



**THE DOCTRINE OF THE COMMON GOOD  
OF CIVIL SOCIETY  
IN THE WORKS OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS**

*A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate School  
of the University of Notre Dame  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy*

*by*  
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### PREFACE

The question of the common good, of civil society was never developed or discussed in a systematic manner by Saint Thomas, but the theses which he expounded in relation to it, while treating other subjects, can be summarized in a doctrinal body, which could be regarded as the "theory of the common good" of Saint Thomas. To organize these theses to the extent that is warranted by the condition in which they appear in his works, as well as to examine what is needed to complete the theory, which is not included explicitly in those works, is the main purpose of this dissertation. The fragmentary and scattered character of materials bearing upon this question in Saint Thomas' writings requires a considerable amount of interpretation, inference, and even some times harmonizing of those texts which at least appear contradictory. This we have tried to do in writing this dissertation. Moreover, we have taken special pains to remain within the limits of what, historically, are the personal teachings of Saint Thomas, as distinct from what has been a development of Thomism from his time up to the present. On the other hand, since it is not always easy to distinguish between what he actually declared or intimated, and what is merely implicit in his teaching, it has not been possible to avoid completely recourse to Cardinal Cajetan and John of St. Thomas, two of his greatest commentators. We have tried to use their commentaries only in an instrumental way, so to speak, toward ascertaining what Saint Thomas' own thought actually was, without introducing elements unwarranted by those texts.

Recent discussions among the disciples of Saint Thomas concerning the common good of civil society have made apparent the confused and undeveloped condition of this question in current Thomistic philosophy. Accordingly, before proceeding to integrate into a new synthesis whatever may have been gained in these discussions, it would seem advisable, as a preliminary task, to settle the state of the problem such as it can be determined on the basis of what is contained in the writings of Saint Thomas.

The primary sources for this dissertation have been chiefly the Summa Theologica, the Summa contra Gentes, the Commentaries on the Ethics and Politics of Aristotle/and the De Regimine Principum. It has been unquestionably established by scholars that of the Commentary on the Politics only the first four books and, of the De Regimine, the first book and the first five chapters of the second book

other four books of the *Metaphysics*. Although it seems that the faithful disciple of Saint Thomas—F. H. Reilly—Politics were written by a hence represent the *Prima Secundae* notes of the master, and them in this dissertation for the purpose. Use has been made of Thomas personally wrote *as an addendum*. Strictly to what Saint of others be attributed to him. The reason is to safeguard lest the thoughts *Principum* is known to have remained a part of the *De Regimine Principum*. Consequently, no use at all has been made of the *Prima Secundae*.

sources: some of the *Quarta Secundae*. Of course used as basic the *De Veritate* and *De Caritate*. For instance especially on the Sentences, and even such as the *Prima Secundae* on the Sentences, to which one would refer. *Metaphysics of Aristotle* of the common good, but which in fact find on the question contain some materials which occasionally, or

to the *Commentaria* Thomas' in discussing Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *Physics*, is explaining his own ideas and not another's ideas without a satisfactory and generally amount that scholars have as yet reached throughout this dissertation. Therefore we have of accepting the ideas and doctrines followed the practical expedient Aristotle as ideas and doctrines. The *Commentaria* on also to be found in the works in which Thomas whenever they are teaching. With regard to the *Prima Secundae* Thomas sets forth his own pally, the *Summa theologiae*.

I want to give here a word of thanks to those who have helped to make this dissertation of my gratitude to those indebted to the Reverend Father. Possible. I am especially assistance and encouraging *intérêt* for his frequent University of Notre Dame. During my graduate studies at the kindness and patience throughout my work. I am indebted to Simon for his suggestions and invaluable advice. The many fruitful given me during the preparation of the *Prima Secundae* which he has Lanigan, who carefully and thoughtfully read the dissertation; and to Mr. Joseph English version of this thesis. I have corrected the language of the

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## INTRODUCTION

In the works of Saint Thomas the very general concept of a "good" which in some form or other is shared by several beings at the same time, or towards which different beings are ordained, is usually termed a "common good" (*bonum commune*). God, for example, is the common good of the whole universe;<sup>1</sup> the Church has a common good,<sup>2</sup> and the Divine Good, the object of beatitude, is common to the celestial society.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes, instead of speaking of a good, Saint Thomas speaks of an end (*finis*) common *to an* entire order of beings; but since, according to his doctrine, everything that has the ratio of end has the ratio of good,<sup>4</sup> this end will be as such a common good for all those beings which tend towards it. Thus, God, who is the supreme end of the universe, is also the good to which all created beings aspire.<sup>5</sup> And there is, of course, a common good of civil society. These examples suffice to show that the meaning of the expression "common good" varies very much from one case to another. The meaning, in fact, is analogical, not only when it applies both to God and to creatures, but also when it is said of various subjects within the order of created being alone. And even when such an expression refers to the good of an entire community, its meaning is not always the same, for in different cases different kinds of goods are said to be common to that community. This is why it is often rightly remarked that Saint

1. In I ad Cor.: "Deus est commune bonum totius universi."
2. Trī,~ī11 § 5, ad 1: "gratia gratis data ordinatur ad bonum commune Ecclesiae."
3. De Car., 2: "inquantum admittitur ad participandum bonum alicujus civitatis...competunt ei [homini] virtutes quaedam...ad amandum bonum civitatis; ita cum homo per divinam gratiam admittatur in participationem caelestis beatitudinis, quae in visione et fruitione Dei consistit, fit quasi civis et socius illius beatae societatis, quae vocatur caelestis Hierusalem... Unde homini sic ad caelestia adscripto competunt quaedam virtutes...ad quarum debitam operationem praeexigitur amor boni communis toti societati, quod est bonum divinum, prout est beatitudinis objectum."
4. De Ver., 21, 2: "omne id quod invenitur habere rationem finis, habet et rationem boni."
5. I, 44, 4: "unaquaeque creatura intendit consequi suam perfectionem, quae est similitudo perfectionis et bonitatis divinae. Sic ergo divina bonitas est finis rerum omnium." I, 65, 2: "totum universum, cum singulis suis partibus, ordinatur in Deum, sicut in finem."

Thomas' notion of the common good is an elusive one, and *not* equally clear or easy to grasp in all its range. *However, in spite of the differing senses it bears in the usage of Saint Thomas, the notion of the common good of civil society presents certain basic characteristics sufficiently definite to set it in sharp contrast with other doctrines and tendencies about what society is and what it ought to propose as its aim.* In fact, that very term is often used in order to designate whatever kind of well-being the State is expected, by differing political schools, to secure for all *society, and within such usage it proves to be easy to indulge in imaginings of goods which ought to be ends for the united work of State and society.* But do those things with which *the imagination fills the term "common good"* correspond with the conception of Saint Thomas? They do *not*: because his notion, even *if large* and sometimes elusive, does not admit of such loose and indiscriminate accumulation of goods.

Saint Thomas' teachings about the common good of civil *society can be organized on the basis of three principles: the specificity of the common good--"bonum commune civitatis et bonum singulare unius personae non differunt solum secundum multum et paucum, sed secundum formalem differentiam;"*<sup>6</sup> its contents, that is, the matter, as it were, in which the common good consists, which is above all the good life of the multitude--*"civitas est communitas perfecta... ex ejus esse provenit quod homines non solum vivant, sed quod bene vivant, in quantum per leges civitatis ordinatur vita hominum ad virtutes,"*<sup>7</sup> — and its primacy over all private good--*"bonum commune melius est quam bonum particulare unius."*<sup>8</sup> The principle of *specificity* leads to the discussion of the ontological structure of society as ground for the demonstration that a corresponding good must exist for it as a collective entity. The nature of this good is ascertained through the consideration of its *ethical* aspect, namely the *bene vivere* which society is called upon to achieve as the *communitas perfecta*. These first two principles can be said to characterize the common good in *itself*; the third, namely, its primacy over the private good of an individual, puts it in relation with other kinds of goods and assigns to it in relation to the rest its proper preeminence. In this dissertation a chapter has been devoted to each *one of these* three principles.

6. II-II. 58, 7, ad 2.

7. In Pol., I, 1, #17.

8. *S.c.G.*, III, 146.

## Chapter I

### THE SPECIFICITY OF THE COMMON GOOD OF POLITICAL SOCIETY

The idea that there is a good which is shared by the members of any human community whatever--a family, a village, a tribe, a city--was a subject of important speculations in Greek moral philosophy, in *The Republic*, Plato proposes to find out what is the life of the virtuous-man; and through the comparing, or rather the paralleling, of the social organism and the individual soul, he further investigates in the state, or polis, the elements of virtuous life. For the soul, these elements are wisdom, fortitude and temperance, all unified in and by justice; in like manner, whatever state or polis possesses them will also be just, and at the same time happy. The main theme in the political philosophy of Aristotle, as in that of Plato, is an inquiry into what constitutes the happiness of political life, and the conditions--i.e., the different kinds of political regimes--through which alone such happiness can be attained. The opening idea of Aristotle's *Politics* is that every human community tends toward some good.<sup>1</sup> The community as a whole has an end and this end is the "good life"; no polis is really such which does not aim at realizing a just and good life as its proper end.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, every kind of community differs specifically from any other according to the end it purports to attain. The state or political community--or polis, as Aristotle knew it--is the all-embracing and highest form of human association; and, accordingly, the end which corresponds to it is the highest among human goods. This good is not greater in a merely quantitative fashion, as though it were simply the result of adding up the goods of lower and partial communities, or those of its individual members; on the contrary, it differs in kind, or qualitatively, from all other goods, since it is the one belonging to a community whose essential traits consist in being self-sufficient and in containing within itself all other kinds of human association. Thus, the good at which civil or political society aims as its

1. Pol., I, 1, 1252 a 1: "Observation shows us, first, that every polis (or state) is a species of association, and, secondly, that all associations are instituted for the purpose of attaining some good."
2. These two ideas, namely, that the community as such has an end, and that this end consists in the "good life"--which is at the same time the happy life and life according to virtue--appear once and again throughout the *Politics*. The second idea is most thoroughly discussed in Book III.



own and specific end distinguishes *it from* any other kind of community. Aristotle rejects the criterion of more or *less in the* number of individuals that make up a community as the explanatory principle of the differences obtaining among the various kinds of community.<sup>3</sup>

These themes are classic in the political *philosophy* which takes its inspiration from Aristotle; in the works of Saint Thomas Aquinas as well as in the political doctrines of his school they constitute the thesis of “the specificity of the common good.” “*Alia est enim ratio boni communis et boni singularis.*”<sup>4</sup> There are many similar formulas which briefly and clearly express this thought. In his Commentary on the *Politics*, Saint Thomas expounded in extenso all these Aristotelian ideas. But they are also his own doctrines, as clearly appears from a great many passages in some of his works, especially in both *Summas* and the *De Regimine Principum*. Thus Saint Thomas stresses again and again the principle of finality in human affairs: wherever there is human activity there is an end for it, since *it is in view of an end that man acts according to his nature.*<sup>5</sup> This holds true not only for each man acting individually but also for every society as such: they are instituted and they exist *in order to attain some end.* And so, *the tendency of every human community toward an*

3. Pol., I, 1, 1252 a 7: “It is a mistake to believe that the ‘statesman’ is the same as the monarch of a kingdom, or the manager of a household, or the master of a number of slaves. Those who hold this view consider that each of these persons differs from the others not with a difference of kind, but according to the number, or the paucity, of the persons with whom he deals. On this view a man who is concerned with few persons is a master: one who is concerned with more is the manager of a household: one who is concerned with still more is a ‘statesman,’ or a monarch. This view abolishes any real difference between a large household and a small polis... But this is a view which cannot be accepted as correct.”

4. II-II, 58, 7, ad 2. The context is as follows; “Bonum commune civitatis et bonum singulare unius personae non differunt solum secundum multum et paucum, sed secundum formalem differentiam. Alia est enim ratio boni communis et boni singularis, sicut alia est ratio totius et partis.”

5. I-II, 1,1: “omnes actiones, quae procedunt ab aliqua potentia, causantur ab ea secundum rationem sui objecti; objectum autem voluntatis est finis, et bonum; unde oportet, quod omnes actiones humanae propter finem *sirtt.*” Before stating this conclusion Saint Thomas makes in the same article the distinction between “actiones proprie humanae,” which belong to man as endowed with *reason and will*, and all those which proceed from man not as such (“hominis actiones”).

end which is its own good<sup>6</sup> is so manifest, for Saint Thomas that when he speaks of that end it is not in order to demonstrate its existence but to determine what kind of end it is, what its content is, how it differs from the ends of other species of community. The existence of that good being simply manifest, it is the question of its specific content that is asked.

Saint Thomas likewise, following Aristotle, holds that civil society (civitas or civilis multitudo, the equivalent of the Aristotelian polis), the family and some other associations generally found among men differ from each other, not according to more or less (“secundum multum et paucum”) but specifically.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, there is also a formal difference between the common good of a community and the private good of any individual;<sup>8</sup> the good proper to civil society, or the “civitas,” as Saint Thomas often calls it, differs from a singular person’s good in the same way as the ratio of whole is distinct from the ratio of part; that is, formally.<sup>9</sup> This means that in order properly to account for its formality, the common good of society must be considered as a new and qualitatively autonomous species of good.

What has just been said will suffice as a summary of the main positions of Saint Thomas on this subject. Before proceeding to a systematic treatment and development of them it is necessary first to determine the meaning of the concept of “civitas” in Saint Thomas, and to distinguish clearly between the two senses of which the notion of the specificity of the common good admits.

6. Every end has the ratio of a good: “omne agens agit propter finem, qui habet rationem boni.” (I-II, 94, 2). But a good can be either real or apparent: “bonum, ad quod aliquis respiciens operatur, non semper est verum bonum, sed quandoque verum, et quandoque apparet.” (I-II, 18, 4, ad 1).

7. See text of II-II, 58, 7 ad 2, quoted in note 4, p. 4. Following that passage and in answer to one of the objections brought in in the article, Saint Thomas refers to Aristotle’s doctrine (Pol., I, 1, 1252 a 7), which he evidently makes his own, when he says that “non bene dicunt qui dicunt civitatem et domum et alia hujusmodi differre solum multitudine et paucitate, et non specie.” (ibid.).

8. II-II, 47, 11: “ratio formalis omnium, quae sunt ad finem, attenditur ex parte finis... Diversi autem fines sunt bonum proprium unius, et bonum familiae, et bonum civitatis, et regni.” This is said by Saint Thomas in the course of his demonstration that political prudence, the object of which is the good of society, is not of the same species as the prudence which deals with the good of an individual, just because the objects of both kinds of prudence differ also in species.

9. II-II, 58, 7: “Alia est enim ratio boni communis et boni singularis, sicut alia est ratio totius et partis.”

In adopting the concept of "civitas" Saint Thomas followed Aristotle in his notion of the polis as the most perfect and the only self-sufficient form of community, as well as the one which includes within itself all other forms. The polis that Aristotle wrote about or, more exactly, the one he had in view as the basis for his speculation, was the city-state of ancient Greece. Different and larger types of community, such as the regnum, were prevalent in the medieval world Saint Thomas knew. He was well aware of that difference; in fact, he sometimes seems to feel that the word "civitas" (for polis) would rather mean something like the medieval city, and then he is careful to mention the regnum after the civitas, even in those formulas in which he follows the Philosopher most closely. But it is in just such cases made clear that he thinks that what can be said of the polis applies properly to both the civitas and the regnum.<sup>10</sup> Whether he had in mind the Greek city-state, or the medieval city, or the regnum, he did not consider these historical varieties of decisive importance for his abstract point of view as a philosopher. What concerned him much more was rather a formalized notion capable of being attributed with truth to any real form of society that has such self-sufficiency and inclusiveness as meet the requirements of the Aristotelian definition. Such a community is then what he meant by "civitas" or "civilis multitudo."

The specificity of the common good, as it was remarked above, admits of two distinct senses. According to the first of these the good of the civitas is formally different from that of any other kind of natural community, inasmuch as it is specifically richer and higher in goodness than any one of them. Thus, the goods which different types of community strive to attain have--notwithstanding their being common goods--a corresponding difference of contents. According to the other sense, society's common good differs formally from the private goods of the individuals which make it up, because it is a whole with regard to them, which are its parts. In other words,

10. For instance in II-II, 47, 11 (in a passage quoted above, note 8, p. 5). In the same article, after speaking of the different species of prudence according to the different kinds of goods (the individual good and that of the family), he concludes: "et tertia [prudencia] politica, quae ordinatur ad bonum commune civitatis, vel regni." Likewise, in II-II, 50, 1: "in eo qui non solum seipsum habet regere, sed etiam communitatem perfectam civitatis vel regni, invenitur specialis et perfecta ratio regiminis... Et ideo regi, ad quem pertinet regere civitatem vel regnum, prudentia competit secundum specialem et perfectissimam sui rationem." According to these texts, both the civitas and regnum are the object of the same kind of prudence.

insofar as the ratio of whole is realized in such a collective being as a community, the good that belongs to it cannot but be different from the goods proper to the parts just as the ratio of whole is different from the ratio of part.

The first sense of the notion of specificity emphasizes the diversity of contents of two goods both of which may well be common, yet different, as when the good of civil society is compared with that of domestic society. What is envisaged here is not that the family stands in relation to civil society as a part to its whole, but only that their respective goods are not composed of the same elements: in fact, society's common good is qualitatively richer and higher than the family's. This is the specific difference which is erroneously denied, according to Aristotle, by those who see only a difference of number between the household and the polis, and for whom, therefore, there is no specific distinction whatsoever between a great household and a small state.<sup>11</sup> In order to refute this view, Aristotle undertakes in the first book of the Politics an analysis of the origin, nature and functions of the family. The latter is "the first form of association naturally instituted for the satisfaction of daily recurrent needs," and is the first thing to arise from the two elementary relationships of man and woman, master and slave.<sup>12</sup> These two relationships originate directly from the necessity of providing for the reproduction and preservation of the human species; and the good for whose attainment the family first arose does not comprise more than the satisfaction of everyday wants. On the contrary, the polis, transcending even the condition of the village but yet deriving from the domestic group, out of the primary needs of living, goes on existing with the purpose of the "good life"--of life secundum virtutem, as

11. Pol., I, 1, 1252 a 12. The context of the Politics in which this position is criticized by Aristotle refers only to the differences in kind among domestic and political regimes. Why is it also considered as a source of the Thomistic doctrine of the specificity of the common good itself? The answer can be inferred from the commentary of Saint Thomas on this passage. He says that among the four regimes considered, two of them--the royal one and that of the politikos, or constitutional--are related to civil society; the other two--that of the householder, or oeconomicum, and that of the master, or despoticum--are related to the family. Cf. In Pol., I, 1, #3. Now, since the difference between these two sets of regimes (as well as within those of each set) is above all a difference in kind, it is inferred that such a difference must be ultimately based on the specific diversity of the ends and goods of society and family, the reason being that specifically different ends call for a corresponding difference in the regimes which are suitable to serve them.

12. Pol., I, 2, 1252 b 9.

Saint Thomas shall say later-- the end and accomplishment of all the possibilities of human nature.<sup>13</sup> This "good life," which is a life according to what is most specific in man, namely, his reason, is the end of the polis, and within the polis alone can it be served; it is a richer, more noble good than the one which the family secures for its members. Although the family and the polis differ in the number of individuals that compose them, the greater number of people found in the polis is only a necessary condition--relative to the material causality--of its existence. The polis alone is self-sufficing, because being the most perfect form of community it is the end to which all lower communities are ordained, and, furthermore, while including all of them it is not included by any.<sup>14</sup> The question then arises in what consists that supreme good which is attainable in the polis alone and which makes it self-sufficing. To describe the content of that good is at the same time to evince its specific formality, especially as opposed to the end of the household, which is "the satisfaction of daily recurrent needs."<sup>15</sup>

It is this aspect of the specificity of the common good which is explicitly referred to in the opening chapters of the *Politics* and which constitutes one of the underlying themes throughout the work, which, as a continuation of the doctrines of the *Nicomachean Ethics* on the highest form of human life and happiness, discusses the means that are conducive to their realization in the polis.<sup>16</sup> The second aspect--the formal diversity between the whole and its parts--is not discussed or even mentioned in the *Politics*; some implication of it, however, is

13. Cf. *Pol.*, I, 2, 1252 b 32.

14. *Pol.*, I, 2, 1252 b 35.

15. *Pol.*, I, 2, 1252 b 12. This statement does not represent, however, Aristotle's complete doctrine on the family. In *Ethics*, VIII, 11, 1161 a 17 he says that the three goods children receive from their parents are their existence, nurture and upbringing; thus, he places in the family an educational function of the offspring. He speaks also very explicitly about all the members of the family benefiting from the different relationships of friendship existing among them, and from the mutual love and help deriving therefrom. Cf. *Eth.*, VIII, 11 and 12, *passim*. But the family, however high may be the good it is destined to bring about, is not a *perfect* and self-sufficing community. Only a higher kind of community, the polis, is the adequate milieu in which to achieve all the excellences of which human nature is capable: these exceed the possibilities of the domestic community and can be attained by man only as a member of the city. This is the point which Aristotle intends in the section of the *Politics* under consideration.

16. Cf. *Eth.*, X, 9, 1181 b 12 to 23 (final paragraph of the *Ethics*), where a programme for the *Politics* is stated.

contained in Aristotle's criticism of those who attempt an explanation of the diversity of regimes by means of the greater or lesser number of their subjects. In Saint Thomas, on the contrary, this aspect is clearly brought forth in the statement that the difference between common good and private good is equivalent to the difference between the rationes of whole and part.

That which is chiefly and fundamentally implied in this statement when applied to the common good is a certain position with regard to the ontological structure of society and the specific type of being which is brought into existence when a multitude of human beings live together in a community. This subject will be developed in the remainder of this chapter.<sup>17</sup> But first of all it is necessary to reach a clear notion of the kind of whole which society is in the ontological order; otherwise, an adequate understanding of the common good, principally in its relationship with the social subject in which it is embodied and with the individuals which make up that subject, cannot be reached. Certainly, the exact determination of the position that the individual goods should be given with regard to the community welfare is a problem that fully belongs in the field of ethics, and therefore it can be solved with ethical criteria alone; yet, the starting point for a correct solution of this problem lies in an ontological consideration of the social whole. Actually, the existence of society as a being formally different from a collection of individuals determines somehow the existence of a common good irreducible in its turn to a sum of private goods. The attempt to reduce the properties of a group as such to the quantitative combinations of its individual elements or the attempt to account for the former solely in the terms of the latter is the idea which is common to the social and political doctrines or tendencies vaguely called individualist.<sup>18</sup><sup>19</sup>

Such is not the Thomistic conception of the common good. In Saint Thomas' doctrines that conception is inseparable--and necessarily inseparable--from certain basic positions about the ontological structure of the "ens sociale." The point which comes into consideration here is whether this ens is a "totum", and, if so, what kind of "totum" it is in the metaphysical order. Whence it will follow that the ratio of the good proper to a social whole and the ratio of the private good differ in the same way that the whole and the part do.<sup>18</sup>

17. The characteristic properties of the good which only in civil society can be realized--in other words, the content of the common good--will be the subject of the next chapter.

18. Cf. Andre Lalande, *Vocabulaire Technique et Critique de la Philosophie*, vol. I, 4th. edition, Paris, 1938, under the article *Individualisme*.

19. II-II, 58, 7, ad 2: "Alia est enim ratio boni communis et boni singularis, sicut alia est ratio totius et partis."

What is the meaning of a whole, a totum? In his *Commentary on the Physics* Saint Thomas defines the totum by repeating almost literally Aristotle's words in his definition of  $\delta\lambda\omicron\nu$ .<sup>20</sup> "Definitur enim unumquodque totum esse, cui nihil deest; sicut dicimus hominem totum aut arcam totam, quibus nihil deest eorum quae debent habere... Cum autem aliquid desit per absentiam alicujus intrinseci, tunc non est totum. Sic igitur manifestum est, quod haec est definitio totius: 'totum est, cujus nihil est extra'."<sup>21</sup> There is a whole, then, whenever there exists an aggregate of elements of any kind whatsoever such that, coexisting together in any way, they are destined to their mutual completion and to their being integrated into one higher and all-inclusive being. Thus, the ratio of whole includes that of being complete in itself, or being perfect. This is why, after the passage above quoted of his *Commentary on the Physics*, Saint Thomas adds the remark that whole and perfect-are either entirely the same thing or closely akin; if they are not absolutely equivalent it is because whole or totum cannot be said of what is simple, since what is simple has no parts; yet the latter can be said to be perfectum.<sup>22</sup> Whence the ratio of totum includes both having parts and being able to exist without depending on anything else for carrying out its existence--on account of its completeness. On the other hand, the ratio of part has the meaning of something imperfect or incomplete in itself, which on this account is destined to be integrated into a superior and complete entity--the whole, so as to be able to exist either in an absolute way, like the hand with regard to the body, or at least under those properties and formalities which a being derives from the whole to which it belongs as a part. The latter possibility is realized in the case of man, who exists as a civis, and receives benefits as a civis, only if he is member of a civitas.

Now the concept of whole is analogical in Saint Thomas. A genus, for instance, is a whole inasmuch as it embraces the species that come under it as its parts. An essence, that is, a mere possibility of existence, or, also, that which confronts the intellect as an object which specifies it, is likewise a whole, for it is constituted of elements or aspects which act as parts holding and implying each other in the unity of the essence. In the quantitative whole, the parts coexist outside of each other. In a spiritual and, therefore, simple creature

20. *Phys.*, III, 6, 207 a 10: "we define the whole--that from which nothing is wanting, as a whole man or a whole box...the whole is that of which nothing is outside."

21. In *Phys.*, III, lect. 10.

22. *Ibid.*: "totum et perfectum, vel sunt penitus idem, vel sunt propinqua secundum naturam. (Et hoc ideo dicit [Aristoteles] quia totum non invenitur in simplicibus, quae non habent partes; in quibus tamen utimur nomine perfecti)."

there is a totum only insofar as that creature is endowed with a plurality of powers: intellect, will, senses, etc. The ratio of whole is actualized in all these different kinds of beings, although in diverse ways: a plurality of elements which are mutually interrelated and which, through their integration, act in an all-embracing unity.

For a thing to be a whole it is not necessary that it be a substance. But the ratio of unity belongs essentially to the whole; however, there can be wholes which are one, which have unity simpliciter, and wholes which are one secundum quid.<sup>23</sup> There are wholes which--without having a substantial unity, are nonetheless wholes, and it is in this manner that many men form one society and many stones one heap.<sup>24</sup>

Now it is to be asked whether all that has been said about whole in general holds true when said of a human community. The answer is no doubt affirmative; every human community is a whole and as such it shares fully in all the properties belonging to wholes. In fact, the composing elements of any association whatsoever of human beings are always mutually related in such a way as to form one system embracing all of them in its unity. This unity is sufficient for these elements thus related to be constituted into a whole.<sup>25</sup> As for civil society, it includes in its unity not only individuals but also all lower communities.<sup>26</sup> It is, then, easy to see that any community formed by men--and, specifically, civil society--meets the definition of whole. However, the kind of totum that society is does not belong to any of the four species above enumerated, namely, the genus, the essence, the whole constituted by the powers of a

23. For a discussion of the different kinds of totality, according as they have unity simpliciter or secundum quid, see *infra*, p. 12 and ff.

