

RE, Philosophy and Ethics (RPE) –

Closure work for Year 9

Continuing with this topic on the Philosophy and Ethics of Relationships, you are going to understand what it means to be human, according to a religious person. Then, you are going to investigate what St. Thomas Aquinas, a Philosopher, said about what it means to be human.

Tasks

1. Read the knowledge
2. Summarise the knowledge in your notes
3. Create an information page (could be a mind map/ learning diagram/ poster) about St. Thomas Aquinas' Natural Law.

Make sure you include:

- a. Who St. Thomas Aquinas was
- b. What his theory says
- c. Example of how it could be applied to real-world situations (if you're struggling, think about: not looking after the environment, not going to school, contraception)

What it means to be human

Religious ideas about humanity usually include the belief that God created all human beings. Many religious people see a human being as a combination of a body and a soul. All religions value human life and believe that it always deserves respect.

Sexuality

Human beings are a combination of different characteristics. These include:

- the **physical**, or bodily
- the **spiritual**, or what goes beyond the body to give a deeper sense of existence
- the **emotional**, which guides the way a person responds to situations, eg anger, hatred
- the **mental**, which is how a person's mind works and responds
- the **sexual**, which deals with sexual instincts, physical attraction and sexual interactions with others.

All of these aspects are fundamental to someone's personality. Each person has a different type of combination, but everyone has some element of each aspect. Sexuality is as important to the individual as any other of these features and it never leaves the individual.

Heterosexuality

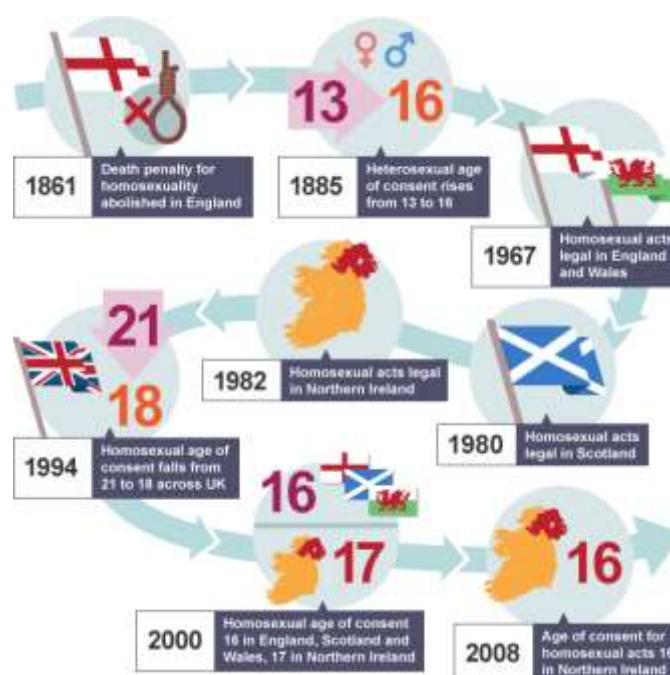
'Hetero-' is a Greek prefix meaning '**different**'.

Heterosexual is the word to describe people who are sexually attracted to people of the opposite gender.

Homosexuality

'Homo-' is a Greek prefix meaning '**same**'.

Homosexual is the word used to refer to people who are sexually attracted to people of the same gender. Men who are attracted to each other are often referred to as gay men and females who are attracted to each other as lesbians.



Aquinas' natural law

Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas was a Catholic priest, philosopher and theologian who lived from c.1225-1274.

Thomas Aquinas developed an ethical theory known as natural law. The purpose of ethical theories is to help people to make moral decisions about various issues they may face in life.

Five Primary Precepts

Aquinas stated that there were certain fundamental laws set by God and that humans should follow these laws and apply them to decision making throughout life. These laws are:

- self-preservation
- continuation of the species through reproduction
- education of children
- to live in society
- to worship God

He called these the Five Primary Precepts, and from these developed secondary precepts which are to help people live by the five primary ones.

Example

Taking the primary precept of 'continuation of the species through reproduction', a secondary precept of this would be that contraception is wrong, because it prevents reproduction.

Interpreting Aquinas' natural law

People have different ways of interpreting Aquinas' natural law.

Catholics take an absolutist approach. They believe that the rules should always be followed, no matter what, eg they do not agree with the use of any type of contraceptive.

Other Christians, such as the Church in Wales take a more relativist approach. They believe that natural law should not be seen as a set of rules that can never be broken, but more as guidance for people to use their human intelligence to decide what is right and wrong in each situation. In this case there could often be circumstances where using contraception could be considered the most responsible thing to do.