This project to bring together a collection of essays on pre-mercantilist economic ideas was originated by Barry Gordon of the University of Newcastle in Australia. He had established a working understanding with the publishers who were willing to undertake a commitment to a large comprehensive volume on the subject. The project was underway in 1993 with understandings with most of the contributors. My position as co-editor was suddenly changed with Barry's untimely death from a sudden heart attack on March 17, 1994.

This project was undertaken without the benefit of a funded conference that guarantees that the participants meet a deadline for at least an initial draft of their contributions. In addition, the dimensions of the contributions solicited require a major effort that demanded systematic surveys of the literature. The result has been that some of the initial contributors fell by the wayside and were replaced by others. Delays and changing commitments have put severe pressures on many contributors. Nevertheless, the final assembly of papers covers some areas that have not been systematically investigated in previous treatments of the history of economic ideas.

The emphasis upon social justice as a corollary to economic ideas was the result of Barry Gordon's innovative concern for the equal treatment of the moral aspects of social theory. Each contributor, of course, dealt with this aspect of early thought in his or her own way. In some essays, social justice emerges as the paramount concern. In others, justice and economics appear to be two sides of the same coin in early thought. The contributors to this project hope that the variety of ideas and approaches presented here will stimulate a richer appreciation of the influences of the past on modern theory. They further hope to suggest new perspectives and correlations that will enrich both contemporary and historical analysis. This would be the most fitting tribute to the enthusiasm for research in the history of economic thought and ethical concerns of Barry J. Gordon.

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July 20, 1997