24. I-II, 17, 4: "Quae sunt diversa secundum substantiam, et unum secundum accidens, sunt diversa simpliciter, et unum secundum quid: sicut multi homines sunt unus populus, et multi lapides sunt / Unus acervus; quae est unitas compositionis aut ordinis."

There is no doubt that the definition of whole holds true of any community whatsoever: a whole is id, cui nihil deest eorum quae debet habere, or also, id, cujus nihil est extra (in *Phys.*, III, lect. 10, above quoted). It could be objected, however, that this definition applies also to things that normally are only parts--and that therefore it is a bad definition: thus, if a hand does not lack anything of what it must have it is a whole. But, for one thing, a hand cannot exist isolated like an independent whole. On the other hand, nothing prevents a thing from being a whole and a part at the same time under different respects. And only the universe is a totum par excellence: ita haec ratio totius competit ei, quod est vere et proprie totum, scilicet in universo, extra quod simpliciter nihil est. (in *Phys.*, III, lect. 10)

26. In *Pol.*, I, 1, #2: "Manifestum est quod civitas includit omnes alias communitates."

spiritual substance, and the quantitative whole. What kind of whole is then a human community? The answer depends on the kind of unity which is proper to it. As for this, Saint Thomas says very explicitly that it is a unity of order: "Hoc totum quod est civilis multitudo, vel domestica familia, habet solam unitatem ordinis, secundum quam non est aliquid simpliciter unum."<sup>27</sup>

The expression "unitas ordinis" is applied by Saint Thomas to beings of very different kinds. A heap of stones, for instance, is one by unity of order,<sup>28</sup> and likewise a city is one inasmuch as it is made up of houses.<sup>29</sup> There is also a unity of order in every number.<sup>30</sup> All the creatures in the universe form a whole with that kind of unity,<sup>31</sup> which is also the only possible one for many beings in the human world, like a family, an army,<sup>32</sup> civil society.<sup>33</sup> The very diversity of the beings which, according to Saint Thomas, possess only a unity of order indicates that the order which unifies those beings is not of one and the same kind for all. Thus, for example, among the beings that have "unitas ordinis" a first group is formed by those which at the same time are "one" simpliciter--like numbers and syllables. On the other hand, there are beings which, possessing also a unity of order, have only a oneness secundum quid, like an army or a city.

This diversity of meanings of the expression "unitas ordinis" as used by Saint Thomas is brought out very clearly by a comparison of some of the texts in which that kind of unity is predicated of several things. In a passage of his *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, for instance, both the syllable and the number are said to be "one" simpliciter, although not in the manner in which a substance is one<sup>34</sup> but only with a unity derived from an order. Unlike the unity of syllables and numbers, the unity that obtains for some other kinds of beings which are also made up of a multitude of elements is only secundum quid. The reason for this difference, adds Saint Thomas, is that the

27.1 In *Eth.*, I, 1, #5.

28. Cf. above p. 11, note 24.

29. *S.c.G.*, IV, 35: "Fit unum ex multis: uno quidem modo, secundum ordinem tantum, sicut ex multis domibus fit civitas, et ex multis militibus fit exercitus."

30. In *Met.*, VII, 17, #1673: "...compositum quandoque sortitur speciem ab aliquo uno, quod est vel forma, ut patet in corpore mixto; vel compositio, ut patet in domo; vel ordo, ut patet in syllaba et numero." For a complete context of this passage and a commentary on certain difficulties raised by it, see below, note 36, p. 13.

31. *De Pot.*, 3, 16 ad 2: "creatura assimilatur Deo in unitate, ...in quantum omnes unum sunt unitate ordinis."

32. *S.c.G.*, IV, 35, the same passage quoted above in note 29.

33. *iii-E-th.*, I, 1, #5: "Hoc totum quod est civilis multitudo, vel domestica familia, habet solam unitatem ordinis." Cf. I-II, 17, 4.

resulting compound may be specified either by something one--which in its turn may be either a form, or a "compositio," or an order--; or by the multitude itself of the parts assembled--as in the case of a heap of stones or any association of human beings. In these latter instances, when the specification is derived from the multitude, as such, of the collected parts, ab ipsa multitudine partium collectarum,<sup>34</sup> the unity is only secundum quid.

In the passage just cited the only kind of "unitas ordinis" which is mentioned is the one which causes a thing to be one simpliciter. But in texts of other works "unitas ordinis" is attributed by Saint Thomas to wholes, the unity of which is merely secundum quid. The following can be given as examples: "Quae vero sunt diversa secundum substantiam, et unum secundum accidens, sunt diversa simpliciter, et unum secundum quid; sicut multi homines sunt unus populus, et multi lapides sunt unus acervus, quae est unitas compositionis aut ordinis;"<sup>35</sup> and: "Hoc totum quod est civilis multitudo, vel domestica familia, habet solam unitatem ordinis, secundum quam non est aliquid simpliciter unum."<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, it can be inferred from these passages that not only is there "unitas ordinis" in beings that are "one" secundum quid, but also that no other kind of unity is possible

In *Met.*, VII, 17, # 1672<sup>^</sup> The complete text is as follows: "Quandoque enim ex multis fit compositio, ita quod totum compositum ex multis est unum quoddam, sicut domus composita ex suis partibus, et mixtum corpus ex elementis. Quandoque vero ex multis fit compositum, ita quod totum compositum non est unum simpliciter, sed solum secundum quid; sicut patet in cumulo vel acervo lapidum, cum partes sunt in actu, cum non sint continuae. Unde simpliciter quidem est multa, sed solum secundum quid unum, prout ista multa associantur sibi in loco."<sup>37</sup> # 1673: "Hujus autem diversitatis ratio est, quia compositum quandoque sortitur speciem ab aliquo uno, quod est vel forma, ut patet in corpore mixto; vel compositio, ut patet in domo; vel ordo, ut patet in syllaba et numero. Et tunc oportet quod totum compositum sit unum simpliciter. Quandoque vero compositum sortitur speciem ab ipsa multitudine partium collectarum, ut patet in acervo et populo, et aliis hujusmodi: et in talibus, totum compositum non est unum simpliciter, sed solum secundum quid."

35. I-II, 17, 4.

36. In *Eth.*, I, 1, # 5. It might seem that there is an incongruity between this passage and that of the *Commentary on the Metaphysics* above quoted, (note 34). In fact, they are rather complementary. The text of the *Commentary on the Ethics* refers only to that type of unity of order which does not constitute a being simpliciter one; but Saint Thomas does not either say or imply that such is the only type of unity of order. Precisely the text quoted from the *Commentary on the Metaphysics* mentions a type of unity of order

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for beings which are simpliciter multa although one secundum quid<sup>37</sup>--undoubtedly the lowest and most imperfect degree of unity.

Now, this is the case with every collective being; all of them essentially imply two things, Saint Thomas says, namely, a plurality of supposita, and a certain order whereby they are unified.<sup>38</sup> This holds true, then, of both a pile of stones and any human community whatsoever. However different these two types of collective being are under many other respects, Saint Thomas does not hesitate to liken them from the formal point of view of the plurality of their ultimate subject

36. Continued

which causes a being to be one simpliciter. Thus, for instance, both syllable and numer, which are specified by something one, ab aliquo uno, and are therefore "one" simpliciter ("Et tunc oportet quod totum compositum sit unum simpliciter")--possess nevertheless a unity of order. Since the kind of order which unifies a being depends on the nature of the things to be ordered as well as on the ordering principle, one kind of ordo would accordingly be fitting to a simpliciter unum whereas another one would cause a thing to be one merely secundum quid. In other words, unity of order would not by itself imply, without further specification, either unity simpliciter or unity secundum quid. This is the doctrine of such an authoritative interpreter of Saint Thomas as John of Saint Thomas, who in commenting on this very text of *In Metaphysicorum*, writes: "ex pluribus entibus in actu non fit unum per se unitate formae, bene tamen unitate ordinis et mensurae, sicut fit ex pluribus entibus in actu unum artefactum et unum sacramentum et unum convivium. Habent enim ista unitatem per se, quatenus opponitur unitati per accidens, quae sumitur a multitudine et non ab aliquo uno, sive forma sive compositione sive ordine, ut vidimus ex S. Thoma, 7 Metaph., lect. ult." (In this text, the expressions per se and per accidens obviously correspond to Saint Thomas' expressions simpliciter and secundum quid unum respectively). A little previously in the same article, John of Saint Thomas had written: "distinguitur unitas ordinis in numero ab unitate exercitus vel civitatis, quae sunt entia per accidens, eo quod in istis solum invenitur ordo relationis, qui non sufficit ad unitatem per se." (*Log.*, II, 16, 2).

37. Every being that is one secundum quid is one with unity of order alone. According to the rules of the conversion of propositions, the converse of this A--namely, every being that is one with unity of order alone is one secundum quid--is not necessarily (and is not actually) true. See above, note 36.

38<sup>1</sup> I, 31, 1, ad 2: "nomen collectivum duo importat, scilicet pluralitatem suppositorum, et unitatem quandam, scilicet ordinis alicujus; populus enim est multitudo hominum sub aliquo ordine comprehensorum."

of existence, since both a heap of stones and a society are simpliciter multa: “multi homines sunt unus populus, et multi lapides sunt unus acervus.”<sup>39</sup> But if they are alike with respect to the necessary plurality of their supposita, they of course are widely different as to the order which befits them and holds them together, according to the different natures of their supposita. Now, before discussing what is contained in the quid whereby a society is given its own peculiar unity of order, it is proper to consider another comparison, often made by Saint Thomas, between a society and a living being. In fact, if from the formal point of view already mentioned the pile of stones is much more like a human community than the latter is like a living organism, the likening, on the other hand, of civil society and a living being is also frequent in Saint Thomas, and is often made as an illustration of the general relationships between whole and part. In such cases, rather than emphasize the differences between a human community and a living body, he likes to consider both kinds of being as organisms in order to point out their similarities and draw conclusions therefrom. In his Commentary on the Politics he writes:

“singuli homines comparantur ad totam civitatem, sicut partes hominis ad hominem. Quia sicut manus aut pes non potest esse sine homine, ita nec unus homo est per se sibi sufficiens ad vivendum separatim a civitate. Si autem contingat, quod aliquis non possit communicare societate civitatis propter suam pravitatem, est pejor quam homo, et quasi bestia. Si vero nullo indiget, et quasi habens per se sufficientiam, et propter hoc non sit pars civitatis, est melior quam homo. Est enim quasi quidam deus.”<sup>40</sup>

Following Aristotle, Saint Thomas often uses this or similar comparisons when he discusses the relationships between an individual and the society to which he belongs, or seeks to show the dependency of the first upon the second, or when he states the primacy of society's general good over the good of a particular individual.<sup>41</sup>\* In such

39. I-II, 17, 4.

40. In Pol., I, 1, #21.

41. For instance, II-II, 64, 2: “Omnis pars ordinatur ad totum ut imperfectum ad perfectum; et ideo omnis pars naturaliter est propter totum. Et propter hoc videmus quod si saluti totius corporis humani expedit praecisio alicujus membri, puta cum est putridum vel corruptivum aliorum membrorum, laudabiliter et salubriter abscinditur. Quaelibet autem persona singularis comparatur ad totam communitatem sicut pars ad totum/ Et ideo si aliquis homo sit periculosus communitati, et corruptivus ipsius propter aliquod peccatum, laudabiliter et salubriter occiditur, ut bonum commune conservetur.”

cases, it is obvious that the living body is not compared to the social organism in such wise as to suggest that an individual man would cease to exist if he were segregated from his social whole, just as a hand dies and is no longer a hand when cut off from its body. All that the passage just quoted means and vividly stresses is that man is social and has need of social life for the development of his nature. But from the point of view of existence it is obvious that an individual man can keep on subsisting in his own identity and human nature when he separates himself from the community and lives as a solitary. Both the supposita in a society and the members of a living organism are the necessary condition, in the order of material causality, for the existence of their respective wholes, but only the supposita can exist by themselves, separately and independently of each other and without losing their ontological identity, because they are complete substances. The limbs of a living body, on the other hand, become corrupt if the body dies or if they are separated from it; in this case the parts cease to be what they specifically were in the organism; a hand amputated from a body is no longer a hand, unless equivocally, the way a stone hand can still be called a hand.<sup>42</sup> Bound up with this difference between a social whole and a biological organism is the fact that every living body, being a substance, has a form in the strict and proper sense of this word; and this form specifies the whole and each of its parts and constitutes them in that species whereby they are distinct from any other species. But in a being which is "one" secundum quid there is no form in the proper sense; in its place there is an order, whose function is similar to that of the form only inasmuch as this order constitutes the whole, makes it be such and such and preserves its identity throughout the fluctuation and change of its material subject.<sup>43</sup> But, unlike the integral parts of a living body, the members of a society do not receive their existence as supposita

42. In *Pol.*, I, 1, #21: "destructo toto homine, non remanet pes neque manus nisi aequivoce, eo modo quo manus lapidea posset dici manus."

(43. A form in the proper sense of the term informs, and gives existence to, both the whole and each of its parts, such as the soul does, as it is a substantial form. But an order, or a "compositio," does not give existence to the parts: "quia anima unitur corpori ut forma, necesse est quod sit in toto et in qualibet parte corporis; non enim est forma corporis accidentalis, sed substantialis. Substantialis autem forma non solum est perfectio totius, sed cujuslibet partis. Cum enim totum consistat ex partibus, forma totius quae non dat esse singulis partibus corporis, est forma quae est compositio et ordo, sicut forma domus, et talis forma est accidentalis." (I, 76, 8).

from the order that unifies them in the social whole; all they receive from that order is precisely their being parts of it and their sharing as parts in it.<sup>44</sup>

Owing to this lack of form, in the strict meaning of the term, and, consequently, to the relative and imperfect unity of every community, it is, possible, says Saint Thomas commenting on Aristotle, to attribute to the individual elements of a society many actions which can by no means be attributed to the whole as if it were their own subject. A soldier in an army can perform actions that do not belong to the whole of the army as such, although, on the other hand, the army has by itself operations that cannot be attributed to any of its parts; such, for instance, as its engaging in a battle.<sup>45</sup> This non-complete determination of the parts by the whole in an "unum secundum quid" (or "per accidens") gives the parts a certain autonomy and makes the order that unifies them more dependent upon its material subjects than the form is dependent upon the integral elements of an organism. In short, the ultimate foundation of the differences between a biological organism and a social body is the impossibility for several beings in act to constitute at the same time one being in act, unless it be one merely with a unity of order.

Thus far, the main result of these comparisons has been to show rather what the unity of a society is not. A positive answer concerning the quid whereby a society has a unity of its own can only be

44. A whole of this kind belongs to the genus of those called heterogeneous (to which, besides, all living organisms belong). In a heterogeneous whole, the form of the whole is not found in each of its parts taken separately: the composing elements of a community, namely its individual human beings, do not have the ratio of community. On the other hand, a homogeneous whole is one in which the form of the whole is also found in any of its parts, even if separated: thus, for instance, any part whatsoever of a given quantity of water is water. Writes Saint Thomas: "duplex est totum: quoddam heterogeneous, quod componitur ex similibus partibus; quoddam vero heterogeneous, quod componitur ex dissimilibus partibus. In quolibet autem toto homogeneo totum constituitur ex partibus habentibus formam totius: sicut quaelibet pars aquae est aqua; et talis est constitutio continui ex suis partibus. In quolibet autem toto heterogeneo quaelibet pars caret forma totius; nulla enim pars domus est domus, nec aliqua pars hominis est homo. Et tale totum est multitudo... pars ejus non habet formam multitudinis." (I, 11, 2, ad 2).

45. In *Eth.*, I, 1, #5: "pars ejus totius [civilis multitudinis] potest habere operationem, quae non est operatio totius, sicut miles in exercitu habet operationem quae non est totius exercitus. Habet nihilominus et ipsum totum aliquam operationem, quae non est propria alicujus partium, sed totius, puta conflictus totius exercitus. Et tractus navis est operatio multitudinis trahentium navem.



sought through the consideration of what kind of order befits supposita which are endowed with a rational nature. In the unity made-up by a number of stones it is because of the nature of the stones that the order—or rather “aggregatio”—is only a system of spatial relations, or of relations essentially associated with space (“associantur sibi in loco”).<sup>46</sup> A very different kind of relation must prevail in a unity formed by “individual substances of intellectual nature/ that is, by persons, according to the classical definition of Boetius. Thanks to his aptness to become, and to adhere to, other beings in the manner proper to rational intentionality, each human person is open to communication with others in the identity of objects of knowledge and love. That is why the personal is social by definition, and it is social in a very profound way, since by behaving in terms of objects rationally apprehended it can share with others the same life and activity regarding objects which are known and aimed at in common. This is “convivere,” living together, in the strongest sense of the expression. ~Now~if this “living together” is bound up with human nature, it cannot but manifest itself as a tendency which is towards an end, and precisely in the way in which acting is proper to man as such: that is, for the sake of the end. Those beings which are endowed with reason, Saint Thomas reminds us, move themselves towards the end, “ad finem,” since they are able to know it.<sup>47</sup> Thus “every community is established with a view to some good; for mankind always act in order to obtain that which they think good.”<sup>48</sup> Such a tendency must always be present in every social body; and the mutual arrangement of its parts as well as the working of the whole thus constituted and in motion toward the end—in short, both the structure and the dynamism of the social body—depend upon that end and are measured by it, for the end governs the entire system of things which tend toward it.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, the structure and operations through which every community

46. Cf. *In Met.*, VII, 17, #1672; passage quoted above - note 34.

47. I-II, 1, 2: “aliquid sua actione vel motu tendit ad finem dupliciter: uno modo sicut seipsum ad finem movens, ut homo; alio modo sicut ab alio motum ad finem... Illa ergo quae rationem habent, seipsa movent ad finem... Et ideo proprium est naturae rationalis, ut tendat in finem quasi se agens, vel ducens ad finem.” Ibid., ad 1; “quando homo per seipsum agit propter finem, cognoscit finem.”

48. *poL Ir \** 1252 a i.

49. II-II, 87, 2, ad 3: “ea quae ordinantur in finem sunt iudicanda secundum quod competunt fini.” I-II, 102, 1: “oportet quod id quod est ad finem, sit proportionatum fini; et ex hoc sequitur quod ratio eorum quae sunt ad finem, sumitur ex fine; sicut ratio dispositionis serrae sumitur ex sectione, quae est finis ejus, ut dicitur in 2<sup>a</sup> Phys., text. 88.”

displays its own activity participate in that kind of finality which is proper to rational creatures. Accordingly, the activity which most formally expresses the finality of social beings is not of a physical type, nor even biological, as in the vegetable and animal organisms. Social phenomena transcend the physical sensible order to which they are subject on account of the matter—both bodies and space—by means of which they exist. Knowledge of social facts comes, of course, through sensible things, but social facts inasmuch as they are social belong to a completely different order; they possess a dimension by means of which they are orientated towards ends that are knowable only through reason. This is why the knowledge of social facts cannot be resolved into sensible data; their explanation can be provided solely by their end.<sup>50</sup>

We must remark here that the end of a society need not be always present to the minds of all its members. It does not even have to be known by all of them. What is more, it is not always easily formulable in statements which are precise and beyond controversy. It is not necessary either, in order that every human community be truly said to aim at some end, that each of its members always act with an actual view to that end. The real meaning of this truth is that the different forms and organizations through which the entire social activity is carried out are objectively referred to ends, which explain them and make them comprehensible. In other words, those forms of social dynamics move themselves, as it were, in virtue of what they are and according to their own inclination, towards their respective ends, even if these ends may not be actually known or rightly viewed by many of the individual agents who are the ultimate subjects of that social activity, or even if the motives of some of these individuals may be at variance with the objective social ends.<sup>51</sup> The fact remains

50. That which specifies a thing and constitutes it as such and such makes it thereby intelligible. Now, human actions are specified by their ends: “actus humani, sive considerentur per modum actionum, sive per modum passionum, speciem a fine sortiuntur. ...actus dicuntur humani, in quantum procedunt a voluntate delibata; objectum autem voluntatis est bonum, et finis; et ideo manifestum est quod principium humanorum actuum, in quantum sunt humani, est finis; et similiter est terminus eorumdem.” (I-II, 1, 3). Cf. Ibid., ad 1: “finis non est omnino aliquid extrinsecum ab actu, quia comparatur ad actum ut principium, vel terminus.”

51. Just as with regard to an action the “finis actionis” and the “finis agentis” need not be identical, so the end of any association or any social institution does not necessarily coincide with the particular motives that an individual acting through them intends to attain. The intrinsic end of an institution or a community specifies it and gives it its objective form. It can be considered as a kind of “finis actionis,” which, unlike the “finis agentis,” gives an act its proper species and nature. Cf. I-II, 18, 4.

that the finality of any society whatever cannot but share in the nature of human finality, and, therefore, social ends can not only be known by rational beings but can also be held as the rule and measure by which to adjust the individual's conduct in his social life.

As to the way in which the entire operation of a social body is actually carried out, the fact is that the final goal to be attained implies some basic agreement among all the individual members and some amount at least of ultimate convergence and congruity in their common action. It is to this that Saint Thomas refers when he speaks of the "adunatio hominum ad aliquod communiter agendum."<sup>52</sup> From this very formal point of view of the "communiter agendum" it makes no difference whether the group in question is a small and transitory one, like the one formed by a few men drawing a boat ("trahentes navem"),<sup>53</sup> or on the contrary an old, complex society: the end can in both cases—and in all cases intermediate—be attained only by means of some kind of collective action converging towards it. Thus, beyond any concrete or historically given forms of common social activity, and regardless of the particular ends a society sets out to pursue, a minimum of cooperation of all concerned is at the root of the very existence of a society, and below that minimum the society simply could not subsist. It can be said then that the very existing of any society lies in the actual finalistic cooperating of all its members. At this point it becomes clear why authority is necessary, since its essential

52. *Contra impugnantes Dei cultum et religionem*, 2, c. 8. - Fr. Engelbert Kurz rightly criticizes as erroneous the idea, often held, that this formula is the definition of civil society in Saint Thomas. (See E. Kurz, O.F.M., *Individuum und Gemeinschaft beim Hl. Thomas von Aquin*). Such a formula is too generic to constitute a complete definition; an army, a society, a family, as well as any other form of collective human action, are all of them an "adunatio hominum ad aliquod communiter agendum." What specifies society is not included here. On the contrary, it is much more exact to say that civil society is "multitudo adunata ad totam vitam" (II-II, 48, art. unie.), although this formula is applied in the same article to the family, also. But then both family and civil society are set off in contra-distinction to any kind of "multitudo adunata ad aliquod speciale negotium," such as, for instance, an army is. In a complete definition of civil society a further specification would be needed so as to have the expression "tota vita" mean not only "vivere" but also, and chiefly, "bene vivere," --as it will be expounded in Chapter II.

53. *In Eth.*, I, 1, #5: "tractus navis est operatio multitudinis trahentium navem."

function is to direct society toward that in which its common good consists and to procure unity of action whenever there is no ground for unanimity. In fact, it cannot be expected that all individuals, even if agreeing upon the end, should also agree upon the way to attain it, especially when different ways of action can lead to the same results. In such cases authority is indispensable in order to choose the course to follow and to prescribe that course. Its precepts constitute the law, in the most general sense of the word. Authority is thus both a result of the end-seeking activity of every community and a necessary condition for success in such activity.

In order to determine the nature of the order whereby a society is one, we have thus far considered that the components of society have rational nature, and, consequently, that society essentially aims at some end. The next point concerns the relationships which exist among the members of society. In any society whatever these relationships are necessarily implied by the degree of organization and mutual arrangement of parts which its activity requires. It makes no difference how complex and varied the relationships may be from an empirical point of view. What is relevant here is the ontological meaning which relationships have in the table of the Aristotelian categories. According to this schema, they belong to the category relation, so that this category is necessarily present in the essential constitution of any social being as such. Since a society does not and cannot exist in such a manner as to be itself a substance, its sole possible manner of being is to be simultaneously many substances inasmuch as these are interwoven into one body by the category relation. In other words, the social ens has real existence independently of any mental representation, but it does not exist like a substance; rather it exists insofar as, and in the manner and condition in which, the accident relation exists among substances. This is the meaning of Saint Thomas' teaching when he writes: "licet multitudo praeter multa, non est nisi in ratione; multitudo tamen in multis est etiam in rerum natura."<sup>54</sup> But just as a society is not a collection of individuals, it cannot be considered as a mere sum of relationships among individuals; if it were such, the unity of the whole would disappear. The fact is, however, that those relationships are integrated into a system which is unified by its over-all reference to the common social end. Furthermore, they have a place in, and a relevance for, the entire common operation and functioning only insofar as they are called for by the end. Thus, it is from the end that the unity of the system originates. Now, a body of relationships which are unified into a system

54. *De Pot.*, 3, 16 ad 16.

by their ultimate referability to a supreme end is an "order."<sup>55</sup> Therefore, that which really causes any human community to be one is an "order of relations;" and so, the "unitas ordinis" by means of which a society is one is an "ordo relationis."<sup>56</sup> The reality designated by this expression "ordo relationis" is what Saint Thomas, following Aristotle, calls *politia*. This word has two senses in Aristotelian-Thomistic politics, however. In one sense *politia* is applied to that mixed regime which consists in a combination of different elements of oligarchy and democracy, and which is often called *respublica* by Saint Thomas. In Aristotle's classification of regimes according to the number of persons--either one, or a few, or many--who exercise the political power in the city<sup>57</sup> *politia* is the name which denotes the regime of the many, provided that their rule is intended for the benefit of all; (otherwise, the regime becomes the perversion which he

55; For an "order" to exist among things, there are two requisites: a criterion, or principle,--which in practical things is an end--, and the arrangement and disposition of the things to be ordered, according to the measure set up by the end. Saint Thomas writes: "Ad hoc quod aliqua sint ordinata, duo requiruntur: primo quidem, quod aliqua ordinentur ad debitum finem, qui est principium totius ordinis in rebus agendis;... Secundo oportet quod id quod est ad finem, sit proportionatum fini; et ex hoc sequitur quod ratio eorum quae sunt ad finem, sumitur ex fine." (I-II, 102, 1).

56. This expression does not seem to have been used by Saint Thomas in connection with society. Whenever he speaks of the "civitas" as made one by a "unitas ordinis," he does not go further to specify what kind of order it is. In fact, the expression "ordo relationis" is used by John of Saint Thomas when he comments on Saint Thomas' In Metaphysicorum; he then writes (Logica, II, 16, 2): "distinguitur unitas ordinis in numero ab unitate exercitus vel civitatis, quae sunt entia per accidens, eo quod in istis solum invenitur ordo relationis, qui non sufficit ad unitatem per se." Cf. note 36 above.

