

# Aquinas on Natural Law

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“Law is nothing else than an ordinance of reason for the common good, promulgated by him who has the care of the community.”

[*Summa Theologia*, I-II, Q. 90, Art. 4]

# Kinds of Law

**Eternal:** That rational plan by which all creation is ordered. (The mind of God as seen by God.)

**Natural:** How humans participate in the eternal law. (The first principles of practical reason.)

**Human:** Positive laws that conform with natural law. (Devised by human reason, peculiar to geography, time, and social circumstances.)

**Divine:** Eternal law as it appears to humans (e.g., through special revelation).

# First Principles

## 1<sup>st</sup> Principle of Practical Reason

The good is what all desire.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Principle of Law

Good is to be done and sought after, evil is to be avoided.

# Kinds of Inclination

*qua substance*: Each substance desires the preservation of its own existence.

*qua animal*: Each animal desires sexual union, to care for the young, ....

*qua rational*: Each rational being desires to know the truth about God, to live in society, ....

# Humans are Special

All things seek their good, but humans alone are consciously aware of this good and freely direct themselves to the good that is peculiar to humans, rather than goods shared with other animals (such as sexual pleasure) or all beings (such as self-preservation).