

NATURAL LAW AND NOTRE DAME

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The University of Notre Dame Law School has again demonstrated its determined interest in leading the struggle to revest the natural law philosophy as the keystone of American jurisprudence. For, on December 10 and 11 of this past year, the University of Notre Dame staged its second annual Natural Law Institute. This year's two-day Institute was sponsored by Mr. Alvin A. Gould, of Cincinnati, Ohio. It was attended by more than six hundred jurists, judges, lawyers, legislators, philosophers, and others interested in searching appraisal and reaffirmance of the proposition that all American constitutional guaranties of liberty and freedom must rest ultimately in the immutable principles of a universal, unchanging moral philosophy.

This second Institute emphasized the historical roots of natural law theory in five distinct eras of world history. Five accomplished and scholarly lectures graced the proceedings. Professor Maurice Lebel, of Laval University, Quebec, gave the introductory lecture on Natural Law in the Greek Period. Professor Ernst Levy, distinguished teacher of legal history at the University of Washington Law School, presented a profound and scholarly dissertation on Natural Law in the Roman Period. Dr. Gordon H. Gerould of Princeton University followed with a sketch of natural law theory at the height of its early glory in the medieval period, and the famous legal and philosophical writer Heinrich Rommen concluded the journey into the past with his presentation of Natural Law in the Renaissance Period. The Institute was climaxed by a stirring address by Federal District Court Judge Robert N. Wilkin, of Cleveland, Ohio, on the present status of natural law in American jurisprudence. Dean Clarence E. Manion of the College of Law, University of Notre Dame, served as active chairman of the proceedings, which also included a short talk by Mr. Ben Palmer, of the Minneapolis bar, noted author and a lecturer at the first Natural Law Institute, held in 1947.

The consensus of those who attended the second Institute was that, unless one agrees with Hegel that we "learn nothing from history save the fact that we learn nothing from history," the proceedings were most stimulating and successful. The similarities and dissimilarities in the theories of natural law among many civilizations served to provoke fresh reflection among those who are apprehensively aware of the stage in civilization which we have reached. Attaining the scientific "know-how" by means of which he can destroy himself, Man seems to lack the moral force and law to prevent his own suicide. Notre Dame believes that these annual Institutes may help to correct, in some measure, that very grave deficiency.

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