“Social justice” has been mainly a religious conception, in the sense that it originated in religious circles, underwent a large part of its conceptual development in official statements of religious authorities, and has been adopted most enthusiastically by the members of religious organizations. Since 1931 it has been part of the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. Philosophers seem to have come to it late: only since the publication of John Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice* in 1971 does it appear to have received much explicit attention from them. Rawls’s theory, which describes itself as a theory of social justice, though it has occupied the center of the philosophical stage since that time, represents only one, idiosyncratic version of the idea. The idea has had a history, which has led it through numerous permutations of meaning.

Originally, when the idea of “social justice” was first developed in the 1840s, it was a formal concept rather than a material one. By this I mean the term was taken to signify simply a branch of the ordinary concept of justice, analogous to “commutative justice” or “criminal justice,” and did not imply any particular content, philosophy, or view of the world. There could be, and was, a conservative conception of social justice, a liberal conception of it, and a socialist conception of it, all equally entitled to call themselves “social justice.” In other words, the concept of social justice was initially an extension of the existing, traditional idea of justice into a new area, that of society as a whole, so that it did not require developing any content new to the idea, but just new conditions for its application. This is what we find with the earliest users of the idea: Luigi Taparelli d’Azeglio, the conservative who inaugurated it, Antonio Rosmini, the classical liberal who publicized it, and the English Christian Socialists. Since the Second World War, however, “social justice” has come to mean something very different. The socialist conception of it won out over its rivals and gained solitary possession of the field. The term now stands for a very particular view of what is right and wrong in society. It has become a material concept rather than a formal one. My aim in these pages is to begin to describe the process by which the concept itself originally came about. First it will be helpful to say something about the historical circumstances out of which it arose.

THOMAS PATRICK BURKE is President of the Wynnewood Institute in Wynnewood, PA
“Social justice” owes its origin as a distinct concept (giustizia sociale) to the Italian Risorgimento of the nineteenth century. It was first used, to our knowledge, by the Jesuit philosopher Luigi Taparelli d’Azeglio in 1843 in the debates over the beginnings of the Risorgimento’s effort to unify the Italian peninsula politically. Despite its many dialects the peninsula had long been recognized as a cultural unity, a fact attested to, among other things, by the 1523 founding of the Accademia della Crusca in Florence, whose mission was to study the vocabulary of the entire peninsula. But in 1840 the territory was divided between a number of different powers, including Austria, which held the north, Piedmont in the northwest, the Papal States across the middle, and the kingdom of Naples. Napoleon, however, had occupied the entire mainland, and, although he divided it up into a number of republics, which he subsequently converted into “kingdoms,” he named one of them the “Kingdom of Italy” and treated the peninsula in some respects as an administrative unity. For example, the Code Napoleon was introduced everywhere. After Napoleon’s fall, the Congress of Vienna in 1815 largely restored the earlier political entities that had preceded Napoleon. But Napoleon had left behind him the vision of a unified Italy, which in the wave of romantic nationalism that swept Europe in the nineteenth century possessed great inspirational power, especially for the educated and liberal middle classes. It was not long before agitation began with the aim of bringing about unification. Revolutionary movements such as the Carbonari sprang up throughout the territory, but soon failed. In January 1848, revolution broke out in Sicily, leading to war between Piedmont, which aimed at unification, and Austria, which successfully resisted it. Eventually, through Cavour’s efforts in Piedmont, Garibaldi’s in the south, and others’, the unified Kingdom of Italy was established in 1870.

This project of unifying Italy, drawn out over several decades, produced fierce debate about fundamental questions of political and philosophical theory. On what foundation does the state rest? What is the origin of its power? By what right does anyone possess the authority to govern others? Is political authority created simply by military power and received by inheritance or conferred by a contract, as Locke had argued? Unification was a liberal project, for the aim of most of its supporters was to sweep away the existing powers, still essentially feudal and absolute, and replace them with constitutional governments guaranteeing personal liberties. But nationalism was a conservative emotion, and associated with the debate over unification were other debates over whether the new form of government should be federal or centralized, a republic or a monarchy, and here also there was room for conservatism.

