



RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Jesuits, the Social Question, and the Divide between Conservative and Progressive Neo-Thomists

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ABSTRACT

The French and Industrial Revolutions transformed Europe's political, economic, and social landscape, prompting the Catholic Church to revive Aristotelian-Thomistic principles, which led to the emergence of Neo-Thomism. In 1879 Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical *Aeterni Patris* urged the Church to apply Neo-Thomism to modern challenges. In 1891 *Rerum novarum* addressed the relationship between capital and labor, introducing social justice as a concept distinct from commutative and distributive justice. Focused on the social question, social justice lacked a clear definition, sparking an ideological divide within the Church. This divide influenced the Society of Jesus, whose members, with a tradition of advising on economic morality, applied Neo-Thomistic principles to new challenges. Shaped by their environments, some Jesuits adopted a conservative, paternalistic approach emphasizing order, individual liberty, and private property, while others advocated communal values, equitable wealth distribution, and harmonious capital-labor relations. This article examines six European Jesuit thinkers from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who addressed the social question through Neo-Thomistic frameworks.

Keywords:

Jesuits; Neo-Thomism; labor; social justice; economy

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“Let’s start by practicing justice, for without justice we cannot think of charity.”

—Father Alberto Hurtado Cruchaga, S.J. (1901–52)

The Social Question¹

The French and Industrial Revolutions fostered a divide between conservative and progressive tendencies within the Catholic Church and the Jesuit order. Political turmoil in Europe during the 1830s and 1840s, combined with the Long Depression of 1873, challenged the prevailing order, giving rise to the “social question.” Having originated in France after the 1830 Revolution and later spreading across Europe,² the social question was a “scenario of social and economic defects resulting from one-sided monetary capitalism, leading to the collapse of human society,”³ which threatened social stability. Changes in capital-labor relationships, driven by capital accumulation and technological advancements, made the social question urgent.

The social question introduced the concept of social justice, which governs relationships among individuals as social beings. Employed by Pope Pius XI in the Catholic Magisterium, social justice emphasizes human inherent sociability⁴ and represents justice *among individuals* in their social interaction, focusing on societal relationships. Although scholars have assimilated social justice into earlier Thomistic legal justice,⁵ even if combined with distributive justice,⁶ it has acquired a place of its own, especially as it relates to economic issues, as Frank Brown wrote: “Social Justice should establish a legal and social order which will give form and shape to all economic life.”⁷

1 To my parents, Voltaire and Gester, and to Hans, in gratitude.

2 Holly Case, “The ‘Social Question,’ 1820–1920,” *Modern Intellectual History* 13, no. 3 (2016): 765.

3 Joseph Biederlack, *Die soziale Frage: Ein Beitrag zur Orientierung über ihr Wesen und ihre Lösung* (F. Rauch, 1921), 1.

4 Stefano Solari and Daniele Corrado, “Social Justice and Economic Order According to Natural Law,” *Journal of Markets & Morality* 12, no. 1 (2009): 52.

5 Johann B. Schuster, “Das Verhältnis von Iustitia Legalis und Distributiva zur Iustitia Socialis in Quadragesimo anno mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Lehre von Heinrich Pesch S.J.,” *Scholastik* 11 (1936): 226.

6 Franciszek Janusz Mazurek, “Die Konzeption des gesellschaftlichen Solidarismus nach Heinrich Pesch,” *Jahrbuch für Christliche Sozialwissenschaften* 21 (1980): 93.

7 Frank Brown, “Catholic Social Teaching and Economic Science,” *Catholic Social Science Review* 1 (1996): 91.

However, achieving social justice was complex, navigating legal, political, economic, and philosophical obstacles amid turbulent historical circumstances, where conservative and progressive views often clashed even within the Society of Jesus.

The Jesuit Order and the Social Question

The Catholic Church sought to address the social question, with conservatives like Joseph de Maistre⁸ clashing with progressive thinkers like Félicité de Lamennais, founder of *L'Avenir*.

This divide also influenced the Jesuit order. Conservative Luigi Taparelli D'Azeglio's emphasis on order contrasted with Alberto Hurtado's views. Jesuits engaged in Catholic circles, sometimes shaping papal policies.⁹ Some advised Catholic entrepreneurial associations, while others supported labor unions.¹⁰ Over time general congregations developed a more consistent view of social justice.¹¹ But before that, several Jesuits would come to opposing views.

Neo-Thomism and the Social Question

Nineteenth-century Jesuits were deeply influenced by Scholastic thought. As Sándor Agócs noted, "Neo-Thomism became a refuge for the leaders of the Church who rejected the Revolution and the intellectual and social changes it introduced."¹² Whether in its purest form (as advocated by French Jesuit Billot)¹³ or modified by Suarezian ideas, Neo-Thomism shaped the Society of Jesus, providing a renewed doctrine of reason and faith to address these new questions.¹⁴ This was the result of a conscious effort from the top; Pope Leo XIII's *Aeterni Patris* (1879)¹⁵ explicitly urged

8 Thomas C. Behr, *Social Justice and Subsidiarity: Luigi Taparelli and the Origins of Modern Catholic Social Thought* (Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 25.

9 Behr, *Social Justice*, 35.

10 Samuel Fernández Eyzaguirre, "Base documental para el estudio de San Alberto Hurtado. Estado de la cuestión," *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia* 17 (2008): 314.

11 Daniel Cosacchi, "Jesuits and Social Justice," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 6, no. 4 (2019): 657, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22141332-00604005>.

12 Sándor Agócs, "The Road of Charity Leads to the Picket Lines: The Neo-Thomistic Revival and the Italian Catholic Labor Movement," *Church History* 42, no. 1 (1973): 30.

13 Oliver P. Rafferty, S.J., "Thomistic Revival and the Relationship between the Jesuits and the Papacy, 1878–1914," *Theological Studies* 75, no. 4 (2014): 752.

14 Ludwig Hödl, "Zur Wirkungsgeschichte der Enzyklika »Aeterni Patris« Leos XIII. in der deutschen Philosophie und Theologie," *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 30, no. 4 (1979): 242.

15 Hector Scerri, "The Revival of Scholastic Sacramental Theology after the Publication of *Aeterni Patris*," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 77, no. 3 (2012): 265.

the clergy to embrace Thomism. The appointment of Cardinal Mercier as head of the Higher Institute of Philosophy at the University of Leuven¹⁶ and the promotion of Jesuit Neo-Thomists like Franzelin and Kleutgen, co-ghostwriter of *Aeterni Patris*, reinforced this direction. At stake were longstanding issues, such as tensions between justice and charity, private property and taxation, and new issues like work relationships in an industrialized world and workers' rights.

