

account (p. 37). But it makes a world of difference. Focusing on the health deficit of disability distorts the analysis in a variety of ways.

As it happens, many people, even with severe functional limitations, incur no more medical costs than the average person. Moreover, making the blind see or quadriplegics run marathons is not what justice requires. Yet, since he restricts the disadvantage of disability to the medical sphere, this is precisely what Stein assumes. The “cure or amelioration” of disability (either in fact, or through compensation when impossible) is the aim of social justice. This points us in the wrong direction. Since impairment is not the sole, or even the major, source of the disadvantage of disability, cure or amelioration are not what justice requires. These goals distort the analysis since they immediately lead us to putative, but wildly counterintuitive, resource and welfare egalitarian demands, of the sort that the author happily uses to his advantage in his overall argument.

Secondly, the causes of the disadvantage of disability include social arrangements that are mutable and for which, arguably, we are all responsible. Impairments may be the result of “brute luck,” but the failure to accommodate functional limitations is not. More to the point, most of these social changes need not require the redistribution of staggering amounts of social resources. They may require change of attitudes, stereotypes, and other misperceptions, and they will certainly require political will and a reorientation of social planning. But none of this is simply a matter of moving resources around.

Altering social perceptions to respond to disability may, indeed, save money and social resources. Proponents of Universal Design insist that the built environment can be designed to accommodate a wide spectrum of functional capacities, not just the normal range. If, rather than spend whopping sums of money retrofitting our built environment, we design and build for a more realistically varied population of users, we will increase usability and save money in the long run.

Lastly, Stein’s characterization of disability forces him to confront an application of utilitarianism in the allocation of medical resources that is associated with Peter Singer (and worked out in detail by Peter Ubel in *Pricing Lives*, 1999). Because disability lowers welfare, the argument goes, a cost–welfare comparison between a normal person needing a new kidney and a person with a severe disability who also needs a kidney will favor the normal person, since we get more bang for our medical buck. Stein tries to duck the problem by suggesting that a policy of devaluing disabled lives would cause insecurity and social unrest, and so would not be an appropriate utilitarian option. But a far better response is that the belief that disability creates a massive welfare deficit is itself a social prejudice, not a medical fact.

Despite the trouble that Stein’s conflation of impairment and disability causes, he is an able philosopher and

might be able to recast his arguments against egalitarianism in light of a more realistic conception of disability. In any event, this is a sophisticated and well-thought-out book, and he has certainly elevated the discussion.

Natural Law Liberalism. By Christopher Wolfe. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 268p. \$75.00 cloth. DOI: 10.1017/S1537592707071745

— Aristide Tessitore, *Furman University*

Although natural law theory and liberal political philosophy signify two realms of thought typically regarded as at loggerheads, Christopher Wolfe’s provocatively titled book not only argues for their theoretical compatibility but also sets forth a new synthesis intended to furnish the basis for an inclusive American public philosophy at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Notwithstanding the fact that modern liberalism fought its way into historical existence as a radical alternative to political excesses sanctioned by traditional versions of natural law theory, Wolfe maintains that the political character of this initial confrontation has given rise to unnecessarily narrow and antagonistic understandings of the relationship between them. Natural law and modern liberalism are in fact products of two richly varied and complex intellectual traditions. By disentangling the essential features of natural law theory from the historical circumstances within which it developed, and by setting out the full array of political philosophies that constitute the tradition of liberalism, Wolfe advances a serious and thoughtful account of the way in which the objective moral principles of natural law can and ought to be reconciled with modern liberalism’s distinctive commitments to liberty and equality. By challenging the underlying premises of contemporary debate about the proper relationship between religion and politics, he opens a new and constructive path for future dialogue among often polarized and combative participants.

Natural Law Liberalism is divided into two major parts. Part One begins with an account of John Rawls’s influential “antiperfectionist” version of liberalism, and is followed by careful considerations of both the positive aims and characteristic blind spots of several prominent liberal theorists, all of whom in one way or another work within or enlarge the Rawlsian understanding of liberalism. Chapters on John Rawls, Stephen Macedo, Amy Gutmann, and Dennis Thompson bring to light the exclusionary tendency inherent in contemporary versions of liberalism by means of incisive analyses of the illusory aspiration to “neutral” versions of “public reason” and “reciprocity.” Chapters on Ronald Dworkin’s critique of paternalism and Joseph Raz’s position on trust and citizenship bring into focus contemporary liberalism’s utopian aspiration to individual autonomy. Part One concludes with a chapter entitled “Offensive Liberalism.” It is devoted to Stephen Macedo’s account of “liberalism’s transformative