Catholic opinion was conservative, especially under Pope Gregory XVI (r. 1831–46), and explicitly condemned both liberalism and democracy. Until the American Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation, for example, Catholics generally supported the institution of slavery in principle, since it seemed to have been accepted by St. Paul in the New Testament. Gregory’s successor, Pius IX, however, initially looked upon liberalism and democracy more favorably.

During the events of 1848–49 many of the Italian states obtained constitutions from their sovereigns. These were uniformly modeled on the French constitution of 1789. Like their model, however, they proved to be unstable. This was the immediate context that gave birth to the concept of “social justice.”
Luigi Taparelli d’Azeglio, S.J.
(1793–1862)

It is one of the ironies of history that the quintessentially “liberal” idea of “social justice,” as it was to become (in American terminology), should have been originated by an ardent conservative. Prospero (his baptismal name) Taparelli was born in Turin into an aristocratic but nationalistic family that would play a prominent role in the Risorgimento. His father, Cesare, Marquis of Azeglio in the Piedmont, was a soldier and devout Catholic who took his family to Tuscany to escape Napoleon’s armies and there published the nationalist newspaper Amico d’Italia (Friend of Italy); his mother, Cristina, the Countess Morozzo, was the sister of Giuseppe Cardinal Morozzo. His younger brother Massimo, after writing a series of nationalistic novels, first turned to politics as a nationalist pamphleteer and later became premier of Piedmont; to this day he remains an honored name in Italy. Prospero’s cousin, Count Cesare Balbo, published a book Delle speranze d’Italia (On the Hopes of Italy), which aroused a strong sense of Italian nationalism.6

The young Prospero studied at first the secular thinkers prominent at the time, such as Condillac, famous for his sensationalism, a form of extreme empiricism, and also for his advocacy of free trade, but then discovered the French traditionalists Lamennais, Bonald, and de Maistre. When Pope Pius VII summoned the Society of Jesus back into existence in 1814 (it had been dissolved by Clement XIV in 1773), Prospero joined it without delay, taking the name Luigi in honor of St. Aloysius (“Luigi” in Italian) Gonzaga. He was ordained a priest in 1820, made rector of the novitiate in Novara in 1822, then in 1824 of the Jesuit house of studies in Rome, the Collegio Romano, later to become the Gregorian University.

As a thinker his chief concern from the first was with the state of political society, which he wished to influence in a conservative direction, especially towards the preservation of papal authority, which was then not only spiritual but also temporal, since the popes ruled the Papal States. But he realized that the intellectual reputation of the Church at the time left much to be desired and was a serious obstacle to its effective influence. The Church needed a philosophical renewal. In Novara his attention had been directed to the medieval Scholastics, in particular to the works of St. Thomas Aquinas. In Rome he now seized on Thomas as the key to intellectual reform, and in 1827 and 1828 laid down a curriculum for the Collegio Romano on Thomistic lines.7 Through these writings Taparelli became one of the originators of neo-Scholasticism and neo-Thomism, although he does not seem himself to have studied Thomas very intensely. He subsequently spent many years at the Vatican’s journal Civiltà Cattolica, where one of his collaborators, on whom he had much influence, was Gioacchino Pecci, a former student of his, who became Pope Leo XIII. His 1879 encyclical, Aeterni Patris, canonized Thomism as the official philosophy of the Roman Catholic Church.