57. The criterion of the number of rulers is not the only one used by Aristotle to draw the distinction among the different forms of government. Political regimes are bad or good according as the common good is, or is not, their aim, but, even for two constitutions, the aim of which is not the common welfare, the distinction according to the number of their governing bodies does not suffice. In fact, "the real difference between democracy and oligarchy is poverty and wealth." (Pol., III, 8, 1279 b 40. See also same chapter, passim).

calls democracy). He further remarks that the name used for this species of regime is the generic name given to all constitutions, or *politias*.<sup>58</sup>

This generic use of the term constitutes its second sense. Here *politia* denotes the general arrangement or organization of a society; it is the "ordering of those who live in a city" (a "civitas"), and the intercommunication, or body of mutual bonds, "communicatio," among its members.<sup>59</sup> In modern terms, *politia* is the system of those institutions which shape a social matter--and are embodied in it, especially insofar as they are the expression of an actual way of social and political living. The *politias* or constitutions of the Greek city-states, studied by Aristotle, are spoken of in this sense. Note that here the word constitution is given a meaning wider than the current and technical one of source or foundation of the system of positive law of a nation. The *politia* has, with regard to its community, a function similar to that of the form in a substance; it makes a society be such and such, while distinguishing it from all others. The identity of a society depends upon the *politia* to such an extent that, if the *politia* changes, the society ceases--to--be formally the same, even if it remain materially identical through the sameness of its parts.<sup>60\*</sup>

58. Pol., III, 7, 1279 a 39: "when the citizens at large administer the state for the common interest, the government is called by the generic name--a constitution" (or *politia*). - For Saint Thomas' use of *respublica* (*politia*) in this sense, the following text can be mentioned: "oportet quod in republica aliquo modo appareat paucorum status et popularis." (In Pol., IV, 8, #7). See also Ibid., lect. 7, passim, for Saint Thomas' commentaries on the *politia*.

59. "ordo inhabitantium in civitate" (In Pol., III, 7, #1); "ordo civitatis" (ibid., IV, 10, #3); "communicatio civium" (ibid., III, 2, #3); "vita civitatis" (Ibid., IV, 10, #3).

60. In Pol., III, 2, #3: "non potest dici eadem civitas, si mutetur ordo politiae: cum enim communicatio civium, quae politia dicitur, sit de ratione civitatis, manifestum est quod mutata politia non remanet eadem civitas... Et ita etiam videmus in omnibus aliis quae consistunt in quadam compositione vel communione, quod quando-cumque alia est species compositionis non remanet identitas... manifestum est quod civitas est dicenda eadem respiciendo ad ordinem politiae; ita quod mutato ordine politiae, licet remaneat idem locus et iidem homines, non est eadem civitas, quamvis materialiter sit eadem." - Understood in its second meaning, *politia* can be applied to two different aspects of the same reality. (Cf. Marcel Demongeot, Le meilleur regime politique selon saint Thomas, in which there is an analysis of the notion of *politia* in Saint Thomas). Under one of these aspects, the *politia* is the organization of public authority; it is then variously called "ordo

Let us now make, in the manner of definition, an enumeration of the elements of the "ordo relationis" which unifies a society. This "ordo" is the one which exists necessarily, and to the exclusion of any other, among the components of a whole whenever these components are substances in actu endowed with a rational nature, and consequently mutually bound by relationships which imply rational knowledge and will--and which imply, correspondingly, ends which can be known and pursued as such; in the pursuit of these ends the components of the whole--that is, the individuals which make up a society--organize into different structures and functions, all of which possess an objective reference to ends, and finally to a supreme end.<sup>61</sup>

60. Continued-----

principantium" (in Pol., IV, 12, #1); "ordo dominantium in civitate" (ibid., III, 6, #2); "ordinatio civitatis quantum ad omnes principatus qui sunt in civitate, sed praecipue quantum ad maximum principatum" (ibid., III, 5, #2). The other aspect, which is the one chiefly considered in the text of this dissertation, is the organization immanent to society itself. There is evidently a mutual acting of both aspects upon one another, since the general organization and moral orientation of a society influence the form of its governing authorities, and are in their turn influenced by the latter.

61. These various forms of organization and activity are the social institutions, in the most general sense of the expression. All of them are at least mediately directed toward an end which is not sought for the sake of anything else. About the subordination of lower to higher ends Saint Thomas writes: "unus finis propter alium desideratur. Aut ergo est devenire ad aliquem finem, qui non desideratur propter alium, aut non. Si sic, habetur propositum. Si autem non est invenire aliquem talem finem, sequitur quod omnis finis desideretur propter alium finem. Et sic oportet procedere in infinitum. Sed hoc est impossibile, quod procedatur in finibus in infinitum: ergo necesse est aliquem esse finem, qui non sit propter alium finem desideratus." (in Eth., I, 2, #20).

The "cooperation" which is spoken of in the text must be understood in a very formal way. So understood, it does not necessarily imply a universal agreement of wills; the conflicts and tensions within a society are quite obvious. But in order for a purposive common working to exist it is sufficient that these conflicting tendencies do not go so deeply as to break a certain minimum of basic agreement on the ultimate ends. Such a minimum exists beyond the reach of any dissension whenever the moral totality of a society accepts at least a small number of principles and values to be respected in the solution of political and social conflicts.

In Saint Thomas' theory of the political regimes, the minimum of unity corresponds to the democratic regime, in which government is distributed according to the freedom which the citizens have to act on their own initiative and discernment, without receiving from others the rule of their actions. Cf. Marcel Demongeot, *op. cit.*, about unity in the different political regimes.

On the other hand, this ordo which unifies a society has two dimensions\*, first, the relationships of the parts among themselves; and second the relationships which all of the parts have to their common end;@ this latter relationship determines and measures the relationships among the parts.<sup>63</sup> The dependence of the entire social activity upon its end is what makes a multitude of interrelated individuals to be one whole--which is to say that the supreme end is the formal constitutive of both the unity and being of a society, because in the things which move towards an end the formal and specifying ratio comes from the end, and all things receive their unity as well as their very existence from the form which is proper to them.<sup>64</sup> The unity of society is grounded in its teleological character.

At this point it is appropriate to consider the immanent order of society in relation to the good. For the immanent order of society is nota static structure but a dynamic and teleological organism, and so it is related to an end. But whatever has the ratio of end has also the ratio of good: an end as such is always the term for a tendency; and, whatever fulfills a tendency, or is sought as desirable for it, as its completion and satisfaction, has by that very fact the ratio of good for it. A thing is said to be a good precisely because it is perfective of another thing by way of final causality.<sup>65</sup>

εΖ/Τη Eth., I, 1, #1: "Invenitur duplex ordo in rebus. Unus quidem partium. alicujus totius seu alicujus multitudinis ad invicem, sicut partes domus ad invicem ordinantur. Alius est ordo rerum in finem."

63; II-II, 47, 10, ad 2: "bona dispositio partium accipitur secundum habitudinem ad totum." I-II, 102, 1: "ratio eorum quae sunt ad finem, sumitur ex fine."

64. II-II, 47, 11: "Ratio formalis omnium quae sunt ad finem attenditur ex parte finis." Concerning the existence and unity which a being enjoys as coming from its form, Cf. *δ.ε.Τ*, II, 58: "Ab eodem aliquid habet esse et unitatem; unum enim consequitur ad ens. Quum igitur a forma unaquaeque res habeat esse, a forma etiam habebit unitatem." Even if not actually written by Saint Thomas himself--who is believed to have written only the first four books of the Commentary on Politics--the following text, probably from one of his immediate disciples, contains good Thomistic doctrine: "Unitas ordinis in finem facit civitatem unam." (in Pol., V, 2, #18).

\*65. I, 5, 1: "Ratio enim boni in hoc consistit quod aliquid sit appetibile; unde Philosophus in I. Ethic., in princip., dicit quod bonum est quod omnia appetunt." De Ver., 21, 2: "cum ratio boni in hoc consistat quod aliquid sit perfectivum alterius per modum finis; omne id quod invenitur habere rationem finis, habet et rationem boni."

It follows from *this* that a society's immanent order, or *politia*, is related to some good for the very reason that it refers to an end; and that *order will be good if the end at which it aims is good*, and if, moreover, it is adequately *proportioned to this good end*. Only under these conditions can an order really and truly be said to be such.<sup>66</sup>

Just as there is a twofold order in things—as recalled above—that which is good as an end for something is also twofold. There is first a good which is extrinsic to that which is ad finem; and then there is a good which is intrinsic to a thing, namely, its form. Now, the form of a whole which is one through an ordering “per ordinationem,” is the order itself, which is therefore the intrinsic good of that whole.<sup>66</sup> This is why the immanent order and the intrinsic good of civil society are equivalent expressions. In like manner, the intrinsic good of an army consists in its good organization and functioning—its immanent order. Its extrinsic good is victory.<sup>68</sup>

66. I-II, 102, 1; “Ad hoc quod aliqua sint ordinata, duo requiruntur: primo quidem quod aliqua ordinentur ad debitum finem, qui est principium totius ordinis in rebus agendis... Secundo oportet quod id quod est ad finem, sit proportionatum fini.”

67. In *Met.*, XII, 12, #2627: “Bonum enim, secundum quod est finis alicujus, est duplex. Est enim finis extrinsecus ab eo quod est ad finem, sicut si dicimus locum esse finem ejus quod movetur ad locum. (This example is taken from the Aristotelian physical system). Est etiam finis intra, sicut forma finis generationis et alterationis; et forma jam adeptam, est quoddam bonum intrinsecum ejus, cujus est forma. E forma autem alicujus totius, quod est unum per ordinationem quamdam partium, est ordo ipsius: unde relinquitur quod sit bonum ejus.” This doctrine is derived from a passage of the *Metaphysics* in which Aristotle inquires “in which of two ways the nature of the universe contains the good and the highest good, whether as something separate and by itself, or as the order of the parts. (*Met.*, IX, 1075 a 12). And he answers: “probably in both ways, as an army does; for its good is found both in its order and in its leader, and more in the latter.”

68. I-II, 111, 5, ad 1: “bonum multitudinis, sicut exercitus, est duplex: unum quidem quod est in ipsa multitudine, puta ordo exercitus; aliud autem est quod est separatum a multitudine, sicut bonum ducis; et hoc melius est, quia ad hoc etiam illud aliud ordinatur.” The good of the leader is explained as his will of victory, and the organization of the army is for victory's sake—its extrinsic good: “magis est bonum exercitus in duce, quam in ordine: quia finis patior est in bonitate his quae sunt ad finem: ordo autem exercitus est propter bonum ducis adimplendum, scilicet ducis voluntatem in victoriae consecutionem; non autem e converso, bonum ducis est propter bonum ordinis.” (in *Met.*, XII, 12, #2f>30).

A difficulty may be raised here by the simple remark that a society can have existence while in a bad state of organization and activity, or while in pursuit of wrong ends. A society exists only through a form which is an order, but insofar as it is badly organized or wrongly oriented, it does not really have an order and form, and therefore, it cannot even be said to have existence. However, the difficulty vanishes when one considers what good is and the different modes according to which a thing is said to be good. The ratio of good consists, as briefly mentioned above, in that a thing perfects or completes another thing in the manner of a final cause. Now, the order of society is something that perfects it, and this in a twofold way. First, insofar as the order of a society is the form whereby it comes into existence; in this sense, the order is always good, since it is both the act which gives that society its very existence, and that society itself as existing; now, a thing is good insofar as it is, “inquantum est aliquid bonum, inquantum est ens.”<sup>69</sup> Second, order is a good for a society if it constitutes an improvement of any kind along the line of what is added to the mere existence of that society; if, more specifically, that order consists in bringing about a better condition of organization and activity of the social body: in this sense there exists always the possibility for a society to reach higher and higher levels of perfection. Thus, if a society is considered from the point of view of its existing, that is to say, of its being an ens in actu, then its order cannot but be a good for it, for exactly the same reason that actual existence is a good for whatever has a mere possibility of existence. But if, on the other hand, a society is considered from the point of view of that which, added to its existence, could be for it either a further perfection, along an always open avenue of possible improvement, or just the opposite, then the order of a society becomes subject to a judgment by virtue of which this order can be said to be either good or evil, according as it is, or is not, in agreement with those ultimate ends every society must pursue. These ends preside, as it were, over all ideal patterns of social organization; they are, above all, the object of an ethical knowledge—in a very general yet proper sense—and constitute, accordingly, ethical criteria to judge of a social order. All this amounts to saying that both “immanent order” and “intrinsic good” are expressions which, applied to a society, can be taken either in an ontological sense or an ethical one. Thus, immanent order, inasmuch as it gives a society its act of existence, is always a good; inasmuch as it must conform with the true ends at which a society must aim, it can be either good or evil, and in divers degrees.

Because society is an “unum per accidens,” the distinction between the two lines of perfection, ontological and ethical, holds true of society in a peculiar manner, rather different from the manner in which

69. I, 5

it applies to substances. In a substance, existence can be conceived as completely stripped of any operation, as put in extramental reality in a state of absolute inactivity, as bare and sheer existence. On the contrary, existing as "unum" requires necessarily for an "unum per accidens" a minimum of operation of its parts, a minimum which in a society would probably consist in the mere consensus, however implicit and tacit it may be, of all its members to live a common life.<sup>70</sup> This consensus is a "cooperating," it is an acting with a view to a common end, so that for society to exist is for men to cooperate. Insofar as cooperation becomes more intense and reaches more areas in the life of a community—the "communicatio" among its members thus becoming deeper—the "unum per ordinationem" which society rises to a higher degree of existence, because then the degree of actuality in the cooperation among its parts is also higher. This higher degree depends not so much on the complexity and number of social relationships as on the intensity and depth with which the members of a community engage their personal inferiority in the common living. If, for that sort of "unum per ordinationem" which a society is, to exist is for its members to cooperate, then the intensification of their cooperating—of their civic "communicatio"—constitutes an increase in the actuality of the society's very existence, while at the same time it is a perfection along the ethical line; it is indeed a good which a community ought to strive to acquire. Such a perfection is, in concrete terms, that unity which is called peace, which Saint Thomas declares to be the goal intended by the ruler of a multitude: "ad quod tendit intentio multitudinem gubernantis, est unitas, sive pax."<sup>71</sup> Peace is not only the concord of all wills in a common object, but also the harmony of all tendencies within each soul.<sup>72</sup> Peace can exist only if related to an authentic good;<sup>73</sup> it is the state of a society when such

70. This consensus is not the acquiescence given to a compact which has been agreed upon for utility's sake alone, but which freely could have not been formed—as is held by some of the so-called social compact theories on the origin of society—; it is rather the expression at the level of reason, and through it, of a fact of nature: the natural need of social life for man.

1. I, 103, 3.

2. II-II, 29, 1: "pax includit concordiam, et aliquid addit...Concordia enim proprie sumpta est ad alterum: in quantum scilicet diversorum cordium voluntates simul in unum consensum conveniunt...concordia importat unionem appetituum diversorum appetentium; pax autem, supra hanc unionem, importat etiam appetituum unius appetentis unionem."

Ibid., 2, ad 4: "cum vera pax non sit nisi de bono," etc. Ibid., ad 3: "pax vera non potest esse nisi in bonis et bonorum." Peace will be considered with some thoroughness in Chapter II, which deals with the content of the common good.

a good has not only impregnated the external relationships of the members but has also penetrated into their souls and achieved in them the unification of all their tendencies.

Being identical in this manner with peace, unity can be considered in the line of ethical perfection. It is indeed a high ethical excellence for a community to achieve the harmony of all wills—and of all appetites—in the love of common ends. This is social unity in its moral sense. And from the point of view of existence, it is an absolutely necessary requisite for a society to be one in order to exist, because everything is insofar as it is one: "unumquodque intantum est, in quantum unum est."<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, unity belongs to the ratio of goodness: "Unitas pertinet ad rationem bonitatis."<sup>75</sup> Thus, the transcendentals being, goodness and unity are also present—and necessarily, of course, in any society; they mutually imply each other and are realized analogically, in the form which befits the nature of society.

We must again insist that in every community there is a continuity and a mutual implication between its existential and its ethical lines. At the lowest stage of its existence some sort of action—actually, a beginning of "cooperation," as shown above—is already present. At the height of an intensely united common living, society, not being a substance by itself, requires indispensably for its maintenance in existence such actions of the individuals as insure unity and peace. Thus, there is in social life a gradation of increasing actuality of both existence and moral perfection. In every act of "communicatio," of civic living together, there appear two aspects of one and the same reality, the social being. The entire system of those acts, inasmuch as the very existence of a society becomes real through them, is its immanent order, or form, in the ontological sense. And insofar as those same acts are carried out in a true direction towards right social ends, they are morally good, and they constitute the immanent order in the moral sense. And in both senses the immanent order is identical—as already noted—with the intrinsic common good, which Saint Thomas compares to such organization of an army as is adequate to attain victory, which is the extrinsic good.

There is an extrinsic or separate good for civil society also. In contrast to the immanent common good, the extrinsic is, as it were, outside of society; it is a good external and superior to the order which is inherent in society, and society should serve it. For Saint Thomas, the question of concretely identifying that extrinsic end is dominated by these two principles: that the end which suits every man is twofold, one natural and one supernatural; and—as enunciated in *De Regimine Principum*--that one and the same judgment should be

74. I, 103, 3.

75. Ibid.

formed about the end of the whole society and the end of one man.<sup>76</sup> However, a doctrine of the extrinsic natural good of the multitude is not found elaborated in his works. It is not strange that Saint Thomas should have deemed it superfluous to develop a purely natural moral philosophy:<sup>77</sup> whatever the supreme good to which man may naturally attain, the fact is that in his concrete situation after Christian Revelation he is supernaturally destined to enjoy God in the eternal life. It is only through comparison with an army's double end that Saint Thomas refers to what would in reality be society's natural extrinsic common good, but he never ventures a further specification. On the other hand, he is very explicit when he deals with the supernatural extrinsic good of society. Here his starting point is the principle, above mentioned, that one and the same judgment should be formed about the end of the whole society and the end of one man; it follows from this, as he clearly teaches, that the multitude is also destined for fruition in God. It would seem, he begins, that the end of civil society is virtuous life, since men congregate with the object of living properly, and they would not secure this object if each man lived apart from the rest. But the multitude has the same end as any of its members, and each man is destined through virtuous life for the divine fruition; it follows, therefore, that the ultimate end of the multitude is not the virtuous life itself but the possession and enjoyment of God attained through the virtuous life.<sup>78</sup> And because that end is superior to all human power and shall be fully consummated only in the Kingdom of God, the office of leading to it was not entrusted to the city's

76. *Reg.* I' 14: "Idem oportet esse iudicium de fine totius multitudinis, et unius." The reason for this statement can be found in *In Pol.*, VII, 2, #2, where it is said: "manifeste apparet felicitatem unius hominis et civitatis esse eandem et unius rationis... Et hoc rationabiliter contingit; quoniam quorum est una natura, eorum est unus ultimus finis. Unus autem homo et omnes cives civitatis sunt unius speciei; ergo unius et omnium civium est unus ultimus finis."

77. Cf. E. Gilson, *Le Thomisme*, p. 421, 5th edition.

78. *De Reg.*, I, 14: "Videtur finis esse multitudinis congregatae vivere secundum virtutem. Ad hoc enim homines congregantur, ut simul bene vivant, quod consequi non posset unusquisque singulariter vivens; bona autem vita est secundum virtutem; virtuosa igitur vita est congregationis humanae finis... Sed quia homo vivendo secundum virtutem ad ulteriorem finem ordinatur, qui consistit in fruitione divina, oportet eundem finem esse multitudinis humanae, qui est hominis unius. Non est ergo ultimus finis multitudinis congregatae vivere secundum virtutem, sed per virtuosam vitam pervenire ad fruitionem divinam."

natural authorities but to the priesthood.<sup>79</sup> For this reason the Christian Church is present in the midst of the temporal city.

But it is precisely by applying the principle stated in the *De Regimine* that one can learn what the extrinsic end of the city in the natural order is. This end, which society is to serve after it has acquired its own immanent unity, order and harmony, cannot be other than the highest good that man can obtain by his natural powers alone, namely, "the happiness of which the philosophers spoke/ "felicitas de qua philosophi locuti sunt."<sup>80</sup> Of this happiness Aristotle says: "If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest virtue... This activity is contemplative."<sup>81</sup> Saint Thomas also considers the contemplative life the highest form of life.<sup>82</sup> If this holds true for every man, it holds for society also, since, according to the above-enunciated principle of the *De Regimine*, one and the same judgment should be formed about the end of the whole society and the end of one man; and therefore contemplation is the extrinsic end of civil life. Now, even if this extrinsic end of society and the extrinsic end of each single man are identical—and indeed they are, both in the natural and in the supernatural orders—society and the individual do not refer to them in the same manner. This interpretation seems to be supported by an important text of the *De Regimine Principum*. It is the passage in which Saint Thomas says that living according to virtue is the end for which men

79. *Ibid.*; "quia finem fruitionis divinae non consequitur homo per virtutem humanam, sed virtute divina, ...perducere ad illum finem non humani erit, sed divini regiminis. Ad illum igitur regem huiusmodi regimen pertinet, qui non est solum homo, sed etiam Deus, scilicet...Jesum Christum. ... Hujus ergo regni ministerium ...non terrenis regibus, sed sacerdotibus est commissum."

80. *De Ver.*, 14, 2. In the *Ethics* Aristotle had already declared that happiness is the supreme end: "We call that which is in itself worthy of pursuit more final than that which is worthy of pursuit for the sake of something else, and that which is never desirable for the sake of something else more final than the things that are desirable both in themselves and for the sake of that other thing, and therefore we call final without qualification that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else."

"Now such a thing happiness, above all else, is held to be; for this we choose always for itself and never for the sake of something else." (*Eth.*, I, 7, 1096 a 30, Page 31: *If.*).

81. *Eth.* X, 7, 1177-i 11, ff.

82. Of the two possible forms of life for man as such, the contemplative life is the higher; "vita contemplativa simpliciter melior est, quam activa." (*II-II*, 182, 1).

congregate in society;<sup>83</sup> and they would not be able to attain this end if they did not congregate: “*virtuosa vita est congregationis humanae finis.*”<sup>84</sup> The perfection of human activity *secundum virtutem* can thus be achieved in the community and only in the community, but the subject in which virtue resides and by which it is practiced is the individual, and it is the individual also who is the term in which the act of association finally redounds in perfection of virtue. The (supernatural) extrinsic end of both society and individual is materially one and the same thing: the possession and enjoyment of God through the highest activity according to virtue, that is, through contemplation. This is the extrinsic end of society inasmuch as virtue can be acquired only in and through society. It is the extrinsic end of the individual man inasmuch as he alone is the radical and ultimate subject of the vision of God, to which he is directed by virtue.

One might ask whether there is not an incompatibility between the principle that the judgment is one and the same with regard to the end of the whole society and the end of a single individual, and the thesis, on the other hand, that society’s common good differs formally from the good of the individual. No real difficulty can be found here, however. With regard to the extrinsic common good which is materially one and the same for both society and individual, the fact that they at least are diversely related to it—as already said—means that the same end is a good for both of them under different respects, and this agrees with the principle of the specificity of the common good. Furthermore, this principle concerns primarily the intrinsic or immanent good. In the first place, this principle means that the common good is formally distinct from the private good because it alone befits the nature of an *\*unum secundum quid,\** like the social being, in which alone that good is realized as in its own and proper subject. This is equivalent to saying that such a good is identical with the good structure and functioning of the social body. The principle means also—as explained at the beginning of this chapter—that the total content of goods that can be realized in civil society transcends in kind and not only in degree the goods which the domestic community is capable of giving to man. It must be remarked, however, that the good of a whole society at least partially coincides materially with the private good, that is, insofar as it is also a good for each individual; if this were not so, the common good would not be truly common. But even so, the common good preserves its formal difference in that it is a good for each individual without ceasing to be the very good which is simultaneously common to many, whereas the private good as such excludes any other: it is this individual’s own good and for that reason is not the good of another.

83. *De Reg.*, I, 14, the same passage quoted above in note 78, p. 30.

84. *ibid.\**:



All these considerations lead to the problem of ascertaining in what consists that good which is realized in civil society. This aspect of the doctrine of the common good is more concerned with ethics than have been the aspects thus far discussed. The object of this chapter has been to investigate the specificity of society's common good considered only as befitting society inasmuch as it is a community, that is, an "unum secundum quid," and in contrast to the good which befits a being "unum simpliciter." To this purpose a line of reasoning more ontological than ethical has been followed. The gist of the reasoning has been to show that the kind of "whole" that society is consists essentially in an order, and that this order is its good, the good which is common to the individual members. Now, when the principle is applied that the ratio of whole differs formally from the ratio of part, the conclusion follows that the good of the whole cannot but differ from the private good, as a quality formally irreducible to it. At the same time the argumentation has made it manifest that, because of the nature of the being which has only that "unitas ordinis" which is proportionate to a human community, the minimum existence of any community whatsoever implies already some amount of cooperation towards one end; and, by virtue of such mutual implication in all human communities of the entitative and of what may be called the ethical aspects, it is in their very constitution or ontological structure that the specificity of every common good has its roots.

The question now arises: what is the content of that good which the *societas perfecta* alone—not the family or any other human community—procures for man? It will be the object of the next chapter to answer this question.

## Chapter II

### THE CONTENT OF THE COMMON GOOD

That civil society should be the only environment proportionate to the realization of the highest human good does not depend on the ontological constitution of that society but on the fact that it is the only society that can be self-sufficing for living well, which is the highest among human goods. For this reason civil society is designated by Saint Thomas as the *societas perfecta*, and it is a *societas perfecta* at least *de jure*, although the ideal of giving to man the highest good he can reach on earth may be far from realization in fact. But civil society is destined for that consummation and it is in this form of community alone that the good of living well could be attained.

And so it is said that society is necessary for man. In the exposition of this classic doctrine of the politics of Saint Thomas and Aristotle it is often insinuated, and sometimes openly stated, that according to these philosophers society is necessary for man inasmuch as it succors the individual in his purely vital needs, and that it is consequently like a useful invention of which the individual avails himself to compensate for his incapacity to achieve subsistence by himself alone. But if reasons of this kind are all that is said in order to explain the necessity for living in society, clearly such an exposition gives to the doctrine of Saint Thomas a coloring of utilitarianism which it is very far from having. It is true, and Saint Thomas teaches it very explicitly, that the individual when isolated can do little or nothing to provide for his vital needs, and therefore requires the assistance of the others, organized in society, as a supplement to the deficiencies and limitations of his nature.<sup>1</sup> The need for supplying these deficiencies is one of the reasons which, according to Saint Thomas, explain the appearance and existence of society. But man

1. Not only through the assistance of his fellows but also by use of his reason man procures that which animals obtain with the biological means with which they are by nature endowed: "*Aliis animalibus natura praeparavit cibum, tegumenta pilorum, defensionem, ut dentes, cornua, ungues... Homo autem institutus est nullo horum sibi a natura praeparato, sed loco omnium data est ei ratio, per quam sibi haec omnia officio manuum posset praeparare, ad quae omnia praeparanda unus homo non sufficit, Nam unus homo per se sufficienter vitam transigere non posset. Est igitur homini naturale,*

needs the help and collaboration of his fellows not only in the lower order of the physical means necessary for the conservation of life,<sup>1</sup> but also in the order of spiritual life; society is necessary for the moral and intellectual culture of man.<sup>3</sup>

But there is in the teaching of Saint Thomas a more profound reason than all this to explain why man is a social animal. This reason is that the ultimate and radical foundation for life in society is man's rational nature, not inasmuch as reason supplies him with those means of biological defense with which nature did not endow him, but formally because it constitutes him in his character as a person. The multiple forms of communication which social life implies are above all forms of the communication of intelligent beings. Only the person as such is made by nature to transcend itself in the manner of rational intentionality, and only this transcending, thanks to which man can in a certain way open himself to others, makes him social in an authentic sense, in the sense of participating consciously and voluntarily, with the inwardness of his person, in a common life. Saint Thomas, following Aristotle, remarks that the word, that is, the sound charged with intentionality, is proper to man alone, who is capable through it of communicating with his fellows in what is useful and in what is

1. (Continued)

quod in societate multorum vivat." (De Reg., I, 1). Although Saint Thomas assigns to reason the role of a substitute for the biological means which man, unlike many irrational animals, does not possess, he does not, in the explanation of sociability as natural to man, reduce the function of reason to that of a mere instrument of biological life. This will be shown later in this dissertation.