Thomas Aquinas provided a general framework: private exchanges follow commutative justice, while distributive justice governs relations with authority, such as taxation. However, social justice demanded new answers, and Neo-Thomism did not ensure consensus. Differing backgrounds, experiences, and challenges shaped Jesuits' perspectives, positioning them on opposite sides of the social question.

The Social Question and the Conservative-Progressive Divide

Conservative Response to the Social Question

Classical liberalism initially shaped Catholic economic thought. Figures like François Xavier Joseph Droz, Charles de Coux, and Charles Périn viewed private property, markets, and capital-labor relationships through a liberal lens, advocating Christian charity to address excesses. Charles Périn consistently avoided the notion of social justice, seeing it as the same as commutative justice.¹⁷

Drawing on Frédéric Le Play's sociology,¹⁸ conservatives saw paternalistic associations as solutions to the working class's plight. Charitable organizations, like the *Société des amis de l'enfance* and the *Société de Saint Vincent de Paul*,¹⁹ united aristocratic and bourgeois families to provide material aid and promote workers' moral standards, rejecting undue state intervention.²⁰ These groups also served a spiritual purpose: charity was a path to salvation, encapsulated in the Vincentian motto "God as

16 Joeri De Smet, "Neo-Thomism at Leuven's Faculty of Law," in *Neo-Thomism in Action: Law and Society Reshaped by Neo-Scholastic Philosophy, 1880–1960*, ed. Wim Decock, Bart Raymaekers, and Peter Heyrman (Leuven University Press, 2021), 68.

17 Solari and Corrado, "Social Justice," 54.

18 Floreal Forni, Ada Freytes, and Germán Quaranta, "Frédéric Le Play: Un precursor de la economía social," *Serie Documentos de Trabajo* 1 (April 2003): 8.

19 António Almodovar and Pedro Teixeira, "The Ascent and Decline of Catholic Economic Thought, 1830–1950s," *History of Political Economy* 40, no. suppl. 1 (2008): 65.

20 Michael Walsh, "The Myth of *Rerum novarum*," *New Blackfriars* 93, no. 1044 (March 2012): 161.

goal and the poor as means.”²¹ French and German industrialists, like Léon Harmel and Franz Brandts,²² set the example in an “approach of the aristocratic stream of Catholicism” to solve the social question:²³ along with bettering the working conditions in the factories, Christian moral standards were enforced, such as attending Mass, avoiding alcohol, and upholding family life.²⁴

Progressive Response

Charity alone proved inadequate. During the lingering Long Depression of 1873, social unrest arose in the working classes.²⁵ In 1884 the *Association Catholique des Patrons du Nord* in the French city of Lille called for state involvement, just wages, and trade unions.²⁶

In 1886, responding to strikes in Liège,²⁷ Bishop Mgr. Doutreloux convened the first Congress of Liège, a gathering of progressive Catholic leaders like Adolf Daens, Antoine Pottier, and Léon de Lantsheere,²⁸ fostering a progressive agenda.

21 Peter Heyrman, “Catholic Charity and Public Poor Relief in Nineteenth-Century Belgium: Reconquest, Competition, Complementarity, Superiority,” *European Journal for the History of Medicine and Health* 79, no. 2 (2022): 262.

22 André Habisch, “Practical Wisdom for Social Innovation: How Christian Entrepreneurs Triggered the Emergence of the Catholic Social Tradition in Europe,” in *On the Economic Significance of the Catholic Social Doctrine*, ed. Jürgen Backhaus, Günther Chaloupek, and Hans A. Frambach, European Heritage in Economics and the Social Sciences 19 (Springer International Publishing, 2017), 175.

23 Stefano Solari, “Can a Catholic Be Liberal? Roman Catholicism and Liberalism in a Political Economy Perspective (1800–1970),” *Journal of Philosophical Economics* 16 (2023): 7, <https://doi.org/10.46298/jpe.9252>.

24 Peter Heyrman, “A Conservative Reading of *Rerum novarum* through a Neo-Scholastic Lens: The Jesuit Auguste Castelein (1840–1922) and the Belgian ‘Patrons Catholiques,’” in *Neo-Thomism in Action: Law and Society Reshaped by Neo-Scholastic Philosophy, 1880–1960*, ed. Wim Decock, Bart Raymaekers, and Peter Heyrman (Leuven University Press, 2021), 201.

25 Jon-Arild Johannessen, “The Long Depression: 1873–1893,” in *Innovations Lead to Economic Crises: Explaining the Bubble Economy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 90.

26 Florent Le Bot and Bruno Dumons, “Catholicisme social,” in *Dictionnaire historique des patrons français*, ed. Jean-Claude Daumas (Flammarion, 2010), 114.

27 Paul Gérin, “Les écoles sociales belges et la lecture de *Rerum novarum*,” in “*Rerum novarum*”: *Écriture, contenu et réception d’une encyclique*, 267, Publications de l’École française de Rome 232 (École Française de Rome, 1997), 269.

28 Kwinten Dewaele, “Neo-Thomism and the Debates on the Just Wage in Belgium (1879–1914),” in *Neo-Thomism in Action: Law and Society Reshaped by Neo-Scholastic Philosophy, 1880–1960*, ed. Wim Decock, Bart Raymaekers, and Peter Heyrman (Leuven University Press, 2021), 301.

Ongoing Tensions

Conservatives responded swiftly. Charles Périn, invited by Bishop Mgr. Charles Freppel of Angers, organized an opposing congress advocating against state intervention.²⁹ The battle between the Schools of Liège and Angers was intense, involving seminars, journals, and appeals to government and ecclesiastical authorities to influence papal decisions.

In 1891, Pope Leo XIII issued *Rerum novarum*, addressing the social question for the first time. Seeking a middle way using Thomistic categories,³⁰ *Rerum novarum* “sought a middle way for the Catholic Church.”³¹ However, this middle way seemed to leave many questions unresolved. Some viewed it as essentially conservative,³² while others saw it as partially endorsing progressive stances.³³ It emphasized that charity was beyond human enforceability³⁴ and described private property as “inviolable,”³⁵ but it also endorsed labor unions formed exclusively by workers.³⁶

Conservative and Progressive Jesuit Thinkers

This article examines six Jesuit thinkers: three conservatives and three progressives, shaped by their personal histories and the world they lived in. The late nineteenth-century unification of Italy pressured the Pontifical States and the Church’s temporal power of the Papacy.³⁷ This had a direct impact on some of the figures we will analyze, such as the influencing Italians Luigi Taparelli D’Azeglio and Matteo Liberatore.