Taparelli’s aim, however, to which neo-Thomism was meant to contribute, was to develop a conservative and specifically Catholic theory of society that would be an alternative to the liberal and laissez-faire theories of Locke and Adam Smith. In 1833 he was transferred to Palermo and remained there for sixteen years, during which he wrote his principal work in five volumes, Saggio teoretico di dritto naturale appoggiato sul fatto (A Theoretical Treatise on Natural Law Resting on Fact). The phrase “sul fatto” gives perhaps the most distinctive feature of his approach. The Lockean idea that political authority arises out of some kind of contract is absurd, he
argues, for such a thing has never actually happened. The facts of history are that the right to govern has been obtained through the “natural superiority” of the ruler and of the ruling class: through their superior valor, knowledge, and wealth. This is the actual system created by divine providence. Whoever brings order into a society has the right to rule it. By “order” I take him to mean peace and the day-to-day administration of justice.

Taparelli gives a parallel account of the dominance of some countries over others. Empires and hegemonies are created, not by virtue of any contract, but through the natural superiority of a race or a people over others. This superiority establishes its power directly or indirectly, creating a hierarchy of relationships between the different nations. It is a power independent of particular wills, he remarks, and imposes itself on individuals and peoples. In speaking of this superiority as “natural,” Taparelli means, not “nature” in the sense of a species, for he considers that “all men are equal in nature,” but that superiority of character, knowledge, and wealth just mentioned. Men are “unequal in their persons.”

The Creator has implanted in all men a natural tendency to seek the supreme good and therefore to seek the lesser goods that lead to it. Men do this more effectively by cooperating with one another, and therefore it is God’s will that they should live together in societies. But no society can survive without some authority to establish order. “A society cannot exist without an authority that creates harmony in it.” This has been true since the beginning of human history. Therefore it is God’s will that there should be “natural authority,” the authority that naturally arises in human society because some men are naturally braver, more competent, more intelligent, wealthier, or better endowed with the qualities of leadership than others.

When a particular authority grows so strong that it has no superior it attains to sovereignty, and if it exists in a stable territory it becomes a state. The right to govern the state, as we have just noted, belongs to the person who has established order in it. This right is not given to him directly by universal human nature, but is the result of his personal qualities and achievements. No one else has a true right to govern, and all others in the society are therefore subject to his rule:

Here in a few words is the theory of social existence based upon the facts of history, and likewise confirmed by those facts. The existence of associations of men united by nature, equal to one another in their nature, unequal in their persons, free in their power of choice and therefore in need of a principle of unity: these are the chief facts of history to which we have applied the universal principle of duty. The results of this application are that man needs always to be governed, and so he is, in point of fact; that he who governs is stronger and at the same time possesses authority, and so he actually is; that subjects are not sovereigns, and in point of fact they are not. . . . Compare this theory of the facts of history with the hypotheses of the social contract where man is by nature free but in fact is in chains; by right is sovereign but in fact is a subject; creates the society, but in fact is created by it; confers authority, but in fact has no part of that authority; has made a pact, but did no negotiating; did it to secure all his rights, and meanwhile gave them away; believes every state to be a republic, yet sees there are monarchies; believes all men are equal, yet sees everywhere a hierar-
chy of classes; believes it gives consent, yet sees things happen despite it; believes it gives laws, yet sees that it receives them. . . . Compare these two doctrines, I say, and judge which of them is true! ⁸

The liberal theories of society are nothing more than theories, mere speculation. They are not drawn from history and are insufficient to explain the realities of history.

Taparelli makes a distinction, which was to become influential in Catholicism, between “the large society,” the State, and “the small societies,” the family and the local organizations and authorities that men create to further their local purposes. The foundation of society is not the large society but the small ones. The large society is built, not from the top down but from the bottom up out of the small ones. Therefore the large society is in an important sense subordinate to the small ones. The large society is built, not from the top down but from the bottom up out of the small ones. Therefore the large society is in an important sense subordinate to the small ones. Each of these smaller societies has its own end, its own authority, its own principles of action, and its own rights. Like individuals generally, they have an obligation to work together for the common good. Each lesser society must preserve its own inner unity without threatening that of the whole; and every larger society must maintain its unity without destroying the unity of the lesser societies.