2. This is the sphere that could be called in modern terms "the division of labor": Saint Thomas refers to this in the following words: "Est igitur necessarium homini, quod in multitudine vivat, ut unus ab alio adjuvetur, et diversi diversis inveniendis per rationem occuparentur, puta, unus in medicina, alius in hoc, alius in alio." (De Reg., I, 1). And in In Pol., I, 1,#17: "[civitas] componitur ex pluribus vicis, in quorum uno exercetur ars fabrilis, in alio ars textoria, et sic de aliis."
- [10] In Eth., I, 1,#4: "juvatur homo a multitudine, cujus est pars, ad vitae sufficientiam perfectam; scilicet ut homo non solum vivat, sed et bene vivat, habens omnia quae sibi sufficiunt ad vitam: et sic homini auxiliatur multitudo civilis, cujus ipse est pars, non solum quantum ad corporalia... sed etiam quantum ad moralia." - In Pol., I, 1,#17: "ex ejus [civitatis] esse provenit, quod homines non solum vivant, sed quod bene vivant, in quantum per leges civitatis ordinatur vita hominum ad virtutes." De Reg., I, 14: "Ad hoc homines congregantur, ut simul bene vivant, quod consequi non posset unusquisque singulariter vivens."

harmful, in good and evil, in the just and the unjust. This is what causes a community to be, and what makes human social communication much more profound than, and in reality essentially different from, the association which is found among gregarious animals such as ants and bees.<sup>4</sup> Much more: even on the supposition that the individual would not require the help of others to provide for his various needs, society would exist as a logical result of man's rationality and spirituality. For, inasmuch as the individual by his rational nature is capable of communion with others in the knowledge and love of the same ends, of devotion to the good of the community more even than to his own life,<sup>5</sup> of preferring life with others to living in solitude even should he lack nothing in that solitude,<sup>6</sup> inasmuch--in brief--as he is capable of loving the good of the city *secundum se*, in order that it be preserved and diffused, and not in order that it may be of profit for himself,<sup>7</sup>

4. In *Pol.*, I, 1, #20: "loquutio est propria hominibus; quia hoc est proprium eis in comparatione ad alia animalia, quod habeant, cognitionem boni et mali, ita et injusti, et aliorum hujusmodi, quae sermone significari possunt. Cum ergo homini datus sit sermo a natura, et sermo ordinetur ad hoc, quod homines sibi invicem communicent in utili et nocivo, justo et injusto, et aliis hujusmodi; sequitur, ex quo natura nihil facit frustra, quod naturaliter homines in his sibi communicent. Sed communicatio in istis facit domum et civitatem. Igitur homo est naturaliter animal domesticum et civile." Developing the same theme in the *De Regimine Principum* (I, 1), Saint Thomas concludes: "Magis igitur homo est communicativus alteri quam quodcumque aliud animal, quod gregale videtur, ut grus, formica et apis."
5. *I.*, 60, 5: "Naturaliter pars se exponit ad conservationem totius corporis... Et quia ratio imitatur naturam, hujusmodi imitationem invenimus in virtutibus politicis. Est enim virtuosus civis ut se exponat mortis periculo pro totius reipublicae conservatione."
6. In *Pol.*, III, 5, #4: "homo naturaliter est animal civile; et ideo homines appetunt ad invicem vivere et non esse solitarii, etiam si in nullo unus alio indigeret ad hoc quod ducerent vitam civilem."
7. *De Car.*, 2: "Amare bonum alicujus civitatis contingit dupliciter: uno modo ut habeatur; alio modo ut conservetur. Amare autem bonum alicujus civitatis ut habeatur et possideatur, non facit bonum politicum; ...quod est amare seipsum magis quam civitatem; sibi enim ipsi hoc bonum concupiscit, non civitati. Sed amare bonum civitatis ut conservetur et defendatur, hoc est vere amare civitatem, ...intantum quod aliqui propter bonum civitatis conservandum vel ampliandum, se periculis mortis exponant, et negligent privatum bonum." --Owing to his limitations, however, the individual cannot help loving the common good with "love of concupiscence" (Cf. *I.*, 60, 3), though loving it at the same time with "love of friendship."

it is on the ground not of an insufficiency but, on the contrary, of an excellence of his nature that man forms a society with his fellows.

It is to be remarked, however, that the insufficiencies which man overcomes by living in society, are due to the fact that personality is realized in him in the most imperfect degree. If the person is the most noble thing to be found in nature,<sup>8</sup> it is from consideration of the concrete state of its realization in man, and not of the ratio itself of person, that Saint Thomas frequently says that man in several ways needs the society of others. Thus, for instance, he needs them for his intellectual and moral perfection,<sup>9</sup> and for happiness in the present life.<sup>10</sup> It is in this same sense that Saint Thomas can say that the diverse forms of human living together ("communicationes"), which will be surpassed in the future life, were instituted because of the insufficiency of each one by itself.<sup>11</sup> In sum, the existence of all social life is based upon two different orders of reasons: an order of reasons, on the one part, according to which society follows naturally from what is most formal in human nature, namely, its character as person; on the other part, an order of reasons which are derived from the concrete condition and imperfect degree of realization of the ratio of the person in man and which are revealed in the insufficiencies that reach from the level of his animality to the core itself of his moral and spiritual life: these latter reasons do not move man any less to association.

8. *I.*, 29, 3: "Persona significat id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura, scilicet subsistens in rationali natura."
9. *II-II*, 188, 8: "solitudo competit contemplanti, qui jam ad perfectum pervenit. Quod quidem contingit dupliciter. Uno modo ex solo divino munere, sicut patet de Joanne Baptista... Alio modo per exercitium virtuosus actus... Ad exercitium hujusmodi juvatur homo ex aliorum societate dupliciter: uno modo quantum ad intellectum, ut instruatur in is quae sunt contemplanda; ...Secundo quantum ad affectum, ut scilicet noxiae affectiones hominis reprimentur exemplo et correctione aliorum ... Et ideo vita socialis necessaria est ad exercitium perfectionis."
10. *I-II*, 4, 8: "si loquamur de felicitate praesentis vitae, ...felix indiget amicis, non quidem propter utilitatem, cum sit sibi sufficiens; nec propter delectationem, quia habet in seipso delectationem perfectam in operatione virtutis; sed propter bonam operationem, ut scilicet eis beneficiat, et ut eos inspiciens benefacere delectetur, et ut ab eis in benefaciendo juvetur. Indiget enim homo ad bene operandum auxilio amicorum tam in operibus vitae activae, quam in operibus vitae contemplativae."
11. *Sent.*, III, 34, 3, 2, q. 3, in 1: "hujusmodi [ad alterum] communicationes non erunt in patria, quia omnes sufficientiam ibi a Deo accipient. Propter insufficientiam enim uniuscujusque in se introductae sunt communicationes, ut patet per Philosophum in *V Ethic.*"

Now, that total good which only civil society, “societas perfecta” and no other form of community, can give to man, is the one which at the same time succors the individual’s deficiencies and limitations and brings to realization the most noble human faculties. The two tendencies, first of seeking in society a help and a supplement and, second, of expressing and unfolding in it the excellences of the individual being, are like two aspects of the same imperfect human nature in search of its culmination and perfection in the possession of its highest object and good.

What is this supreme good? Its nominal definition has already been mentioned; it is that which consists in living well, bene vivere. This is nothing else than the right exercise, according to reason, of man’s appetitive and *cognitive* faculties. And only such living produces “a life of true happiness and goodness.”<sup>12</sup> But this supreme human good is the end of politics, the science which deals with the right arrangement of the city.<sup>13</sup> On that account, “the good life” is the rule and measure of the common good of the city and the intelligible key to its content.

Consequently, society should be proportioned to that dual excellence in which happiness consists: the good operation of reason itself, and the acts of the will as regulated by reason.

Of these two aspects of the good which civil society offers to man, Saint Thomas never hesitates to assert that virtuous life is the superior; that living well is only living according to virtue;<sup>14</sup> and, consequently, that the common good is primarily the moral health of society, the environment in which the individual begins and develops his own moral life, and in which one person helps another to live well. The common good is a vital store to which all virtuous men contribute, and from which all receive beneficent influx; it surrounds men, as it were, with an interchange of aids, examples and incentives for well doing. This good is the object of the city in such a way that only those who communicate mutually in living well deserve to be called parts of the city.<sup>15</sup> Such is the concept of the content of the common good which Saint Thomas expounds in unmistakable terms especially in the De Regimine Principum, but which appears also quite clearly throughout relevant discussions in his other works.

At this point a difficulty arises. It is well known that Saint Thomas, following Aristotle, teaches the primacy of the contemplative life over

12. Pol., III, 9, 1281 a I.

13. in *Eth.*, I, 2, #29: “finis politicae est humanum bonum, idest optimum in rebus humanis.”

14. *De Reg.*, I, 14: “bona vita est secundum virtutem.” Ibid., 15: “virtus enim est qua bene vivitur.” Cf. I-II, 55, 4.

15. *Ibid.*, I, 14: “hi soli partes sunt multitudinis congregatae, qui sibi invicem communicant in bene vivendo.”

the active, that happiness consists chiefly in the operation of speculative reason, and that the intellectual virtues, which perfect reason, are more noble than the moral virtues, which perfect only the appetite.<sup>16</sup> How is it possible then that the common good of society, the only good which measures up to the supreme (natural) end of man, the good about which the same judgment must be formed as about the good of a single individual, how is it that this good is above all a moral good, a life according to virtue and according to moral virtue, which is the most proper meaning of this latter word?<sup>17</sup> The answer is that, although the intellectual virtues--and with them the contemplative life--are more noble, because of their object, than the moral virtues, yet the moral virtues are more necessary for human life, and it is only by reason of them that a man can be called good simpliciter. A man is not called good because he is learned.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the final cause of society is, according to Saint Thomas, a moral end: in the De Regimine Principum, while surveying the ends which may move men to congregate in society, he says that it is not the knowledge of truth--nor corporal health nor the acquisition of wealth--but living virtuously, which moves men to attain through virtue their fruition in God:

Idem autem oportet esse iudicium de fine totius multitudinis, et unius. ...si quidem talis ultimus sive unius hominis, sive multitudinis finis esset corporalis, vita et sanitas corporis, medici esset officium. Si autem ultimus finis esset divitiarum affluentia, oeconomus rex quidam multitudinis esset. Si vero bonum cognoscendae veritatis tale quid esset, ad quod posset multitudo pertingere, rex haberet doctoris officium. Videtur autem finis esse multitudinis congregatae vivere secundum virtutem. Ad hoc enim homines congregantur, ut simul bene vivant; ...bona autem

16. I-II, 66, 3, Sed contra: “Virtus moralis est in rationali participationem; virtus autem intellectualis in rationali per essentiam... Ergo virtus intellectualis est nobilior virtute morali.” (in I-II, 182, 1, following Aristotle in *Eth.*, X, 7 and 8, Saint Thomas sets forth reasons why the contemplative life is better than the active).

17. I-II, 66, 3: “quia virtus dicitur ex eo, quod est principium alicujus actus, cum sit perfectio potentiae, sequitur quod ratio virtutis magis competat virtutibus moralibus, quam virtutibus intellectualibus.”

18. I-II, 66, 3, ad 2: “secundum virtutes morales dicitur homo bonus simpliciter, et non secundum intellectuales virtutes, ea ratione qua appetitus movet alias potentias ad suum actum.” I-II, 56, 3: “non dicitur simpliciter aliquis homo bonus ex hoc, quod est sciens, vel artifex, sed dicitur bonus solum secundum quid, puta bonus grammaticus, aut bonus faber.”

vita est secundum virtutem. (...) Sed ...homo vivendo secundum virtutem ad ulteriorem finem ordinatur, qui consistit in fruitione divina.<sup>19</sup>

In recognizing the preeminence of moral virtue in the content of the common good Saint Thomas does not contradict his doctrine of the primacy of contemplation. Rather he sets forth this doctrine as valid in the natural order and he insists that there could not be lasting social good without the knowledge of truth and the profession of wisdom. But Saint Thomas reserves the complete realization of the superiority of contemplation for the supernatural life in Heaven, in which alone man attains his highest beatitude, which is the contemplation of God.<sup>20</sup> Virtuous life is necessary for man in this life, precisely for obtaining possession of God in the next. There is no doubt, on the other hand, that the contemplation of truth has an essential part in the constitution of the common good, and that the common good cannot perdure in a society which professes fundamental errors with regard to man's nature, his destiny and his situation in the universe.

The multitude's living properly and according to virtue is, above all, what defines the common good for Saint Thomas. Although it is true that this expression comprehends in reality diverse levels of the good organized in a hierarchical order of means and ends - as will be explained later in this chapter - the living well of the city is the highest and determinative level of the total content of the common good; it is the common good par excellence, and the end to which are ultimately subordinated all the other goods which in some way may be called common to the city. Social institutions of every kind, and corporeal possessions have worth and are justified only insofar as each of them in some way within its own sphere, corresponds to, or contributes toward the existence, preservation and promotion of the city's good moral condition.

Before showing in detail that this is the central idea in Saint Thomas' conception of the content of the common good, it is well to explain briefly the sources of that conception in Aristotle. Repeatedly and unequivocally the Philosopher says that the true end for which the polis is instituted is not mere living but living well.<sup>21</sup> And in passages which constitute an advance rebuttal to social theories prominent in the last three centuries, he states that "it is not the end of the state to provide an alliance for mutual defense against all injury, or to ease exchange and promote economic intercourse."<sup>22</sup> Nor is it the

19- De Reg., I, 14.

20. S.c.G., III, 37: "ultima felicitas hominis non consistit nisi in contemplatione Dei."

21. Pol., I, 2, 1252 b 30. Cf. Ibid., III, 9, passim.

22. Pol., III, 9, 1280 a 35.

end of the polis simply to prevent injustices in the course of inter change with other nations, as cities which trade among themselves do. This intercourse through trade does not constitute these communities, a single city, since they have neither laws nor magistrates in common, and "neither of the parties concerns itself to ensure a proper quality of character among the members of the other; neither of them seeks to ensure that all who are included in the scope of the treaties shall be free from injustice and from any form of vice."<sup>23</sup> With this distinction Aristotle clearly implies that the end of every true state is the proper living of its members according to a high quality of character and virtue. And the conclusion explicitly stated is that "any polis which is truly so called, and is not merely one in name, must devote itself to the end of encouraging goodness."<sup>24</sup> But to attain this state of affairs is to realize happiness, which is "the energy and practice of goodness."<sup>25</sup> For Aristotle, then, it is evident that this excellence is the supreme end of the polis. Whence it follows that in order to attain this high state of happiness, mutual help, the communication of friendship among men, is necessary, because however noble the form of life a man may lead he never succeeds in becoming wholly self-sufficient; even the philosopher may need companions in the very contemplation of truth; and in any case the virtuous man requires persons toward whom and for whom he may exercise his virtue.<sup>26</sup>

As a faithful interpreter of Aristotle's thought, Saint Thomas makes these ideas central points in his philosophic speculation on the nature and end of society and on its political regime. In his Commentary on the Politics he expounds in the following terms what may be considered a full and clear definition of civil society: "Civitas enim est communicatio bene vivendi composita ex generibus diversis et gratia vitae perfectae et per se sufficientis. Hoc autem est vivere feliciter: bene autem vel feliciter vivere in politicis, est operari secundum optimam virtutem practice."<sup>27</sup> The unity and thereby the being of the city depend solely on the communication of several families in the common purpose of proper living; it is neither military alliances nor trade pacts of any kind which make a city one. The two causes which specifically define the constitution of a being are the formal and the

23. Ibid., 1280 b 2.

24. Ibid., 1280 b 6.

25. Ibid. VU» 13) a 8.

26. Eth., X, 7, 1177 a 32: "The just man needs people towards whom and with whom he shall act justly, and the temperate man, the brave man...but the philosopher, even when by himself, can contemplate truth, and the better the wiser he is; he can perhaps do so better if he has fellow-workers, but still he is the most self-sufficient."

27. In Pol., III, 7, #14.

final; and, Saint Thomas observes, for *society* these two causes are *respectively* the communication in living well, “*communicatio bene vivendi*,” and the *intending of the perfect life*, “*gratia vitae perfectae*.”<sup>28</sup> In Chapter 14 of Book I of *De Regimine Principum*—one of the most important sources for the thought of Saint Thomas on the end and good of society—he states that the good king should chiefly see to it that the multitude subject to him leads a good life; and this solicitude should extend not only to instituting the proper living of the multitude, but also to preserving what has been instituted, and to ceaselessly perfecting what has been preserved. And in agreement with Aristotle, he writes that the true motive for congregating into a society is not mere living and attending to the needs of physical life; nor is it the securing of wealth—otherwise, all merchants would belong to a single society.<sup>29</sup> The criterion for judging the goodness of political systems is precisely the degree in which they are apt to attain the virtuous life of the city; and according to this the two best systems *simpliciter* are royalty and aristocracy, because they are directly ordained to and fitted for such purpose.<sup>30</sup>

Even if Saint Thomas did not frequently state that the end of the city is the virtuous life, his insistence that the ruler be a “*vir bonus*” would sufficiently intimate this thought. *Politics is an art which* requires a high species of prudence, and so the good ruler will be a *man endowed with prudence* to an extraordinary degree—and therefore virtuous without qualification, since it is according to prudence, upon which all moral virtues depend, that a man is said to be virtuous.<sup>31</sup>

28. Ibid., #13: “per hoc quod [Philosophus] dicit, ‘*communicatio bene vivendi*,’ innuit causam formalem; ..per hoc quod dicit ‘*gratia vitae perfectae* etc.’ tangit causam finalem.”

29. De Reg., I, 14: “*Si propter* acquirendas divitias [homines convenient], omnes simul negotiantes ad unam civitatem pertinent: sicut videmus eos *solos* sub una multitudine computari, qui sub eisdem legibus et eodem regimine diriguntur ad bene vivendum.”

30. In Pol., III, 16, #7: “cum sint tres politiae recte ordinatae, ... illa inter alia optima est, quae regitur et dispensatur ab *optimo viro* vel ab *optimis viris*, quia ad optimum finem ordinatur: semper enim quod fit ab optimo agente, ad optimum finem ordinatur per se.” Ibid., IV, I,#8: “Adhuc consideratum est in praecedentibus de regno et de statu optimatum. Idem enim est considerare de his quae significantur per ista nomina et de optima politia: utraque enim istarum duarum intendit principaliter in finem, qui est secundum virtutem, et ad ipsam virtutem multam et perfectam existentis.”

31. In Pol., III, 3, #1: “aliquis dicitur virtuosus secundum unam virtutem perfectam, scilicet secundum prudentiam, ex qua omnes virtutes morales dependent.” And further on (ibid., #2): Non dicitur

Thus, the good ruler as such is capable of discerning the good and the evil, the just and the unjust, the profitable and the harmful, not only for himself but also for the whole of a community; and so is capable of presiding over the others. The man well endowed for ruling is he who by the high perfection of his moral virtues—interlocked and harmonized by prudence—is capable of directing the moral conduct of the community under his care. If the good ruler then is the one who can habitually give good moral precepts, the good which he secures for the community through good government will consist formally in its good moral condition. For Aristotle—and for Saint Thomas, who adopted this conception and developed it in a Christian sense in his *De Regimine Principum*--the ruler is a sort of moral leader, a wise and prudent man who by his virtue towers over the rest and is, thus, the one best fitted to guide them along the paths of moral life. The virtue of the one who not only governs himself but can also govern others is accordingly of a surpassing excellence. If greater virtue is required for ruling the household family than for governing oneself, much greater must be the virtue necessary for the rule of a whole city or a kingdom. Exercising properly the king’s office requires therefore an outstanding virtue, the more so if one considers that the doing of a greater good demands a greater virtue; but the good of the community is precisely better and more divine than that of an individual.<sup>32</sup> In conclusion, the good legislator is he who is engaged in making his subjects virtuous; and law is nothing else than the precepts of the virtuous man who presides over the community.

Now, Aristotle says that the virtue of the good citizen consists precisely in his observance of the constitution and the laws under which he lives; his virtue is therefore relative to those laws.<sup>33</sup> The just man, on the other hand, is called just on account of an absolute excellence, which is superior and prior to any written law, and not

31. Continued. aliquis esse bonus princeps, nisi sit bonus per virtutes morales et prudens. Dictum est enim in sexto Ethicorum quod politia est quaedam pars prudentiae; unde oportet politicum, idest rectorem politiae, esse prudentem, et per consequens bonum virum.”

32. De Reg., I, 9: “Est praecipua virtus, qua homo aliquis non solum se ipsum, sed etiam alios dirigere potest ...Sic igitur major virtus requiritur ad regendum domesticam familiam, quam ad regendum se ipsum, multoque major ad regimen civitatis et regni. Est igitur excellentis virtutis bene regium officium exercere” ... (..). “majoris virtutis esse videtur quod majus bonum per eam aliquis operetur. Majus autem et divinius est bonum multitudinis quam bonum unius.”

33. Pol., III, 4, 1276 b 30: “the virtue of the citizen must be relative to the constitution of which he is a member.”

relative to any constitution; this excellence is virtue without qualification. This is the reason for the distinction made by Aristotle between a good man and a good citizen. The Philosopher wonders whether the excellence of the just man and that of the good citizen are identical or different; and his answer is that, because the citizen as such is a part of the city, his virtue is defined with regard to the *politia* or constitution according to which he lives; but *mai politia* may not be the best. But in defining the virtue of the good man simpliciter there is no reference at all to a special political system, but only to the absolute criteria of virtue. The good citizen's excellence is identical with the good ruler's only when the citizen in the best system possible has the virtue which would be required both for ruling and for being ruled. In such a system, which would be the only one adequate for a community of free men, one man or several exercise government not despotically, in the manner in which the master exercises it over the slave, but politically, that is, over free and equal people, who are capable both of governing, and of being governed by, their equals.<sup>34</sup> This thesis means that only in the best system is it possible for the excellence of the just man and that of the good citizen to coincide, for only in such a regime is the *bene vivere* in all its fullness the ideal of common life embodied in the constitution. Saint Thomas makes these theses his, but, with Aristotle, he warns that even in the best city it is nevertheless impossible that all the citizens be equally virtuous, or even simply virtuous; but for the good of the city it suffices that each one does well what falls to him as a part of the social whole. Yet even with these exceptions, it is always true that only in the best system is it possible for the virtue of the good citizen as such to coincide perfectly with that of the honest man.<sup>35</sup>

34. Cf. *Pol.*, III, 4, passim. What is expounded in the text is the substance of Aristotle's thesis developed in this chapter of the *Politics*.

35. In *Pol.*, III, 3, #1: "Contingit aliquem esse bonum civem, qui tamen non habet virtutem secundum quam aliquis est bonus vir; et hoc in politiis quae sunt praeter optimam politiam... (...) impossibile est, quantumcumque sit bona politia, quod omnes cives sint virtuosissimi; sed tamen oportet quod unusquisque faciat opus suum quod ad civitatem pertinet, bene... in optima politia oportet quod quilibet civis habeat virtutem boni civis. Per hunc enim modum civitas erit optima: sed virtutem boni viri, impossibile est quod omnes habeant." However, in another place (In *Eth.*, V, 3, #926) Saint Thomas writes thus: "Sunt enim quaedam politiae, non rectae, secundum quas aliquis potest esse civis bonus, qui non est vir bonus; sed secundum optimam politicam non est aliquis civis bonus, qui non est vir bonus." This text identifies the virtue of every citizen with that of the good man in the optimum system; the text quoted from the Commentary on the *Politics* maintains

Now, even in the case in which the virtue of each and every citizen does not realize perfectly the ideal of virtuous life which the system proposes, there will always be an equivalence between the common good which a city attains and the virtues of the citizens composing it. This equivalence consists of this, that the moral atmosphere in the city—the common good in its noblest aspect—depends materially on such virtues. The countenance of the common good depends on the virtue of the members making up the city, although only with the dependence of material causality. The reason for this is, first, that as regards its nature the happiness of a man and that of the city are of the same ratio;<sup>36</sup> and second, that the actions of an individual redound in some way upon the social whole of which he is a part. Society is a composed whole and depends therefore, in a material way, to a high degree on its parts; and the action of the parts has an influence upon the whole.<sup>37</sup> In the intention of its author an action may well not be directed to the good or evil of another individual or of society; nevertheless, objectively, that is to say, in consideration of the *finis operis*, it redounds directly or indirectly to the good or evil of society. For this reason the life of the just conserves and promotes the common good, because they are the principal part of the multitude; they are that part of the social whole which realizes most perfectly the city's end and which with its virtue produces, conserves and promotes the good moral environment which spreads its benefit to the whole multitude.<sup>38</sup>

But if the common good depends, chiefly in the order of material causality, upon private virtues, private virtues are submitted in turn to the common good as to their final cause: "bonum partis est propter bonum totius,"<sup>39</sup> "bonitas cujuslibet partis consideratur in proportione

35. Continued

the distinction between the two. The position exposed in the last work seems to be the one which is truly representative of Aristotle's thought—and Saint Thomas' as well—since a little earlier in the Commentary on the *Ethics* it is announced that this theme will be treated in the *Politics*. The *Ethics* speaks rather casually about what is examined closely in the *Politics*.

36. *De Reg.*, I, 14: "Idem oportet esse iudicium de fine totius multitudinis et unius."

37. *J-II*, 21, 3: "unusquisque in aliqua societate vivens est aliquo modo pars, et membrum totius societatis; quicumque ergo agit aliquid in bonum, vel malum alicujus in societate existentis, hoc redundat in totam societatem: sicut qui laedit manum, per consequens laedit hominem."

38. *II-II*, 64, 6: "Vita justorum est conservativa et promotiva boni communis, quia ipsi sunt principalior pars multitudinis."

39. *I-II*, 1<sup>o</sup>9



ad suum totum.”<sup>40</sup> Thus, private virtues are referable to the common good in two ways: either as integral parts of it, in the measure in which each virtue is a good; or as subject to the rule which an end common to the virtues imposes upon them. Under the first aspect, to be referable to the common good means to contribute to the constituting and increase of the good of the whole society; it might be said that virtue then acquires one more title of justification, namely, that which is derived from its being thus a positive contribution to the common good; (its other title is the value which it has by itself, in its substance or content as virtue). It is also under this aspect that the common good, in its most elevated form, may be considered materially (materialiter) equivalent to the virtues of the good men, in the sense in which a society is what its component elements make it. According to the other viewpoint, for virtues to be referable to the common good means that the common good, as the end of all virtues, demands the acts of all as something which is owed to it, and adapts to its exigencies the exercise of the virtuous life. In accordance with its essence, every virtue orders its act to its proper end; but it does not belong to the essence of a virtue to be ordered to an ulterior end.<sup>41</sup> This ulterior ordering of the acts of all the other virtues to the good of society is carried out by legal, or general, justice.<sup>42</sup> The goodness of an act of virtue does not depend entirely on its species, but also on something else which is added to the species as circumstances necessary for the rectitude of the act.<sup>43</sup> By reason of what is owed to the good of the social whole, general justice may not only demand a certain act of

40. I-II, 92, I, ad 3.

41. II-II, 58, 6, ad 4: “quaelibet virtus secundum propriam rationem ordinat actum suum ad proprium finem illius virtutis; quod autem ordinetur ad ulteriorem finem, sive semper, sive aliquando, hoc non habet ex propria ratione.”

