The Affiliation between Religion and Aesthetics from the Perspective of Thomas Aquinas in the European Middle Ages and its Reflection in Italian Architectural Works

Abstract

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of beauty and taste as well as the philosophy of art. With the collapse of Christian theology in 12th and 13th century Europe, the tendency of society at that time to Aristotelian rationalism amplified. In the meantime, a Christian Saint named Thomas Aquinas attempted to promote the teachings of Christianity with Aristotelian rationalism in order to prevent the decline of Christianity. The current research, which was carried out in a descriptive-analytical manner, seeks to investigate the connection between religion and Aristotelian philosophy from the perspective of Thomas Aquinas and its influence on Italian architecture. Studies have shown that Thomas Aquinas transformed and completed Aristotle's philosophical thoughts within the framework of Christian teachings, and finally, he reconciled the Christian faith with Aristotle's philosophy. Aquinas make an attempt to create a rational and tangible face for the socio-political events of that time which arose from the practice of the church and its politics. According to Aristotle's philosophy, there are two actual (divine) and potential intellects. Relying on this philosophy of Aristotle, Aquinas knew that Christian religious teachings emerge from the actual intellect, that is, God, from which human rationality is an inspiration. In fact, Thomas Aquinas believed in two knowledge systems: the divine system based on faith and the philosophical system based on human reason. The aesthetics of Italian architecture is divided into two categories: external (symbolic) and internal (identity). In the external domain, it is divided into factors such as light and color, and in the internal domain, it is distributed into factors such as religion and culture.

Research aims:

1. Recognizing the relationship between religion and aesthetics from the perspective of Thomas Aquinas in the European Middle Ages.

2. Investigating the influence of the relationship between religion and aesthetics in Italian architecture.

Research questions:

1. What is the affiliation between religion and aesthetics in the thought of Thomas Aquinas?

2. What effect did Thomas Aquinas' views on aesthetics and its connection with religion have on Italian architecture?

Keywords: Satire, painting, poetry, Safavid era, culture.

Introduction

The problem of conflict between reason and religion was one of the first problems that arose in the field of human thought. In the meantime, for the 13th century European, one of the meanings of philosopher was irreligious; It means a philosopher who was a rationalist believes that someone who was born before Jesus, could not know the truth of the Christian faith. The situation of Plato and Aristotle was also similar to this as Aristotle was considered an atheist. Also, it did not occur to them that a person who is a philosopher could also be a saint. Thomas Aquinas, who is considered one of the greatest Christian theologians and philosophers, believed that reason has almost perfect harmony with religion and faith.

Aquinas expressed the most systematic and penetrating solution to the problem of faith and reason. In this system, a link is established between Aristotle's philosophy and Christian revelation, as found in the holy books and interpreted by the church. According to Aquinas, the ultimate good of human nature is in the pleasure of meeting; however, it is not possible for us to realize this in this world since our thoughts are based on sensory data. However, we can transcend the limitations of the senses in ways that other creatures cannot. Our intellect can abstract from sensory data and accept the existence of a higher realm; thus, at the same time that the intellect cannot reach the root of the supernatural being, existence can prove its being; hence, divine truths can be obtained through philosophical reflection. The second way in which we can achieve the vision of God is the way of revelation, which is accessible to both those who can and cannot engage in philosophical reasoning. Aesthetics as one of the intellectual concepts was considered in the

viewpoints of Thomas Aquinas. The reflection of this thinking in the intellectual and cultural atmosphere of Italian architecture can be deliberated.

Examining the background of the present research shows that there has been no independent work in the field of writing in this regard. Unquestionably, some works have investigated Aquinas's thought on medieval art. An article titled "Comparative study of the influence of St. Augustine's and Thomas Aquinas' opinions on the painting art of the middle Christian centuries" was published by Rajabi and Hosseini (2017). In this work, the authors argue that in the Middle Ages, under the influence of Aquinas's ideas, art took on a worldly essence, and parallel to this issue, the human body was created based on perfect and transparent proportions. Conversely, in this work, there is no declaration regarding the influence of Aquinas' opinions on the architecture of this period.

Conclusion

Thomas Aquinas, a saint of the church, by combining the ideas of Aristotle with the teachings of Christianity, premeditated and completed with acute awareness, took the initiative in the field of medieval philosophy and the church, and changed Christianity from its untainted and unquestioning acceptance. At the same time, the prevailing atmosphere in the society of that day was platonic and neo-platonic, with the penetration of rationality and rationalism and its integration into the teachings of Christianity and the justification of these teachings with Aristotelian rationalism, they attempted to regain the credibility of the church and Christianity and prevent the decline of the Christian community of the time. Aquinas had an exceptional interest in Aristotle's thoughts and referred to Aristotle's logical and philosophical reasons in his treatise. The main basis of Aquinas's theory can be seen in his renowned treatises, particularly the "Higher Theology". After the initial faith in revelation, reason can justify the ways that God has placed on the path of man. Aquinas' theory is aimed at the natural and rational way of organizing social life in such a way that man can achieve the natural goals of life in the public arena (in society and politics). Aquinas's moral and political insight against understandings based on absolute governments or theocratic governments is actually a confirmation of the rational legitimacy of government based on human law. Aquinas was an optimistic thinker who believed in man's ability to organize his social and political life. Aquinas, by referring to ancient Greek philosophy, especially Aristotle, influenced by Ibn Sina's and Ibn Rushd's interpretations of Aristotle, and by benefiting from the achievements of Roman legal studies. Finally, by being inspired by the religion

of Christ and the studies of Christian sages, Aquinas was able to take political thought to a new course and this was the starting point of the new age transformation in Europe. Aquinas was able to create a new system in theology that made possible the combination of reason and Sharia. It was at this time that Thomas Aquinas, among the other Dominicans of the 13th century AD, based on Aristotle's thoughts, presented a dissimilar interpretation of the Neoplatonic metaphysics that dominated the church in the Middle Ages and opened the way for modern wisdom in the following centuries. Neo-Platonists believed in general forms independent of individuals and that understanding the truth depends on achieving these general forms. Conferring to them, there is no path from the world of individuals and perishable sensory (experiential) life to the eternal and perpetual world of truths of general forms. The duality between the mortal body and the immortal soul is a reflection of the duality of the sensory world (individuals) and the world of general forms. With the Aristotelian interpretation of general forms, Thomas Aquinas found it possible to access them through the abstractions of individual reason. According to him, the human mind can reach the understanding of general forms by analyzing individual phenomena and resorting to the process of abstraction. The result of this new approach was giving importance to empirical observations and legitimizing reason for abstract conclusions from these observations. The Aristotelianism of Thomas Aquinas actually prepared the ground for the development of modern scientific approaches. Aquinas believed that philosophy and theology are not only not in conflict with each other, but complement each other to reach the truth. From his point of view, human knowledge is a large set of a hierarchical system, at the base of which are the sciences, above the disciplines of philosophy, and at the peak is theology. Revelation, which is the watcher at the top of the pyramid of knowledge, does not cause human values and truths at the base of the pyramid to disappear and become irrelevant. Philosophy moves on the basis of principles discovered by reason; moreover, theology draws its inspiration from devotional revelation. These thoughts of Aquinas can be seen in the principle of appropriateness and application of painting in medieval architecture.

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