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# Saint Thomas Aquinas Theories on Man, Society, Government, law and Applicability of these ideas in the Administration of Nigerian Secondary Schools

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## ABSTRACT [ENGLISH/ANGLAIS]

Saint Thomas Aquinas, a genius of intellectual, a great theologian a philosopher and a great writer was an Italian monk of noble birth who lived in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. His writings discussed God, man, life and almost everything about the society. This article focused on saint Thomas Aquinas teaching about man as a political being, on law and its application of on Thomastic teaching and administration of secondary schools in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Thomas Aquinas, Thomas's ideas, applicability in school administration

## RÉSUMÉ [FRANÇAIS/FRENCH]

Saint Thomas d'Aquin, un génie de la propriété intellectuelle, un grand théologien philosophe et un grand écrivain était un moine italien de noble naissance qui a vécu au 13<sup>ème</sup> siècle. Ses écrits discuté Dieu, l'homme, la vie et presque tout sur la société. Cet article porte sur saint Thomas d'Aquin enseignement sur l'homme en tant qu'être politique, le droit et son application sur l'enseignement et l'administration Thomastic des écoles secondaires au Nigeria.

**Mots-clés:** Thomas d'Aquin, les idées de Thomas, l'applicabilité de l'administration scolaire

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## INTRODUCTION

St. Thomas Aquinas was an Italian Monk of a noble birth, who lived in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, during the era of great intellectuality. He lived according to the quest of the period because he was a highly learned man. St. Thomas, a genius of intellectual, a great Theologian and Philosopher, wrote many books and articles among which were Summa 1-111 [1, 2, 3]. In his writings he discussed about God, man, life and almost everything about the society.

This article discusses his teachings about man as a political being, and its application in the administration of secondary schools. St. Thomas' teachings are contained in Summa 1 of 1, 11 of 1, Summa 1 of 11, 11 of 11, Summa 1 of 111 and 11 of 111. Thomastic theory and teachings as regards politics were down to earth. St. Thomas wrote as if he lived in the 21<sup>st</sup> century [4].

Though he was never an administrator himself (for he refused the election as an Archbishop) he served in many commissions and was often consulted on administrative matters of his Religious order – Dominican order. St. Thomas follows the Aristollian doctrine that makes a man a political being/animal but modifies it in accordance with his Christian Philosophy or Theology.

## SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS POSTULATIONS ON MAN

He teaches that man is naturally a political being and as such seeks to live in the community or society. He goes on to teach that man is basically a political being endowed with speech and intellect, therefore man is also a social being. Aquinas believes that man must live in the community or society for the purpose of a common good and brings people to live together under one ruler.

He says that ruler must do everything possible to promote the interest of all humans living together. All those who live in the community must promote a common interest and unite under a common front to fight a common enemy. He said that help should come from every angle of the society to foster unity, strength and protection. Aquinas went further to say that God has endowed human beings with intelligence which he denied the animals. God has given instinct to animals to use in life.

According to Aquinas in J. Bourke [5]

*'This is clearly a necessity of man's nature. For all other animals, nature has prepared food, hair, as a covering, teeth, horns, claws as a means of defence or at least speed in flight, while man alone was made without any natural provisions for these things. Instead of all these man was endowed with reason, by the use of which he could procure all these things for himself, by the work of his hands. Now one man alone is not able to procure them all for him for one man could not sufficiently provide for life unassisted. It is therefore natural that man should live in the society of many people.'*

The fact that man operates not by instinct but by reason makes social organizations indispensable. This interdependence of sociability is as explained by St. Thomas in the quotation above. What lower animals perform spontaneously and instinctively human beings achieve as a result of rational processes since human beings were intended to live as political and social beings [6]. They alone have been endowed with the capacity to speak. Speech is the specific communication of rational beings. Animals have been denied the ability to speak. Nature has so distributed tasks to different members of the community.

St. Thomas states further that a community is made up of different people who comprises of statesmen, artisans, soldiers, farmers and others. In a Thomastic state, a society can function well if only nature produces people who are physically strong, some intellectually keen and others fearless. He believes that nature will continue to supply the society with such all that is needed to make the people comfortable and viable.

Aquinas taught that God is the maker and first ruler of all states. Aquinas ideas about the community of human beings or the state are not different from those of today [7].

## THOMAS AQUINAS TEACHING ON LAW

Thomas Aquinas teaching on law is contained in the first part of the second part of the Summa. The question on 'how' comes up again in the second part of the second part of Summa. A comparison of the two is very illuminating. In his teachings St. Thomas has left us a detailed treatise on law. In the first place, St Thomas was interested in deriving morality and legality from eternal law. In the second place, his intention is more judicial. He tries hard to present a theory that embodies Aristotle's teaching and at the same time reconciles some of the well-known contrasts with the natural law [8].