Progressive thinkers faced different contexts. In a Protestant-dominated Germany after the *kleindeutsche Lösung* excluded the Austrian Empire, Catholics were a minority. Even earlier, figures like Wilhelm von Ketteler, Bishop of Mainz, defended the Church’s right to educate its

29 Heyrman, “Conservative Reading,” 209.

30 Bruno Pinchard, “*Rerum novarum*: Une encyclique néo-scolastique? La question sociale ou le déclin de la communauté,” *Publications de l’École Française de Rome* 232, no. 1 (1997), 207.

31 Jürgen Backhaus, Günther Chaloupek, and Hans A. Frambach, eds., *On the Economic Significance of the Catholic Social Doctrine: 125 Years of Rerum novarum*, European Heritage in Economics and the Social Sciences 19 (Springer International Publishing, 2017), 8.

32 Walsh, “Myth of *Rerum novarum*,” 158.

33 Guy Bedouelle, “De l’influence réelle de l’Union de Fribourg sur l’encyclique *Rerum novarum*,” *Publications de l’École Française de Rome* 232, no. 1 (1997): 242.

34 Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*, Encyclical (The Holy See, May 15, 1891), para. 22.

35 Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*, para. 49.

36 Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*, para. 15.

37 Karim Schelkens, John A. Dick, Jürgen Mettepenningen, and David Schulthenover, *Aggiornamento?: Catholicism from Gregory XVI to Benedict XVI* (Brill, 2013), 31.

members.³⁸ Later, under the new German Reich, the *Kulturkampf* pitted German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck against the Catholic world, leading to the creation of the *Zentrumspartei*.

Conservative Jesuits

Luigi Taparelli D'Azeglio, S.J. (1793–1862)

Luigi Taparelli D'Azeglio was without doubt one of the most important Catholic thinkers on economic and social matters.³⁹ Born in Turin (then Piedmont-Sardinia), he was the first rector of the *Collegio Romano* in Rome after its return to Jesuit control (1773–1814), he revised the curriculum to emphasize Aristotelian-Thomistic doctrines.⁴⁰ His controversial advocacy of Thomism led to his exile to Naples and Palermo in the 1830s. Returning to Rome,⁴¹ he led the Thomistic revival, founding a study circle on Thomas Aquinas's teachings that influenced Vincenzo Gioacchino Pecci, the future Pope Leo XIII.⁴² His *Saggio teoretico di dritto naturale appoggiato sul fatto* significantly shaped Neo-Thomistic doctrine.

A staunch advocate of order, Taparelli founded the conservative *La Civiltà Cattolica* in 1850,⁴³ following the 1848 social upheaval, which prompted Pope Pius IX to adopt a conservative stance, issuing the *Syllabus Errorum* (1864) and proclaiming papal infallibility (Vatican Council I).⁴⁴

From this notion of order, Taparelli developed his *Principle of subsidiarity*,⁴⁵ which emphasized the autonomy of midlevel organizations: contrary to the individualistic view of classical liberalism, he argued that man, far from alone, lives in society with and dependent on others.⁴⁶ This dependency generates bonds and associations on several levels of association, which he called *hypotactical associations*:⁴⁷ society is formed from

38 Martin J. O'Malley, "Currents in Nineteenth-Century German Law, and Subsidiarity's Emergence as a Social Principle in the Writings of Wilhelm Ketteler," *Journal of Law, Philosophy and Culture* 2 (2008): 23.

39 Almodovar and Teixeira, "Ascent and Decline," 70.

40 Behr, *Social Justice*, 33.

41 Behr, *Social Justice*, 35.

42 Behr, *Social Justice*, 35.

43 Solari, "Can a Catholic," 14.

44 Bernhard Knorn, S.J., "Johann Baptist Franzelin (1816–86): A Jesuit Cardinal Shaping the Official Teaching of the Church at the Time of the First Vatican Council," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 7, no. 4 (2020): 592.

45 Prior to Taparelli, we can see other Catholic thinkers elaborating on this issue, especially arguing for the independence and autonomy of family and other mid-level bodies. But it was Taparelli who first systematizes the notion of Subsidiarity in a coherent and all-encompassing manner.

46 Behr, *Social Justice*, 1.

47 Behr, *Social Justice*, 110.

the bottom up, starting from smaller groups (*consortia* or *consorzii*), which in their turn form broader, more complex entities (*deutarchies*), finally reaching the highest and most complex organizations (*protarchies*).⁴⁸ Each has a *hypotactical right* to act independently within its sphere if fulfilling its duties. If they fail, higher structures must intervene to assist but not supplant them.

Taparelli focused mostly on the negative aspect of subsidiarity, ensuring the Church's independence amid Italy's unification.

His influence on *Rerum novarum* regarding subsidiarity can be felt.⁴⁹ In it, Leo XIII, apart from defending midlevel organizations (as the medieval guilds),⁵⁰ highlighted the role of smaller entities within the state. Quoting Thomas Aquinas (*Liber Contra Impugnantes Dei Cultum et Religionem*), Leo XIII defended smaller entities:

Lesser societies and the larger society differ in many respects, because their immediate purpose and aim are different. . . . Private societies . . . cannot nevertheless be absolutely, and as such, prohibited by public authority. For, to enter into a society of this kind is the natural right of man; and the State has for its office to protect natural rights, not to destroy them.⁵¹

Further, immediately below in the same paragraph, Leo XIII said that there "are occasions, doubtless, when it is fitting that the law should intervene to prevent certain associations, as when men join together for purposes which are evidently bad, unlawful, or dangerous to the State. In such cases, public authority may justly forbid the formation of such associations, and may dissolve them if they already exist."⁵² The role of the state to intervene on the smaller organizations is clearly defined.

Another thing that marks Taparelli as a conservative is his interpretation of Thomas Aquinas's teachings regarding private property. Taparelli viewed private property as *ius naturale*, or natural right *stricto sensu*, in contrast with the common view that regards it as *ius gentium*.⁵³ In his *Saggio*, after criticizing Francisco Suárez's understanding of *ius naturale* and *ius gentium*, Taparelli related private property to man's freedom ("le proprietà private nascono dal dritto naturale per un fatto che all' individuo è

48 Luigi Taparelli, *Saggio teoretico di dritto naturale, appoggiato sul fatto*, 6th ed., vol. 1 (Spese Degli, 1857), 290.

49 Behr, *Social Justice*, 107.

50 Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*, para. 15.

51 Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*, para. 16.

52 Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*, para. 16.

53 Heyrman, "Conservative Reading," 211.

libero").⁵⁴ This reflects the ongoing debate in Europe on the matter and the efforts to counter the threat of socialism.⁵⁵

Taparelli's biggest contribution is his notion of social justice. For Taparelli, social justice stems from men's intrinsic equality (even in unequal relationships, like that of father and son, both individuals remain equal *as men*)⁵⁶ and sociability. Men do not live in isolation but in society; they form all kinds of associations (the *consortia*, *deutarchies*, and *protarchies*). To accomplish this, they create and develop social bonds, which give them not only rights but also duties, which do not end in the obligation of not doing harm (the old *alterum non laedere*), but of doing good.⁵⁷ Man, as son of God, recognizes in his fellow men his fellow brothers, which impels him to be (as the Bible would call it) "his brothers' keeper." These obligations result in social, not individual rights—the rights of man living in society. Social justice demands that the individuals do good to the other *on the basis of their subjective quality: fellow men in society*.