ambitions,” primarily as they manifest themselves in a “liberal educative project,” which, Macedo forthrightly concedes, does and must inculcate liberal principles in its citizens (Macedo, *Diversity and Distrust*, 2000, pp. xi, 3). The chapter title bears especially on the problematic character of “liberal” public education: Wolfe contends that the right of religious believers to educate their children is increasingly confronted by “an offensive, crusading liberalism” (p. 113), one that poses “a significant threat to freedom” (p. 100) for many Americans (perhaps a majority) who adhere to religious views that are more traditional than those of the theoretical architects of contemporary liberalism.

Whereas the first part of the book is intended to reveal deficiencies in contemporary liberal theory that render it inadequate as a foundation for a truly representative public philosophy, Part Two seeks to establish a positive alternative, what Wolfe calls “natural law liberalism” (p. 131). He begins by placing the currently dominant expressions of liberalism into the broader historical context of political philosophies and political movements reaching back to the seventeenth century. This analysis culminates in the identification of five “core principles” (equal human dignity, consent of the governed, individual rights, effective limited government, and rule of law) and five strong “tendencies” (rationalist, reformist, individualistic, that which tends to promote either rational religion [natural theology] or secularism, and universalistic) that inform or animate most liberal thought. Wolfe provides a similar analysis of the natural law tradition by tracing its historical development, distinguishing different versions and “levels” of natural law theory, sifting out an underlying core agreement among them, and making a credible case that the core principles of natural law theory are not in fact hostile to liberalism’s central preoccupation with liberty. He goes on to show the ways in which natural law theory affirms the main “principles” of liberalism, offers qualified sup-

port for its primary “tendencies,” and helps to overcome many of contemporary liberalism’s blind spots. The book concludes with a chapter that applies natural law liberalism to the topic of religious liberty, and another that sketches the principled basis for a natural law public philosophy.

Wolfe’s writing is often spirited, consistently incisive, and unfailingly clear. He does not stoop to caricature, is uninterested in partisan wrangling, and confines his argument to the most important issues and problems of the day. Like the interlocutors he criticizes, Wolfe is primarily interested in the future health of liberalism, and he treats those with whom he disagrees with the kind of carefulness and seriousness that bespeaks genuine respect. Although he often expresses appreciation for their efforts and the concerns that underlie them, he does not dilute his criticisms and is frank in pointing to their failures. The result is a bracing engagement that is refreshingly direct without being combative.

Nevertheless, the book is bound to be controversial. Not only is it written from a religious perspective alien to the dominant sensibilities of the academy, but its effort to forge an as-yet-untrodden path also risks criticism from both sides of the dispute—traditional natural law theorists sharply critical of the excessively secular character of contemporary liberalism and contemporary liberal theorists impatient with the persistent unwillingness of religious traditionalists to relegate religion to the private sphere. The constructive ambition animating this book (and its promised sequels) is to provoke participants on both sides of the controversy to find a common middle ground in natural law liberalism. The book makes an important contribution to this end. The extent to which he succeeds in furthering the desired dialogue, however, will depend in large part on whether those whom Wolfe subjects to thoughtful and respectful criticism prove willing to return the favor.

AMERICAN POLITICS

When Movements Matter: The Townsend Plan and the Rise of Social Security. By Edwin Amenta. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006. 352p. \$35.00.

Challenging Authority: How Ordinary People Change America. By Frances Fox Piven. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006. 200p. \$21.95 cloth.
DOI: 10.1017/S1537592707071757

— Joseph E. Luders, *Yeshiva University*

Do movements matter? In particular, can they extract policy concessions from state actors? And if so, how? These questions have been the focus in recent years of a burgeon-

ing and exciting literature. For Frances Fox Piven, the answer to the question “Do movements matter?” is an emphatic yes. Indeed, she argues that the principal surges in egalitarian social change in American history can be traced directly or indirectly to the intervention of disruptive protest movements. For Edwin Amenta, the answer is also yes, but in a more qualified fashion. Together, these two works are brimming with insights regarding how movement impact might be understood.

In *Challenging Authority*, Piven argues that the fundamental basis of movement power is disruption, broadly construed, and its impact upon electoral politics. In their ability to interfere with the routine realization of elite interests, social movements can compel their unwilling targets to make concessions in order to assuage the