42. II-II, 58, 5: “pars id quod est, totius est; unde et quodlibet bonum partis est ordinabile in bonum totius. Secundum hoc ergo bonum cujuslibet virtutis, sive ordinantis aliquem hominem ad seipsum sive ordinantis ipsum ad aliquas alias personas singulares, est referibile ad bonum commune, ad quod ordinatur justitia. Et secundum hoc actus omnium virtutum possunt ad justitiam pertinere, secundum quod ordinat hominem ad bonum commune. Et quantum ad hoc justitia dicitur virtus generalis.”

43. I-II, 18, 3: “plenitudo bonitatis ejus [actionis] non tota consistit in sua specie, sed aliquid additur ex his, quae adveniunt tamquam accidentia quaedam: et hujusmodi sunt circumstantiae debitae: unde si aliquid desit, quod requiratur ad debitas circumstantias, erit actio mala.”

virtue,<sup>44</sup> but also indicate the circumstances in which that act should be executed. Furthermore, it can also occur that an act, which, abstractly considered according to its kind, is morally excellent ought not however to be executed hic et nunc, because, in view of the concrete circumstances, the common good requires otherwise. Contemplation, for example, is superior by its very essence, simpliciter, to active life, but general justice can, nevertheless, in consideration of the particular circumstances in a given situation--in cases of extreme disturbance of public life, for instance--decide that it is more according to virtue to cease contemplating and to come to the rescue of one's fellow-beings in their spiritual and temporal needs.<sup>45</sup> It falls, thus, to general justice to so intervene in the very exercise of virtues as to demand such exercise, to regulate it, and even to suspend it in favor of a different act of more immediate urgency. If the species of a virtue and its particular acts are not distinguished the role of general justice and its relation to the common good cannot be understood. The expressions which Saint Thomas uses are very explicit regarding this distinction.

If the acts of all the virtues are the matter or field of application of general justice, it follows that general justice has an architectonic character, for it embraces the entire domain of doing secundum virtutem and determines the how, the when, and the other circumstances of the virtuous acts, according to a general order or plan and in consideration of the good of the political community. In an architectonic way, general justice exists par excellence in the ruler; but it exists also in the citizen, although only secondarily, namely, insofar as the citizen contributes actively and of his own inclination to the realization of this general order, in conforming his conduct to what the ruler has prescribed for the common good.<sup>46</sup> In an analogous way, prudence is also architectonic in the ruler, since it is his function as such to counsel, to judge and to rule rightly concerning those means through which

44. II-II, 58, 6: “justitia legalis dicitur esse virtus generalis, in quantum scilicet ordinat actus aliarum virtutum ad suum finem, quod est movere per imperium omnes alias virtutes.”

45. II-II, 182, 1 ad 3: “ad opera vitae activae interdum aliquis a contemplatione avocatur propter aliquam necessitatem praesentis vitae.” Sent., III, 35, 1, 4, sol. 1: “Vita contemplativa non ordinatur ad aliquid aliud in ipso in quo est; quia vita aeterna non est nisi quaedam consummatio contemplativae vitae...; unde non restat quod ordinetur ad aliud, nisi secundum quod bonum unius hominis ordinatur ad bonum multorum, ad quod propinquius se habet vita activa quam contemplativa.”

46. II-II, 58, 6: “[justitia legalis] est in principe principaliter, et quasi architectonice; in subditis autem secundarie, et quasi administrative.”

the good of the community under his care is attained. Political prudence exists in the ruler in an outstanding degree; in the subject, in a lower degree and as an auxiliary to the prudence of the prince.<sup>47</sup> Political prudence in its most excellent form, the prudence which rules, the *regnatiya*, is one of the bases for general justice, inasmuch as it utters the practical judgment according to which the will, the seat of justice, moves all the virtues to the common good.<sup>48</sup>

Saint Thomas says that general justice may be had without virtue in common and virtue in common may be had without general justice, for they are not essentially the same: "non est eadem iustitia generalis cum virtute communi; sed una potest sine alia haberi." It does not seem that they can in fact be had one without the other except in the lower and initial state of virtuous life, or in regimes which pursue an ideal of life which is not the best and most perfect. In such cases it may be that the citizens will have the virtue of general justice, inasmuch as they accommodate their conduct to the requirements of the common good in that particular regime, and yet they may not be purely and simply virtuous men. But, on the contrary, it is impossible that general justice and virtue in common do not coexist in the ruler, because the virtue of the prince and that of the good man are one and the same:<sup>50</sup> as a ruler, he should possess general justice in its highest degree; but it is only through the aggregate of all the virtues that he is a good man. In the same way that good citizen and good man are identified at the apex of the city's life—in the ruler of the best regime—so, at that apex and there only do the highest virtue and the fullest general justice join and sustain each other mutually. The meaning of these two distinctions<sup>51</sup> and of their final resolution to unity at the peak of the community is that there is among the total of the virtuous acts and the exigencies of the common good a growing assimilation, which reaches the point of absolute identification in the one who presides over the best of the politics. In the just man,

47. II-II, 47, 10: "prudentia non solum se habet ad bonum privatum unius hominis, sed etiam ad bonum commune multitudinis," Ibid., 50, 2, ad 2: "Eadem agenda considerantur quidem a rege secundum universaliorem rationem quam considerentur a subdito, qui obedit...Et ideo regnativa comparatur ad hanc politicam, de qua loquimur, sicut ars architectonica ad eam, quae manu operatur."

48. II-II, 47, 10 ad 1: "sic se habet prudentia politica ad iustitiam legalem, sicut se habet prudentia simpliciter dicta ad virtutem moralem."

49. II-II, 58, 6, Sed contra,

50. In Pol., III, 3, #4: "virtus boni viri est quae est virtus boni principis."

51. These two distinctions are: between the "bonus civis" and the "bonus vir," and between virtue in common and general justice.

virtue tends, upon becoming more perfect, to coincide more and more with the requirements of the common good, as intimated by general justice. At the same time, the citizen whose virtue has come to coincide with the virtue of the good man, becomes worthy to command and preside over the others.

And there is evidence more cogent that general justice cannot in fact be possessed without the other virtues, nor the virtues without general justice, at least beyond a certain degree of perfection in the virtuous life. For the effect of law is, according to Saint Thomas, to cause men to be good; but law contains precisely the precepts of general justice. The actions prescribed by general, or legal, justice result therefore in virtuous life. Justice is called general when it orders the acts of all the virtues to the common good, and since order to the common good belongs to law, general justice may be also called legal,<sup>52</sup> because through it man conforms with the law which orders his acts to such an end.

Thus, the theme of law appears in close relation with the common good and general justice. As noted above, the effect of the law is to cause men to be good. This is Saint Thomas' reasoning: the law is a judgment of the ruler's practical reason, and the virtue of the subject or citizen consists in obeying that judgment. And as laws are given to be obeyed, it follows that it is a property of the law to induce those subject to it, to exercise that virtue which pertains to them, namely, to obey the law. And virtue being by definition that which causes the one possessing it to be good, the effect of law will be to make good those subject to it. (That goodness, however, can be an authentic goodness, or it can be merely the habit of adjusting oneself to a law which has for end, not the common good such as natural and divine laws call for, but the mere profit or pleasure of the legislator, or even what conflicts with God's law; a man can thus be called a good thief, inasmuch as he observes the rules of his trade. It can also happen that the law in question is not the one of the best or regimes, but rather, for example, the law of the "status popularis." In such cases, the law certainly does not cause men to be good simpliciter and according to virtue, but only secundum quid).<sup>53</sup> But when the

52. II-II, 58, 5: "actus omnium virtutum possunt ad iustitiam pertinere, secundum quod ordinat hominem ad bonum commune; et quantum ad hoc iustitia dicitur virtus generalis; et quia ad legem pertinet ordinare in bonum commune, ...inde est, quod talis iustitia, praedicto modo generalis, dicitur iustitia legalis; quia scilicet per eam homo concordat legi ordinanti actus omnium virtutum in bonum commune."

53. I-II, 92, 1: "lex nihil aliud est, quam dictamen rationis in praesidente, quo subditi gubernantur. Cujuslibet autem subditi virtus est, ut bene subdatur ei, a quo gubernatur... Et per hunc modum

effect of the law is to produce virtue in men *simpliciter* - that is, in accordance with the *precepts of natural and divine laws* - it is precisely then that the end which the law proposes is at *the same time the common good in its highest genuine form* - although with the restriction, already mentioned, that perfect virtue in those who govern and the mere obedience of citizens to the mandates suffice for the good of the community.

It has been said<sup>53</sup> that Saint Thomas has developed two *theses* on the end of law - that law is for the common good,<sup>55</sup> that law is for the happiness of the individual person - that *these theses are in conflict, and that Saint Thomas either did not find or did not expound the formula of their reconciliation. But this is not a question of the end of the law, but rather a question of the two different aspects under which the law's end may be considered; and these aspects are perfectly compatible with each other. Furthermore, the ambivalent character of the end of the law shows that the common good in the mind of Saint Thomas is a condition and at the same time a result of the happiness*

53. Continued

virtus cujuslibet subjecti est, ut bene subjiciatur principanti, ut Philosophus dicit in I.Polit. Ad hoc autem ordinatur unaquaeque lex, ut obediatur ei a subditis; unde manifestum est, quod hoc sit proprium legis, inducere subjectos ad propriam ipsorum virtutem. Cum igitur virtus sit, quae facit bonum habentem, sequitur quod proprius effectus legis sit bonos facere eos, quibus datur, vel simpliciter, vel secundum quid. Si enim intentio ferentis legem tendat in verum bonum, quod est bonum commune secundum justitiam divinam regulatum, sequitur quod per legem homines fiant boni simpliciter. Si vero intentio legislatoris feratur ad id, quod non est bonum simpliciter, sed utile, vel delectabile sibi, vel repugnans justitiae divinae; tunc lex non bonos facit homines simpliciter, sed secundum quid, scilicet in ordine ad tale regimen. Sic autem bonum invenitur etiam in per se malis; sicut aliquis dicitur bonus latro, quia operatur accomode ad finem."

54. In the *Bulletin de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale*, II, #418, (1933-36), Dom O. Lottin, O.S.B., writes thus: "Quand, dans la 2ae, q. 90, a. 2, S. Thomas se demande utrum lex ordinetur semper ad bonum commune, on voit clairement dans sa réponse se juxtaposer les deux solutions: l'une individualiste (la loi est faite pour acheminer l'homme à sa fin dernière, la béatitude personnelle, si fermement établie au début de la 1a-2ae), l'autre sociale (la partie est faite pour le tout). Il faut se demander jusqu'à quel point la synthèse a été faite par S. Thomas et donc si, dans sa pensée, la première solution est subordonnée à la seconde."

55. I-II, 90, 4: "flexj nihil est aliud, quam quaedam rationis ordinatio ad bonum commune, ab eo, qui curam communitatis habet, promulgata."

which those persons who participate in the common good attain by living virtuously. The question is rather whether Saint Thomas really believed that the two viewpoints differed so much as to require a formula of conciliation. It does not seem that he did. Still, the difficulty which this dualism might involve was removed in advance when Saint Thomas says that the law's effects are to cause men to be good. One of the objections in that article states: that the law is given with respect to the common good; but there are some who, behaving fitly in that which pertains to the common good, conduct themselves badly in matters of their own private good; consequently, it does not belong to the law to make men good.<sup>56</sup> Saint Thomas answers that, on the one hand, the goodness of each component element is considered in relation to its whole, so that for the part to be really good it must be measured by the good of the whole; but the whole, on the other hand, cannot exist properly except through parts proportionate to it. Again he answers that in a community in which either the whole citizenry, or at least those who rule, are not virtuous, there cannot be a common good.<sup>57</sup> There is, therefore, as observed above, an interdependence between the whole and its parts, between the common good and the virtues of the citizens. In this interrelation, however, the character of the dependence is not the same for each term. The good of the whole depends on the good of the parts in a way similar to the way in which a body depends, for its being, on its integral parts. On the other hand, the perfection, in each concrete case, of the virtuous activity of each citizen comes from the accommodation of his conduct to the prescriptions of the law for the common good. The specific distinction between the common good and the individual good (here understood as the life of virtue) is not made principally on the ground of the matter which causes the common good to be good. That matter is, so to speak, virtuous matter for both kinds of good, and thus in that matter a high individual virtue and the common good par

56. I-II, 92, 1, obj. 3: "Lex ordinatur ad bonum commune...; sed quidam bene se habent in his, quae ad commune pertinet, qui tamen in propriis non bene se habent; non ergo ad legem pertinet, quod faciat homines bonos."

57. Ibid., ad 3: "bonitas cujuslibet partis consideratur in proportione ad suum totum; ...cum igitur quilibet homo sit pars civitatis, impossibile est, quod aliquis homo sit bonus, nisi sit bene proportionatus bono communi: nec totum potest bene existere, nisi ex partibus sibi proportionatis; unde impossibile est, quod bonum commune civitatis bene se habeat, nisi cives sint virtuosus, ad minus illi, quibus convenit principari. Sufficit autem quantum ad bonum communitatis, quod alii intantum sint virtuosus, quod principum mandatis obediunt."

excellence come to coincide. Society and the individual are rather to be opposed on the ground of other categories of the good, such as the existence of the individual and all that relates more or less directly to this existence. In this order there can be, and often are, cases of sharp opposition between the social good and the individual's own good. Society may demand for its own good the sacrifice of individual comfort, health and even life, or the abandonment or the limitation of the means leading to these goods. But there is possible no individual virtue, no private moral perfection, which is against or at the expense of the common good. It is only in this order in which there is opposition possible between social and individual good that it is necessary to concede that the relationship between society and the individual is difficult to define in the thought of Saint Thomas. But in the sense in which the good of society is life in common secundum virtutem, the fact that the law is given with reference to the common good, and the fact that its effects are to cause individual men to be good, are only two aspects of the same reality, the virtuous life of the city.<sup>58</sup>

Hence the accentuated moral character which Saint Thomas assigns to human positive law. It is proper to this law to prescribe the acts of all virtues, precisely because there is no virtue ail or some of whose acts are not referable either directly or indirectly to the common good.<sup>59</sup> It also pertains to human law to punish vice. This law does not prohibit all vices; but this restriction does not contravene the condition of morality as the very matter of human law. In fact, the very article which states that not all vices are prohibited by human law itself makes manifest the moral character of human law, in the consideration that what it punishes is designated as vice, which is contrary to virtue. The object and the effect of the law remain unfailingly the moral health of the community, except that it is not possible, because of the weakness of many men and their moral imperfection, to impose on them the arduous task of realizing, in its entirety and in its highest degrees of perfection, the whole content of

58. In Pol., III, 7, #10; "quicumque curant de bona legislatione considerant de virtute et malitia, ut malitiam repellant a civibus et faciant eos virtuosos; hoc enim intendit bonus legislator; quare manifestum est quod bona et vera civitas et non secundum sermonem tantum, debet esse sollicita de virtute, ut faciat cives virtuosos."

59. I-II, 96, 3; "Omnia objecta virtutum referri possunt vel ad bonum privatum alicujus personae, vel ad bonum commune multitudinis... Lex autem...ordinatur ad bonum commune; et ideo nulla virtus est de cujus actibus lex praecipere non possit. Non tamen de omnibus actibus omnium virtutum lex humana praecipit, sed solum de illis qui ordinabiles sunt ad bonum commune, vel immediate, ...vel mediate."

moral law. Some less grave vices, faults and sins are to be eradicated by human law, which prohibits only the vices which are most serious and those which, if left unrestrained, could endanger the very existence of society.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, human law must try to induce men to virtue, not in a single stroke -- "subito" --but gradually

A careful consideration of these statements regarding vices which must be prohibited because they endanger the very existence of society, gives rise to this problem: whether in relation to the common good, virtue must be cultivated for itself, for its autonomous ethical value, or whether it must rather be cultivated for the legitimate advantages or benefits, of any kind whatsoever, which the practice of virtue produces for society. Is justice necessary for the common good by reason of the worth of the just man as such, namely, as the culmination of a human excellence; or is it necessary because where there are just men no one will suffer harm by homicide, theft, etc., and so social life will be enabled to subsist? Of the virtues of truth and friendship Saint Thomas says that they contribute necessary conditions for the conservation of human society: men could not live together unless they believed in one another; nor can any man live without a minimum at least of that delectation, which the virtue of friendship obtains.<sup>62</sup> There are accordingly on one side the virtue of being truthful and that of offering friendship; on the other side, there is the benefit which is derived for others and for society from truthful conduct or from a person's friendliness. It is thus also that an act of

60. I-II, 96, 2: "oportet quod leges imponantur hominibus secundum eorum conditionem; ...non enim idem est possibile ei qui non habet habitum virtutis, et virtuosus; ...multa sunt permittenda hominibus non perfectis virtute, quae non essent toleranda in hominibus virtuosis. Lex autem humana ponitur multitudini hominum, in qua major pars est hominum non perfectorum virtute. Et ideo lege humana non prohibentur omnia vitia, a quibus virtuosus abstinere, sed solum graviora, a quibus possibile est majorem partem multitudinis abstinere, et praecipue quae sunt in nocentum aliorum, sine quorum prohibitione societas humana conservari non posset; sicut prohibentur lege humana homicidia et furta et hujusmodi."

61. Ibid., ad 2; "lex humana intendit homines inducere ad virtutem, non subito, sed gradatim: et ideo non statim multitudini imperfectorum imponit ea quae sunt jam virtuosorum, ut scilicet ab omnibus malis absterneant."

62. II-II, 109, 3, ad 1: "non possent homines ad invicem convivere, nisi sibi invicem crederent, tamquam sibi invicem veritatem manifestantibus." II-II, 114, 2, ad 1; "sicut non posset homo vivere in societate sine veritate ita nec sine delectatione; quia, sicut Philosophus dicit in 8. Ethic, [cap. 5], 'nullus potest per diem morari cum tristi, nec cum non delectabili.' "

filial piety is a good for the son inasmuch as it is virtuous; but the good which results for the parent from that act is the succor of his needs, bodily or otherwise. In general, it is possible to distinguish two aspects of goodness in any virtue, according as one considers the ethical value of the act of virtue, or the external work by means of which it is carried out and which redounds to the benefit of others. The act in itself is a moral good in the strictest sense of the word; its goodness proceeds from the effective adequation of the will to the right precepts of practical reason; and the habitus from which that act proceeds makes him who executes it *simpliciter* good. On the other hand, the external work which a virtuous act has as its object is a good which does not consist formally in the very act of virtue, and consists even less in the inner willingness of the will to accord with the *recta ratio agibilium*; it consists, rather, precisely in the profit which is derived by another — a single individual, or many, or the entire society -- from the execution of such act. Social living requires such goods. Since man is social by nature, each individual owes to the rest a conduct which produces those conditions without which human society would be unable to endure.<sup>63</sup> Those conditions can come from the specific act of any virtue whatsoever; acts of fortitude, temperance, etc., may be necessary for producing them in a society, and for this reason these acts may even become due in justice and demanded by society. There are some virtues which are necessarily destined by their nature to produce for others the kind of good without which social life could not be. These are the virtues whose specific act implies a relation ad alterum, such as justice,<sup>64</sup> principally, and those virtues connected with it.<sup>65</sup> Justice is the fundamental virtue in this respect. The conservation of life and property and, with it, the maintenance of at least a minimum of social living together, results from abstaining from vices like homicide, theft, etc., which are among the most serious of those contrary to justice.<sup>66</sup>

Two remarks must be made here. In the first place, the radical justification of the virtues is not, in the eyes of Saint Thomas, founded upon the aspect of the profitable returns which society may derive from them; there would be in this view a sort of social utilitarianism which is completely foreign to his thought. Virtues are worthy for

63. II-II, 109, 3, ad 1: "quia homo est animal sociale, naturaliter unus homo debet alteri id, sine quo societas humana servari non posset."

64. II-II, 58, 2, Sed contra: "justitia est solum circa ea quae sunt ad alterum."

65. These are the so-called social virtues. Cf. II-II, 80, art. un.

66. I-II, 96, 2: "lege humana non prohibentur omnia vitia, ...sed solum graviora, ...et praecipue quae sunt in nocumentum aliorum, ...sicut...homicidia et furta et hujusmodi."

1 wi^they are in themselves; they have sufficient justification in the fact that they are habitus which make well doing possible. In the second place, the fact that there is a distinction between an act of virtue and the external work which it may produce does not prevent them from being in a close union, according to which the inner willingness is prolonged normally in the external work and in its good result ad alterum; and this external work is more meritorious insofar as the will from which it proceeds is more prompt.<sup>67</sup> Consequently, as has already been stated above, the life of the just is preservative of the common good, because their virtue abounds in those external works which are necessary for any life in common.

Nevertheless the difference between those two aspects exists, and it appears in a particularly notable manner in what Saint Thomas says about the way in which that act of justice which is the matter of a legal precept is carried out. It suffices, he says, for the purpose of human law that the act be executed according to what is prescribed by law; and, provided that the act is executed, it does not matter if it does not come from the habitus of justice; it may arise, for instance, from fear of the penalty.<sup>68</sup> The law imposes the fulfilling of certain external acts which are judged necessary for the good of society; if these acts are not carried out by the impulse of virtue, or at least through obedience to law, they will be fulfilled then under the sanction attached to the precept.

From these analyses it can be inferred that for Saint Thomas, the expression "common good" of civil society embraces goods of very varied natures. Thus, although it means par excellence the good life of the community according to virtue, it nevertheless surpasses the limits of this meaning and includes, in addition, those goods which are in any way related to that supreme end as lower ends subjected to it, or as means intended for its fulfillment; and also those which, like specifying objects, confront the activity in which happiness consists. Should the concept "common good" be so extended, in accordance with the usage of Saint Thomas, as to include all those goods which in any way may be shared, enjoyed or owned by many, then the natures of the goods thus included will vary, first, according as they are the objects of the good life, i.e., the objects of wisdom, knowledge, virtue;

67. I-II, 114, 4 ad 2: "unicuique est laboriosum et difficile quod non prompta voluntate facit; et talis labor diminuit meritum."

68. I-II, 100, 9: "illud directe cadit sub praecepto legis ad quod lex cogit. Coactio autem legis est per metum poenae, ut dicitur X Eth.; nam illud proprie cadit sub praecepto legis, pro quo poena legis infligitur." Ibid., ad 1: "modus faciendi actum justitiae, qui cadit sub praecepto, est ut fiat aliquid secundum ordinem juris, non autem quod fiat ex habitu justitiae."

or second, according as the goods are embodied in the organization of society, in which case they refer to the structure and functioning of the social whole, its institutions, etc.; or third, according as they belong to the living matter, so to speak, which provides the material cause of society, and then the goods will be all those which are related in some way to the biological existence and conservation of the individual; or finally, according as the goods are incorporated in things as useful possessions, and such goods are riches, etc. Although they belong to such diverse categories, they are nevertheless not juxtaposed at random but, on the contrary, are organized and related to one another in an order at whose apex is the operation regulated by virtue, that is, happiness--insofar as happiness can in fact be reached in temporal life. This crowning good, happiness, so imposes its rule and measure on all the levels of that hierarchical order, that whatever is done at the expense of the rule of virtue can never be good, but is, rather, an evil for the entire community.

In order to determine the order of the other goods in the hierarchy, it is well to follow the method suggested by a statement of Saint Thomas in the *De Regimine Principum*, namely, that two things are required for the individual's happiness: the main thing is activity according to virtue; the other, secondary and instrumental, is a sufficient supply of corporeal possessions. A similar classification, continues Saint Thomas, is found to be true in society; but whereas man is endowed by nature with the unity which enables him to act, society, on the contrary, must first acquire this unity.<sup>69</sup> This distinction, based on the nature of the social being, whose unity is a unity per ordinationem, is the key to the discovery of a complete order of goods which belong to the social organization itself, and which are to be carried out only in the social being as such. Since they are essential to the full living together of a society, and indeed to its very existence, these goods are higher than those above-mentioned which are embodied in things, as well as higher than those belonging to the body—"vita et sanitas corporis."<sup>70</sup> Now, the goods related to, or inherent in, the social structure are subordinated, in turn, to the supreme end of the political community.<sup>71</sup>

69. *De Reg.*, I, 15: "Ad bonam unius hominis vitam duo requiruntur: unum principale, quod est operatio secundum virtutem (virtus enim est qua bene vivitur); aliud vero secundarium et quasi instrumentale, scilicet corporalium bonorum sufficientia, quorum usus est necessarius ad actum virtutis. Ipsa tamen hominis unitas per naturam causatur, multitudinis autem unitas, quae pax dicitur, per regentis industriam est procuranda."

70. *Ibid.*, I, 14.

71. *In Pol.*, III, 7, #14: "finis propter quem instituta est civitas bene ordinata, est secundum virtutem perfectam vivere vel operari, et non ipsum convivere."

That unity which society must reach as a prerequisite for its good acting is nothing other than its peace. This unity, however, cannot be reached simply by any means whatsoever, but only according to justice, which is an indispensable foundation for the good arrangement of the city. Finally, the social being itself is the field in which the virtues related to justice--piety, obedience, liberality, veracity, and above all friendliness--spread themselves and fructify in works ad alterum which are perfective of the common living.

Peace, which is the unity of the community,<sup>72</sup> is the main good of society;<sup>73</sup> it is a condition most necessary for its existence, preservation and good acting. Without the unity which is peace, the usefulness of social life disappears and the community becomes a weighty burden for itself.<sup>74</sup> Unlike the unity of each individual man, which is a unity bestowed and preserved by nature, the unity of society, although it is natural in that the existence of society is derived from human nature, is at the same time a work of will and has continually to be constituted and conquered by the political prudence of the ruler and the civic virtue of the ruled. Saint Thomas insists repeatedly that the ruler should strive to promote peace, and even states that this should be his main purpose.<sup>75</sup> And this assertion is in agreement with the preeminent function he assigns in the social life to the unity which is peace: just as a man needs the unity of all his parts in order to act, so it is only when united by the link of peace that the multitude can be conducted to the virtuous operation which is happiness.<sup>76</sup>

The concept of peace embraces both the concept of concord, which is the union of diverse wills in a common consent, and, as an indispensable element, the concept of the interior unification of the various

72. *De Reg.*, I, 15: "Multitudinis unitas...pax dicitur."

73. *Ibid.*, I, 5: "Bonum pacis est praecipuum in multitudine sociali."

74. *Ibid.*, I, 2: "Bonum et salus consociatae multitudinis est, ut ejus unitas conservetur, quae dicitur pax, qua remota socialis vitae perit utilitas, quinimmo multitudo dissentiens sibi ipsi sit onerosa." *Ibid.*, I, 15: "Sicut homo nihil bene agere potest nisi praesupposita suarum partium unitate, ita hominum multitudo pacis unitate carens, dum impugnat se ipsam, impeditur a bene agendo."