Aquinas postulates that the morally good action is that which is conducive to man's attainment of his ultimate end which is final happiness. He is convinced that all men are naturally inclined toward this happy end but the problem lies in the prudent selection and the proper use of right actions that will land man successfully to that end. The key things therefore are to make good choices and the successful completion of these choices.

Aquinas teaches that God has created the universe and the men in it. So since God continues to exercise His providential care over all things Aquinas believes that God has given an eternal law to man which is the highest and ultimate standard of moral good and evil. The law is in the mind of God. Part of this law was revealed to man in the form of divine positive law found in the scripture for example the ten commandments handed down to Moses for man.

The natural moral law comes to everyone through his participation in his natural environment. Everybody has a sufficient awareness of what is good and bad for human beings to enable them live in community. Some kinds of actions are judged generally good because they tend to perfect man's powers and contribute to the public welfare. Others are eternally evil or bad because they are self-abusive, malicious and selfish. Conscience is a practical judgement made by human understanding. Man can easily violate his conscience. Such an act is contrary to an honest judgement of conscience is evil. Moral virtues play an important role in Thomistic Moral Theology. The basic virtues on the natural law are prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice. The cardinal or supernatural virtues are faith, hope and charity. The Angelic Doctor teaches that moral virtue are habits of the intellect, will make the agent capable of doing what is good, more easily, promptly and accurately, vices are also moral habits, but bad ones. As habits these qualities increase man's capacities for good

or ill. On this point, Saint Paul in his epistles especially to the Romans states that the good we want to do, we do not, while the evil we want to avoid is what we do. There is natural law in every human being. This is conscience. Sometimes, we know what to do but cannot do it [3, 7].

Many moral actions and their opposed vices are discussed in the second division of part two of the Summa of Theology. By saying that a ruler must govern in accordance with the laws and that state laws must be derived from natural law, St. Thomas proclaims that legality is conditioned by morality, and moral conduct is regulated by reason [4, 5]. Reason proceeds from principles which God implants in every man and his fundamental principles constitute what is called natural law. The natural law is the source of the norms of moral virtues mentioned above. Justice especially when properly formulated and promulgated, constitutes the civil codes of a state or society.

### ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL

Edem [9] states that administration involves planning activities that aim at the fulfillment of the goals of an organization. They state further that educational administration is a branch of public administration. They described educational administration as being essentially a service activity through which the fundamental objectives of the educational process may be fully and efficiently realized. It is geared towards the attainment of goals of education.

Administrator was described [10] as a coordinator who has to organize activities in such "a way that things must work smoothly, quickly and effectively". He does this in order to get the goals and objectives of the organization fulfilled. His functions involve effective planning, organizing, supervising, controlling, evaluating, communicating and decision-making. Administration therefore is coordinating, organizing, directing, utilizing the entire human and material resources to achieve a minimum goal the school community, an administrator must do all in his powers to make all at his disposal to produce effective teaching and efficient learning. The overall aim of education in Nigeria is to turn out trained personnels to contribute to the growth and development of the country. Nigeria has made education a huge instrument for national development [11].

Thomas Aquinas proposed a ruler for the society. The school is a society of its own with all the administrator

and subordinate. Let us look at a Nigerian secondary school. Nigerian system of education now is 9:3:4. It is known as Universal Basic Education with nine years supposedly in the primary school, three years in senior secondary and four years in tertiary.

At all levels of education in Nigeria the teacher aims at producing a democratic patriotic and self-reliant individual. According to the National Policy on Education [11, 12], Secondary Education is the education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage.

The broad goals of secondary education shall be to expose the individual for useful living within the society, and higher education. In specific term, secondary education shall:

- a. Provide all primary school leavers with the opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of sex, social status, religious or ethnic background;
- b. offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and future roles;
- c. provide trained manpower in the applied science, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades;
- d. develop and promote Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of world's cultural heritage;
- e. inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence;
- f. foster national unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity;
- g. raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, appreciate those values specified under our broad national goals and live as good citizens; provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development.

To achieve the stated goals secondary education shall be of six years duration, given in two stages, a junior secondary school stage and a senior secondary school stage, each shall be of three years duration.

