

NEWS RELEASE

New book explores key ideas of natural law

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For immediate release

VANCOUVER—A new book about natural law, a philosophical and scholarly tradition that began during the era of Plato and was greatly expanded prior to the Enlightenment, was released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

The *Essential Natural Law* also includes a website and animated videos, which summarize key aspects of natural law in an accessible format.

“According to natural law, all humans possess reason and therefore all people, whatever their ethnicity, culture or religion, have the ability to know the difference between good and evil, right and wrong,” said the book’s editor Aeon J. Skoble, professor of philosophy at Bridgewater State University and senior fellow with the Fraser Institute.

Over the centuries, natural law has influenced the development of moral, political, legal and economic thought in the Western tradition.

Natural law scholars include Thomas Aquinas, the 13th-century philosopher and priest, who wrote the *Summa Theologiae*, which explored the relationship between manmade laws and natural law.

For Aquinas and other natural law scholars, the idea that all humans share an inherent morality provides a moral restriction on the power of the state and creates a rationale for people to disobey manmade laws that contradict natural law.

Indeed, according to natural law, when government enacts laws that contradict what people know to be “right”—say, a law that discriminates against certain people because of their gender, ethnicity or religion—people will rightly disobey the law because it’s viewed as unjust.

This view helped spawn many of history’s most important movements and moments including the United States Declaration of Independence, which cites the “unalienable rights” of man, the underground railroad that helped enslaved African Americans escape to free U.S. states and Canada, and many other rights movements worldwide including women’s suffrage in the United Kingdom and North America.

Throughout history, natural law scholars significantly contributed to the ideas that encourage free society and helped create the tenets of modern Western democracy—individual rights, justice and limited government—we enjoy today.

At www.essentialnaturallaw.org, you can download the complete book and individual chapters for free and view several short videos summarizing key points of individual chapters. The videos are also available on the Fraser Institute’s YouTube [channel](#).

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