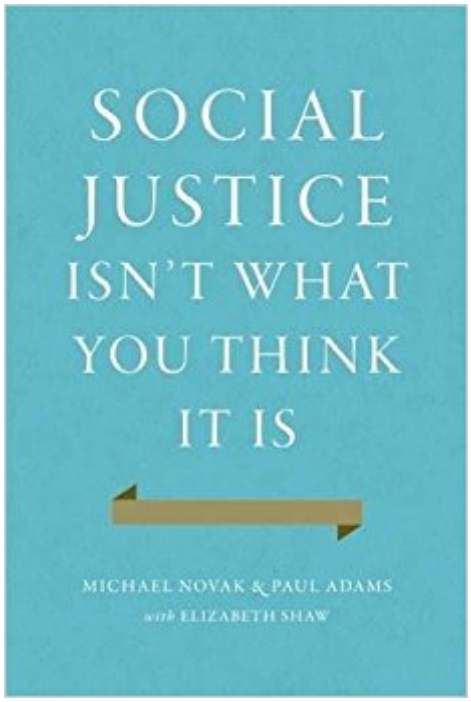
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Social Justice Isn't What You Think It Is



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Synopsis

What is social justice? For Friedrich Hayek, it was a mirage—a meaningless, ideological, incoherent, vacuous clichÃƒÂ©. He believed the term should be avoided, abandoned, and allowed to die a natural death. For its proponents, social justice is a catchall term that can be used to justify any progressive-sounding government program. It endures because it venerates its champions and brands its opponents as supporters of social injustice, and thus as enemies of humankind. As an ideological marker, social justice always works best when it is not too sharply defined. In Social Justice IsnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t What You Think It Is, Michael Novak and Paul Adams seek to clarify the true meaning of social justice and to rescue it from its ideological captors. In examining figures ranging from Antonio Rosmini, Abraham Lincoln, and Hayek, to Popes Leo XIII, John Paul II, and Francis, the authors reveal that social justice is not a synonym for “progressiveÃ¢â ¬Â• government as we have come to believe. Rather, it is a virtue rooted in Catholic social teaching and developed as an alternative to the unchecked power of the state. Almost all social workers see themselves as progressives, not conservatives. Yet many of their “best practicesÃ¢â ¬Â• aim to empower families and local communities. They stress not individual or state, but the vast social space between them. Left and right surprisingly meet. In this surprising reintroduction of its original intention, social justice represents an immensely powerful virtue for nurturing personal responsibility and building the human communities that can counter the widespread surrender to an ever-growing state.

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Customer Reviews

I have read this book with real delight. Clear, profound, inspiring, and brilliant. – Rocco Buttiglione, Italian Chamber of Deputies Adams and Novak write with compelling clarity and force. They make a rich contribution to our understanding of social justice and the policy implications that flow from it. – Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap., Archbishop of Philadelphia A profound treatise on a topic dear to the heart of political progressives and social work professionals. Those who have never given the meaning of social justice a second thought will be greatly rewarded with reflective insights and a new understanding. Those who think they know the meaning of social justice will be challenged to think again – and more deeply. – Neil Gilbert, Chernin Professor of Social Welfare, University of California, Berkeley Elegantly, winsomely, and with telling examples, Adams and Novak show how Catholic Social Thought challenges conventional "liberal" and "conservative" approaches to social issues. Ã Â This is a terrific book for anyone who is prepared to look anew at the dilemmas facing a society that aspires to be both free and compassionate. – Mary Ann Glendon, Professor of Law, Harvard University A distinctively caritas and catholic take on the concept of social justice that is rich in its originality, provocative, thoughtful in exposition, challenging us to transform our approach to social policy. – John Braithwaite, Distinguished Professor, Australian National University This book presents an innovative vision of social justice as a preeminent, creative, and outgoing virtue deeply rooted in genuine Catholic social thought. It provides an indispensable guide for advancing the common good in a contemporary landscape plagued by a pervasive secularism and an extreme moral relativism. – William C. Brennan, Professor, School of Social Work, Saint Louis University The challenge of writing about CST is that doing so expertly requires prodigious learning in not only the Catholic tradition, but also in so many contiguous fields – such as economics, politics, law, theology, philosophy. Thankfully, our authors are masters of their craft. And they have produced a marvelous restatement, and interpretation, of this important body of Church teaching. – Gerard V. Bradley, Professor of Law, University of Notre Dame Before reading this book, I was suspicious of the phrase social justice.Ã Â In Latin America, politicians and policy makers who use the social justice banner have committed many injustices. Acting supposedly on behalf of the general interest, the common good or the poor, government programs essentially concentrate power, bloat bureaucracies and often promote corruption. Adams and Novak surprised me when they distilled, from Catholic social thought and other sources, a definition centered on free individuals, as opposed to the Leviathan state. The Novak seal is evident because the definition emphasizes innovation, creativity and human flourishing. Here, social justice, like plain justice, is a virtue “that empowers individual

