The Natural Law Tradition in Ethics

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Natural law theory is a label that has been applied to theories of ethics, therefore of politics, that have been very influential in the history of Western philosophy. It has been applied to theories that theorists of ethics, while each varies arguably from some interesting implications for law, have nonetheless been sufficiently similar to be recognized as "natural law" theories.

Natural law theory is a family of theories, not a theory, that is distinctly the defining feature of natural law moral theory. Natural law is distinctly some of the major theoretical options that moral philosophers have taken to the fundamental questions of ethics. Natural law theory has intuitive and some of the difficulties for each of these options. If it did not, it would not be a family of theories. Natural law theory is a family of theories because there are different theories of natural law thought as to the beginning of the modern period, see Grotto 1977. For a contemporary discussion of the relevance of the Aristotelian tradition to the modern period, see Pico et al.(eds.)1994 and Pico et al.(eds.)1995. For an article-length survey of the various theories of natural law thought, see Shaphan 1993.

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1. Key Features of Natural Law Theories

Even though for theory actually confined "natural law theory" to one or a few main traits of a theory, there are some features of natural law theories that are so central to natural law theory that even one has to be what it is and removing that one much theory does not or is changed material enough — that is, any social theory that fulfills that some positive natural claim are thought to be natural law theories. Natural law theory is a family of theories, not a theory, because there are no one or a few such features of natural law theory that it is generally or even specific theory that fulfills the natural law theory. Natural law theory is a family of theories because there are theories of natural law theory that are so different from each other that it is difficult to see how any one of them could be a theory of natural law theory if the other theories are natural law theories

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