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The Natural Law Formula and the Missing Link: Tracing and Updating Aquinas' Methodology

Research dedicated to natural law usually analyzes the same commonplaces to deduce natural rules and natural rights. Recurrently it focuses its attention on some specific elements of reality (e.g., the human being, its possibilities, inclinations, and goods) in order to assess what should be achieved (e.g., happiness, the ultimate end, or human flourishing) and how it can be done. Observing how it proceeds, what kind of methods guides it, we discover that it connects these elements following similar patterns. The connection of these elements, as variables in a formula or links in a chain, is called here "the Natural Law Formula."

The first chapters explain the nature of the eight links of the chain and how they are intrinsically connected. It means that if we change one variable, the whole equation will change producing different results. The last chapters show how the formula can be used to arrive at several natural law conclusions. Works of the most influential natural jurists are reviewed, and those of Aquinas, where almost all the puzzles of the formula were completed and fit tightly together. Some mentions of human rights discourse, evolutionary biology, axiology, and other recent sciences that did not exist centuries ago are included.