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| **Natural Law** | |
| **Strengths** | **Weaknesses** |
| **Rational** – Natural Law uses practical reason, it is a common-sense approach. | **Too simplistic -** Humans do not have a single ‘fixed’ human nature. |
| **God -** Doesn’t require belief in God, as it is based on empirical observations of our nature. | **God -** Requires belief in God, as it relies on a God-given purpose |
| **Objective** – Natural Law gives us rules that are true independently of our individual thoughts and desires. | **Outcomes -** Leads to immoral outcomes e.g. not allowing contraception led to spread of AIDS and overpopulation in Africa |
| **Purpose -** The world has meaning, purpose and values. | **Purpose -** The idea of ‘purpose’ in nature can be explained by science (evolution and natural selection). |
| **Flexible** - allows for secondary precepts to vary according to culture, as they are the practical working out of the universal primary precepts. | **Cultural Relativism -** Neilsen questions the unchanging nature of Primary Precepts in Natural Law, using Cultural Relativism. Gareth Moore argues our nature is a product of culture and society. |
| **Double Effect** - gets around problems of conflicting secondary precepts. | **Double Effect** - brings in consequentialism through the back door. You are allowed to do some terrible things because of double effect, and at other times you can’t do really helpful things. |
| **Instinctive -** Natural Law’s rules are in line with our instincts and intuitions. | **Agape -** Jesus was opposed to legalism, and broke rules in order to do the most loving thing. |
| **Virtues -** Focuses on human virtues and excellence – the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude, and theological virtues of faith, hope and charity | **Too optimistic -** It has a too optimistic view of human nature. Augustine disagrees (original sin), as does Calvin (total depravity). |
| **Thriving** - Helps humans achieve health, happiness, friendship etc. | **Unholistic** - Vardy/Grosh – Aquinas’ view of human nature is unholistic and over-simplified |
| **All-encompassing** - There are issues not covered in the Bible such as Genetics. | **Unreliable** - Scripture is more reliable than reason, as reason leads to corruption. |
| **Human dignity** - Values human life highly. | **Consequences -** Doesn’t consider consequences. (Bernard Hoose and Proportionalism). |
| **Human Rights** - Protects the absolute nature of Human Rights. | **Conflicting rules** - As with any absolutist theory, what if two universal rules come into conflict with each other? |
| **Reliable -** Predicting consequences is not reliable. Natural Law gives us rules that we see in societies throughout the whole world e.g. Do not kill. | **Impractical** - Predicting consequences works, and is the best way of deciding what will do the most good. |
| **Absolute** - Our ‘post-modern’, secular society has lost all sense of objective values and truth. Pope Benedict calls this the ‘dictatorship of relativism’. | **Out-dated** - Natural Law is stuck in the past, enforcing traditional views that are out of touch with 21st century society. This leads to homophobia, intolerance of other cultures etc. |
| **Autonomy -** Natural Law allows the individual, using reason, to work out for themselves what is objectively right and true, not relying on religious authority, scripture or tradition. | **Naturalistic Fallacy**  - how we are is not the same as how we ought to be. Just because sex produces babies, this doesn’t mean that every act of sex *ought to be open* to procreation. |