This teaching eventually gave rise to the Catholic doctrine of the principle of subsidiarity, i.e. that social functions that can be performed adequately by local authorities such as the family or the town should be assigned to them, not to higher or more remote authorities such as the national government. It should be noted that this principle is distinctly conservative, although it is often not recognized as such.

Taparelli’s Conception of Social Justice

Taparelli discusses justice and social justice against the background of the French Revolution of 1789 with its cry of equality and brutal treatment of kings and aristocracies, and also of the revolution of 1830 that installed Louis Philippe. The question at issue for him, although Taparelli does not formulate it precisely in these terms, is something like this: how should a society treat its traditional rulers? Is the existence of an aristocracy unjust? For “distributive justice governs public administrators in the distribution of the offices (funzioni) of the society.” His answer is that social justice requires us to accept inequality.

Justice, he argues, is the habitual inclination to level or balance accounts. Distributive justice equalizes proportions in the common good. Social justice is justice between man and man. But what proportions exist between man and man? Considering man in the abstract endowed solely with the qualities of human nature, between man and man the relationship that exists is one of complete equality, for “man and man” signifies here nothing other than humanity replicated twice. What proportionate equality could be greater? Social justice should therefore level all men in regard to the rights given with their humanity, since the Creator has equalized them by nature; man fulfills the intentions of his Maker by acting according to the norm of this justice.

But this is only half the picture in Taparelli’s view. Actual men are not simply instances of abstract human nature but concrete individuals with particular qualities, and on the level of their individuality they are unequal. For social justice, their social rights and duties, that fact is decisive:

But slow. Where is this abstract man, this replicated humanity, the notion of which has suggested to me the first lineaments of social justice? If there exist men associated with other men,
they always exist in the *concrete*, always individuated, always endowed with forces possessing definite qualities. But when I consider men from this new perspective, where is the equality? Compare age with age, intelligence with intelligence, strength with strength, etc.; everything is disparity between men: a disparity, furthermore, that derives from nature, since it is nature that forms the individual as it does the species; or rather, let us say nature forms individuals, man perceives species. I conclude correctly, then, that all individual human beings are *naturally unequal* among themselves in everything that pertains to their *individuality*, just as they are naturally *equal* in all that pertains to the *species*. And so the activity of man will be just when it is appropriate to the different rights of those with whom one is dealing. Everything in individuals is inequality, even though the likeness of their natures be total.

This individual inequality does not contradict their equality of species-nature, for the qualities of the individual in relation to those of the species are an addition, and if you add unequal quantities to equal ones, are not the sums unequal? For example, add to the species-property of *man* the individuality of *son*, and you will find it in regard to the father in a relationship of debtor. For to be a son means to have received one’s existence, and to be a father means to have given it. Now if the giver and the receiver considered themselves only as endowed with humanity, they would be equal and they would not owe one another anything reciprocally; but if their accounts are to be in balance in light of the fact that one of the two in becoming an *individual* has received from the other, this other has a right to a repayment. Justice demands, then, that the son render to the father an equivalent of the existence he has received from him. 

Not only does individual inequality not contradict species-equality, but it is a product of it. The demand that accounts be balanced, and therefore that individual differences be taken into account, comes from their species-equality.

But why does justice demand that the accounts be balanced? Precisely because the equal humanity in both of them requires the equalization as its right. The inequality between the rights of the two individuals we are considering, far from standing in contrast to their species-equality, is rather a necessary consequence of it. The species-equality is the basis of all their inequalities as individuals, just as the one nature is the basis of all the different individualities.

The consequence is that justice has very different requirements for private goods and common or social goods. In the one case it requires a quantitative equality, but not in the other.

