

IN DEFENSE OF JACQUES MARITAIN

I. Th. Eschmann

. . . *utpote personæ sunt.*

Pius XII, *Encyclica Mystici Corporis.*

I

ON CENSURES, INSINUATIONS, AND CITATIONS

The problem of Person and Society in the philosophy of St. Thomas, for many years past a favorite topic among European Thomists, has recently become an acute question on the continent of North America, owing, in no small measure, to the publication by the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy at Laval University, Québec, Professor Charles De Koninck, of a book entitled *De la primauté du bien commun contre les personnalistes. Le principe de l'ordre nouveau.*¹

Whether the author of this book was aware of it or not—it makes no difference to the fact—this title pointedly assails the eminent French philosopher, Jacques Maritain. One need

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¹ (Québec: Editions de l'Université Laval; Montréal: Editions Fides, 1943.)

[Fr. Eschmann refers to De Koninck's book in the original French, and not in the translation as it appears in this issue of the review. In order to preserve the integrity of the article, the original French is retained when Eschmann quotes from the book, but the pages referred to are the pages of the translation. All references without quotation refer as well to the pages of the translation.—ED.]

only call to mind Maritain's *La primauté du spirituel* and the well-known fact that throughout all his writings this doctrine of the primacy of the spiritual is crystallized and, as it were, concretized in the primacy of the personal.

This also explains the fact that the reading public generally connected Professor De Koninck's thesis with Maritain and his doctrine of the person.² Such a view of the impact of Professor De Koninck's book was at once inevitable and, given the circumstances, perfectly correct. For, books comprise more than their objective, abstract content, more than the mere words in which they are written. They embrace all the circumstances of time, place, and occasion with which their publication is surrounded. Books are qualified *actus humani*, public documents burdened with all the references and relations accompanying their appearance in print. What point could there be, then, in any possible denial by Professor De Koninck of the charge that he meant to challenge Maritain's teaching or of any possible assertion on his part that he knew nothing about such teaching? His book is not only a polemic against "the" personalists—an all too convenient anonymity which permits every attack, and leaves every avenue of retreat wide open—but it is also, and primarily, a polemic against personalism, i.e. that doctrine on the person which right here and now, in our own day and age, in this very country and among Thomists, is represented most prominently by Jacques Maritain.³

² See, for instance, Yves Simon's recension in the *Review of Politics* for October, 1944 (VI, 530-533).

³ The fact that Prof. De K. has known and intends to criticize Jacques Maritain is susceptible of a strict *proof* by the usual means of tracing an author's sources through the words and notions he employs. See for instance p. 66: "A l'individualisme [les personalistes] opposent et recommandent la générosité de la personne"; p. 66: "la personne-tout"; and other examples elsewhere. If such words and notions were not actually and entirely Maritainesque provenience, they are, today and among Thomists, of a clearly visible Maritainesque stamp, and that is enough for the proof.

This is the personalism which is at issue in a passage on pages 13-14 of Professor De Koninck's book, a passage which recalls by its style and bearing the "heroic" ages of baroque-Scholastic controversy:

Le péché des anges fut une erreur pratiquement personaliste: ils ont préféré la dignité de leur propre personne à la dignité qui leur serait venue dans la subordination à un bien supérieur mais commun dans sa supériorité même. L'hérésie pélagienne, dit Jean de Saint Thomas, peut être considérée comme une étincelle de ce péché des anges. Elle n'en est qu'une étincelle, car, alors que l'erreur des anges fut purement pratique, l'erreur des pélagiens était en même temps spéculative. Nous croyons que le personalisme moderne n'est qu'une réflexion de cette étincelle, spéculativement encore plus faible. Il érige en doctrine spéculative une erreur qui fut à l'origine seulement pratique. . . .

Nous n'entendons pas soutenir ici que l'erreur de tous ceux qui se disent aujourd'hui personalistes est plus que spéculative. Qu'il n'y ait là-dessus aucune ambiguïté. Sans doute notre insistance pourra-t-elle blesser ceux des personalistes qui ont identifié cette doctrine à leur personne. C'est la leur responsabilité très personnelle. Mais il y a aussi la nôtre—nous jugeons cette doctrine pernicieuse à l'extrême.

