

# NEO-THOMISM IN ACTION

## LAW AND SOCIETY RESHAPED BY NEO-SCHOLASTIC PHILOSOPHY, 1880-1960

{INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP} LEUVEN 8-10 OCTOBER 2017

This workshop aims to provide an opportunity for an explicitly international audience of scholars to reflect on the societal impact of Neo-Thomism, especially in the domains of law and socio-economic thinking. It indeed starts from the hypothesis that Neo-Thomism above all had a social and apologetic vocation. Neo-Scholastic philosophy offered a holistic view of society, while shielding it against the secularizing forces of the modern world and striving towards a 'shared', 'hybrid' or 'integrated modernity'. The Neo-Thomist project expressly called for greater involvement by lay people in the Church's apologetic and pastoral strategies.

Through scholarly education, periodicals, study circles and other networks involving current and former students and other participants from very different societal domains, these neo-Scholastic institutions pervaded society, with a holistic philosophical framework that showed explicitly apologetic objectives. They offered intellectual breed-

ing grounds for a new Catholic elite to grow. During the decades preceding World War I, the interwar period and even post-World War II, neo-Thomist learning centres acted as hubs for various Catholic networks permeating society as a whole, and cemented these connections within civil society, education, the civil service and judiciary, the worlds of labour and business and especially their interest groups.

The University of Leuven offers a fine example in this respect, with renowned legal scholars such as Victor Brants (1856-1917) and Léon de Lantsheere (1862-1912), and of course its Institute of Philosophy (HIW), founded in 1889 under the impetus of the later Archbishop and Cardinal, Désiré Mercier (1851-1926). These Belgian actors were of course merely one component of a vast international Thomist network that almost completely spanned the universal church with important hubs in places like Paris, Fribourg, Lille and of course Rome. The workshop aims to highlight the exchanges between these different Neo-Thomist centres and affiliated

scholars, their societal networks and ideas. The role of religious institutions (Jesuits, Dominicans, and others) within this 'Thomist international' and their impact on its interaction with the legal and socio-economic domains of course deserves particular attention.

The social impact of neo-Thomism is a topic deserving a multifaceted and in-depth analysis, using a broad, international comparative perspective and combining the results of very different fields of historical research: history of science, church and religion, social and political history, etc. We cordially invite papers dealing with the topic from these and other academic perspectives. In order to structure the exchange of ideas and experiences regarding the influence of neo-Scholastic philosophy in the legal and socio-economic domains, the organizers propose three major angles from which to approach this vast and polymorphic topic, but they of course also welcome relevant contributions using a transversal and even a biographical approach.

**1** Societal **turning points** and key moments in Western European history. Papers could deal with specific, often crisis-related and decisive contexts in which structures and individual actors, clearly influenced by neo-Scholastic thinking, exerted their influence and even steered the outcome. Many different examples could be given here. Let us merely point to the contexts of the emerging social policies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the aftermath of World War I, the financial crisis and recession of the 1930s, the reconstruction of post-war Europe, the emergence of the Welfare State, ....

**2** Neo-Scholastic **networks and institutions**. Although important work has been done to ascertain the international scope and significance of neo-Scholastic networks, institutions, study-circles, periodicals, alumni and conference networks, etc., the Neo-Thomist infrastructure in Western Europe was never carefully charted, its impact on different societal domains only partially analyzed. We invite papers that broaden our understanding of these grids, evaluating their evolving composition, functions and reach preferably in an international and long chronological perspective. Given the focus of the workshop, we especially invite contributions discussing networks and institutions that were part of or interacted with the legal and socio-economic milieus.

**3** **Discourses and key concepts**. During the Leuven workshop we hope to gain a better understanding of the ways in which Thomism was visualized, appropriated, translated and/or applied in the fields of law and socio-economic policy. Papers could focus on public debates or social controversies or on specific socio-political issues that neo-Scholastic philosophy tried to solve using a more or less clear and original approach. We particularly welcome contributions focusing on the debates and the intellectual discourse communities regarding (1) property rights, (2) criminal law and judiciary system, (3) social justice and responsibility and (4) the representation of interests. Special attention could be paid to the key concepts involved, such as 'just wages', 'profit', 'usury', 'property' and many others.

This workshop is organized by KADOC, the Institute of Philosophy and the Research Unit of Roman Law and Legal History of KU Leuven.

## SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Bart Raymaekers (HIW-KU Leuven)  
Wim Decock (LAW-KU Leuven)  
Jan De Maeyer (KADOC-KU Leuven)  
Kaat Wils (Cultural History-KU Leuven)  
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## ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Wim Decock (LAW-KU Leuven)  
Jan De Maeyer (KADOC-KU Leuven)  
Bart Raymaekers (HIW-KU Leuven)  
Peter Heyrman (KADOC-KU Leuven)

## VENUE

Leuven, 8-10 October 2017 Irish College

## TIMING

- Call for Papers: August 2016
- Deadline for proposal submission: 1 February 2017
- Proposal notification: 1 March 2017
- Deadline for Papers: 1 September 2017
- Workshop: 8-10 October 2017

## CONTACT

For any questions and to submit your proposal, please contact:

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## PROPOSALS

Proposals should be submitted as PDF documents and contain

- a clear title of the envisaged paper
- a summary (max. 500 words), outlining the paper's goals, methodology and source materials
- CVs of author(s), with contact information, position and institutional affiliation.

Proposals will be selected based on topic relevance, innovativeness and the degree to which the proposal answers the call.

Proposals should be attached and emailed to the workshop organizers (peter.heyrman@kadoc.kuleuven.be) no later than 1 February 2017.

You should receive a confirmation of proposal receipt within 48 hours. Notification of acceptance will occur no later than 1 March 2017.

Accepted papers will be peer-reviewed and published in a volume of the series KADOC-Studies on Religion, Culture and Society (University Press Leuven / Cornell University Press)