If an individual receives so much from another to whose goods he had no previous right, he must give as much in return if he wishes to settle accounts according to justice. Justice between equals consists therefore in a quantitative balancing or leveling; nor can justice be lessened on one side by increasing the other, since the right of the person who gave extends precisely to the thing he gave, neither more nor less. Therefore this right is satisfied by an equivalent. But suppose instead that two or more individuals all seeking a common good (many sailors, for example, seeking to discover an
unknown land, or many associates running a public educational establishment) compete with one another to obtain a preeminence or an office: does the rule of justice require you to balance accounts between the two of them? But no, that is a ridiculous thing even to say, impossible to execute. But then what does equality mean here? Equality consists here in equalizing the office to the person’s capacity, the recompense to the merit, punishments to demerit, and the real order to the ideal proportions of means to end. And each person should be content to make the same contribution as every other to the common purpose.

On the basis of this natural equality and natural inequality, which represent in his view indubitable facts of our historical experience (the fatto of the subtitle of the book), Taparelli considers it is possible to give a valid account of the particular social rights and duties that apply in particular societies in a way that will show they arise equally from human nature and the facts of historical experience. The first principle of morality applied to social existence commands us to procure the good of others and therefore to abstain from impeding it. This implies a correlative right on the other’s part to procure his own good without being impeded by us, so long as he does not pose an obstacle to ours.

From this brief account certain important things should be clear about Taparelli’s conception of social justice. Unlike the conception of social justice generally accepted in our society at the present time, which is socialist and difficult, if not impossible, to harmonize with our ordinary conception of justice, Taparelli’s conception 1) is simply the ordinary and traditional conception of justice applied in a new area, namely the constitutional arrangements of society, 2) does not apply to states of affairs in society that could exist independently of human actions, 3) constitutes a defense of societal inequality, and 4) is conservative.

Taparelli’s conception of social justice has been forgotten. But it, and indeed his entire political philosophy, is a serious contribution to conservative thought that ought to be better known than it is. Instead, he was to exert an influence on history through something entirely different, which he never labeled “social justice,” and which scarcely corresponds to anything that might be known under that name today, but which would nevertheless come to be known by that name: his conception of morality in economics.

Taparelli on the Economy
When Taparelli was writing in the 1850s, the Industrial Revolution, which had begun in England around 1770, had not yet reached Italy. Indeed, it is a common opinion among economic historians that properly speaking it never did, at least not until after the Second World War. Rather, Italy experienced only something “analogous” to an industrial revolution. Until the country was unified in 1870, the methods of production in the various separate states were uniformly labor-intensive, and trade was governed by guilds and restricted by heavy regulation and high tariffs. Protectionism reigned. The dominant industry remained agriculture. Until the end of the century, when the banking system was reformed, there was little or no indigenous capital. However, the free-trade doctrines of Adam Smith and David Ricardo were known, as were the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution in France.

Taparelli opposed in principle the entire liberal project, both political and economic, which he sometimes summa-
rized under the two names, John Locke and Adam Smith. A collection of his essays bears the appropriate title _Tyrannous Liberty_. The reason for this opposition was that he saw liberalism as a product of the Protestant Reformation, which exalted private judgment over the divine authority of the Roman Catholic Church and thereby replaced the Catholic sense of community with an emphasis on the self-interest of the isolated individual. He distinguishes between the “heterodox” or non-Catholic economy, then in the process of being introduced throughout Europe as the free-trade doctrines of Adam Smith took hold, and the Catholic or ideal economy. The theory of the secular economists such as Smith elevates the self-centered search for utility as the governing force of human life, he argues. The consequence of this individualism is that “society is in a perpetual antagonism where each one offers the minimum in order to obtain the maximum.” Because of competition, “society is a war of all against all: war among the producers, war of the producers against the buyers, war of one nation against another in order to absorb its wealth by means of customs duties.” Since the wealth of the government depends on the wealth of its citizens, which it takes through taxes, “the government must inject itself into all private enterprises, in order to press all its citizens to work for the public wealth.” The logical outcome of the society created by individualism is a demand for redistribution, and so communism. At bottom the individualistic economy is just anarchy.

