



The Rule of Law, Human Dignity and the Future of Democracy

Reclaiming Justice Through Natural Law

By Barry W. Bussey

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Examines whether the rule of law can endure without its natural law and metaphysical foundations, arguing for a renewed, human-centered legal order grounded in objective moral principles and capable of addressing contemporary challenges such as AI, technocracy, and decolonization.

This book investigates the existential crisis facing the rule of law as it becomes increasingly detached from its historical natural law foundations. The authors collectively argue that a purely immanent or “truncated” legal system—one stripped of transcendence—lacks the moral authority to resist “toolkit” conceptions of law that treat legal systems as neutral social facts to be exploited for private interests. Through a historical lens, the text traces the shift from realist natural law to modern “reconstructivist” perspectives, questioning whether the rule of law can survive the current eclipse of the metaphysical. Contributions evaluate the limits of procedural natural law, noting that while it respects human agency, it remains insufficient without substantive standards of the “Good and the Right” to foster human flourishing. Further chapters analyze the grounding of positive law, arguing it should be derived from naturally knowable moral principles rather than special revelation to better accommodate pluralistic societies. Finally, the book envisions a “fourth era” of the rule of law, proposing a multivalent approach—informed by Dooyeweerd’s “sphere sovereignty”—to address global challenges like technocratisation, AI, and decolonization, ultimately advocating for a human-centered legal order.

Key selling points

Reclaiming the Rule of Law: Argues that law needs deeper moral foundations to truly protect human dignity

Law in an Age of Power and Technology: Confronts AI, technocracy, and authoritarianism with a human-centered vision of justice

Pluralism Without Fragmentation: Shows how shared legal principles can coexist with cultural and religious diversity

Justice that Restores: Calls for practical legal reform focused on truth, responsibility, and meaningful restoration

About the Author(s) / Editor(s)

Barry W. Bussey is a Canadian lawyer based in Peterborough, Ontario, whose scholarship focuses on law, religion, conscience, and human dignity.

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