75. *Ibid.*, I, 15: "Multitudinis unitas, quae pax dicitur, per regentis industriam est procuranda." *Ibid.*, I, 2: "Hoc igitur est ad quod maxime rector multitudinis intendere debet, ut pacis unitatem procuret."

76. *Ibid.*, I, 15: "ad bonam vitam multitudinis instituendam tria requiruntur. Primo quidem, ut multitudo in unitate pacis constituatur. Secundo, ut multitudo vinculo pacis unita dirigatur ad bene agendum...Tertio vero requiritur, ut per regentis industriam necessariorum ad bene vivendum adsit sufficiens copia."

appetites within each one of those who are in concord.<sup>77</sup> These are really two inseparable aspects of one and the same peace, for the deeper the peace of the minds is--that is to say, the more ordered the appetites under the influence of virtue--the deeper also and steadier the social peace will be. And *insofar as the law succeeds in causing the city to be virtuous, there will be an adherence and consent of all to the common ends as well as an orderly unification according to those ends of the appetites of each individual. In this sense, peace proves to be not only a condition required for the good life of society but also its fruit and result.* Saint Thomas says that peace is not a virtue but a fruit of virtue: "*ponitur [pax] inter fructus, in quantum est quoddam finale bonum, spiritualem dulcedinem habens.*"<sup>78</sup> As a fruit, peace is the enjoyment of the virtuous life of the city. But because peace has a character of unifying the multitude, at least a minimum of peace is a necessary condition for that virtuous life. Aside from this, the unity which Saint Thomas exalts in his *De Regimine* is not the one required for the mere ontological existence of a community--that is to say, the formal consensus, no matter how tacit, to simply establish a community of life with a view to a minimum of ends--but something more: it is an advanced stage in the voluntary unification of all the individuals with all their tendencies and appetites, under the attraction of the supreme common ends. Even so, unity does not formally constitute the happy life of the multitude, but is rather a condition necessary for reaching it.

Social peace, on the other hand, cannot be established by neglecting the requirements of justice. As a good intended to be substantial, as it were, with the social organism, justice is not primarily the virtuous habitus which moves the individual "to give to everyone what is his own," but it is rather the actual shaping of the social matter in accordance with the rules derived from the object of the virtue of justice, the jus, the res justa.<sup>79</sup> These rules are the laws issued by the ruler for the common good, and the collection of these laws in a body constitutes the positive law of a society. The special subject matter of particular justice, namely, the external acts and things of

77. II-II, 29, 1: "*concordia proprie sumpta est ad alterum: in quantum scilicet diversorum cordium voluntates simul in unum consensum conveniunt. Contingit autem unius hominis cor tendere in diversa. ...non enim homo habet pacatum cor quandiu non habet id quod vult; etsi habeat aliquid quod vult, tamen adhuc restat ei aliquid volendum, quod simul habere non potest. Haec autem unio non est de ratione concordiae; unde concordia importat unionem appetituum diversorum appetentium: pax autem, supra hanc unionem, importat etiam appetituum unius appetentis unionem.*"

78. II-II, 29, 4 ad 1.

79. II-II, 57, 1: "*jus est objectum justitiae.*" Ibid., ad 1: "*\*hoc nomen jus primo impositum est ad significandum ipsam rem justam.*"

which men make use to communicate with one another,<sup>80</sup> is not the only object of the law: there are also the acts of virtue which the legislator considers necessary for the common happiness. Then the law both prescribes those acts as falling under the formal aspect of what is due and also provides the way to enjoin them. The behavior thus prescribed and required by the law may be considered, in a sense, as the minimum of ethical behavior necessary for the maintenance of social life. This consideration of an ethical minimum which the law imposes is manifest in Saint Thomas' statement, above quoted, that law prohibits the most serious vices, such as homicide, robbery, etc., from which not only the most virtuous men but also the large majority of the multitude are able to abstain. On the other hand, the behavior required by justice appears always under the character of that which is due to another: and in this way justice in a fundamental way makes possible social organization, on the basis of what must be recognized and guaranteed as belonging to every one and to the community.

Justice, and especially legal justice, is ordered to the virtuous life of the city because justice is contained and stated in the objective order of the legal injunctions, and life according to virtue is the effect of the law. But justice is in itself a common good also: Saint Thomas writes that the judge has under his care that common good which is justice.<sup>81</sup> Among the things which law prescribes, some are related directly and immediately to the common good in its highest aspect; others, only indirectly and mediately, such as happens when there is a question of preserving the common good of justice and peace.<sup>82</sup> In all these cases the expression common good is applied to justice in a

80. II-II, 58, 8: "*possunt per rationem rectificari...exterioribus actionibus, et res exteriores, quae in usum hominis veniunt; ...per exteriores actiones, et per exteriores res, quibus sibi invicem homines communicare possunt, attenditur ordinatio unius hominis ad alterum; ...et ideo cum justitia ordinetur ad alterum, ... [est] circa exteriores actiones, et res, secundum quamdam rationem objecti specialem; prout scilicet secundum eas unus homo alteri coordinatur.*"

81. See note 60, page 53.

82. I-II, 19, 10: "*judex habet curam boni communis, quod est justitia.*"

83. I-II, 96, 3: "*non de omnibus actibus omnium virtutum lex humana praecipit, sed solum de illis, qui ordinabiles sunt ad bonum commune: vel immediate, sicut cum aliqua directe propter bonum commune fiunt: vel mediate, sicut cum aliqua ordinantur a legislatore pertinentia ad bonam disciplinam, per quam cives informantur, ut commune bonum justitiae, et pacis conservent.*"

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sense which is surely authentic, but yet different from (he sense according to which the common good is synonymous with the common happiness of the multitude. Justice is an authentic common good because inasmuch as it is realized within a society, it consists in the good social organization on the basis of what is due to each part and to the whole, and such a social condition is a good for all the members of that society. Justice in this way proves to be an element of the all-embracing common good of society; and it is such an element, both in its character as an upright external operation of the individuals and, mainly and formally, when it insures to the community a certain number of moral conditions without which the community could not survive. This interpretation agrees with Saint Thomas' teaching that the intention of the legislator is directed first and primarily to the common good and secondly to the order of justice and virtue, by means of which the common happiness is achieved.<sup>81</sup>

In speaking of peace and justice, one cannot fail to mention friendship. Whereas justice is essential as a foundation for any right social structure, and is measured in accordance with the things by means of which persons are related, friendship manifests itself rather in the mutual benevolence which normally arises among those who are united under any form of grouping or any common possession ("communicatio").<sup>85</sup> As a sentiment of this kind, friendship facilitates the cohesion of all who are in the group. To each type of communicatio, from the most simple to the largest and most comprehensive, which is civil society, there corresponds a different sort of friendship.

64. I-II, 100, 8: "intentio legislatoris cujuslibet ordinatur primo quidem et principaliter ad bonum commune; secundo autem ad ordinem justitiae, et virtutis, secundum quem bonum commune conservatur, et ad ipsum pervenitur." Cf. I-II, 100, 9 ad 2: "intentio legislatoris est de duobus: de uno quidem, ad quod intendit per praecepta legis inducere: et hoc est virtus; aliud autem est, de quo intendit praeceptum ferre: et hoc est, quod ducit, vel disponit ad virtutem, scilicet actus virtutis; non enim idem est finis praecepti, et id de quo praeceptum datur; sicut neque in aliis rebus idem est finis, et quod est ad finem." - The inclusion of virtue with justice in this passage means that virtue can be a subject matter for the law, and in such a case it becomes an object of legal justice. The "order of justice and virtue" is then the same as the total content of the positive law.

85. II-II, 23, 1: "non quilibet amor habet rationem amicitiae, sed amor qui est cum benevolentia; quando scilicet sic amamus aliquem ut ei bonum velimus... Sed nec benevolentia sufficit ad rationem amicitiae, sed requiritur quaedam mutua amatio, quia amicus est amico amicus. Talis autem mutua benevolentia fundatur super aliqua communicatione."

for instance, the friendship which unites fellow-soldiers is different from the one which links the members of a family, and this friendship differs, in turn, from the friendship which unites fellow-citizens.<sup>86</sup> Each communicatio (xoiwovm, for Aristotle) proves to be, in its dual character as an interrelation of individuals and as the special feeling of friendliness which unites them in the group, a specific and more or less complex unit both of the structure and of the functioning of the social organism. In general, friendship is a manifestation of the natural sociability ("omnis homo naturaliter omni homini est amicus")<sup>86</sup> by means of which men constitute their communities; but it is also a conscientious and voluntary cultivation of this human tendency. Considered in this latter sense, friendship is a virtue, and its acts are owed to the other persons on account of the delight which it affords and which is necessary for man's life.<sup>88</sup> This is why friendship, with the affection it generates, completes and perfects in a sense the work performed by strict justice. But whereas friendship is essentially personal, justice is impersonal by nature, since it depends on certain proportions among things and makes no acceptance of persons.<sup>89</sup> Finally, it can be said of friendship, as of peace, that it is rather the result of virtue than itself a virtue.<sup>90</sup>

On a level lower than that of intersocial relations--justice, peace, friendship, etc.--and subordinated to them are the things required in the third place, according to the De Regimine, for the good living of

86. In Eth., VIII, 9, #1661: "ostendit [Philosophus] diversitatem amicitiarum secundum diversitatem communicationis. Videmus enim quod fratribus et personis ita conjunctis sunt omnia communia, puta domus, mensa et alia hujusmodi. Aliis autem amicis sunt quaedam discreta. Et quibusdam plura et quibusdam pauciora." Cf. Eth., VIII, 9, 1159 b 27.

87. II-II, 114, 1, ad 2.

88. II-II, 114, 2, ad 1: "sicut non posset homo vivere in societate sine veritate, ita nec sine delectatione."

89. Jacques Maritain, The Person and the Common Good: "society... cannot subsist without...civil amity, which is the animating form of society and essentially personal. However, the relations which make up the structure of society concern, as such, only justice, which is essentially impersonal because it is measured on things, and does not make acceptance of persons."

90. II-II, 23, 3, ad 1: "potest dici, quod [amicitia] non est virtus per se ab aliis distincta: non enim habet rationem laudabilis, et honesti, nisi ex objecto, secundum scilicet quod fundatur super honestatem virtutum...unde amicitia virtuosa magis est aliquid consequens ad virtutem, quam sit virtus."



the multitude.<sup>91</sup> A certain amount of "corporeal goods" is necessary for virtuous activity, both for the decorum of happy life and as instruments which virtue utilizes for doing good.<sup>92</sup> These goods occupy the lowest level of all those comprehended in the expression "common good," and this expression fits them least properly. They form an order of purely instrumental goods, the order of wealth, that is, of those things "exterior to man, the use of which is necessary or favorable to the support and expansion of human life."<sup>93</sup> In the order of nature, the instrumental goods are inferior to man and were made for him, "infra hominem, et propter hominem facta."<sup>94</sup> They might rather be called common utilities. They are common in the sense that an entire society needs them, and can consequently give laws for their use, employment, distribution and enjoyment by each and every one of the citizens, in accordance with justice and with a view always to the highest ends on which the common good depends.

It must now be asked which of the three levels in which the total content of civil society's common good is organized--namely, the level of happy activity, that of social structure and functioning, or that of the instruments favorable to human life--corresponds strictly to the immanent good as discussed in the first chapter, and there declared to be the good which most properly specifies the social being. At once the goods of the lowest level may be excluded from such a concept; it is obvious that they, although objects of use, are external to what is social. On the other hand, just as the immanent good of an army is its organization, so the immanent good of a society is the

91- De Reg. l. 15: "ad bonam vitam multitudinis instituendam tria requiruntur... Tertio vero requiritur, ut per regentis industriam necessariorum ad bene vivendum adsit sufficiens copia."

92. In Eth., I, 14, #173: "Felicitas non est a fortuna... Concurrent autem ad felicitatem quaedam alia bona, in quibus fortuna aliquid operatur. ...eorum quaedam necessaria sunt ad decorem quemdam felicitatis. Quaedam vero instrumentaliter cooperantur ad felicitatem." Ibid., 16, #194: "felicitas indiget exterioribus bonis, vel ad decorem, vel in quantum sunt instrumenta operationis secundum virtutem. ...usus exteriorum bonorum est bonus et virtuosus, in quantum scilicet virtus utitur eis, ut quibusdam instrumentis ad bene agendum."

93- Yves Simon, "Work and Wealth," Review of Politics, 2 (1940), 2.

94. I-II, 2, 1: "in ordine naturae omnia hujusmodi [divitiae] sunt infra hominem, et propter hominem facta." We add here that Saint Thomas in the Commentary on the Ethics, observes on his part that between the Stoics and the Peripatetics there is the difference that the latter recognize that just as the virtuous man can be affected by sadness, so also he depends on external property up to a certain point for his felicity. Cf. In Eth., I, 16, #196.

good condition of its structure and functioning. But the qualities of that condition are, precisely, justice, as realized in social life; unity; peace; friendship; and everything which these imply in the institutions, habits and social customs which make living together possible, and which are the means and the form of the flow of social life. Thus, any good quality of organization or of activity which is capable of realization only in a social being as such, is a part of society's immanent common good, in the most proper meaning of that term, because that which is essentially relative ad alterum, — such as justice, peace, friendship, concord, social unity, — can exist only among several. But the righteous operation in which the happy life of the community consists is also immanent in the community, although not in exactly the same way as the virtues ad alterum. Common activity according to virtue resides, by analogy—with the individual person's acts of virtue or knowledge, in the collective subject—"manet in ipso operante"—in the measure in which this activity by itself and not its object, constitutes happiness. That operation perfects society in the line of what is moral, and it adheres to it in a way similar to the way in which a virtue dwells in its individual subject. Thus, it may with all propriety be said that the collective moral conscience and the common patrimony of virtue and good living which nourish the moral life of each individual dwell in society itself. However, unlike unity and justice, which when objectively realized in a community are qualities essentially inherent in its very structure, and, therefore, necessarily imply relations among persons, the good living of the multitude resides in each one of the good men as in its ultimate subject; the virtue of each of them is afterwards made common to many by diffusing itself through its own action.<sup>95</sup> Thus, the totality of the immanent good of society comprises a range of qualities which extend for what is most impersonal, socialized and "relational" in its structure, through the diverse states of the collective moral conscience--in different degrees of interdependence with the virtue of individuals—up to the most personal acts of virtue of good men as diffused through the community.

That this good is common means that all the component parts of the community enjoy and share in it. Being the good of a whole, it is thereby in an effective way common, or at least communicable, to its parts. Such communicability belongs to the essence of any common good, whereas it may be entirely lacking to some individual goods: personal existence, for example, cannot, under the same ratio of goodness, be shared by more subjects than its own. Now, the common

95. S.c.G., III, 69: "bonum unius fit multis commune, si ab uno in alia deTivatur; quod non potest esse, nisi in quantum diffundit ipsum in alia per propriam actionem."

good is not only communicable, but, owing to the ontological structure of society, it cannot be completely separated nor mutually distinguished from the good of the singular individuals: order different respects--materialiter on the part of the citizens, and finaliter on the part of the common good--there is an interdependence and mutual influence between the two terms. The common good is not, then, peculiar to the social body as an entity separated from the parts of the social body; it is likewise a good for the parts precisely insofar as they are parts.<sup>96</sup> Whence it follows that he who seeks the common good, simultaneously seeks a good for himself. Saint Thomas likes to quote the saying of Valerius Maximus to the effect that the ancient Romans preferred to live poor in a rich empire than rich in a poor empire, which indicates that the common good is for each of the members of the city a good even greater than his private good.<sup>97</sup>

The highest and most perfect form of communicability is that of a good which, remaining wholly identical, can be enjoyed and shared simultaneously by many individuals; this is precisely the communicability of the objects of spiritual and moral life; objects of this kind are not submitted to quantity and so their communicability is not subject to any form of distribution.<sup>98</sup>

96. *De Car.*, 4, ad 2: "Est quoddam bonum commune quod pertinet ad hunc vel ad illum in quantum est pars alicujus totius; sicut ad militem, in quantum est pars exercitus, et ad civem, in quantum est pars civitatis."

97. *11-11, 47, 10* ad 2: "ille qui quaerit bonum commune multitudinis ex consequenti etiam quaerit bonum suum, ...quia bonum proprium non potest esse sine bono communi vel familiae vel civitatis aut regni. Unde et Valerius Maximus dicit de antiquis Romanis quod malebant esse pauperes in divite imperio quam divites in paupere imperio."

98- Saint Thomas speaks of a common good of intellects, which consists in the order of the intelligible objects: "bonum cui intellectus speculativus conjungitur per cognitionem, est communius bono cui conjungitur intellectus practicus, in quantum intellectus speculativus magis separatur a particulari quam intellectus practicus, cujus cognitio in operatione perficitur, quae in singularibus consistit." (Sent., IV, 49, I, 1, sol. 3 ad 1). This common good is "separated," in a way analogous to the way in which God is the separated common good of the universe. Maritain remarks (The Person and the Common Good) that the common good of the intellects can be understood in two ways: either as the supratemporal order of truth and beauty, or as the treasure of culture accumulated in the course of a civilization and in which minds participate as in a truly common good.

A lower manner of communicability is that of the goods which submitted to any form of distribution or of use by a multitude, in a way as to imply either division of the goods themselves according to quantity, or at least a reciprocal exclusion among those who enjoy the goods. It may be said of none of these things that it is simply the "common good," but rather it may be said that they are common goods, in the plural. They are common, however, in the sense, either that no individual is assigned in advance to enjoy them privately, and to the exclusion of the rest, or that, because of the end for which they exist, society has over them a supreme dominion, which is superior to all individual appropriation or adjudication.

In the totality of the common good everything which may be communicated through some form of distribution is a subject matter for distributive justice. The fact that when discussing distributive justice Saint Thomas often uses the expression "bona communia," (plural), is significant, because only goods which are several can be distributed in a strict sense. Just as it belongs to distributive justice to assign the various burdens and tasks which each one owes to the community, in accordance with what each can contribute in equality of proportion, so it also belongs to it to distribute the goods which are common, which as such are owed by the whole to the part." Concerning the nature of these goods, sufficient light is shed both by the objection that to distribute the common goods to many is harmful to society's common good, and Saint Thomas' reply which recommends moderation in the distribution. Saint Thomas would not have given this answer if the expression "common goods" concerned only spiritual and moral goods, which are neither exhausted by their being shared by many, nor even subject to moderation when it is a question of realizing them.<sup>100</sup>

99- II-II, 61, 2: "in distributiva justitia datur aliquid alicui privatae personae, in quantum id quod est totius, est debitum parti: quod quidem tanto majus est, quanto ipsa pars majorem principalitatem habet in toto; et ideo in distributiva justitia tanto plus alicui de bonis communibus datur, quanto illa persona majorem habet principalitatem in communitate."

100. II-II, 61, 1, obj. 1: "non enim potest esse justitiae species, quod multitudini nocet, cum justitia ad bonum commune ordinetur. Sed distribuere bona communia in multos, nocet bono communi multitudinis: tum quia exhauriuntur opes communes: tum etiam quia mores hominum corrumpuntur." And Saint Thomas' reply: (Hoid., ad 1): "sicut in largitionibus privatarum personarum commendatur moderatio, effusio vero culpatur; ita etiam in distributione communium bonorum est moderatio servanda, in quo dirigit justitia distributiva."

*As a result of the foregoing discussions two things must be pointed out: the complexity of the content of the common good, and the fact that however complex it may be, the content of the total social good is a hierarchical order which is commanded by the supreme end of human happiness. This end is essentially a moral good, and whatever is contrary to moral law will fail to attain this good— in fact, to contravene moral law is at the same time to attempt against human happiness.*

*Now, several questions arise from the consideration that the good of the whole must be shared by its parts. It might be asked, for instance, whether this sharing means that the good of the whole community is worthy only because it is useful to each individual, and so is on that account subordinated to each individual, or whether, on the contrary, the good of the whole is worthy by itself, not as a means but as an end. And if this latter is the case, it may further be asked whether the good of the entire community prevails over that of a single person. These and similar problems are set by the general relationship between society and the individual, common good and private good, and their solution is not given by merely stating the constitutive elements of the entire good of society. The solution to these problems is found, as will be shown in the next chapter, in the doctrine of the primacy of the common good.*

### Chapter III

#### THE PRIMACY OF COMMON GOOD OVER PRIVATE GOOD

Saint Thomas makes frequent and varied application of the principle of the primacy of the common good over any private good, now, for instance, to find the justification for capital punishment; now to establish the excellence of the Eucharist over the other sacraments; in another place, to subordinate private virtue to the common happiness, or again, to teach the duty of renouncing contemplation at least in part, in order to tend to the spiritual good of the Church, or even the urgent temporal needs of a multitude. In these, and in many other different cases, he never hesitates to uphold the superiority of a common good—whatever it may be in each particular case.

Historically, the principle of the primacy of society's common good may be traced to the political thought of the ancient world. In the prevailing tendency of this thought, as represented mainly by Plato and Aristotle, the state, or polis, was believed to have an incomparable influence in shaping the moral life of the citizens; and since the end of the state is above all moral perfection, the good and virtuous citizen is he alone who conforms his life to the constitution and laws of his city. On the other hand, the relationship between society and individual often assumes, on a purely practical level, the form of disagreement and even of acute conflict between their respective interests. The solution for such conflicts has generally been found in subordinating all other interests to that of the community. The community was acknowledged to have a good of its own; this fact was clearly expressed in such notions of the Roman Law as "res publica" and "bonum publicum," which designated those values of a political order to which was given absolute predominance over all private goods. With these and similar formulas of the Roman Law there arises a second element in the formation of the doctrine of the primacy of society's common good. A third element comes from Patristic literature. The Fathers of the Church introduced into the incipient Christian philosophy many formulas of the Roman jurists concerning the hegemony of the "res publica," but at the same time they made the decisive and far-reaching reservation that although the city is what is most eminent in the temporal human order, there is nevertheless something superior to it for which man is ultimately destined, namely, the order of divine things. Such a reservation will, in the long run, modify the general perspective of the problem.

Saint Thomas embodied this reservation—as a Christian theologian could not help doing—together with the Aristotelian and Roman legacy, in the elaboration of his political doctrines. That new datum—that is, the new meaning and value acquired by man's personality with his supernatural destination—appears unequivocally in Thomas' statement that grace in a single soul is worth more than the natural good of the whole universe. Thus, the final and decisive stage in the formation of the problem known as "the primacy of the common good of the civil society" must be ascribed directly to Patristic sources and to the Fathers' interpretation of formulas of Roman Law? It was in this state of historical development that the problem reached Saint Thomas.

In his writings the statement, in varied but more or less equivalent formulas, of this doctrine is usually that "the common good prevails over the private good." Whatever may be said concerning the terms or the post-Aristotelian conceptualization in which Saint Thomas expresses the principle, it is certain that he rightly finds an authority for the principle in the passage of the *Nicomachean Ethics* in which

I. What is stated above about the sources for the problem of the primacy of the common good of civil society follows what Fr. I. Th. Eschmann, O.P. writes in his article "A Thomistic Glossary on the Principle of the Preeminence of a Common Good" (*Medieval Studies*, V). Fr. Eschmann presents here a collection of numerous passages concerning the primacy of the common good of civil society in the works of Saint Thomas. In addition to the sources for those texts in Aristotle, in Roman Law and in some Fathers of the Church, especially Saint Augustine, Fr. Eschmann points out that in Saint Thomas the elements of the problem show a development and, above all, a juridical style which they are very far from having in their Aristotelian sources. It would be wrong, Fr. Eschmann goes so far as to say, "to believe that we are faced here with an Aristotelico-Thomistic doctrine. Nothing is further from the truth ... Historically speaking the principle of the superiority of a common good and related doctrines are a legacy to Scholasticism from a Roman and patristic heritage." And, further on: "The authority of Aristotle is only, if at all, in a very limited sense a source for the Scholastic axiom [that "bonum commune praefertur bono privato"]." And also: "The word and notion of bonum commune are Roman" (p. 125).

If such, historically, is the case, as Fr. Eschmann assures us, there is no doubt on the other hand that, philosophically, Saint Thomas is right in finding in a passage of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (I, 2, 1094 b 7) a sufficiently explicit basis to support the doctrine of the primacy of the common good, and that his interpretation of the passage is wholly warranted by the words which

Aristotle says that "even if the end is the same for a single man and for a state, that of the state seems at all events something greater and more complete whether to attain or to preserve; though it is worthwhile to attain the end merely for one man, it is finer and more godlike to attain it for a nation or for city-states."<sup>2</sup> This sentence is for Saint Thomas, as it was for his medieval predecessors, a dictum authenticum.<sup>3</sup> Before examining the conditions for the validity of this dictum it is necessary to take as a starting point what it purely and simply affirms.