By contrast, the “Catholic economy” represents order. It is founded on belief in God, submits to divine revelation, maintains respect for the human person and for the Christian ideals of charity and self-sacrifice, and is alone capable of explaining what actually happens in economic life. As against the “iron law of wages,” for example, Taparelli argues that in practice an employer must pay wages sufficient to support not only the individual worker but his family, and furthermore that this is the right and Catholic thing to do—an argument that was to become a founding doctrine of official Catholic social teaching. But the Catholic economy as Taparelli understands it is by no means one that pursues economic equality. Taparelli does not believe in social equality, either in political life or the economy. He believes, as we have seen, that there is a natural hierarchy among men, and leadership in all spheres goes rightly to those who create order. “[T]here is a big difference between the broom wielded by the humblest workers and the pen held by the higher employees” of the divine Master. The Catholic spirit of cooperation in place of competition in the economy “adds to the sentiment of civic equality respect for the hierarchical subordination which is so natural between those who serve the same Master.” In the Catholic economy, the highest value will be given, not to the search for money and pleasure, but to honorable and honest conduct. “Hobbes’s war of all against all will give way to the universal cooperation of individuals, who are equal in regard to their species-nature, but hierarchically coordinated in their labors under the supreme Master.” In a true Catholic economy, those who carry out the functions of government will do so at their own expense, as a public service performed out of love for their country; they will not be paid salaries out of the public purse.

The difference between the Catholic economy, together with a Catholic discipline of economics focusing on morality, on the one hand and the heterodox economy with its purely scientific economics on the other is mainly, however, a difference in motivation. It is not a difference in public policy. In the Catholic economy legal
restraints on the economy will be minimal, as numerous quotes from Taparelli show,

“Many of Bastiat’s observations in favor of liberty of commerce square with the teachings of Catholic economics.” “We should not judge that it is useless for a Catholic government to investigate the doctrine of the heterodox economists on the production and distribution of wealth. This science of production will always be necessary as an auxiliary to the Catholic science of ordering.” “So a treatise on the Catholic economy is only a treatise on just economic liberty.”

“A honourable liberty is the goal and utility is merely the means for every good government.”

The Catholic economy does not impose restrictions on the liberty of its citizens in order to enrich the government, for it is the freest economy that produces the wealthiest government. The role of justice and charity is not to restrict liberty but to perfect it. “Liberty is more perfect in a state where crime is repressed and honest people are protected than in one” dominated by the Camorra. In regard to public policy Taparelli is essentially a liberal.

In the Catholic economy taxes will be minimal, and government will be careful not to adopt measures that injure capital. Government should know what kinds of taxes will weigh least heavily on capital, what are the cheapest kinds of taxes, how to make the best use of capital not invested, and how to use wisely the money necessary to buy the instruments of commerce. The poor will find themselves free to lift themselves up to wealth. Taparelli does not place care for the poor among the duties of government, but of individuals. It is the duty of those who have the goods of this world to care for those who lack them, and this should be reflected in the theoretical account of how an economy works successfully:

If economic science . . . wants to show us how, through the power of self-interest, wealth distributes itself between the proprietor, the capitalist, the worker, and the tax collector, it ought also to show us that where Catholic charity reigns, the shares of the capitalist and the proprietor return to a large extent into the hands of the worker as a balm, leveling through generosity the inequalities of fortune.

For economics in his view is essentially a moral science, that is, one subordinated to moral considerations.

The role of government, for its part, is to bring moral order or justice. It is “to protect weakness against force.” Justice, together with humane feeling (“tender-ness”), is called to protect the order of society both against the cruelty of the powerful who crush the poor and also against the communism of the poor who rise up against the powerful.

