

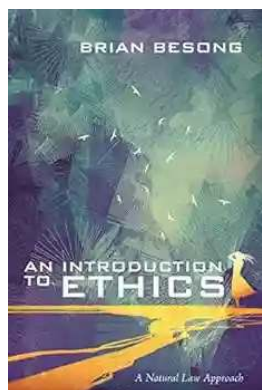
# An Introduction To Ethics: Natural Law Approach

Have you ever wondered what guides human behavior? How do people know what is right and wrong in various situations? Ethics is a branch of philosophy that aims to answer these questions. One particular approach to ethics is the natural law approach, which offers a unique perspective on moral decision making.

## Understanding Natural Law Approach

The natural law approach is grounded in the belief that there are objective moral standards that govern human behavior. According to this approach, there are certain fundamental principles that are inherent in human nature and can be discovered through reason. These principles form the basis for making ethical decisions.

Unlike other ethical theories that focus on consequences or emotions, the natural law approach emphasizes the importance of following universal and unchanging moral principles. It suggests that these principles are not simply man-made, but rather derived from a higher source, such as God or nature.



## An Introduction to Ethics: A Natural Law Approach

by Brian Besong(Kindle Edition)

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In the natural law approach, ethical decisions are based on what is seen as good for human nature and fulfill its purpose. It advocates for actions that promote human flourishing and allows individuals to reach their full potential. Conversely, it discourages actions that hinder human well-being or contradict the inherent purpose of human existence.

## **Principles of Natural Law**

Central to the natural law approach are the primary precepts, which are general principles that guide human behavior. These precepts include preserving life, procreation, knowledge, social order, and worshiping God. They are believed to be universal and applicable to all individuals, regardless of their culture or personal beliefs.

Secondary precepts, on the other hand, are derived from the primary precepts and vary depending on specific circumstances. For example, the secondary precept derived from the primary precept of preserving life could be "do not kill." The secondary precepts help translate the general principles into specific guidelines for moral decision making.

## **Strengths and Criticisms**

The natural law approach offers several strengths that make it an appealing ethical theory. Its emphasis on universality provides a foundation for ethical decision making that is not influenced by cultural or personal biases. It offers a clear and structured framework for understanding ethics, making it accessible to both scholars and everyday individuals.

However, the natural law approach does face criticisms. Critics argue that it assumes a divine source of moral principles, making it incompatible with secular perspectives. They also argue that determining objective moral principles is subjective and can lead to different interpretations and conflicts. Additionally, the natural law approach has been criticized for being inflexible and unable to accommodate changing societal norms.

## **Application of Natural Law Approach**

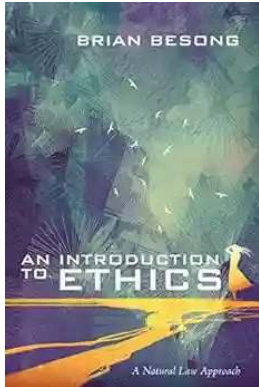
The natural law approach has been applied to various ethical dilemmas throughout history. It has influenced legal systems, political theories, and debates on contentious issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and capital punishment.

For example, proponents of the natural law approach argue against abortion, suggesting that it violates the primary precept of preserving life. They believe that since life begins at conception, terminating a pregnancy is morally wrong. On the other hand, critics argue that a woman's right to autonomy should outweigh the principle of preserving life.

In the context of euthanasia, the natural law approach is divided. Some argue that intentionally causing the death of a terminally ill patient contradicts the primary precept of preserving life. Others, however, believe that allowing terminally ill patients to die with dignity aligns with the principle of fulfilling human nature's purpose.

The natural law approach provides a unique perspective on ethics by asserting the existence of objective moral principles derived from human nature. It offers a structured framework for ethical decision making and has influenced various fields throughout history. However, it also faces criticisms for its reliance on subjective interpretations and inflexibility.

Whether one agrees or disagrees with the natural law approach, it remains an important ethical theory that contributes to the ongoing discourse on the nature of ethics and moral decision making.



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It is natural for us to wonder what should I do, and why? And although a combination of common sense and upbringing aids us in answering our questions, it is also natural for us to seek answers that are grounded in something deeper and more enduring than our personal dispositions and those of our parents. We seek a genuinely good life and the practical wisdom necessary to arrive at happiness.

In this to Ethics, Brian Besong presents a comprehensive and contemporary to the practical wisdom handed down to us by Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, and many others--a position now commonly called "natural law." Written as a beginner's guide, the book systematically explores a range of moral issues including moral knowledge, happiness, right and wrong action, and virtues, to name a few. to Ethics explains in a lively way how natural law provides principled and persuasive answers to our most fundamental moral questions.

"An to traditional natural law theory that is both philosophically substantive and accessible to a general audience has been badly needed. Besong's fine, clear, and welcome book fills the bill."

--Edward Feser, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Pasadena City College

"Besong accomplishes a truly impressive task: a clear, comprehensive, and at the same time brief to classical natural law ethics. Besong has an enviable ability to explain highly complex concepts in terms that undergraduates can understand."

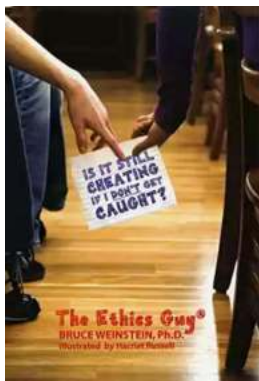
--Alexander R. Pruss, Professor of Philosophy and Director of Graduate Studies, Baylor University

Brian Besong is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Ohio Dominican University.



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