persons to act for themselves, to exercise their inborn social creativity.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã Â How much will societies improve when they embrace this paradigm of social justice instead of the statist conception? – Carroll Rios de Rodriguez, Professor of Economics, Francisco MarroquÃƒÂ- n University, Guatemala Social Justice Isn't What You Think It Is by Paul Adams and Michael Novak is a thoughtfully iconoclastic analysis and exposition of social justice as a virtue through the lens of Catholic social teaching – rejecting both individualism and collectivism and emphasizing the role of mediating social structures. Paul Adams, in particular, explores the application of social justice for Christians in professional social work. This book is an important resource for everyone interested in social justice and Christian practice. – David A. Sherwood, Editor-in-Chief, Social Work & Christianity No concept in ethical and political philosophy is more in need of clarification and critical analysis than that of “social justice.Ã¢â ¬Â• This term is a relatively late arrival in Catholic vocabulary. Adams and Novak provide a careful, thorough analysis of the term and the ideas and approach that make it useful. They also explain the ease with which the term can be misused. This is a very welcome book, not to be missed by anyone at all concerned with public order and understanding. – James V. Schall, S.J., Professor Emeritus, Georgetown University Michael Novak and Paul Adams' new book places the important discussion of social justice squarely within the best scholarship of the Catholic intellectual tradition. By transcending ideological biases, reading and interpreting the pertinent encyclicals impartially, and avoiding all political agendas, this thought-provoking new book should be welcomed by both the left and the right because of its fair, balanced, and reasoned approach. – John G. Trapani, Jr., Professor of Philosophy, Walsh University The difficult and risky underground publication of NovakÃ¢â ¬â„¢s The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism in 1985 was widely circulated among the Polish democratic opposition and inspired many debates about how to shape the free Poland for which we fought. This new book will remind Poles of the breathtaking appearance of SDC 30 years ago. When small groups discussed with John Paul II NovakÃ¢â ¬â„¢s ideas, including those on social justice and others in the present volume, the pope several times said he considered Novak one of his best lay friends in the West. On those occasions when Novak was present, the pope listened with great attention. -- Rev. Maciej Zieba, OP, author of Papal Economics: The Catholic Church on Democratic Capitalism, from Rerum Novarum to Caritas in Veritate Adams and Novak take on the hard task of defining social justice, which they identify as a personal virtue of a special modern type. Novak is unusually aware of abuses of the term by statists in former socialist lands like Slovakia, the country of his ancestors. Adams is especially good on the connection between charity and justice, and on the relation of marriage to both. Ã Â Here in Europe, this book does a great and original service.

– Juraj Kohutiar, emeritus Director of International Affairs, Slovak Christian-Democratic Party, former anticommunist dissident and “Underground ChurchÃ¢â ¬Â• activist I lived half of my life in Argentina, where the overwhelming majority adopted as a guiding policy principle a statist concept of social justice. I lived my other half in the United States, where many have practiced social justice as explained by Adams and Novak, building the institutions of a free and charitable society. Argentina was destroyed, the United States still has a chance. This immensely valuable book provides rich foundations for those who love liberty, justice, and a social environment conducive to human flourishing. – Alejandro Chafuen, President, Altas Network, and 2014 winner of the Walter Judd Freedom Award

This book is interesting and important for several reasons. First, it shows how sound thinking is shared among professionals. Paul Adams went looking for intellectual coherence to bring to his field of social work and ended up in the philosophy of Michael Novak. Naturally, Adams wondered about "social justice," a common term in social work. Novak has been thinking and writing about social justice for a few decades and at a depth that overcomes the confused popular understanding of the term. This book gives us the excitement of a social scientist working out a philosophy for his field with the help of a well-trained mind.Second, the book explains social justice in a way that others could apply to their own fields. Novak walks the reader through popular misunderstandings of "social justice" and gives examples of the consequences. He then interprets social justice as a modern development of the ancient concepts of justice and virtue. The development is obvious to a person like Novak, schooled in philosophy, but not obvious to most people today. Novak’s lucid and engaging explanation of this development incites the reader’s mind, as it must have incited Adams’.Lastly, the book offers Adams’ attempt to apply social justice to his own field. It is admittedly a first cut, but his long expertise in his own field and his educated, thoughtful persistence with philosophical concepts turns out a valuable analysis. Read this book to see how it applies to your own profession.Grattan BrownAssistant Professor of TheologyBelmont Abbey College

This book provides the reader with a better understanding of Social Justice and exactly what it means in relation to the church.