So far as I have been able to discover, Taparelli never used the term “social justice” with reference to economic questions. Social justice for him is the constitutional justice of a society, the justice that defends right order in the constitutional arrangements of the society. Its task at that juncture of history, he believed, was to defend the inherited rights of the existing powers, the Church and the aristocracy, against the rising tide of democratic equality. But many of those who read him, including Pope Pius XI, leaving Taparelli’s constitutional views and his doctrine of inequality entirely aside, focused instead on his economic doctrine and applied his term “social justice” to that. Under that name, a concept of economic equality he did not
espose was to be his paradoxical legacy to his church and the world.

**Taparelli’s Reach**

Taparelli has a good claim to being the father of Catholic social teaching. One of his students was the Jesuit Matteo Liberatore, who wrote the first draft of Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (On the Condition of the Working Classes), the first papal statement on “the social question.” Leo himself, as we have noted, had been a student of Taparelli’s, his collaborator at the *Civiltà Cattolica*, and seems to have been influenced by him. Pius XI used to recommend the study of Taparelli’s works in conversations with his friends and colleagues. One of Liberatore’s students was Oswald von Nell-Breuning, S.J., who wrote Pius XI’s 1931 encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, which officially adopted “social justice” as part of Catholic doctrine, but as an economic doctrine notably stronger than Taparelli’s: “[T]he right ordering of economic life cannot be left to a free competition of forces. For from this source, as from a poisoned spring, have originated and spread all the errors of individualist economic teaching.” In 1932 Franklin Delano Roosevelt quoted this encyclical in a campaign speech before a large crowd in Detroit, saying it was “just as radical as I am” and “one of the greatest documents of modern times.”

---

1 The author wishes to express his special gratitude to Roger Scruton and Alberto Mingardi for their advice and assistance and the Earhart Foundation for its generous financial support. 2 Unless we except John Stuart Mill’s brief references to it in *Utilitarianism*. 3 Edward Gibbon speaks of “social justice,” but in a sense indistinguishable from ordinary justice in reference to the punishment of crime. “Every crime which is punished by social justice, was practised as the rights of war; the Huns were distinguished by cruelty and sacrilege; and Belisarius alone appeared in the streets and churches of Naples to moderate the calamities which he predicted” (*Decline and Fall*, ch. 41). According to Hayek this was an occasional usage of the eighteenth century (*Mirage*, ch. 9, n. 2). 4 *Saggio teoretico di dritto naturale appoggiato sul fatto*, 5 vols. (Palermo, 1843). 5 It is true that some commentators consider the term “justice” to be used in the sense of “social justice” already by Pope Clement XIII in his 1758 encyclical, *A quo die*, where he remarks that “[a]mong the fruits of justice, mercy to the poor should certainly be considered the most important. That justice which comes from faith belongs to Jesus Christ . . . [the poor] require our generosity as their principal right.” Certainly the letter stresses the importance of mercy and generosity towards the poor. However, the pope refers to these qualities not as justice, but as “fruits” of justice. The New Testament uses the term “justice” (*dikaiosune*) for the right relationship of the soul to God, which the context here would support. The statement that the poor have a “right” to generosity is a *hapax legomenon* that can be understood in the sense that they have a claim to it; it is something we ought to do because of Christ’s teaching. “Social justice” would have to wait till the Risorgimento. 6 Charles F. Delzell at [http://www.ohio.edu/chastain/ac/azeg.htm](http://www.ohio.edu/chastain/ac/azeg.htm); Walter Maturi, “D’Azeglio,” *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* (Rome, 1962). 7 “Osservazione sugli studi del Collegio Romano;” “Abbozzo del Progetto di Ordinazione intorno agli Studii Superiori.” 8 The *Saggio teoretico* seems never to have been translated into English; the translations given here are by the author. 9 “But in this case justice will never be rigorously satisfied, it being impossible for the son to render back to the father the existence he has received from him.” 10 “Torrete per regola di giustizia l’altrettanto?”