A quite typical formulation is the following: "bonum multitudinis est maius quam bonum unius qui est de multitudine."<sup>4</sup> The principle contained in the dictum is, then, that the good belonging to a society as such is worth more than any of the private goods of its members; the former possesses more dignity and eminence than the latter and, consequently, should be granted an effective preference in the order of the social and political life rightly constituted. The general scope and meaning of this preference may well be gathered from its application to certain typical cases. Sometimes, for example, that pre-eminence can be such that a private good may have to be sacrificed for the sake of the common good. There is then a true conflict between what is good for the community and what is good for the individual. Thus, in the case of a just war, the good, both spiritual and temporal, of the community can extend so far as to require the loss of many individual goods, even of life itself.<sup>5</sup> There is also a conflict

2. The Thomistic texts in which the common good is called "divinius" are inspired by this passage: *Eth.*, I, 2, 1094 b 7.
3. A dictum authenticum is in the Middle Ages a proposition whose truth is considered ascertained because it belongs to an author whose works make "authority." If its application to different cases presented difficulties the only thing possible was to interpret it or to fix the conditions of its right application, since its truth had to be preserved at all events. The dictum referred to here appears sometimes in the objections (argumenta in contrarium) to the thesis of Saint Thomas. For the manner in which Saint Thomas uses this dictum consult Fr. I. Th. Eschmann, O.P., "Bonum commune melius est quam bonum unius" - Eine Studie ueber den Wertvorrang des Personalen bei Thomas von Aquin, *Medieval Studies*, VI.
4. "Tantum est bonum unius" - 39, 2 - act. 2. The texts containing this principle are so numerous that it would be impossible -- as well as useless -- to cite them a collection of texts concerning the primacy of the common good, see Fr. I. Th. Eschmann, loc. cit.
5. II-II, 31, 3 and 2: "pro bono communi reipublicae vel spirituali vel temporalis virtuosum est etiam quod aliquis propriam vitam exponat periculo." II-II, 26, 3: "quaelibet pars habet inclinationem principalem ad actionem communem utilitati totius. Apparet hoc in politicis virtutibus, secundum quas cives pro bono communi et dispensantia propriarum rerum et personarum interdum sustinent."

of goods whenever the service of the community demands sacrificing, or at least deferring, individual goods such as health, one's own comfort, the repose of the philosopher or the scientist. A conflict of another sort, though no less actual, is that which exists in the case of the criminal condemned to death; here the common good is in conflict not only with the criminal's life, but also with the private good of his family, which needs that life. If for the common good the malefactor's death is necessary, it is without doubt an evil for him and for his family.<sup>6</sup> Something similar happens whenever any penalty—which is always the deprivation of some good: life, bodily integrity, liberty, material property—is imposed on anyone who lacks fondness for virtue, in order to restrain him from sinning.<sup>7</sup>

Now, if it is simply in order that the common good be preserved that it is sometimes necessary to sacrifice private goods, it is precisely on that account that justice--legal justice, that is, whose object

6. I-II, 19, 10: "iudex habet curam boni communis, quod est iustitia; et ideo vult occisionem latronis, quae habet rationem boni secundum relationem ad statum communem; uxor autem latronis considerare habet bonum privatum familiae; et secundum hoc vult maritum latronem non occidi."
7. In the question devoted to the licitness of vindication, Saint Thomas writes: "vindicatio fit per aliquod poenale malum inflictum peccanti." (II-II, 108, 1). And further on: "vindicatio intantum licita est et virtuosa in quantum tendit ad cohibitionem malorum. Cohibentur autem aliqui a peccando, qui affectum virtutis non habent, per hoc quod timent amittere aliqua quae plus amant quam illa quae peccando adipiscuntur; alias timor non compesceret peccatum. Et ideo per abstractionem omnium quae homo maxime diligit, est vindicta de peccatis sumenda. Haec autem sunt quae homo maxime diligit: vitam, incolumitatem corporis, libertatem sui, et bona exteriora, puta divitias, patriam et gloriam." (ibid., 3). In his Commentary on the Politics (In Pol., I, 4,#5) Saint Thomas explains how, according to Aristotle, it is licit, for the good of the community, that even a learned person be submitted to slavery by the conquerors in a war. In fact, allowing them to make themselves the owners of the conquered, "homines incitantur ad fortius pugnandum: et quod sint aliqui fortes pugnatore expedit conversationi humanae ad prohibendum multorum malitias." Even if it is not just simpliciter that the learned man be made a slave of the ignorant one, "tamen servandum est hoc etiam homini virtuoso secundum mentem, quia cum bonum commune sit melius quam bonum proprium unius, non est infringendum quod convenit bono publico quamvis non conveniat alicui privatae personae."

is the common good—requires that such sacrifice be imposed only in the measure in which it is necessary for securing such an end. To go beyond that measure would be contrary to justice and consequently harmful to the good of the community. This is why it is not because he would attribute an absolute and despotic power to the state over the individuals that Saint Thomas acknowledges that it is lawful for the public authority to inflict the death penalty, but for the very different reason that the common good must be protected when the existence of malefactors within a society endangers it. Saint Thomas uses for this purpose terms which are particularly explicit and energetic: “Omnis pars ordinatur ad totum ut imperfectum ad perfectum. Et ideo omnis pars naturaliter est propter totum. Et propter hoc videmus quod si saluti totius corporis humani expediat praecisio alicuius membri, puta cum est putridum vel corruptivum aliorum membrorum, laudabiliter et salubriter abscinditur. Quaelibet autem persona singularis comparatur ad totam communitatem sicut pars ad totum. Et ideo si aliquis homo sit periculosus communitati et corruptivus ipsius propter aliquod peccatum, laudabiliter et salubriter occiditur, ut bonum commune conservetur.”<sup>9</sup>

A superficial and erroneous interpretation of this text would consist in using it to justify the sacrifice of human life or of bodily integrity without any consideration other than public usefulness. But that is certainly not the concept of the common good which, in the eyes of Saint Thomas, makes capital punishment just. What common good is referred to in this text? Undoubtedly it refers on the one hand to those goods without the protection of which social life cannot be conserved.<sup>10\*</sup> But it is not only that category of good which is to be protected by the malefactor’s punishment, but also the moral health of the community, its life *secundum virtutem*. This interpretation appears as the only one possible if proper attention is given to the fact that in the text quoted Saint Thomas speaks of sin. It is necessary to recognize what this word means to the theologian and Christian moralist. Sin is nothing else but the conscious and voluntary infraction of the moral law; consequently the concept of sin refers essentially and

8. II-II, 56, 6: “justitia legalis est quaedam specialis virtus secundum suam essentiam, secundum quod respicit commune bonum ut proprium objectum.” Cf. also *Ibid.*, a 5, *passim*,

9. II-II, 64, 2.

10. I-II, 96, 2: “lege humana non prohibentur omnia vitia... sed solum graviora, a quibus possibile est majorem partem multitudinis abstinere; et praecipue quae sunt in nocumentum aliorum, sine quorum prohibitione societas humana conservari non posset; sicut... homicidia et furta et hujusmodi.”

Ji, I-II, 71, 6: “peccatum nihil aliud est quam actus humanus malus. Quod autem aliquis actus sit humanus, habet ex hoc quod est

directly to the moral order, and only secondarily and by its effects to social usefulness. According to Saint Thomas, then, it is because of the sin which a man commits that his punishment is justified; it is only because a malefactor has endangered the moral health of a community ("si aliquis homo sit...corruptivus communitatis propter aliquod peccatum") that it is licit to deprive him of life in order that that good be conserved. Moreover, the malefactor, says Saint Thomas, has made himself by his sin unworthy of sharing in the society of the good.<sup>12</sup> It is precisely in the consideration of the concept of sin that this above-quoted text is seen quite otherwise than as *tim* justification of an absolute and despotic power of the state over the individual. Only after a man has sinned is there reason in justice to impose a penalty on him; this penalty may be death if that is the only effective means for protecting the common good against the malefactor.<sup>13</sup> Saint Thomas teaches very clearly that in no case may an innocent be legitimately deprived of his life, and no argument can ever be drawn

11. Continued

voluntarius." In the same article Saint Thomas adopts Saint Augustine's definition of sin: "Peccatum est dictum, vel factum, vel concupitum contra legem aeternam." *Ibid.*, ad 5: "a theologis consideratur peccatum praecipue secundum quod est offensa contra Deum; a philosopho [Dionisio] autem moralis, secundum quod contrariatur rationi."

12. II-II, 64, 2, ad 3: "homo peccando ab ordine rationis recedit; et ideo decidit a dignitate humana... Et ideo quamvis hominem in sua dignitate manentem occidere sit secundum se malum, tamen hominem peccatorem occidere potest esse bonum, sicut occidere bestiam." Cf. II-II, 108, 4: "secundum rationem poenae, ...poena non debetur nisi peccato."
13. Cf. X. Basler, "Thomas von Aquin und die Begründung der Todesstrafe," *Divus Thomas, Freiburg i. d. Schw.*, (1931), pp. 173-202. Basler states that, according to Saint Thomas, it is solely propter peccatum that punishment is imposed on a malefactor. Basler brings out the character above all moral, not utilitarian, of the penalty imposed by the public authority, and he rightly declares as contrary to the doctrine of Saint Thomas the attempts made by some authors in Germany to seek a moral ground for the sterilization of idiots in the Thomistic thesis of the superiority of the common good over the private good. Basler points out that in II-II, 65, 1 ("Et ideo sicut per publicam potestatem aliquis licite privatur totaliter vita propter aliquas majores culpas, ita etiam privatur membro propter aliquas culpas minores"), the basis for imposing as a penalty the deprivation of a corporal member is also a moral guilt: propter aliquas culpas minores. In regard to the measure of the penalty, there is no other way to determine it than the consideration of the needs of the common good: "...das Mass

1 from the common good against the life of an innocent person.<sup>13</sup> Since precisely the life of the just conserves and promotes the common good, it would be contradictory to say that in the name of the common good capital punishment—or any other punishment—can justly be inflicted on one who has not committed sin. In summary, what should be stressed here is that the character of the common good such as Saint Thomas conceives it when he recognizes its primacy over all private interests, is quite clearly implied in the assertion that the malefactor's sin makes him corruptive of the community; it is because Saint Thomas considers the common good above all in terms of a virtuous life that he teaches that a grave sin makes the one who commits it a danger for the good of the community in which he lives. The good which possesses by right and requires in fact primacy over all Others is, in *Saint Thomas' mind*, primarily the patrimony of virtues of a society which are shared, practiced and lived in common and for the mutual benefit of the members of that society. This primacy, being in accordance with the moral order, does not warrant the attribution to public authority of the power to dispose of lives and private properties without reference to the attainment of ethical ends and solely for pragmatic considerations of political success. In the conception of Saint Thomas, political life, and consequently the government of society, are not regulated by laws independent of morality; on the contrary, he never would have admitted—nor perhaps even have conceived as a possible position—that the good of the community can be attained as something other than precisely the highest realization possible in this life of one and the same order which, maintaining itself identical, regulates at the same time both public and private life.<sup>15</sup>

13. Continued

der Strafe wird sich immer richten müssen nach dem Gemeinwohl und dessen Interessen." In fact, from conceiving the penalty as the expiation due for a guilt it cannot be deduced that the penalty for such a species of guilt must be precisely death. The mere idea of the penalty as punishment is not sufficient for determining its measure in the great majority of cases; the measure must be determined by taking into account the requirements of the common good, which are nothing else than the defense of the community's moral health through the malefactor's death if the conditions of a society make it necessary to resort to that.

14. II-II, 64, 6: "occisio peccatoris fit licita per comparisonem ad bonum commune, quod per peccatum corrumpitur. Vita autem justorum est conservativa et promotiva boni communis, quia ipsi sunt principalior pars multitudinis. Et ideo nullo modo licet occidere innocentem."

15. The unity of political and moral order is clearly set forth by Saint Thomas in the Introduction to his Commentary on the Ethics. All the operations in which the human will may be concerned are



This is the place to point out that it belongs to political prudence to determine the right application of the primacy of the common good in particular social conditions. It is the role of prudence to know the singular in order that general principles may be applied to action. Now, Saint Thomas tells us, prudence exists not only in relation to the good of a single man but also with regard to the good of a whole society. This latter is political prudence.<sup>16</sup> By means of its judgments alone can be known, with the highest degree of approximation to concrete circumstances, what is conducive and what is harmful in a given case to the good of the community. That is why it is proper to this prudence to establish the laws, to be "legum positiva."<sup>17</sup>

Law, in fact, is the practical judgment of the legislator when he decides which actions are due or conducive to the common good and which are not. Law is given with a view to the common good,<sup>18</sup> and consequently it is through the laws that the primacy of the common good comes to be concretely established in a particular society.

## 15. Continued

considered by moral philosophy as belonging to one order: "Ordo quadrupliciter ad rationem comparatur... Tertius est ordo quem ratio considerando facit in operationibus voluntatis..... ad philosophiam naturalem pertinet considerare ordinem rerum quem ratio humana considerat sed non facit; ita quod sub naturali philosophia comprehendamus et metaphysicam... Ordo autem actionum voluntariarum pertinet ad considerationem moralis philosophiae... Sic ergo moralis philosophiae... proprium est considerare operationes humanas, secundum quod sunt ordinatae ad invicem et ad finem." (In *Eth.*, I, 1, #1 and 2).

16. II-II, 47, 10: "quidam posuerunt quod prudentia non se extendit ad bonum commune, sed solum ad bonum proprium... Sed haec aestimatio repugnat charitati. ... repugnat etiam rationi rectae, quae hoc iudicat, quod bonum commune sit melius quam bonum unius: quia ergo ad prudentiam pertinet recte consiliari, iudicare, et praecipere de his, per quae pervenitur ad debitum finem, manifestum est quod prudentia non solum se habet ad bonum privatum unius hominis, sed etiam ad bonum commune multitudinis." And in article 11 of the same question, that prudence whose object is the common good of the city is called political; "prudentia politica, quae ordinatur ad bonum commune civitatis, vel regni," whereas prudentia oeconomica is concerned with the family's common good, and prudentia monastica, or prudence simpliciter, is related to the individual good.

17. II-II, 47, 12, Sed contra.

18. I-II, 90, 3: "lex proprie primo et principaliter respicit ordinem ad bonum commune." In The Summa contra Gentes, however, the perfection of the individual person is the end of the law; "finis cuiuslibet legis, et praecipue divinae, est homines facere bonos" j

All that has been stated, however, holds true only when private good and common good are of the same kind or species. If such is not the case, it may happen that the good of a single individual is higher than the good of the community to which he belongs. This happens in a most outstanding way with regard to supernatural grace, which is of greater worth, even in a single soul, than the natural good of the whole universe.<sup>19</sup> Supernatural grace is so superior to any other good that in the extreme, and purely hypothetical, case of an absolute opposition arising between them in such a way that the conservation of the one would require the sacrifice of the other, it would be the natural good of the universe which it would be necessary to sacrifice. Thus, to the principle of the primacy of the temporal common good, as it comes down to him from Aristotle, Saint Thomas adds the important and decisive specification that it is valid only if common good and private good belong to the same order. And this he could not help doing, since Christian faith and ethics, with their doctrine of man's vocation to a supernatural life which shall be realized after this one, profoundly modify any statement of the problem made in merely Aristotelian terms. It was to be expected that Aristotle, who lived before the coming of Christianity and who was, as a philosopher, doubtful about the destination and even about the survival of the soul after death, could not conceive for man a greater good than that which he can attain by living in the polls. But, in the actuality of the Christian Revelation, the temporal "city" no longer possesses incontestably the supremacy over all the goods in which man can participate. With Christianity there is made manifest a

## 18. Continued

(III, 116): "intentio cuiuslibet legislatoris est eos quibus legem dat facere bonos; unde praecepta legis debent esse de actibus virtutum" (III, 115). Dom O. Lottin says ("Bulletin de Théologie ancienne et médiévale," V, #475, 1947), that these are two different viewpoints, and that Saint Thomas never developed a formula reconciling both. Such a formula, it is true, is not found in his works, but the conciliation is implicitly contained in his conception of the common good as a moral life in common, which virtuous men at once both enjoy and contribute to, as shown above in the second chapter.

19. Speaking about the justification of the impious man (which belongs to the order of grace and is greater than the creation of the universe, as it is achieved in the eternal good of divine participation), Saint Thomas says, in answer to an objection based on the principle of the primacy of the common good: "bonum universi est majus, quam bonum particulare unius, si accipiatur utrumque in eodem genere; sed bonum gratiae unius majus est, quam bonum naturae totius universi." (I-II, 113, 9, ad 2).

truth, unknown to Aristotle, which permits man, while living in time, to surpass absolutely the destiny of the temporal society, since through grace the supernatural vocation of man has its beginning in this life. It is then the fact that grace is a good greater than all nature which leads Saint Thomas to recognize that there can be in individuals perfections which are superior by their kind to the good of the whole of which those individuals are parts. But it is not only with regard to grace that Saint Thomas speaks about the superiority of a good *ex genere suo*, although, on the other hand, he does not always appear to grant a final and definitive supremacy over the common good to private goods which are by their species higher than the common good. There arises then the problem of knowing for what reason and under what conditions the common good eventually prevails over those private goods which are higher *ex genere suo*.

Saint Thomas does not formulate the solution nor even the problem as such, in any systematic way, but the elements of the question and, with them, the general orientation toward the solution, may readily be drawn out of his works.

It is necessary, first of all, to know what the expression kind (genus) of a good means. We are told in the *De Veritate* that there are two ultimate genera of good for man, namely: the supreme good proportionate to human nature, in which consists the happiness of which the pre-Christian philosophers spoke; and the good of the supernatural order, which man can obtain only with Divine help.<sup>20</sup> But at other times, in comparing the worth of two goods according to kind Saint Thomas refers not to these two ultimate orders but, rather, simply to goods which pertain to the order of what is accessible to human powers alone; this does not, however, prevent there being between the two goods a difference in value and consequently a subordination of the one to the other. This occurs, for instance, in the case of the contemplative life, which is in itself, without necessarily involving a relation to revealed truths, superior to the active life; the contemplative life thus judged superior to the active may well involve simply contemplation of objects of the purely natural order, since contemplation befits man according to an attribute with which he is naturally

20, *De Ver.*, 14, 2: "Est autem duplex hominis bonum ultimum... quorum unum est proportionatum naturae humanae, quia ad ipsum obtinendum vires naturales sufficiunt; et haec est felicitas de qua philosophi locuti sunt... Aliud est bonum hominis naturae humanae proportionem excedens, quia ad ipsum obtinendum vires naturales non sufficiunt... sed ex sola divina liberalitate homini repromittuntur."

endowed; namely, his intelligence.<sup>21</sup> Thus, within the *enure* genus of natural goods the contemplative life is superior to the active, and it is superior by reason of what, specifies it as such, that is, by its kind. This is the meaning which Saint Thomas gives to genus when he says that, taking genus for species, the goodness of the moral act is specified by its object, or, as some say, by its genus, "ex genere, genere pro specie accepto."<sup>22</sup> On the other hand it happens sometimes that the preeminence of one good over another because of its genus--even when it is not a question of the double final good of man, of which the *De Veritate* speaks--implies a relation of some sort to the supernatural order, as, for instance, a favorable disposition, or condition for attaining the life of grace. It is thus that virginity is superior ex genere suo to matrimony, because virginity provides for the spiritual life and good of the soul, while matrimony inclines by nature to the good of the body and the cares of this world.<sup>23</sup> And a reason for the superiority of the contemplative life over the active life is that it resembles more that state which both by contemplation and action we strive to reach.<sup>24</sup>

By understanding the genus of a good in the sense just explained Saint Thomas solves the difficulties which the principle "bonum

21. II-II, 182, 1: "vita contemplativa simpliciter melior est quam activa." Contemplation befits man according to what is best in him, that is, the intellect. This is the first and most important reason of the eight that Saint Thomas gives in favor of the contemplative life over the active life in the same article.
22. I-II, 18, 2. In his commentary on the article about the preeminence of contemplative life (the article referred to in the preceding note), Cajetan writes: "Melius simpliciter appellatur quod est melius ex suo genere, hoc est, ex sua propria et substantiali natura." In other words, genus is that which constitutes a particular good as such and such, and is thereby the reason for its superiority or inferiority with regard to another good.
23. The proof that virginity is a good greater than matrimony is given not only by the example of Christ and the teachings of the Apostle, but also by reason, says Saint Thomas, "tum quia bonum animae praefertur bono corporis: tum etiam quia bonum contemplativae vitae praefertur bono activae. Virginitas autem ordinatur ad bonum animae secundum vitam contemplativam, quod est 'cogitare ea quae sunt Dei.' Conjugium autem ordinatur ad bonum corporis, quod est corporalis multiplicatio generis humani; et pertinet ad vitam activam... unde indubitanter virginitas praeferenda est continentiae conjugali." (II-II, 152, 4).
24. Sent., III, 35, I, 4, sol. 1: "vita contemplativa simpliciter melior est quam activa, in quantum magis assimilatur illi vitae ad quam per activam et contemplativam nitimur pervenire."

commune melius est quam bonum unius" meets in the case of the spiritual perfection of a singular man: a good which seems less than the common good because it belongs to a sole individual, but which, because it refers in its content and substance to the supernatural destination of man, is greater than the temporal happiness of an entire society. The solution to the difficulty lies in the qualification of the principle by the formula "si utrumque in eodem genere." Now, in order to systematize in this regard the total doctrine of Saint Thomas, a further distinction within the qualification is necessary. For, without such further distinction, it can be inferred from this qualification that a private good may be superior *ex genere suo* to the common good, even to the good of the whole universe--and, a fortiori, to the good of the temporal society. But such superiority is absolute and unreserved only when the individual good belongs to the supernatural order and is compared to a good belonging to the natural order. God's grace is the example par excellence of such an individual good. On the other hand, if the comparison is made within the order of purely human goods, the common good is always higher than the good of any single individual. But there are some private goods which, although not belonging to the supernatural order itself, are yet related to it as means to an end. On this account they are higher than the temporal common good; yet, they may sometimes, for the community's sake, have to be ranked below goods which are actually inferior.

The above mentioned cases of matrimony and of a virginity dedicated to God, of the active and the contemplative life, are good illustrations of this point. Virginity, which is ordained to the spiritual good of the one possessing and preserving it rather than to the perpetuation and conservation of the human species, is superior *ex genere suo* to carnal fecundity,<sup>25</sup> which matrimony procures and which society needs in order to subsist. Concerning this point it seems to be the doctrine of Saint Thomas, according to Cajetan's interpretation, that in time of need for the conservation of the human species, the precept of natural law -- namely, the multiplication of men through matrimony -- would prevail over the vow of virginity,<sup>26</sup> provided this

25. II-II, 152, 4, ad 3: "bonum commune potius est bono privato, si sit ejusdem generis: secl potest esse quod bonum privatum sit melius secundum suum genus: et hoc modo virginitas Deo dicata praefertur fecunditati carnali."

26. In his commentary on the article cited in the preceding note, Cajetan writes: "comparatio rerum in bonita<sup>te</sup> non est considerata secundum casus *et eventus*, sed absolute... optime Auctor dixit quod finis virginitatis secundum genus suum est simpliciter *melior* quam multiplicatio hominum, quae est finis conjugii." And, further on: "in casu quo speciem humanam oporteret conservari,

row were not solemn.<sup>26</sup> And as regards contemplation and action, Saint Thomas writes in his Commentary on the Sentences that the active life can often refer more directly to the common good than does the contemplative, which, however, is desirable by itself and more worthy than the active; but the active is more useful and better *secundum quid*, and as such should be preferred sometimes, *ad tempus*, because of the needs of the present life. From this the conclusion must be drawn that contemplation should be interrupted and deferred in the service of fellow-beings whenever any grave need of life in society so requires. This agrees with the assertion that the contemplative life is not ordained to anything other than itself except in the manner in which the good of a man is ordained to the good of the multitude.<sup>28</sup> Thus, even in cases in which one private good is superior *secundum genus suum* to another which, although less worthy, is more useful, because more directly related to the common good in concrete circumstances, the more useful good should then be preferred, and must determine the main course to be followed; the reason for this preference is precisely the superiority of the good of the multitude over that of an individual person.<sup>29</sup> But this preference which is

26. Continued

*praeceptum juris naturae praevaleret voto virginitatis... licet simpliciter melior sit virginitas matrimonio, tempore tamen necessitatis melius est nubere... Et universaliter dicitur quod dispensatio voti continentiae potest fieri non solum propter melius secundum suum genus, sed propter melius ex circumstantia; puta hic in tali eventu."*

27. II-II, 88, 11; "in voto solemnizato per professionem religionis non potest per Ecclesiam dispensari: et rationem assignat Decretalis, quia castitas 'est annexa regulae monachali'."
28. Sent., III, 35, I, 4, q1a. 3: "Duplex est ratio boni. Aliquid enim dicitur bonum quod propter seipsum est desiderandum. Et sic vita contemplativa simpliciter melior est quam activa... Unde et contemplativa est finis activae et fini ultimo vicinior. Aliquid vero dicitur bonum quasi propter aliud eligendum: et in hac via vita activa praeceminet contemplativae. Vita enim contemplativa non ordinatur ad aliquid aliud in ipso in quo est; quia vita aeterna non est nisi quaedam consummatio contemplativae vitae quae per contemplativam in praesenti quodammodo praelibatur. Unde non restat quod ordinetur ad aliud, nisi secundum quod bonum unius hominis ordinatur ad bonum multorum, ad quod propinquius se habet vita activa quam contemplativa. Unde activa quantum ad hanc partem quae saluti proximorum studet, est utilior quam contemplativa. Sed contemplativa est dignior, quia dignitas significat bonitatem alicujus propter seipsum, utilitas vero propter aliud."
29. In connection with the common good of the Church, Saint Thomas, on answering the question whether it is licit to refuse the

given ad tempus and ex circumstantia to a lower good for the sake of the common good, is licit only when the good of a superior kind is not so connected with the acquisition of grace that its disregard would involve the loss of supernatural life; or, in other words, when the higher good thus forgone is not a necessary means to supernatural life, but only a natural condition favoring it. Again using examples previously cited, it is clear that in the cases considered by Cajelan the dispensation from the vow of continence for the sake of the common good, and provided the vow is not solemn, does not imply loss of the life of grace nor, consequently, does it contradict the principle "bonum gratiae unius maius est quam bonum naturae totius universi," since the acquisition and conservation of grace are compatible with the state of matrimony. Neither is this principle violated in the case in which the leisure of contemplation has to defer to the needs of the multitude: because the active life is not incompatible with the state of grace—far from it; furthermore, the active life does not entirely prevent the exercise of contemplation.<sup>30</sup>

In summary to this discussion, various distinctions must be made. The first distinction is between the inherent dignity of a good, considered objectively and absolutely, and the preference which must in fact be granted to that good in the concrete situations of a properly constituted social life. The greater objective dignity of a good does not always coincide with the requirement to prefer it, in an effective way, in the orientation of conduct; the preference is granted in special cases (ad tempus, ex circumstantia) to goods of minor ethical dignity which happen to be closer (propinquius) to what the good of the multitude at any given moment requires. Such preference then agrees with, and is demanded by, the requirements of right conduct; in final analysis it is in such situations more virtuous to labor for the good of the multitude in the exercise of the active life than to repose in contemplation. A ruler, for example, could not licitly devote to

29- Continued

episcopate, says expressly that, if ordered, injunctum, it must not be rejected with the excuse that one may not abandon contemplation: "ad inordinationem voluntatis pertinet quod aliquis omnino, contra superioris injunctionem, praedictum gubernationis officium [episcopatum] finaliter recuset" (II-II, 185, 2). Ibid., ad 1: "quavis, simpliciter et absolute loquendo, vita contemplativa potior sit quam vita activa, et amor Dei, quam dilectio proximi; tamen ex alia parte bonum multitudinis praeferendum est bono unius." Therefore, the episcopate to which one has been elected must not be absolutely refused.

30. II-II, 182, 1, ad 3: "ad opera vitae activae interdum aliquis a contemplatione avocatur propter aliquam necessitatem praesentis vitae; non tamen hoc modo quod cogatur aliquis totaliter contemplationem deserere."

contemplation the time which he should give to the service of the multitude. Neither is it licit to reject the episcopate when imposed, injunctum; this would be to prefer one's private good to the necessities of the Church. If the good of the community licitly requires it, vows of religion and of continence may be dispensed. The examples are many. The determination of the circumstances when, how far, and in what manner one must so act as to choose what is more useful rather than what is more worthy depends on prudence, in all its range, from the prudence which bears upon the individual good up to the prudence which cares for the good government of a multitude.

The second distinction which must be made here arises from the use of the idea of "genus" in these problems. This is the distinction existing between the content, substance or nature of a good—its "genus"—and its greater or less proximity to the good of a multitude. The relation between this distinction and the first can be formulated by saying that the degree of dignity of a good depends on its genus; the effective preference granted to it depends on its greater or less propinquity in a concrete case to the common good. The two terms of this second distinction constitute two criteria for evaluating the ethical excellence of a good. The criterion of the "genus" answers the question which of two goods is better absolutely (simpliciter melius), and decides the question from the point of view of the objective value of that good. With reference to this criterion, a good will be so much higher the nearer it is by its nature, ex genere suo, to the supreme end of man, which is the happy life according to the order of reason. The second criterion, that is, the degree of propinquity hie et nunc of a particular good to the common good, resolves the problem of ascertaining to which of two goods, of which one is superior simpliciter but inferior secundum quid, must be granted the predominance in the practical and effective orientation of social and private life. As has already been stated, one must in such a case choose the good which, according to prudential knowledge, is closer, propinquius, to the common good, for the reason that the common good enjoys a definitive primacy, always provided that such a choice does not involve the loss of that personal good which, by itself, absolutely transcends the natural order: it is not licit to seek, nor is it in fact possible to attain, the temporal happiness of the multitude through the sacrifice of the state of grace in an individual soul.