Subsidiarity and social justice—Taparelli's notions of order—center on the common good. In his *Saggio*, he stated: "Praise and sacrifice are therefore the first of the social means of cooperating for the highest common good."⁵⁸ He remains one of the most original thinkers of the nineteenth century, having developed a coherent notion of the new concept of social justice and updating the notion of subsidiarity and the importance of mid-level institutions.

Matteo Liberatore, S.J. (1810–92)

The Jesuit Matteo Liberatore, a conservative thinker, was born in Salerno, Italy, in 1810. He entered the Jesuit order in Naples during Luigi Taparelli's exile there, where Taparelli, directing the Jesuit College,⁵⁹ significantly influenced him.

The social and political upheavals of 1848 shaped Liberatore's societal views. He actively contributed to *La Civiltà Cattolica*,⁶⁰ for which he wrote numerous articles. His primary contribution to Catholic doctrine was drafting *Rerum novarum*.⁶¹

54 Taparelli, *Saggio teoretico*, 1:126.

55 Behr, *Social Justice*, 80.

56 Taparelli, *Saggio teoretico*, 1:112.

57 Taparelli, *Saggio teoretico*, 1:113.

58 Taparelli, *Saggio teoretico*, 1:82.

59 Peter Henrici, "Matteo Liberatore und Joseph Kleutgen, zwei Pioniere der Neuscholastik," *Gregorianum* 91, no. 4 (2010), 770.

60 Rafferty, "Thomistic Revival," 752.

61 Henrici, "Matteo Liberatore," 776.

His *Della Conoscenza Intellettuale* restored Thomism as a valid philosophical doctrine in the Church.⁶² Liberatore's views, however, were linked to classical liberal ideas of freedom of association based on freedom of choice, rejecting compulsory entry.⁶³ His early admiration for Adam Smith slowly evolved, but he later criticized Smith's "mechanistic" economic doctrine, developing a perspective akin to economic personalism.⁶⁴

Liberatore's views on private property were as conservative as those of Castelein and Taparelli. Perhaps due to his incomplete knowledge of the Scholastic tradition (he was a latecomer to Thomistic views), he seems to have been influenced by liberal (Lockean) approaches,⁶⁵ arguing in *Principles of Political Economy* that private property, traditionally characterized as *ius gentium*, should be considered *ius naturale*,⁶⁶ reinforcing private property's absolute and individualistic nature⁶⁷ and distancing it from Thomism's more communal character.⁶⁸ Liberatore puts special emphasis on the ownership of land ("permanently fruitful")⁶⁹ at a time when some, like Henry George, proposed to tax land comprehensively (the idea of the "single-tax").⁷⁰

As a ghostwriter of *Rerum novarum*, Liberatore's influence is clear. In his *Principles of Political Economy*, he wrote that "the right [of private property] is inviolable,"⁷¹ while in *Rerum novarum* he claimed that "The first and most fundamental principle, therefore . . . must be the inviolability of private property."⁷²

Despite his conservatism, Liberatore showed progressive tendencies on labor issues. In drafting *Rerum novarum*, he advocated for family wages,

62 Henrici, "Matteo Liberatore," 777.

63 Stefano Solari, "The Corporative Third Way in Social Catholicism (1830 to 1918)," *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 17, no. 1 (2010): 106.

64 Alejandro A. Chafuen, "Austrian Economics and the Social Doctrine of the Church: A Reflection Based on the Economic Writings of Mateo Liberatore and Oswald von Nell-Breuning," *Journal des Économistes et des Études Humaines* 13, no. 2 (2003): 5.

65 Paul Misner, "The Predecessors of *Rerum novarum* within Catholicism," *Review of Social Economy* 49, no. 4 (1991): 461.

66 Matteo Liberatore, *Principles of Political Economy*, trans. Edward Heneage Der- ington (Art and Book Company, 1891), 137.

67 Stefano Solari, "Roman Catholicism and the Founding Principles of Liberalism: Liberty and Private Property," *Forum for Social Economics* 49, no. 4 (2020): 425.

68 Dewaele, "Neo-Thomism," 298.

69 Liberatore, *Principles of Political Economy*, 146.

70 Backhaus, Chaloupek, and Frambach, *On the Economic Significance*, 8.

71 Liberatore, *Principles of Political Economy*, 134.

72 Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*, para. 15.

prevailing over Cardinal Zigliara, with whom he drafted the Encyclical:⁷³ *Rerum novarum* held that wages should “enable him [a worker] comfortably to support himself, his wife, and his children,”⁷⁴ echoing Liberatore’s *Principles*: “the natural price of a man’s labor . . . will suffice to maintain him and her and two or three little children.”⁷⁵ Unlike Castelein, who viewed state intervention in labor issues as socialist, Liberatore emphasized justice over charity.⁷⁶

Matteo Liberatore was very much a man of his time; like Taparelli, he was a staunch defender of order and, like Castelein, he defended the *ius naturale* of private property. But he also argued for minimum wages. His contribution as drafter of *Rerum novarum* renders him a distinguished place among Jesuit thinkers on social justice.

Auguste Castelein, S.J. (1840–1922)

The Jesuit Auguste Castelein, a conservative thinker aligned with classical liberalism, emphasized individual liberty. His life and work “sketch a broader panorama, with particular attention to the Jesuit order and the cross-border Catholic industrial elite of Belgium and Northern France.”⁷⁷ He wielded significant influence in Belgian Catholic associations. His conservative perspective was likely shaped by personal experience: the 1870 capture of Rome by Italian forces, which forced him to leave the city and return to Leuven, and the 1886 riots in Liège and other Belgian regions likely reinforced his aversion to revolutions.⁷⁸

Born in Menin, Belgium, in 1840, Castelein studied philosophy and theology in Leuven and Rome, respectively. The social unrest of 1886 convinced him to address the social question conservatively and prioritize order. As an alternative to the progressive School of Liège, Castelein helped organize the Congress of Angers, opposing Bishop Mgr. Doutreloux and Abbot Antoine Pottier.⁷⁹

73 Walsh, “Myth of *Rerum novarum*,” 161.

74 Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*, para. 15.

