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In this paper I will argue that the Natural Law Theory should be rejected. To do so, first I will introduce the Natural Law Theory. Second, I explain the Natural Law Theory's stance on abortion and homosexuality. Finally, I will indicate two of the flaws in the Natural Law Theory that call for its rejection.

The Natural Law Theory states that an action is right if and only if it is a natural behavior. The basic lines of thought behind this theory can be expressed in three parts. First, there is an order or purpose to the universe and that purpose is good. Second, all parts of the universe have a role in fulfilling that purpose. Third, you can fulfill this purpose by behaving naturally. Therefore, by behaving naturally, you are acting rightly. However, not everything you do naturally helps to fulfill your purpose, so not everything is moral. For example, it may feel natural to seek pleasure, but this behavior might not fulfill your purpose as a human being.

In order to understand and apply this theory, an important term to define is "natural". Unlike some definitions, this definition depends on our purpose in the universe, since it is our purpose that shapes our nature. Since different people think we have different purposes, there are multiple different definitions for the word. Some people believe that since humans are animals, our purpose is merely to behave according to our animal nature. As a result, behaving naturally means surviving and reproducing. Other people argue that since humans are different from animals—as we are capable of rational thought—our purpose in life may be to use our ability to reason to understand the "bigger picture" and discover the deeper

meaning of life. In that case, behaving naturally involves contemplating God, his plan, and our existence.

Now that the Natural Law Theory has been stated and defined, it can be applied to cases such as those involving abortion. According to the Natural Law Theory, is abortion moral? Unfortunately, we don't know the answer to that question, because the Natural Law Theory can be used to justify both sides of that debate. The pro-choice advocates might argue that since it is natural for a person to seek pleasure and avoid pain, it is right for a woman to abort a child that would bring more pain than pleasure. In response to this argument, a pro-life advocate would argue that simply because seeking pleasure and avoiding pain feel like natural behaviors does not mean they are fulfilling your purpose as a human being. If your purpose is to seek pleasure and avoid pain, then that premise is true, but if your purpose as a human is to reproduce, then your action is morally wrong. The pro-life advocate would therefore argue that since it is natural to reproduce, it is wrong to have an abortion. This argument is based on the belief that our purpose as a human is to follow our animal nature. However, a pro-choice advocate could easily retort that our purpose is *not* to follow our animal nature, in which case reproduction is not a natural behavior. Since our purpose is unclear, the morality of our actions is unclear, and therefore the Natural Law Theory can be interpreted in multiple different ways. Without knowing which purpose is correct, we cannot know which interpretation of the Natural Law Theory is correct. As a result, the Natural Law Theory cannot be used to handle cases involving the morality of abortion.

Another interesting debate is that surrounding the morality of homosexuality. Alas, the Natural Law Theory's stance on homosexuality is the same as its stance on abortion: unclear. A supporter of homosexuality might argue that since it is natural to have sex with someone if having sex is what you would both like to do, it is right to have sex with that person. This argument does not mention the sexualities of the people involved, because they are irrelevant to the morality of the act. Instead, whether or not you have sex with someone should depend solely on whether or not having sex is what you both desire. If you would *not* like to have sex with someone, then it would be unnatural and therefore wrong to do so. However, if the desire to have sex were mutual, then that action would be natural and right for you both to do. An opponent of homosexuality, similar to an opponent of abortion, would question the purpose of the action. Again, just because it feels natural to act a certain way does not mean that that action fulfills your purpose as a human being. If your purpose is to seek pleasure, and having consensual sex with someone creates pleasure, then that action is right, but if your purpose is to reproduce, following your animal nature, then having sex for pleasure instead of for reproduction is morally wrong. It follows that an opponent of homosexuality would argue that since it is natural to reproduce, it is right to have sex with someone with whom you can reproduce (i.e. someone of the opposite gender). As in the abortion example before, this argument is justified by a purpose to follow your animal nature. But again, if our purpose is not to follow our animal nature, then reproduction is not considered natural or right. Additionally, a supporter of homosexuality might point out that this argument does not justify heterosexual sex in general. For instance, this argument

does not justify having sex for reasons other than reproduction or having sex while using contraception, and this argument does not apply to people who are infertile. Plus, this argument does not mention other factors of sex such as mutual desire. As a result, a man who rapes a woman with the intent of impregnating her would be performing an act that is morally right, because that act would foster reproduction. Since rape is never right, this argument is not sound. So what does this mean for homosexuality? It means that, again, the Natural Law Theory cannot be used to determine the morality of this topic.

Ultimately, the Natural Law Theory is flawed. The first flaw is that we do not know (or cannot agree upon) what our purpose in life is (or if we even have one). It could be to follow our animal nature or our rational nature; to do whatever is innate or whatever all or most humans have in common; or it could be something else entirely. Consequently, we do not know which definition of “natural” to use in our arguments. It could be natural to survive and reproduce, to seek pleasure, or to do something else. Thus we do not know if we are applying the Natural Law Theory correctly. And if we are misinterpreting the Natural Law Theory, we are acting *wrongly*. To avoid this ambiguous situation, it might be better to play it safe and avoid the Natural Law Theory all together. But what if the Natural Law Theory was not so ambiguous? What if we knew our purpose in the universe? Perhaps the first problem would be solved, but another problem would remain. The second flaw of the Natural Law Theory is that an action’s naturalness does not necessarily make that action right. For example, according to our animal nature, it is natural to be selfish since selfishness helps us survive, but acting selfishly is not right because we

live in a society that values generosity amongst other things. This means that either the Natural Law Theory is false because it conflicts with another moral value, in this case generosity, or acting selfishly is *not* wrong. If the latter is true, the Natural Law Theory can be used to justify actions ranging from using all the hot water in the shower to robbing a bank!

In conclusion, although the Natural Law Theory is simple and seemingly easy to follow, its vagueness about our purpose in the universe allows situations to be interpreted in multiple different ways, making the law inconsistent amongst different people, and the Natural Law Theory claims that all natural acts are good when many natural acts conflict with other moral values. These flaws may not indicate that the Natural Law Theory is false, but they do strongly suggest that it be rejected.