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Deliberation on the Cause of the Poor

May beggars be excluded from public spaces? May vagabonds be denied access to foreign cities? Should assistance to the poor rely on private charity rather than public welfare institutions? These and similar questions are at the heart of *Deliberation on the Cause of the Poor*, a remarkable treatise on poor relief by Domingo de Soto (1495–1560), one of Spain’s most famous jurist-theologians. Confronted with the reform of poor laws in cities across Europe, Soto warns against the potentially dire consequences of restricting access to poor relief for the sake of managerial efficiency. Denouncing the abuse of power by corrupt public officials and the instrumentalization of the sacrament of confession, he argues against well-intended public measures that actually jeopardize the poor’s direct access to life-saving help and assistance. Soto draws on manifold arguments from the Bible, the church fathers, natural law, Roman law, and canon law to defend the legitimate poor’s right to beg for assistance, while recalling the vital importance of the virtue of mercy.

Wim Decock (PhD, KU Leuven and Roma Tre University) is Professor of Legal History at the Universities of Louvain-la-Neuve and Liège in Belgium. He is an affiliate researcher at Emory University’s Center for the Study of Law and Religion. His research focuses on the theological origins of juridical, economic, and sociopolitical thought.

Joost Possemiers (MA, KU Leuven) studied Latin, Greek, and German linguistics and literature at KU Leuven, where he is writing a PhD dissertation about Conrad Summenhart’s (ca. 1458–1502) treatise on contract law.

Jeremiah Lasquety-Reyes (PhD, KU Leuven) is a senior analyst for digital markets at Statista in Hamburg, Germany. He has held various research positions dealing with the interactions between ethics, economics, and computer simulations.

Daniel Schwartz (DPhil, University of Oxford) is an Associate Professor in the Departments of Political Science and International Relations at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His research focuses on medieval and late scholastic ethical and political thought, as well as contemporary just war theory.

Sources in Early Modern Economics, Ethics, and Law
Second Series

General Editors: Andrew M. McGinnis & Wim Decock



Soto

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Deliberation on the Cause of the Poor

Domingo de Soto

Edited by Wim Decock
Translated by Joost Possemiers and Jeremiah Lasquety-Reyes
Introduction by Daniel Schwartz

*Economica
Ethica
Juridica*



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