75 Liberatore, *Principles of Political Economy*, 181.

76 Misner, “Predecessors of *Rerum novarum*,” 462.

77 Heyrman, “Conservative Reading,” 230.

78 Heyrman, “Conservative Reading,” 206.

79 Jean-Pierre Delville, “Antoine Pottier and the Neo-Thomistic Roots of Social Justice,” in *Neo-Thomism in Action: Law and Society Reshaped by Neo-Scholastic Philosophy, 1880–1960*, ed. Wim Decock, Bart Raymaekers, and Peter Heyrman (Leuven University Press, 2021), 279.

A disciple of Charles Périn at the University of Leuven,⁸⁰ Castelein influenced Catholic industrial organizations in Belgium,⁸¹ advising the *Assemblée Générale* or *Association des Patrons et Industriels Catholiques de Belgique* (APIC),⁸² where he encouraged charity as a merely private, individual matter,⁸³ and rejected state intervention as a form of socialism.

On labor issues, Castelein opposed employees' rights to share in company profits or receive a family wage.⁸⁴ His liberal tendencies led him to focus on commutative justice for salaries.⁸⁵

Regarding private property, Castelein offered a conservative interpretation of *Rerum novarum*. He emphasized its "inviolable" character, arguing that the Encyclical (paragraph 15) referred to "the inviolability of private property,"⁸⁶ affirming its absolute nature.

Castelein significantly influenced Belgian politics, both in the Church and in entrepreneurial circles. His contributions to an understanding of the social question, individual rights, and community roles remain noteworthy.

Progressive Jesuits

Heinrich Pesch, S.J. (1854–1926)

Heinrich Pesch, widely regarded as the founding father of Solidarity,⁸⁷ developed this concept in his extensive *Lehrbuch der Nationalökonomie*, emphasizing the primacy of community while preserving individual freedom.

Born in Cologne in 1854, Pesch pursued studies in theology, philosophy, and jurisprudence before enrolling in 1901 at the Friedrich-Wilhelm University in Berlin (now Humboldt University) to study economics and engaging with prominent economists Gustav von Schmoller and Adolf Wagner.⁸⁸

80 Almodovar and Teixeira, "Ascent and Decline," 71.

81 Peter Heyrman, "Belgian Catholic Entrepreneurs' Organizations, 1880 to 1940: A Dialogue on Social Responsibility," *Zeitschrift für Unternehmensgeschichte* 56, no. 2 (2011), 169.

82 Heyrman, "Belgian Catholic Entrepreneurs' Organizations," 169.

83 Heyrman, "Catholic Charity," 10.

84 Heyrman, "Conservative Reading," 215.

85 Heyrman, "Conservative Reading," 215.

86 Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*, para. 15.

87 Hermann-Josef Grosse Kracht, "Brückenschläge von der Neuscholastik zur Moderne?," in *Religionssoziologie um 1900*, ed. Volkhard Krech and Hartmann Tyrell (Ergon Verlag, 2020), 747.

88 Hans A. Frambach, "Solidarity as the Center of Economy: The Economics of Heinrich Pesch," in *On the Economic Significance of the Catholic Social Doctrine*, ed. Jürgen Backhaus, Günther Chaloupek, and Hans A. Frambach, *The European Heritage in Economics and the Social Sciences* 19 (Springer International Publishing, 2017), 31.

Pesch's early experiences confronted him with the social question. His time in Lancashire, England—the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution—exposed him in direct contact with the “fate of the worker.”⁸⁹

Pesch's legacy extends beyond his writings to his influence on the “study group,” including Gustav Gundlach, Oswald von Nell-Breuning, Franz Mueller, and Goetz Briefs.⁹⁰

Corporatism is a hallmark of Pesch's doctrine. Building on Ketteler and Taparelli's ideas of subsidiarity, Pesch advocated for a revived guild system, enabling vocational groups to represent members, manage conflicts within professions, and resolve disputes between employers and employees.⁹¹

As an economist, he did not just recall ancient institutions; his ideas about growth, production, and distribution, in what he called *relationships of the coverage of needs* (*Bedarfsdeckungsverhältnisse*),⁹² combined the new economic insights with Thomistic distributive justice. His understanding of the relationships for the satisfaction of needs (*Bedarfsdeckungsverhältnisse*) analyzed economically and normatively how supply influences demand, often with negative social consequences for the poor.⁹³

Pesch articulated two key economic principles: the *principle of the satisfaction of needs* (*Bedarfsdeckungsprinzip*) and the *principle of equivalence* (*Äquivalenzprinzip*). The former posits that the economic process exists to satisfy human needs, not merely desires, distancing him from utilitarians like John Stuart Mill. The latter refers to the equality in exchanges.

According to the first principle, the economic process exists not for its own sake but for the satisfaction of needs. This had an impact on all of his economic views, so he advocated for professional (vocational) associations (*Berufsgenossenschaften*)⁹⁴ and supported social security measures for the poor, invalid, and the old.⁹⁵

Pesch applied the principle of satisfaction of needs to commerce. He argued that, contrary to liberalism, freedom is not an end in itself; it serves a common purpose: the satisfaction of needs of the whole people (*Bedarfsversorgung des ganzen Volkes*).⁹⁶ This guided his views on several issues: On tariffs, although not a protectionist, he nevertheless favored

89 Grosse Kracht, “Brückenschläge,” 747.

90 Edward J. O'Boyle, “Heinrich Pesch, S.J.: Grandpère of Solidarist Economics,” 3, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340950046_Heinrich_Pesch_SJ_Grandpere_of_Solidarist_Economics.

91 Heinrich Pesch, S.J., *Lehrbuch der Nationalökonomie*, vol. 5 (Herder, 1922), 805.

92 Pesch, *Lehrbuch der Nationalökonomie*, 4:123.

93 Pesch, *Lehrbuch der Nationalökonomie*, 4:104.

94 Pesch, *Lehrbuch der Nationalökonomie*, 4:539.

95 Pesch, *Lehrbuch der Nationalökonomie*, 5:600.

96 Pesch, *Lehrbuch der Nationalökonomie*, 5:319.

“protective tariffs” (*Schutzzölle*) for nascent industries⁹⁷ and he defended commercial speculation (like insurance) when it favored production and distribution of goods.⁹⁸

According to the principle of equivalence, the exchange of goods must respect the equivalence of worth (*iustitia commutativa*).⁹⁹ But for him this equality was not individualistic: Recalling the old subjective *communis aestimatio*, or “common estimation,” he went further to say that this estimation, although subjective, is located in a society. For Pesch the equivalence had real, not individually arbitrary, foundations.¹⁰⁰ He argued that the capitalist view of the equivalence renders the market devoid of the true equivalence and tends to hurt the consumer.¹⁰¹ Pesch acknowledged the value of goods according to their utility (*Nützlichkeit*)¹⁰² insofar as they satisfied needs, but his point of departure from capitalism was that a social hierarchy of needs (e.g., clothes protect people from the weather, which *to society* is more valuable than the need to be seen with a beautiful diamond [mere luxury]).

