral theory, every human being is a person. A person is a person with the gift of reason. The origin of this concept was not Aristotle's philosophy, but it seems that Thomas got this concept from Roman law. In Thomas's thought, the concept of person implies a certain class of individual jewels who are distinguished from other jewels because they are in control of their actions. These jewels own their actions and are in control of what they do, they are not only affected by the actions of others, they also act and have an effect, in other words, this type of jewel is both passive and active. In this case, each of these jewels is directly and to the highest degree the cause of each of the separate actions that they perform. Therefore, in Aquinas's thinking, there is nothing superior to a person in nature as a whole, and a person means the being that is the most perfect in nature [13].

In this way, man is a person, that is, he is a distinct essence and essence that owes only the act of his existence, and as a rational essence, he is the autonomous center of activity and the source of his decisions. Apart from this, "it is his act of existence that creates every human being with the double privilege of being a mind and being a person." Everything he wants, everything he does, arises from the same action by which he is what he is. Personal ethics means "in which a person will feel himself to be both the lawgiver and the judge and the subject of judgment of good and bad law. A law that is enacted only in the name of the requirements of its own reason, enforces it, and prescribes its punishment" [2]. So, in the view of Thomas Aquinas, man is considered as a rational being. But on the one hand, this intellect considers itself dependent on its own origin, and on the other hand, it considers itself determined by the objective conditions of its action. In fact, it is metaphysical knowledge that imposes this limitation on reason.

On the other hand, according to Thomas Aquinas, a virtuous habit is provided through the

repetition of good actions, and it facilitates the performance of subsequent actions to achieve the same goal. On the other hand, the law and standard of human actions - whether they are good or bad, right or wrong - is reason, and reason is obliged to guide human activity towards its goal. Since practical reason recognizes good as the goal of human behavior, the first principle of practical reason is that "one should do good and avoid evil." Human good is something that befits his nature, something that he, as a rational being, has a natural desire for - such as a natural desire to preserve his existence, a natural desire to reproduce his kind and raise children. On the other hand, as a rational being, he has a natural desire to search for the truth, especially about God, which is necessary to achieve the goal of mankind, and reason dictates that man should search for this truth. This requirement comes from reason, which is directly based on human nature, in this sense, the moral law is rational and natural, and not arbitrary and based on natural law, which is based on human nature itself.

From the point of view of Thomas Aquinas, the moral responsibility of man can never be removed from man. Because morality is based on natural law, and we have an eternal intellect that naturally guides us towards good, which is our natural desire towards our actuality and our worthy end. That is, we understand what is good and evil with the light of natural reason. This is nothing but the role of divine light in us. Even original sin, according to Thomas, does not cause goodness to completely disappear from human nature. In addition, Thomas Aquinas believes in the special grace and mercy of God which is embodied in Christ and through him includes other people who believe in him and through that the human nature is improved. As a result, a person is the moral agent of his actions and responsible for those actions [14].

As a result, since according to Aquinas, human will is naturally oriented towards goodness and

happiness, and his intellect can also reason about his actions and behavior, human actions and moral behavior are voluntary and optional. And living ethically is a natural thing, that is, it is in accordance with the natural law that governs the world and the creatures of the world, including humans. And on the other hand, living morally is a rational matter because we naturally have reason that calls us to live morally.

Therefore, if we consider rational living to mean having a reason for moral action and behavior, Thomas believes in moral rationality, firstly because man is a rational being and his moral action and behavior is in the domain of his voluntary and rational actions. The other two are that, from the point of view of Thomas Aquinas, a person must become virtuous, i.e. become moral, in order to reach his goal and happiness, both his worldly happiness and his hereafter happiness [15].

Also, if we take the question of the rationality of living morally in the sense of whether the rational choice of moral life has any benefits and does not cover the sufferings of living morally or not? The answer should be found in the goal of moral living. Regarding the natural rational ethics that Thomas took from Aristotle and believes in, it should be said that the purpose of this ethics is for man to reach his natural good and goal, which is worldly happiness. And this is possible only through becoming virtuous through practical wisdom. So, in the thinking of Thomas Aquinas, from the point of view of worldly happiness, being moral is not only rational but also necessary. It is very likely that achieving this type of happiness will not be easy and comfortable, and it is accompanied by hardships and sufferings that are necessary and necessary to achieve this type of happiness. And according to Thomas Aquinas, it is valuable as long as it is in line with the goal and eternal happiness of man.

On the other hand, Thomas Aquinas believes in a higher level of happiness for humans, which is

called eternal happiness. In the vision of Thomas Aquinas, apart from the worldly happiness that he has due to his material nature, a higher and higher happiness is also considered for him in the religion of Christ and accordingly in the moral system of Thomas Aquinas. From this point of view, the goal and happiness of man is divine vision, which, according to Thomas, man can achieve this happiness only through religious virtues such as faith, hope, and divine love, grace, and mercy. Achieving this happiness will never be easy and it is accompanied by many sufferings and hardships, and stepping on this path will not result in material and social benefits in this world. But because the goal is valuable and great, such a life is worth living and it is worth for a person to endure all these hardships and difficulties to achieve that great goal.

Of these, superiority is with the happiness of the hereafter, but this does not mean that worldly happiness and natural morality are unimportant, but it seems that rational natural morality is the foundation and prelude to the happiness of the hereafter, and in this sense, it is necessary and important.

CONCLUSION

From the examination of Thomas' position regarding the moral goal and moral rationality of man, we find that man is the most perfect form of God that can be seen in nature. A single cause is both the origin of the existence of the universe and the system that governs it, and it is also the goal of all the creatures of the universe, including human beings. On the other hand, in addition to natural inclinations, human beings have an intellectual desire called will, which belongs to and is the subject of good that is identified by reason. The special and special end of man is what is the main subject of the will. According to the doctrine of Thomas, the absolute good means that God is the goal of all beings, including humans, and reaching this absolute good - the

vision of God - is the true happiness of man, which can only be achieved in life after death. Since only the voluntary and voluntary acts and actions of man, as a speaking and independent being, are placed in the field of ethics, and the will of man belongs to the general good, that is, happiness, which the complete satisfaction and happiness of man depends on achieving. So, achieving happiness is the goal of human moral life in the moral teaching of Thomas Aquinas. Also, because man has the benefit of reason and will, he is independent in performing voluntary actions and is the real subject of his moral achievements.

Regarding moral rationality in the moral tradition of Thomas Aquinas, we are faced with two questions: 1) Is living morally a rational thing, meaning do we have a reason to act and behave morally? The answer to this question according to the moral teaching of Thomas Aquinas is that, on the one hand, man is a rational being and his moral action and behavior is in the field of his voluntary and rational actions. On the other hand, a person must become virtuous in order to achieve his goal and happiness, and this is possible through moral life. 2) If what is meant by the rationality of living morally is the calculation of cost-benefit, does the choice of living morally have any benefits and does it reduce the sufferings of living morally or not? The answer to this question should be found in the goal of moral living. Since in Thomas's moral theory, the goal of moral life is to achieve happiness, as achieving it is worth any cost from the human side, so the benefit of being moral is more than its cost. Therefore, we can conclude that Thomas Aquinas believes in moral rationality in both senses.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues (such as plagiarism, conscious

satisfaction, misleading, making and or forging data, publishing or sending to two places, redundancy and etc.) have been fully considered by the writers.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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