

(1480–1546), Domingo de Soto (1494–1560), Martin de Azpilcueta Navarrus (1493–1586), Diego de Covarrubias y Leiva (1512–1577), Luis de Molina (1535–1600), Juan de Mariana (1536–1624), and Francisco Suarez (1548–1617). James Gordley's important book, *The Philosophical Origins of Modern Contract Doctrine*, notes:

A synthesis between Roman law and Aristotelian and Thomistic moral philosophy was finally achieved in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It was part of a larger intellectual movement: the revival of Thomistic philosophy. The movement began in 1503, when a professor in the University of Paris named Pierre Crockaert underwent an intellectual conversion.... In 1512 he published a commentary on the last part of Thomas's *Summa Theologica* with the help of his pupil Francisco de Vitoria. Vitoria returned to his native Spain where, as a professor at the University of Salamanca from 1526 until his death in 1546, he founded the so-called Spanish natural-law school.

Human rights became the focus of the writings of the School of Salamanca because of the practical questions sent to them by the missionaries in the New World. Once the humanity of the Native Americans had been vindicated, the matter of their having the right to elect or reject the missionaries' offering of Christianity became paramount. One of the

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important contributions of the School of Salamanca was the defense of the freedom of the human will in the sixteenth-century debates concerning free will and determinism. Thus, the free choice of the individual was central to their discussion.


The individual conscience has been viewed as the source of moral choices ever since the School of Salamanca. The individual conscience is free to elect or to reject commonly accepted standards of morality. Successful civilizations have been those in which a majority of people accepted the commonly accepted standards of morality. Unsuccessful civilizations have not seen a majority of people follow the commonly accepted standards of morality.

The twentieth century has provided an important model of unsuccessful civilizations—the socialist societies. These societies claimed to offer an alternative to historically successful societies—a better alternative. Socialist societies were built on an overwhelming stress on state power and the negation of individual choices. Alongside the system of coercion, the socialist societies claimed to have substituted moral goals for material rewards. People would produce for moral goals what they would not have for material rewards. Of course, reality showed that this is impossible. Moral incentives do not produce material products superior to those produced for material goals.

Return to Liberty, Restoration of Morality

The so-called moral goals were not moral at all. How could they be, if they were based on coercion? Beyond that, if they were based on what is contrary to all we know about human nature. Thus, socialists have always claimed that they are able to transcend human nature to something superior in morality—the New Man, or the New Socialist Man. Yet they have not been any more successful than other utopias. We will not be able to achieve a return to liberty, to a market society, without a restoration of morality. But a special infusion of morality to achieve liberty will be temporary if it is not successful in restoring the market, or liberty.

The complexity of human nature reveals itself in the relationship of morality and liberty. We would prefer to live in an idealized world—a utopia—in which each person is moral solely because that is the right behavior. Sad as it might be, that is not the reality that God has given to us. Humans are not motivated by pure spiritual purposes. Humans are not moral simply because that is the correct behavior. We have

seen civilizations continue to decline when no effort was made to reverse the wrong paths that people had chosen. The legacy of the Salamanican schoolmen and their understanding of the link between liberty and morality provide a ready guide to help us avoid the same fate. 

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