In labor issues, Pesch managed to link the principle of satisfaction of needs and the principle of equivalence to arrive at a solution amicable to social justice: commenting on *Rerum novarum*, Pesch recalled that Leo XIII (although not yet settling for family wages) asserted that the worker, participating as he does to cover the needs of society, must in turn cover his own needs; that is, he deserves a salary sufficient to cover his own needs.¹⁰³ We can here see a *socialization of the iustitia commutativa by the principle of satisfaction of needs*: the *iustitia commutativa* of the labor-wage exchange is altered so as to cover the needs of workers as contributing members of society, resulting in minimum wages.

Pesch’s originality—his massive and comprehensive work on economic theory—places him at the forefront of Catholic economic thought; thus, he remains indispensable. He is one of the few thinkers to have established a doctrine that can be called his own and places him at the center of Jesuit economic thinking.

97 Pesch, *Lehrbuch der Nationalökonomie*, 5: 324.

98 Pesch, *Lehrbuch der Nationalökonomie*, 5: 317.

99 Pesch, *Lehrbuch der Nationalökonomie*, 4:152.

100 Pesch, *Lehrbuch der Nationalökonomie*, 5:38.

101 Pesch, *Lehrbuch der Nationalökonomie*, 4:180.

102 Pesch, *Lehrbuch der Nationalökonomie*, 5:80.

103 Pesch, *Lehrbuch der Nationalökonomie*, 5:628.

Oswald von Nell-Breuning, S.J. (1890–1991)

Oswald von Nell-Breuning has been identified as one of the fathers of the German *social market economy*. Advocating for, a “socially-tempered capitalism,”¹⁰⁴ his work helped establish the foundations of modern German economic and social structure.

Born in Trier in 1890, Nell-Breuning was ordained in the Jesuit Order in 1921 and in 1927 became professor of moral theology and canon law at Sankt-Georgen in Frankfurt am Main.¹⁰⁵ Very early on, he was impressed by the economic hardship, the social question, and the situation of the working class.¹⁰⁶ A prolific writer, Nell-Breuning’s writings would influence German Catholic thinking before and after World War II.¹⁰⁷

A committed Neo-Thomist, Nell-Breuning was not afraid to examine, criticize, and at times even recognize virtues in the writings of Karl Marx.¹⁰⁸ A deep theorizer (he analyzed the principles of economic processes, commercial markets and capital-labor relations), he could be also extremely pragmatic in his views of modern markets.¹⁰⁹

Initially, Nell-Breuning adopted positions similar to the capitalist-oriented *Kölner Richtlinien*, which merely condemned capitalist excesses.¹¹⁰ Later he would distance himself from those views as well as from other, more romantic ones of German and (especially) Austrian thinkers like Karl von Vogelsang.¹¹¹ Instead, he embraced Pesch’s solidarist doctrine as not only more morally defensible but as a philosophical and economic doc-

104 Hermann-Josef Grosse Kracht, “Rekonstruktionen zur Kapitalismustheorie der katholischen Soziallehre: To End Capitalism as We Know It,” in *Kapitalismus – ein Feindbild für die Kirchen?*, ed. Stephan Wirz (Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2018), 46.

105 Chafuen, “Austrian Economics,” 3.

106 Erik Boettcher, “Zwischen Glaube und Wissenschaft: Laudatio für Professor Dr. Oswald von Nell-Breuning,” *Jahrbuch für Christliche Sozialwissenschaften* 22 (1981): 121.

107 Matthias Möhring-Hesse, “Solidaristische Gefahren: Oswald von Nell-Breunings sozialpolitische Impulse für die Gegenwart,” in *Den Kapitalismus bändigen: Festschrift für Franz-Xaver Kaufmann*, ed. Hans Günter Hockerts and Bernhard Emunds (Brill | Schöningh, 2015), 241.

108 Oswald von Nell-Breuning, “Auseinandersetzung mit Karl Marx,” in *Theologische Fragen heute*, ed. Max Müller and Alois Halder (Max Hueber Verlag, 1969), 88.

109 Hermann-Josef Grosse Kracht, “Den Kapitalismus im Kapitalismus überwinden: Prokapitalistische Anfänge und bleibende Kapitalismuskritik bei Oswald von Nell-Breuning,” in *Den Kapitalismus bändigen: Festschrift für Franz-Xaver Kaufmann*, ed. Hans Günter Hockerts and Bernhard Emunds (Brill | Schöningh, 2015), 27.

110 Grosse Kracht, “Den Kapitalismus im Kapitalismus,” 3.

111 Grosse Kracht, “Den Kapitalismus im Kapitalismus,” 2.

trine in its own right. The influential and more progressive West German social circle of the 1930s, *Königswinterer Kreis*, would play a decisive role, influencing him away from more conservative and classical liberal ideas.¹¹²

Of great importance for Nell-Breuning was defeating the notion of the victory of one class over another in the class struggle. While first working to achieve a “class-free society,”¹¹³ he would later accept tension or issues between classes, insofar it was not based nor did it lead to enmity.¹¹⁴

The “Nestor of the Catholic social doctrine,”¹¹⁵ Nell-Breuning ghost-wrote the Encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* (1931)¹¹⁶ and wrote *Reorganization of Social Economy: The Social Encyclical Explained*. In both *Quadragesimo anno* and in his commentaries, he went to great lengths to reconcile the commutative justice of wages and the social value of labor and its impact on its remuneration. Like Pesch, Nell-Breuning denied the capitalist *do ut des, facio ut facias* approach to the value of work; he asserted that “an economic exchange value of work implied the right to demand equivalent value; only in its social relations did work possess this value. Consequently, this value depended upon the social circumstances in which labor is performed.”¹¹⁷

A staunch solidarist, Nell-Breuning followed and further developed Heinrich Pesch’s ideas on corporatism and the community: men have not just different individual goals but also a common goal, their common good (*Gemeinwohl*).¹¹⁸ Solidarity (or solidarism) did not, however, remain for Nell-Breuning a concept fixed in time, covering only men in one point in time; intergenerational Solidarism expressed itself in matters of social security.¹¹⁹ His Solidarism was not based on transactional doctrines;¹²⁰

112 Grosse Kracht, “Den Kapitalismus im Kapitalismus,” 6.

113 Nell-Breuning, “Auseinandersetzung,” 25.

114 Hermann-Josef Grosse Kracht, “. . . auf den Schultern von Karl Marx: Oswald von Nell-Breuning SJ und die Marx-Rezeption der katholischen Soziallehre,” (preprint, Universitaet Tuebingen, 2018), 75.

