

# Eternal law and human law

Law



Eternal Law and Human Law As humans live in this world, laws and regulations are strictly enforced for the justice, safety, and rights of the humans. Whether those laws are eternal or temporal, all laws require standards. Saint Augustine's *On the Free Choice of the Will* discusses these standards and defines what each laws mean. Most importantly, Augustine argues that eternal law is necessary for temporal law to exist and for the nation to function properly. I agree with Augustine's argument on the necessity of both eternal law and human law and the belief of how temporal law is based on eternal law.

According to Augustine, eternal law is a law that is just, unchanging, and follows the proper ordering and reasoning. This eternal law is also what the ordering of everything is based on. He also believes that when one pursues his or her life based on eternal things, such as truth, knowledge, and love, then they are living a life under eternal law. However, if one decides to live a life of desire for temporal things, such as money, possessions, and physical appearances, then they are living under a temporal law where their happiness will not last long.

This law, which is interchangeable with human law, makes a nation well ordered, where the people are allowed to designate officials with their own choices and obtain many other rights. Eternal and human laws proposed by Augustine are essential to society; though both essential, Augustine differentiates the two. Augustine explains that eternal law bases its standards on God and He is the ruler of this law; this law is the law by which God rules all creation. It can also be characterized as the "divine reason or

the will of God, a will which enjoins the natural order” (Fitzgerald & Cavadini, 583).

On the other hand, temporal law is subject to change in such instances as the election of a new president, or institution of new laws. While eternal law both regulates human affairs and governs eternal things, human law is solely limited to the regulation of human affairs. Eternal law is immutable and irreversible; there are no officials or a president to eternal law because God is the standard, and therefore it is unchanging. Eternal law is universally applicable where human law differs in between nations and countries, even tates. Though there are many differences between eternal law and human law, Augustine elaborates that eternal law is both necessary and crucial for human law to exist. He believes that what is considered just in human law is derived from eternal law. In other words, “ eternal law is the measure of the temporal law’s justice” (Dilman, 77). What is considered temporal may be revised in accordance with the changing circumstances of men and their social arrangements, but still remain just by the measure of eternal law.

Human law exists because eternal law is present to us right now in this moment. Augustine concludes that eternal law is just; therefore everything is ordered in the highest degree under this law. I agree with Augustine in that eternal law encompasses human law. Reading through Augustine’s *On Free Choice of the Will*, I was convinced that eternal law is unchanging because it is independent of the changing circumstances of men, but temporal laws are constantly changing as years pass by because we face new generations.

Therefore, there must be a boundary where temporal law can base on. And that boundary is eternal law. For clarity, an example of human law and <https://assignbuster.com/eternal-law-and-human-law/>

eternal law can be compared. A well-known law that everyone should follow is that of the legal drinking age. In the United States, the legal drinking age is 21, however, in other countries such as Mexico, the legal drinking age is 18. Human law is different between many countries and it is temporal because people in United States are raising their voices to lower the drinking age to 18.

Therefore, the legal drinking age law is subject to change as citizens are constantly bringing up this topic. However, in eternal law there is no drinking age but it is telling the rational human being to not to become addicted to drinking and to find healthier desires other than the consumption of alcohol. Under eternal law, drinking is not what life is all about; there are so many other significant tasks and experiences that human beings need to fulfill during their life times in this world.

Eternal law says to love eternal things, not what is a temporal joy. With this example, I am arguing that human law is based on eternal law because human law establishes the legal drinking age so that young generations can find what their true wisdom is before being introduced to worldly pleasures and find themselves lost without having realized the true purpose of their existence. To follow temporal law is to love the creature and the creation more than the Creator.

The desire for artificial and materialistic things will lead to discontent, both for the individual and the society as a whole. However, if all men loved only eternal things, then there would be no need for temporal law, which governs our daily lives. Therefore, temporal law is necessary to restrain the actions of those men who love temporal things. Temporal law is not meant to punish

men who do love temporal things, but is rather for the criminal actions that men commit because of their excessive desires for these things.

This all comes back to the idea that God created the universe and He is the man of eternal law, and we need to love him more than any other things in this world. Great benefits and blessings will be rewarded to those men that earnestly seek for wisdom, love, genuine virtues, and truth than to those men that live wrongfully longing only for wealth, lust, physical beauty and many earthly things. In conclusion, it is both crucial that laws govern society and important that laws order human choices and interpersonal relations.

But it is more valuable that eternal law governs these laws of society because it is always present, ultimate standard and suffers no exceptions. Therefore eternal law is necessary for human laws to exist and control the corrupted society for the better. Works Cited Dilman, Ilham. " Free Will: An Historical and Philosophical Introduction. " GoogleBooks. Routledge, n. d. Web. 19 Feb. 2013. Fitzgerald, Allan D. , and John C. Cavadini. " Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia. " Google Books. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. , n. d. Web. 19 Feb. 2013.