Social justice is not socialism. It is not redistribution of wealth. The authors of this book thoughtfully and thoroughly presents an explanation of social justice that should help those who read the book have a more balanced understanding of social justice.

Very interesting read!

yes, yes!

For those of us who have spent time with Dr.Novak's work, this new masterpiece comes as no surprise. What he and Adams have done is to give us a new lens through which to view Social Justice. Everyone along the political spectrum will find their preconceived notions of what Social Justice is truly challenged by this work.An advancement of the common good is shared by most, and it would be my hope that as you read this book, you think carefully about whether this new definition will move us in that direction? It is my belief that what Dr. Novak and Paul Adams have done is crafted for us a blueprint that will do just that. And they have managed to do so with clear, compelling, and inspiring prose that is utterly thought provoking.

The ambiguity of the definition of social justice is only enhanced in Christian conversations because the term originated in Catholic social teachings. Due to ignorance about the fundamental lack of authority of the Roman Catholic magisterium over non-Catholics and anachronistic readings of contemporary uses of ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“social justice,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• the idea of social justice is often used as a club by Christians who claim that socialism is a necessary corollary to biblical Christianity or that affirming immorality is a moral duty.In his most recent book, Michael Novak seeks to define social justice, reveal the confusion in the popular use of the term, and show why Catholic social teaching does not actually require supporting socialist economics and whatever the latest version of identity theory happens to be. This book relies on essays Novak had previously written with some additional framing to make it cogent. The book has a co-author, Paul Adams, and an additional contributor, which reflects the efforts to get some of this helpful teaching into the public square by friends of Novak.SummaryThe aptly titled book, Social Justice IsnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t What You Think It Is, has two distinct parts. Part One was written by Novak and includes seven chapters that define social justice, six chapters on Catholic Social Teaching on social justice, and two chapters that critique the theological difficulties with misapplication of Catholic Social Teaching. Part Two consists of five chapters of practical application by co-author, Paul Adams.The contributions of this book to the ongoing conversation are significant. NovakÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s systematic outline of six common uses of the term ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“social justiceÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• help reveal and explain the confusion of contemporary public dialog. As a careful thinker, Novak

shows why demanding a definition is so very important. Novak also outlines a better and helpful meaning for the term social justice that is consistent with actual Catholic Social Teaching. At the same time, Novak offers a cogent response to socialists that try to claim Catholic Social Teaching as providing authoritative support for their position. There is sometimes resonance, but his exposition reveals that many the claims made by anti-market crusaders are built on misrepresentations of what popes actually wrote.Paul AdamÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s section of this book is helpful, as well, as he shows how social justice, properly defined, can be applied to real situations to bring about real justice. As a professor emeritus of social work, he offers historical case studies and theoretical examples of positive outcomes based on applying a rational concept of social justice to real world problems.Analysis and ConclusionThis volume offers an important entry in the conversation on social justice. The first chapters are universally applicable and instructive in understanding the contemporary debate. For non-Catholics, the remainder of the Part One is instructive and helpful, but limited since it relies on the assumed authority of the Roman Catholic church. There are, however, valuable principles that can be evaluated against Scripture, many of which are directly applicable beyond the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic denomination. The inclusion of AdamsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ applications is helpful, since a common and valid criticism of much of the conservative rebuttal of various versions of social justice is that there is too little evidence of application of conservative principles of social justice.The most significant benefit of this volume is that it clears the way for legitimate discussions about the nature of social justice. IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢m not convinced that attempting to redeem the term that has been so successfully coopted and confused is the best way forward, but Novak and Adams make it at least possible. That is an important contribution that makes this book an important entry into a vital conversation.Note: I received a gratis copy of this volume from the publisher with no expectation of a positive review. This is an edited version of a post at Ethics and Culture.

Novak writes well in explaining how the current trend in social justice thought isn't what it is. The difficulty he attributes to the trend that makes social justice code for a justification for our centralized, command and control, welfare government is that no one has yet defined it. His chapter on Hayek, who hated the term, is particularly good.The fault I have with the book is that the authors repeat themselves often rather than developing further their argumments, or instead of stopping.

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