115 Bernhard Emunds and Stephan Rixen, “Einleitung: Oswald von Nell-Breuning weiterdenken—Solidarische Perspektiven für das 21. Jahrhundert,” in *Oswald von Nell-Breuning weiterdenken: Solidarische Perspektiven für das 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. Bernhard Emunds and Stephan Rixen (Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2022), 11.

116 Albert L. Brancato, “Review of *Oswald von Nell-Breuning SJ: Aufbrüche der katholischen Soziallehre in der Weimarer Republik*, by Jonas Hagedorn,” *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 6, no. 2 (2019): 382.

117 Oswald von Nell-Breuning, *Reorganization of Social Economy: The Social Encyclical Developed and Explained*, trans. and ed. Bernard W. Dempsey (Bruce Publishing, 1936), 167.

118 Möhring-Hesse, “Solidaristische Gefahren,” 244.

119 Möhring-Hesse, “Solidaristische Gefahren,” 246.

120 Möhring-Hesse, “Solidaristische Gefahren,” 247.

departing from those liberal approaches, he advocated a Christian “communitarian” Solidarism: we deserve and are subject to Solidarist measures, not because of something we have done but because of who we are, human beings.

Taking up Taparelli’s notion of subsidiarity, Nell-Breuning did not, however, explicitly recognize him as a source.¹²¹ This may be due to their different views on authority and the fact that, while Taparelli emphasized the negative face of subsidiarity, Nell-Breuning seemed to emphasize its positive side and the obligation of the state to act when inferior bodies could not achieve their goals, “always consistently with the requirements of common welfare.”¹²²

On private property, Nell-Breuning, in *Quadragesimo anno*, clarified *Rerum novarum*’s stance, aligning with Thomas Aquinas by classifying private property as *ius gentium*, limited by the common good.

Nell-Breuning’s sophisticated analysis of commerce justified operations like stocks and hedge funds, provided they avoided mere speculation. In his commentary on *Quadragesimo anno*, he noted that “speculative trades are one method used to hedge against price risks and to ensure a steady supply of materials, at a steady price, for manufacturers and consumers.”¹²³

On labor, Nell-Breuning analyzed just wages, considering as determining factors (*Quadragesimo anno*, paragraphs 70–74): “(a) the worker’s and his family’s needs, (b) the condition of the enterprise, (c) common welfare.”¹²⁴ With this, he reconciled commutative justice with the *principle of satisfaction of needs* (*Bedarfsdeckungsprinzip*). He also highlighted the desirability of incorporating features of a partnership between employer and employee. We find this idea in *Quadragesimo anno*: “We consider it more advisable, however, in the present condition of human society that, so far as is possible, the work-contract be somewhat modified by a partnership-contract.”¹²⁵ In his commentary to *Quadragesimo anno*, he included the American “stock option” system, which allows but does not obligate the worker to enter into that partnership: “the main point is that co-proprietorship is left to the employee’s free decision; it is up to him whether he desires such close connection with the enterprise in which he is employed.”¹²⁶

121 Behr, *Social Justice*, 100.

122 Nell-Breuning, “Auseinandersetzung,” 111.

123 Stephen Nakrosis, “The Ethics of Speculation in the Works of Oswald von Nell-Breuning,” *Catholic Social Science Review* 18 (2013): 176.

124 Nell-Breuning, *Reorganization of Social Economy*, 171.

125 Pius XI, *Quadragesimo anno*, Encyclical (The Holy See, May 15, 1931), para. 65.

126 Nell-Breuning, *Reorganization of Social Economy*, 164.

And he championed workers' right of "co-management" (*Mitbestimmungsrecht*).¹²⁷ This would address the workers' alienation by linking their fates to their company's.¹²⁸ Initially cautious, he later endorsed Germany's 1970s parity structure of companies as progressive.¹²⁹

Nell-Breuning's longevity and vitality enabled him to address twentieth-century globalization and environmental crises, among other challenges.¹³⁰ He was a sharp critic of the Federal Republic of Germany's housing¹³¹ and other social policies, but praised its harmonization of capital and labor, establishing him as a central figure in economic and social thought.

Gustav Gundlach, S.J. (1892–1963)

Like Oswald von Nell-Breuning, Gustav Gundlach contributed to papal encyclicals¹³² and advised Pope Pius XII on social issues.¹³³

Born in Geisenheim im Rheingau in 1892, he studied philosophy before entering the Jesuit order in 1912. Though sometimes labeled reactionary and *individualist*,¹³⁴ his economic views were progressive, prioritizing socialization and cooperation over isolation and competition to fulfill human nature.

Like many Germans, Gundlach experienced the German financial crisis resulting from the 1929 crash of the New York Stock Exchange, with its

127 Oswald von Nell-Breuning, "Der Arbeitsmarkt unter individual- und sozialetischer Sicht," *Jahrbuch für Christliche Sozialwissenschaften* 22 (1981): 133.

128 Michael Jäckel, "Über Eigenwohl und Gemeinschaftswohl: Eine Erinnerung an Oswald von Nell-Breuning," *Communicatio Socialis* 54, no. 3 (2021), 403.

129 Grosse Kracht, "Den Kapitalismus im Kapitalismus," 15.

130 Gerhard Kruij, "Ökologisch-soziale Transformation: Wirtschaften als Sozialprozess—Oswald von Nell-Breuning und Papst Franziskus zu den Grenzen des Wachstums," in *Oswald von Nell-Breuning weiterdenken: Solidarische Perspektiven für das 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. Bernhard Emunds and Stephan Rixen (Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2022), 107.

131 Hans Günter Hockerts, "Nell-Breunings solidarisches Denken—Impulse für die Gegenwart?," in *Oswald von Nell-Breuning weiterdenken: Solidarische Perspektiven für das 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. Bernhard Emunds and Stephan Rixen (Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2022), 47.

132 Edward J. O'Boyle, *Personalist Economics: Moral Convictions, Economic Realities, and Social Action* (Springer US, 1998), 8.

133 Johannes Schwarte, "Die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Sozialismus bei Gustav Gundlach SJ (1892–1963)," *Jahrbuch für Christliche Sozialwissenschaften* 16 (1975): 84.

134 Wilhelm Weber, *Die Ordnung der menschlichen Gesellschaft*, ed. Katholische Sozialwissenschaftliche Zentralstelle Mönchengladbach (Verlag der Katholischen Sozialwissenschaftlichen Zentralstelle, 1967), 566.

hyperinflation and general hunger.¹³⁵ This experience would influence his view on economic and social matters.