### POSSIBLE APPLICATION ON THOMASTIC TEACHING ON ADMINISTRATION

St. Thomas advocates for a strong ruler preferably a Monarch who could take good care of everyone in the society for the common good. The school is a micro society and a society in itself whose young people are socialized for the good of the community – Dukehain.

Can Thomastic ideas and teaching be applied in secondary school administration especially in Nigeria?

Administration has been conceptualized to mean the use of human and material resources by the administrator to achieve maximum profit for that organization. In the school system he uses all the people and all the material resources at hand to produce effective teaching and efficient learning. The overall educational goals in Nigeria are to turn out responsible men and women who will be useful to themselves, their families, the Nigerian society and the world at large. Nigeria is using education as a huge venture for national development. The school administrator or the school principal uses the autocratic leadership style, democratic style or Laissez faire style of leadership. Autocratic leader does the following:

- i. dictation of all policies and procedures with little or no group participation in decision making;
- ii. the imposition of tasks and method on the subordinates;
- iii. an absence of effective communication between the leader and the group;
- iv. nagging and suspicious brooding on the part of the leader [9].

An autocratic administrator is task oriented but does not care about individual needs of the community. He does his own things alone without consultation. He takes decisions alone because he hardly calls for meetings. He rarely delegates powers. He hardly therefore has a large following. When he is absent from school there is a big vacuum, because nobody covers duty for him.

In the words of Edem [9]

*A democratic leader supports all social activities which give strength to the feeling or personal dignity and self-respect among the followers. It permits self-expression, creativity, and group interaction.*

This type of leadership is interested both in the community and personal needs of the staff and students. In the school where the principal uses democratic leadership style, he takes decision with the rest of his staff. He cares for staff matters as well as official ones. He delegates duties to his staff and students love him and cooperate with him maximally.

The Laissez-faire type of leadership is marked by indecision, indifference and hesitation. Edem [9] describes the principal with Laissez-faire and administrative style as one whom seldom has a clear vision of organizational goals and develops no policies. This type of leader puts up 'I don't care' attitude to duty to the detriment of the school activities and performance

by his staff and students. He goes to work irregularly. His staff and students too come and leave school at any time they like. Nobody cares to maintain peace and order. This type of ruler or administrator does not fit into Thomastic description of a leader who is for the common good of the community.

Thomas Aquinas would have recommended a democratic type of leadership with a little autocratic type. He prescribed a Monarchy only because he did not want to see a chaotic situation in the community. He wanted the society to be peaceful, stable with the ruler and everyone contributing to the common welfare. In the Nigerian secondary school community a principal with a democratic leader style is highly recommended.

The principal, vice principal, head teachers, teachers, senior prefects, and non-teaching staff will work hard for a common goal i.e. to teach effectively and learn efficiently. Students will learn, work as a team and take their places to develop the nation. Aquinas suggested the society should have communal living. Thomas Aquinas postulates that in one community people must be diverse in nature. He cited the statesman, the artisan, farmers and so on. He says everybody should contribute for the welfare and growth of the society. The secondary school community has principal, vice principal, heads of teaching and non-teaching departments, senior students, junior students, cook, librarian etc. All these people play their parts for the achievement of school goals and to enjoy one and another in the community.

He declares that the school society should not be self-sufficient and so needs help from outside the school. The parents are very important in the administration of schools in Nigeria. The PTA should form a strong group to participate in every secondary school administration. Individual philanthropies can be encouraged to send donations in cash and kind to schools located in their community, be the school public or private. Medical team of doctors and nurses should render service intermittently to the school.

Aquinas advocated for strong laws. The schools should have rules and regulations. He agitated that conscience should guide every member of the community so that all will dwell in peace. In fact everybody should be guided by discipline. Discipline according to Ada [13] is "the training of the mind and character such that the person so trained forms and shows acceptable habits".

If the climate is not conducive for teaching and learning, the aims and objectives for which the school has established will not be achieved. Since a lot of

indiscipline abound – like lateness to school, absenteeism, and examination malpractice and so on, all those vices must be curbed for the growth of the school. In addition some legal advisers must be sought to work with the school.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

St. Thomas Aquinas teachings about God, man, government and law have been reviewed. About government Aquinas postulates that God is the maker and first ruler of all states. He says that man is a social and political animal whom God has endowed with speech and intelligence to live in the community in solidarity with one another under a strong ruler.

The author has attempted the application of Thomistic ideas about mass, government law and others in the administration of Nigerian secondary schools. Thomistic idea of a society has fitted into a secondary school community, which is micro of the entire society. His recommendation of a united society under one ruler seems to have gone well with a school principal, using a democratic leadership style of administration.

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### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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