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## Natural Law Liberalism

Liberal political philosophy and natural law theory are not contradictory, but – properly understood – mutually reinforcing. Contemporary liberalism (as represented by Rawls, Gutmann and Thompson, Dworkin, Raz, and Macedo) rejects natural law and seeks to diminish its historical contribution to the liberal political tradition, but it is only one defective variant of liberalism. A careful analysis of the history of liberalism, identifying its core principles, and a similar examination of classical natural law theory (as represented by Thomas Aquinas and his intellectual descendants), show that a natural law liberalism is both possible and desirable. Natural law theory embraces the key principles of liberalism; it also provides balance in resisting some of its problematic tendencies. Natural law liberalism is the soundest basis for American public philosophy, and it is a potentially more attractive and persuasive form of liberalism for nations that have tended to resist it.

Christopher Wolfe is professor of political science at Marquette University. He received his PhD from Boston College and has been teaching at Marquette University since 1978. His published books include *The Rise of Modern Judicial Review* (1986), *Judicial Activism* (1991), and *How to Read the Constitution* (1996). His edited volumes include *Liberalism at the Crossroads* (1994); *Natural Law and Public Reason* (2000); *That Eminent Tribunal* (2004); *The Family, Civil Society, and the State* (1998); *Homosexuality and American Public Life* (1999); and *Same-Sex Matters* (2000). Dr. Wolfe has published articles in many scholarly journals and in *First Things*, as well as book reviews and various opinion pieces. He is the founder and President of the American Public Philosophy Institute.

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