A staunch anti-National Socialist, he faced persecution in Nazi Germany and fled to Rome,¹³⁶ where he helped draft the unpublished Encyclical *Societatis Unio*, also entitled *Humani generis unitas*, against anti-Semitism, intended for release by Pope Pius XI but halted by his death.¹³⁷

As a member of Heinrich Pesch's "study group," which would continue Pesch's work,¹³⁸ Gundlach viewed socialism as a variant of atheist liberalism¹³⁹ seeking solutions in the Neo-Thomistic tradition. Like Pesch, he saw human relationships as the inherent socialization of man, laying the ground for solidarity to bring about social justice: "When we say that the State must manage social justice, the ultimate meaning of this statement is to regulate, coordinate, and determine the exercise of people's personal rights, which are inherently equal and free."¹⁴⁰ As Heinz Sproll observes, Gundlach built on Pesch's solidarism to free economic concepts, such as private property, from liberal axioms.¹⁴¹ For Gundlach, the spiritual, inner principle of social life gives the state its values and power.¹⁴² This meant that no arrangement regarding the social question can satisfy the common good and social justice.

We can see in Gundlach's writings Taparelli's insistence on a natural order; man is internally related to other human beings and has to develop this sociability. Echoing Taparelli, Gundlach saw this development in stages: the first association is the family and only then, going higher and outward, does it reach the highest association, the state. In *Solidarismus, Einzelmensch, Gemeinschaft*, he argued that humans are inherently relational, starting with the family and progressing to the state as a *Societas*

135 Joseph Höffner, "Gustav Gundlach: Biographische Skizze," *Jahrbuch für Christliche Sozialwissenschaften* 3 (1962): 11.

136 Franz H. Mueller, "In Memoriam: Gustav Gundlach, S.J. 1892–1963," *Review of Social Economy* 22, no. 2 (1964): 132.

137 Anton Rauscher, "Gustav Gundlach, S.J.: One of the Architects of Christian Social Thinking," *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* 103, no. 1 (2002): 31.

138 Mueller, "In Memoriam," 132.

139 Schwarte, "Die Auseinandersetzung," 86.

140 Gustav Gundlach, "Das Privateigentum und seine soziale Pflichtigkeit," in *Eigentum und Eigentümer in unserer Gesellschaftsordnung*, ed. Ludwig Vaubel (VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1960), 27.

141 Heinz Sproll, "Gustav Gundlach S.J. (1892–1963) Diskurs mit der liberalen Soziologie Werner Sombarts (1863–1941) und Max Webers (1864–1920): Die Begründung der katholischen Sozialwissenschaft aus der Naturrechtslehre Francisco Suárez' (1548–1617)," *Annales Theologici* 25, no. 1 (2011): 81.

142 Gustav Gundlach, "Vom Wesen der Demokratie," *Gregorianum* 28, no. 4 (1947): 570.

Perfecta with qualitative, not quantitative, totality.¹⁴³ Natural communities (like the family) order themselves functionally to the state as the ultimate organizing entity,¹⁴⁴ but *the content of the values* is given to the State by these natural communities.¹⁴⁵ This gives them not only a functional autonomy (within their sphere of competence) but an autonomy over their goals.

Gundlach's Neo-Thomistic approach centered on three institutions: private property, family, and state.¹⁴⁶ For him, the "social market economy can only be understood if one understands the economy as a social process of internally interrelated human persons."¹⁴⁷ And the external order and organization resides primarily in the institution of private property (*Privateigentumsinstitution*).¹⁴⁸ However, Gundlach distanced himself from the old notion of the source of private property; he rejected private property as the result of sin and the fall of man; for him it was natural in the sense that it develops naturally from man's nature.¹⁴⁹ But private property also has a social dimension: In *Das Privateigentum und seine soziale Pflichtigkeit*, he rejected the notion that private property stems from sin, viewing it as natural but socially conditioned. The state, he argued, must regulate rights, including the right to private property, to achieve social justice.¹⁵⁰

Unlike conservatives, Gundlach embraced mass organizations like unions, stressing their pursuit of a coherent common goal.¹⁵¹ Gundlach helped shape Germany's social structure by addressing economic and social questions from a Neo-Thomistic perspective, contributing significantly to Catholic social thought.

Conclusion

The Catholic Church and the Jesuit order navigated a challenging path in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, responding to political, social, and economic upheavals. Conservatives like Castelein, Taparelli and Liberatore prioritized social order. However, persistent economic inequalities and workers' needs demanded action. Progressive Jesuits like Pesch, Nell-Breuning, and Gundlach sought to reconcile order with solutions

143 Gustav Gundlach, "Solidarismus, Einzelmensch, Gemeinschaft," *Gregorianum* 17, no. 2 (1936): 277.

144 Gundlach, "Solidarismus," 276.

145 Gundlach, "Solidarismus," 277.

146 Gundlach, "Privateigentum," 28.

147 Gundlach, "Privateigentum," 22.

148 Gundlach, "Privateigentum," 23.

149 Gundlach, "Privateigentum," 24.

150 Gundlach, "Privateigentum," 27.

151 Sproll, "Gustav Gundlach S.J. (1892–1963)," 95.

to capital-labor tensions. This was particularly evident in Germany after the Third Reich's collapse, when Catholic influence grew. These thinkers incorporated solidarity and subsidiarity, grounding economic systems in cooperation and public welfare beyond mere competition and private interest.¹⁵² Together, they developed the concept of social justice, influencing modern economic thought and Western legislation.

152 Hermann-Josef Grosse Kracht, "... nichts gegen die Soziale Marktwirtschaft, denn das ist verboten (Konrad Adenauer): Sondierungen zur religiösen Tiefen-grammatik des deutschen Wirtschafts- und Sozialmodells im Anschluss an Alfred Müller-Armack und Oswald von Nell-Breuning," *Ethik und Gesellschaft* 1, no. 1 (2010): 3.

Table 1. Summary of Jesuit Thinker's Stance on Key Issues

Thinker	Stance	Private property	Social justice	Notion of order	Labor issues	Commerce/ Economy
Auguste Castelein	Conservative	<i>ius naturale</i>	Charity over social justice	Order based on hierarchy	No workers' unions	Catholic-tempered liberalism
Luigi Taparelli D'Azeglio	Conservative	<i>ius naturale</i>	Social justice as distinct notion	Subsidiarity	No workers' unions	Subsidiarity
Matteo Liberatore	Conservative	<i>ius naturale</i>	Social justice as distinct notion	Subsidiarity	Workers' unions Family wages	Catholic-tempered liberalism
Heinrich Pesch	Progressive	<i>ius gentium</i>	Solidarity	Community	Vocational associations	Principle of satisfaction of needs
Oswald von Nell-Breuning	Progressive	<i>ius gentium</i>	Solidarity, evolution in class struggle	Community	Labor unions	Social market/productive speculation
Gustav Gundlach	Progressive	<i>ius gentium</i> , related to family	Solidarity	Community, anti-National Socialist	Labor unions	Cooperation