There is a question here of two different criteria, which by themselves correspond to two different problems. This is seen clearly if one considers that to determine conduct in a concrete case with relation to the common good, it is not sufficient to know simply that, of the two goods which are possible objects of that conduct, one is simpliciter better than the other. Rather it is necessary to know further which good to choose as the end of conduct; for conduct to be virtuous it is necessary that one choose that which, in the circumstances, best serves the good of society.

The ultimate reason one must at times prefer a good which is more useful to a good which is more *worthy* is the plurality of aspects and, in short, the imperfection of the human condition in it. This is the thought which runs more or less expressly through the texts of the Sentences and the Summa Theologica quoted in the previous pages. Saint Thomas is very well aware that the necessities of this life absolutely prevent that all the occupation of man should *be a solitary exercise in the heights of spiritual life*; rather, the *major part of man's existence in time is taken up in diverse forms of the active life and of relations with his fellow-beings*. The social nature of man, justice and charity demand solicitude in many forms for the spiritual as well as the temporal needs of others, in order that everyone may finally reach to some measure, however small it may be, of contemplation and spiritual perfection in the present life.

The result of these analyses confirms the statement, made above, that the maxim *\*si utrumque in eodem genere\** is unreservedly valid only when the terms of the comparison are the two supreme kinds of good--supernatural grace and the natural good of the whole universe--or, a *fortiori*, supernatural grace and any of the *goods* included in *the good of the universe*. Otherwise, it is not always true that one natural good which is *higher ex genere* than another is in a given case closer than that *other to the requirements of the common good*. This shows that the primacy of the common good cannot be sufficiently explained through the *argument that the goods which are simpliciter highest by reason of their genera are realized in it*, for this is not always what actually occurs. Although *these goods cannot be disregarded*, a total explanation would require some other arguments in addition. This qualification will be expounded *shortly*.

But first, this point must be distinguished from another with which it may otherwise be confused. The question is asked whether, in order to preserve the principle of the primacy of a common good, it must be held that an individual good, greater by its kind than the temporal good of the community, is greater precisely because it depends upon a common good higher than that of civil society. For instance, to the objection that the sacrament of matrimony is worth more than the Eucharist, because it is ordered to the common good, Saint Thomas answers that the Eucharist is the common spiritual good; in fact it is the separated common good of the whole Church, God made man; whereas matrimony is only ordered to the common good according to the body (corporaliter).<sup>31</sup> Saint Thomas answers the

31. III, 65, 3, ad 1: "matrimonium ordinatur ad bonum commune corporaliter. Sed bonum commune spirituale totius Ecclesiae continetur substantialiter in ipso Eucharistiae sacramento."

objection which states that the practical reason is higher than the speculative reason because the former serves the good of society directly, by saying that, on the contrary, the speculative reason adheres to a good more common than the one which practical reason serves, and that this indicates that speculative reason is the higher.<sup>32</sup> These answers are true, but it must be pointed out that the formal reason why the Eucharist is higher than the sacrament of matrimony is not that it makes present a good which is more common but that it is a good which, being also common, is of a more excellent nature than the corporeal one. A similar thing can be said about the speculative reason. In reality, the fact that one good is more common than another is not the reason why it is more excellent; the relation is rather the inverse: it is because a good is better according to its species and content, that its attraction and influence as a final cause is extended to more beings, and so it is, on that account, more common. Now, even if all this is true, a different answer must be given to the specific question why the good of the temporal community predominates even over private goods which belong by their genera to a higher level of goodness--or, more exactly, why it is that of two singular goods, it is not the one greater in its genus but rather the one closer *ex circumstantia* to the common happiness which should be chosen and followed as a course of conduct. In sum, the different degrees of superiority which are found among private goods, although entirely dependent on their genera, can be associated with diverse levels of goods which are more and more common, but the primacy of the common good of civil society is not sufficiently explained by the mere criterion of the genus of a good. It is time now to ask what is the foundation for this primacy.

[The primacy of the common good is closely associated in Saint Thomas' mind with his conception of society as a totality composed of human individuals. The parts exist for the whole and for its good, and when the existence of any part endangers the whole it must be sacrificed for the sake of the whole. Thus, there is a teleological relation as well as a complete metaphysical dependence of part with respect to whole. There are several reasons for this. First, because the part is what it is on account of its existence within the whole. For this reason the hand severed from the body is only by equivocation a hand in the manner in which, say, a hand of stone is a hand; it is only when joined to the rest of the organism that a hand is alive and real.<sup>33</sup>

32. Sent., 4, 49, I, 1 sol., 3, ad 1: "bonum cui intellectus speculativus conjungitur per cognitionem, est communius bono cui conjungitur intellectus practicus, in quantum intellectus speculativus magis separatur a particulari quam intellectus practicus."

33. In Pol., I, 1, #21: "destructo toto homine, non remanet pes neque manus nisi aequivoce, eo modo quo manus lapidea posset dici manus."

But the point at stake is not only nor is it principally that the parts depend in a utilitarian way upon the whole for their existence; on the contrary, they expose themselves naturally, even without any deliberation, for the conservation of the whole, even as the hand does, for example, to protect the body.<sup>34</sup> This demonstrates that the whole has value in its own right and not simply because the parts exist in dependence upon it. Thus, the parts belong to the whole and exist principally in order to integrate it. Whence it follows that in cases of accidental incompatibility between the existence of the whole and that of the part--the case of a member, for instance, which it not isolated could cause death to the entire organism--the part must be sacrificed. The whole is that which nature principally wants to exist, and the parts exercise the functionings necessary for this existence. The autonomous existence of a part as such has no sense: it is by itself something incomplete which seeks completion through integration with a higher entirety, which is the end for which the part exists.

The preeminence of the good of society is founded on this principle. This preeminence is accordingly valid in the measure in which human society is a whole with regard to the individuals existing in it. Now Saint Thomas says repeatedly that the singular man is related to society as a part is related to its whole.<sup>35</sup> Besides, he says, it is manifest that civil society is not only a whole but is also the most vast and comprehensive whole of its kind.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, it is true for

34. I, 60, 5: "Videmus quod naturaliter pars se exponit ad conservationem totius corporis; sicut manus exponitur ictui, absque deliberatione, ad conservationem totius corporis."

In his commentary on this article, Cajetan writes: "ratio quare pars exponitur pro toto, non est identitas quae est inventa inter partem et totum. Et hujus manifestum signum habetur ex hoc, quod pars exponitur ad perdendam identitatem cum toto, ut salvetur esse totius. Non ergo ratio inclinationis talis est identitas, aut ut salvet seipsam in toto; sed ut salvet esse totius secundum se, etiam cum non esse ipsius partis."

35. II-II, 64, 2: "quaelibet persona singularis comparatur ad totam communitatem, sicut pars ad totum." The same statement is found in many other passages in his works. For instance: "[persona] comparatur ad communitatem, sicut pars ad totum" (II-II, 61, 1); "ipse totus homo ordinatur ut ad finem ad totam communitatem cuius est pars" (II-II, 65, 1).

36. In Pol., I, 1, #2.: "Manifestum est quod civitas includit omnes alias communitates. Nam et domus et vici sub civitate comprehenduntur; et sic ipsa communitas politica est communitas principalissima."



society also that the whole has a metaphysical preeminence over its component elements, and therefore that the law which subjects the existence of the parts to the good of the whole--"esse partis est propter esse totius"<sup>37</sup>--is not affected by the fact that human society is a whole of the moral order. Now, in accordance with the character as an end which is immanent to the whole--which character is correlative to the fact that the parts exist for it--the common good becomes the end and therefore the measure of the particular goods.<sup>38</sup> And just as a member cannot live separated from its organism, neither can the private good exist without the common good,<sup>39</sup> and, accordingly, it is not possible that a man be virtuous if his conduct does not conform to what is required in justice for the good of the community.<sup>40</sup>

Now, it is evident that because the good of society is a moral one, the criteria according to which the subordination of the parts to the whole is regulated in a human society, are necessarily different from the corresponding regulative criteria of an organism. Thus, for instance, an individual cannot for merely biological considerations be put to death in order to conserve the social whole in the manner in which a hand may be cut off for the body's sake. In order for a man to be subjected to punishment there must first, as a necessary condition, be moral malice in him; and to condemn an innocent to death because of physiological degeneration, abnormality or imperfection would be illicit and harmful to the common good. Now, owing to the fact that the moral good is the end to which all other goods are subordinated, it is never licit to contravene a moral principle in order to obtain and insure the existence of any of those other goods. The moral good is of such a nature that it can be attained only through morally licit means; if the means used are not licit, the good of the city, which is before all else a moral good, will suffer detriment in

37. J5.C.G., III, 17.

38. Ibid.: "bonum particulare ordinatur in bonum commune sicut in finem." This text precedes immediately the one referred to in the preceding note.

39. II-II, 47, 10, ad 2: "bonum proprium non potest esse sine bono communi vel familiae, vel civitatis; ...cum homo sit pars domus, vel civitatis, oportet quod homo consideret, quid sit sibi bonum ex hoc quod est prudens circa bonum multitudinis." In Eth., VI, 7, #1206: "proprium bonum uniuscujusque singularis personae non potest esse sine oeconomia, idest sine recta dispensatione domus, neque sine urbanitate, idest sine recta dispensatione civitatis; sicut nec bonum partis potest esse sine bono totius."

40. I-II, 92, 1, ad 3: "bonitas cujuslibet partis consideratur in proportionem ad suum totum; ...cum quilibet homo sit pars civitatis, impossibile est, quod aliquis homo sit bonus, nisi sit bene proportionatus bono communi."

what is most essential to it. Moreover, such moral goods as justice, peace, social unity, all of which are related to the existence and conservation of social living, would never be reached if morally wrong means were used, since the observance of the moral law is the condition most necessary and indispensable for the very existence of community life.

Since it is the only self-sufficient temporal community, the civil society is an end for all the other communities which compose it.<sup>41</sup> It is principally under the formality of final cause that Saint Thomas assigns to the common good--and to the good in general--its essential property of diffusing itself. If it is true, he says, that the notion of "diffusing itself" appears to signify the operation of the efficient cause; it can nevertheless be understood in a more ample sense as the proper operation of the final cause. Still more; it can with greater fitness be said that the good as such implies essentially the diffusion which belongs to the final cause, and not to the efficient cause. The efficient cause is in fact only the initiation or beginning of what is caused, whereas the final cause is the measure and perfection of all the being that is under its influence, and it is precisely in this latter that the intelligible character of the good consists.<sup>42</sup> The more power a good has to diffuse itself from some beings to others, that is to say the more capacity it has as a final cause, the more common will it be for the beings among which it is diffused. The common good is a final cause par excellence, and insofar as a cause is higher it extends its causation to more beings.<sup>43</sup> There is then a direct

41. In Pol., I, 1, #18: "cum civitas sit communitas habens per se sufficientiam vitae, ipsa est finis praemissarum communitatum."
42. De Ver., 21, 1 ad 4: "Diffundere, licet secundum proprietatem vocabuli videatur importare operationem causae efficientis, tamen largo modo potest importare habitudinem cujuscumque causae sicut influere et facere, et alia hujusmodi. Cum autem dicitur quod bonum est diffusivum secundum sui rationem, non est intelligenda effusio secundum quod importat operationem causae efficientis, sed secundum quod importat habitudinem causae finalis; et talis diffusio non est mediante aliqua virtute superaddita. Dicit autem bonum diffusionem causae finalis, et *non* causae agentis: tum quia efficiens, in quantum hujusmodi, non est rei mensura et perfectio, sed magis initium; tum quia effectus participat causam efficientem secundum assimilationem formae tantum; sed finem consequitur res secundum totum esse suum, et in hoc consistebat ratio boni."
43. In Eth., I, 2, #30: "Manifestum est quod unaquaeque causa tanto prior est et potior quanto ad plura se extendit. Unde et bonum, quod habet rationem causae finalis, tanto potius est quanto ad plura se extendit." In Met., VI, 3, #1205: "quanto aliqua causa est altior, tanto ejus causalitas ad plura se extendit. Habet enim causa altior proprium causatum altius, quod est communius et in pluribus inventum."

proportion between the diffusion of the common good as a final cause and the plurality of the beings which its causation reaches. It is precisely in this that Saint Thomas sees the reason why Aristotle should say that it is more divine to love the common good than the individual good, since the common good, by extending itself to many beings, imitates much more perfectly the divine causation, whose influence reaches all things.<sup>44</sup> Even as above, in the treatment of the specificity of the common good, the notion of order is closely connected with the notion of social whole, and with the notion of end thereby implied, but here the connection is on the ethical plane and under a fresh aspect. This is the aspect of order as a harmony which must be reached among elements like those of a community, which are not necessarily in accord but in fact underlie a well-ascertained conflict of tendencies. An idea often expounded by Saint Thomas is that the universal order is not only composed of parts unequal among themselves, but also that the presence of evil contributes to it in its own way, and that one of the manifestations of evil is the conflict which results from the fact that each creature acts only in accordance with its respective nature.<sup>45</sup> This general conception of the situation in the universe can be perfectly applied to society, although in an analogous way; Saint Thomas suggests this application when he says that a prudent ruler must tolerate defects and inequalities in the parts for the good of the whole.<sup>46</sup> Since in any community there is a plurality of parts, there is also a conflict which results necessarily from the diversity of tendencies among the integrating elements, each following its natural inclination. Nevertheless, one essential difference must be noted: the order of the universe exists already, previous to any consideration by the reason; the order in society is, on the contrary, an order which

44. In Eth., I, 2, #30: "Pertinet ad amorem, qui debet esse inter homines, quod homo conservet bonum etiam uni soli homini. Sed multo melius et divinius est, quod hoc exhibeatur toti genti et civitatibus... Dicitur hoc esse divinius, eo quod magis pertinet ad Dei similitudinem, qui est ultima causa omnium bonorum." II-II, 31, 3, ad 2: "bonum multorum commune divinius est, quam bonum unius."
45. S.c.G., III, 71: "Multa bona sunt in rebus, quae, nisi mala essent, locum non haberent... Si ergo malum totaliter ab universitate rerum...excluderetur, oporteret etiam bonorum multitudinem diminui." Ibid.: "esset contra rationem divini regiminis si non sineret res creatas agere secundum modum propriae naturae. Ex hoc autem quod creaturae sic agunt, sequitur corruptio et malum in rebus; quum, propter contrarietatem et repugnantiam quae est in rebus, una res sit alterius corruptiva."
46. Ibid. : "Ad prudentem gubernatorem pertinet negligere aliquem defectum bonitatis in parte, ut fiat augmentum bonitatis in toto."

must be created according to right reason.<sup>47</sup> But the evil which is present in both orders is due to the same cause, namely, the conflict which may arise within a plurality of creatures when they act according to their respective natures, thus entailing almost inevitably a contrariety of goods. Consequently, it is in the Iasi analysis because of the primacy of the whole over the parts that it is necessary for the component elements to restrain, limit, and even sacrifice the natural development or exercise of their tendencies and potentialities, so that the order indispensable for its existence may prevail in the whole. In this way it is clear how this aspect of the notion of order is inseparable from the notion of a social whole and from the character of the social whole as end for the parts of society.

Not all of the doctrine of the common good in Saint Thomas can however be built around the notions of whole, parts and their mutual relations, insofar as these notions are applicable to the social being. These notions are at times presented with a certain crudeness, as in the frequent comparisons in which man is related to the community, as a member is related to the animal organism of which it is a part. But there are sufficient elements in the ontology (cf. chapter 1, above) and in the ethics of Saint Thomas to correct whatever may be unilateral in these comparisons, and also to reestablish the equilibrium in his social philosophy. These elements, most of which Saint Thomas receives from Christian Ethics, converge upon the characteristics of autonomy and value which the individual person possesses in himself, by virtue of his being destined to enjoy eternal life in God. Whence he has said that "man is not ordained to the political community according to all that he is and has,"<sup>48</sup> but rather all that man is and can be must be ordered to God. Once this has been remarked, it is no longer possible merely to say, as a principle which would embrace all truth in this regard, that a singular man is related to society as part to whole. And, apart from this, one may ask whether in elaborating, hypothetically, a moral philosophy which had not been informed by Christian Ethics, Saint Thomas would also have assigned to the individual person the realization of ends which are within the temporal and natural order but higher than what is social as such. If he did not discuss this problem, or thought it superfluous to do so in view of the actual supernatural destination of man, it can at least be said that such a problem does exist in his philosophy; in fact, it arises once it is granted, in accordance with his teachings, that in each individual man

47. As stated by Saint Thomas in the introductory lesson to his Commentary on the Ethics. See note 15, page 74 in this chapter.

48. *ST* 1-2, 4, ad 3: "homo non ordinatur ad communitatem politicam secundum se totum, et secundum omnia sua; ...totum quod homo est, et quod potest et habet, ordinandum est ad Deum."

there exist natural conditions which enable him to achieve all the perfections of which the social whole as such--a whole with a mere unity of order--is incapable. Only the creature which in its substantial unity possesses reason is able to attain the highest good, *capax summi boni*, not only in the supernatural order with the vision of God, but in the natural order with the acquisition of natural happiness--wisdom and virtue--the highest good within the reach of human power. In each of the two cases, the highest good can be achieved and reside only in the individual person, not in the collective entity, as in its proper and immediate subject.<sup>49</sup> Society can be said to reach natural happiness only in the sense that, within society itself, in the organization and inspiration of civil life, due acknowledgment is given to the supreme human values and man is assured the possibility of reaching a life *secundum virtutem*. The fact remains, however, that, in accordance with their different ontological constitutions, *society and the individual person* attain the highest good in characteristically distinct ways; but, on the other hand, it is erroneous to use that difference to set in opposition the common good and the good of the individual person. We agree entirely with the assertion that "there is nothing more illusory than to pose the problem of the person and the common good in terms of opposition."<sup>50</sup> As has been shown above, in the discussion of the content of the common good, the good life of the multitude and that of each person coincide and are mutually implied in that which is most excellent in both. And even in the extreme case in which the individual has to die for the city's sake he is performing a virtuous action, thus heightening his moral perfection and his value as a person.<sup>51</sup> Insofar as the highest human goods are achieved in the city, and blossom there into a civilization which is determined by them in all its manifestations, the common good is so much more human; and so much less in the breach which may separate the requirements of common happiness from those of the individual good.

As for all those matters other than virtue in which the singular individual is related to the community, the case of the sacrifice of life in a just war shows at the same time both the coincidence of common

49. Defining the modes according to which the different beings have a resemblance to God, Saint Thomas says that only intellectual creatures as such are images of God in a proper sense; "Ea quae non habent intellectum, non sunt ad imaginem Dei." (I, 93, 2, *Sed contra*). *Ibid.*, ad 3: "universum est perfectius in bonitate quam intellectualis creatura, extensive et diffusively. Sed intensive et collective similitudo divinae perfectionis magis invenitur in intellectuali creatura, quae est capax summi boni."

50. Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*.

51. *Ibid.*

good and personal perfection on the level of moral values, and the possible opposition between individual life and community interest on the level of the good of existence, itself not properly a moral value. Not far removed from this ambivalent relationship is Saint Thomas' statement that spiritual goods can be possessed simultaneously by many, but corporeal goods cannot.<sup>52</sup> In general it can be said that opposition between individual interest and social requirements is possible whenever the goods in question are not such as virtue and wisdom but rather those whose possession and enjoyment cannot be diffused among many subjects, because the goods themselves are either exclusively proper to each subject, or cannot be shared indefinitely without decrease. On the other hand, it is evident that the total good of a society is as a whole so much better, the fewer restrictions common happiness *secundum virtutem* requires regarding non-moral goods.

A general doctrine about the relationship between society and individual would include in a coherent synthesis the truths that every individual man is merely a part of the social body and yet that this part is a suppositum of rational nature, which, unlike the community, is alone capable of attaining the highest good. The synthesis of all those elements was not so well elaborated by Saint Thomas as to exclude possible divergent interpretations of his thought.<sup>53</sup> A complete formulation of the relationship between the community and the individual must be made, first, in ontological terms which define what, according

52. Sent., II, 30, a. 1, ad 4: "Bona temporalia...possunt se invicem in diversis impedire, quia prosperitas unius inducit adversitatem alterius... Sed...spiritualia bona [simul] a pluribus integre possideri possunt." The bona temporalia spoken of here seem to be mainly those related in one way or another to corporeal things, since they are opposed by Saint Thomas in this text to bona spiritualia. - *Contra impugnantes Dei cultum et religionem*, 4: "Quod dat aliquis, iam non habet": patet esse falsum in spiritualibus, quae communicantur non per translationem alicujus dominii, sicut accidit in rebus corporalibus, sed magis per modum emanationis cujusdam effectus a sua causa: sicut qui communicat alii scientiam, non propter hoc scientiam amittit."

53. Cf. the authoritative opinion of Dorn O. Lottin, (*Bulletin de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale*, II, #418, 1933-36): "La pensée de saint Thomas sur le rapport individu-société est malaisément définissable... c'est une question de savoir si s. Thomas s'est posé explicitement ce problème des rapports entre le bien commun et le bien privé." (See the remarks made above, chapter 2). It can be added here that this latter relation is a most important aspect of the larger problem of the relationship between society and individual.

to the nature of things, is permanent and invariable in the mutual position of the social body and its parts. But a purely metaphysical solution is insufficient for a problem which essentially involves ethical questions, since these belong to the dynamic aspect of the community-individual relationships. In fact, the relationships between community and individual are worked out in terms of human conduct, and, consequently, it is only according to ethical criteria that principles for the solution of the tension between man and society can be found. The relation between the two terms is manifested as tension and can be solved only in motu.<sup>54</sup>

Now, aside from man's ontological position with respect to society and whatever the metaphysical preeminence he may be granted over it once their interrelationships have been carefully defined, a paramount ethical principle undoubtedly stands out: namely, that the moral disposition of the individual person toward the common temporal good must always be, not the love of possession but that other love of which Saint Thomas also speaks in the *De Caritate*; not the inclination to take advantage of society's good, but the inclination to serve it and to promote its conservation and diffusion. A man who acts this way heightens his spiritual perfection much more than he would by pursuing his own good, for it is more godlike to seek the happiness of a whole city than to seek one's own happiness.

A summary and, at the same time, a conclusion of this exposition on the Thomistic doctrine of the political common good can be set forth in the following propositions:

1. When there are two goods of the same kind, one of which is common to many, the other private, the common good always prevails.

2. An individual good which belongs to an order higher than the whole natural order, is always and under all circumstances superior to any common good of the natural order.

3. A private good which by its nature belongs to the temporal and natural order and is superior simpliciter to another private good, must at times be renounced in favor of that other, for the sake of the common good.

4. The primacy of the common good—understood in all its all-comprehensive range—is due formally not to its content or genus simpliciter, but to the fact that it is the good of the whole, to which the parts are metaphysically subordinated.

5. At their highest level--the happy life *secundum virtutem*--the common good and the good of the individual person coincide, at least in a relative and imperfect way; on lower levels, an incompatibility may truly exist between the two, but the primacy belongs always, and must be accorded always, to the common good.

54. Jacques Maritain, *op. cit.*

## CONCLUSION

Out of the numerous teachings of Saint Thomas concerning the common good of civil society there arises a coherent conception quite definite in its principles and general fundamental outlines according to which the common good in its broadest sense is an orderly structure of different kinds and levels of goods under the supreme rule and measure of one end, the happy life of man in the exercise of his rational powers. The dominating position accorded to this end, which is always present to the mind of the good legislator, and which the laws are to promote, gives to the totality of social life, as Saint Thomas conceives it, an accentuated moral orientation, since this end is the supreme criterion as to the extent and manner in which it may be licit to seek and enjoy other goods, or as to what should be or should not be done, for the sake of common happiness. And common happiness cannot be attained automatically through the striving of every one to reach his own private good; the common happiness in its widest content is a good which, as an autonomous quality, is formally diverse from the singular goods of the parts taken collectively, and it does not result from the separate pursuit of these particular goods without a view to the common end. The belief here rejected is common to the doctrines vaguely and unprecisely called "individualistic." Rather than constituting a rigorous doctrine, they are a certain ideal of political and social organization which, if it does not absolutely deny what is specific in the social good, does at least tend to overlook it. Such tendencies have appeared historically sometimes in association with hedonistic ideas about happiness, and sometimes together with a conception of society as organized merely for the acquisition of wealth. But such a society would not truly be one, in the Aristotelian-Thomistic sense of the word; it might well be self-sufficient in an economic sense, but not in the sense that it procures for its members the greatest human good which can be attained in the course of time, happiness in accordance with virtue. This is why, in civil societies organized for economic benefit--if indeed there have ever been any in the strict sense of these words--such expressions as common good or the like are to be understood as meaning prosperity and material well-being--something very different from what Saint Thomas thought and taught.

In public life the end of civil society is more often completely overlooked than misconceived. The State is so entirely concerned with what are really only ways and means that one may wonder whether an end is thought to exist at all. The end is completely lost sight of, and so the means become emancipated, as it were, and are granted an



entirely autonomous consideration. One example of this non-subordination of means is the regime, often proposed, in theory as well as practice, for the economic life, which would enjoy an autonomous regulation, subject not to human aims superior to the economic system, but to laws which are presumed immanent to the system itself and sufficient for its regulation. In a similar way, the conception of the whole social activity as intended to build a super-individual entity to which the supreme value under all respects is attributed, and of every human being as a mere instrument of that activity, without any recognition of his final autonomous value as a subject of moral goods, is completely foreign to Saint Thomas' thought on the common good. It is, on the contrary, to the superior human goods that every social activity or common task should be subordinated. Now, since, according to Saint Thomas, the highest goods a human being can attain by living in society are virtue and contemplation, which have, as their proper subject, the individual person, there is no doubt that, his entire political thought is orientated concretely and in the last analysis to the human person and his destiny. This, as we hope we have shown, does not oppose the person to the common good or to the primacy of the common good: there is, rather, an interchange between the noblest aspects of the common good and the excellences of personal perfection; every man must love the common good not in order to possess it and make use of it, but in order that it may be preserved and promoted. Although the individual person is called to a destiny superior to the destiny of temporal society--which will as such finally perish—the good of temporal society is not simply a means or instrument whereby man may more easily attain his supra-social vocation; the good of society is of such a nature that it deserves to be loved for itself. In other words, man should love the social good not as a "bonum utile," but rather as a "bonum honestum"—because it is a "bonum honestum." In truth, the good which a community attains by being self-sufficing cannot be a merely useful one. "Self-sufficiency is," according to Aristotle, "that which by and of itself makes life desirable and lacking in nothing? The happy life, which is not desired for the sake of anything else, is what constitutes the self-sufficiency of the civitas perfecta. Therefore, a good like the bene vivere of the multitude, which as supreme end (in the temporal order) has its complete justification in what it is itself, cannot be a bonum utile. The common good of civil society cannot be other than a bonum honestum. Not every bonum honestum is necessarily self-sufficing; but a good which, because it is self-sufficing, is not desirable for the sake of anything else, can only be a bonum honestum.

It must be borne in mind that Saint Thomas' doctrine of the common good is placed at a high level of philosophical abstraction, and

that therefore many contingent circumstances are to be taken into account in order to apply the principles of this doctrine to political life. It is legitimate and normal that, under different circumstances, these principles should find expression in diverse views and programs destined for political and social action. But these views and plans of action, even if more concrete than the philosophical principles which they intend to apply, are still at an intermediate stage between these principles and its immediate application to a particular society by the prudence of the ruler.

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