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Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

RAWLS AND THE LAW

*William Michael Treanor**

Professor John Rawls of Harvard University, who died in November of 2002, is widely regarded as the most important political philosopher of the twentieth century, and his influence on legal thought was particularly profound. There have been a number of conferences or symposia on Rawls's individual books, such as *A Theory of Justice* and *Political Liberalism*, but, astonishingly, until the symposium presented in this issue of the *Fordham Law Review* was held in November 2003, no symposium or conference had focused on the implications of his work for the law. Simply because of its subject, then, this symposium was of landmark significance. Yet this symposium was remarkable, not simply because of its subject, but because it brought together an outstanding group of scholars whose papers grappled with the deepest implications of Rawls's work for the law.

This symposium was the third of a series of conferences on constitutional and legal theory at Fordham that began with our symposium on Fidelity and Constitutional Theory¹ and continued with our conference on The Constitution and the Good Society,² both of which also appeared in the *Fordham Law Review* and both of which have had an important influence on legal thought. Professor James Fleming, who organized the conference on Rawls and the Law, also organized these previous conferences. All of us at Fordham Law School—and scholars throughout legal academia—are profoundly grateful to Jim for his commitment to furthering discourse about the most fundamental questions of law, of individual rights, and of justice, for we are all beneficiaries of that great commitment.

It was an honor for Fordham to hold a conference on the work of John Rawls, a scholar so identified with justice and the quest to elaborate principles of justice. I am confident that the papers presented here will prove of great import and will help shape legal

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1. See Symposium, *Fidelity in Constitutional Theory*, 65 Fordham L. Rev. 1247, 1247-818 (1997).

2. Symposium, *The Constitution and the Good Society*, 69 Fordham L. Rev. 1569, 1569-2200 (2001).

debate for years to come. I am grateful to all of the participants, and particularly to Ronald Dworkin, whose wonderful keynote address was characteristically full of insight and vigor, and to the editors of the *Fordham Law Review*, whose tireless work made this remarkable book possible.