There is a proper and profound Thomistic doctrine of the relative superiority, within definite orders, of *their* respective common goods over the particular goods contained in those orders. It is this doctrine which Professor De Koninck has distorted into the contradictory and unintelligible position of the absolute superiority of "the" common good over all and everything. This will be shown later in detail. Father Jules A. Baisnée in a recent article in *The Modern Schoolman*⁴ has chosen to defend and emphatically to recommend this distortion, and to defend and recommend it against Jacques Maritain. Father Baisnée reveals himself to be much impressed by the weight of the authorities which, according to him,

⁴ Jan., 1945 (XXII, 59-75).

Professor De Koninck's anti-personalist position commands. He, therefore, seems to yearn for an official condemnation of Personalism (Jacques Maritain's doctrine on the person not only not excluded but unmistakably included). He imputes to "the" Personalists (Jacques Maritain's doctrine not only not excluded but unmistakably included) that "freedom, autonomy, dignity are words which come frequently under [their] pen . . . and they insist that subordination of man to any general good but the good of God, . . . to any authority but the divine authority would mean a denial of man's very personality."⁵ This statement is not supported by any reference to any text of any "Personalist" and, therefore, embraces every text of every man whoever, by whomsoever, has been brought in whatever connection with "Personalism." If it be applied to Jacques Maritain, it will be—*sit venia verbo*—utter nonsense, and there is no point here in carrying coals to Newcastle. One is almost tempted to repeat St. Thomas' challenge: ". . . non loquatur in angulis" (*De unitate intellectus*)! The above statement may be taken for one of the "reasons" why Father Baisnée fears that "Personalism" (Jacques Maritain's doctrine not only not excluded but unmistakably included) may be "a revival of the polycephalus monster of Pelagianism."⁶ A strange fate, surely, for Jacques Maritain to be now a Pelagian after having been accused, not many years ago, of opening the door to Lutheranism!

Pacem, amici! Would it not be better for us to stop short

⁵ Op. cit., p. 73. Every Thomist is surely authorized to go, in this matter, just as far as St. Thomas himself has gone: "Quando homo per seipsum agit propter finem, cognoscit finem. Sed quando ab alio agitur vel ducitur, puta cum agit ad imperium alterius, vel cum movetur altero impellente, non est necessarium quod cognoscat finem. Et ita est in creaturis irrationabilibus."—*ST*, I-II, 1. 2 ad 1.

⁶ Op. cit., p. 74. On Father Baisnée's prospective blacklist there is also Very Reverend M. S. Gillet, O.P., Master General of the Dominican Order (cf. art. cit., p. 65). Perhaps the reader will allow a vigorous protest from a Dominican.

on the road of censuring and adding-up authorities, before it is too late and Catholic scholarship is once more made a laughing stock?

To the extent, however, to which authoritative pronouncements might enter into consideration, it would be well to bear in mind that the language at least of recent papal utterances favours the personalist ideas as expounded by Maritain. At any rate, these utterances should deter Catholic writers from attempting to make a crusade of their opposition to these ideas. I am far from affirming or even insinuating that Maritain's specific set of conceptions which is labelled, *personalism*, has received any official sanction whatsoever. But I do affirm that, in the light of the documents quoted below, it is rather surprising to see Catholic writers indiscriminately indulging in subtle insinuations, strong language, and even specific and grave censures, without having previously made the necessary distinctions with the utmost care and an absolutely unequivocal clarity, and without having given specific references to explicit statements of individual writers.

Pius XI says in the Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*:

Societas . . . ex divini Creatoris consilio naturale praesidium est, quo quilibet civis possit ac debeat ad propositam sibi metam assequendam uti; quandoquidem Civitas homini, non homo Civitati existit. Id tamen non ita intellegendum est, quemadmodum ob suam *individualismi* doctrinam *Liberales*, quos vocant, asseverant; qui quidem communitatem immoderatis singulorum commodis inservire jubent: sed ita potius ut omnes, ex eo quod cum societate composito ordine copulantur, terrenam possint, per mutuam navitatis conspirationem, veri nominis prosperitatem attingere . . . Iamvero, quemadmodum homo officia illa repudiare non potest, quibus Dei iussu civili societate obstringitur, . . . ita pari modo societas iis iuribus civem spoliare non potest a Creatore Deo eidem impertitis . . . neque eorumdem usum impossibilem reddere . . . Dum *communistarum* effata personam ita extenuant, ut civium cum societate ne-

cessitudines praepostere subvertant, humana mens, contra, ac divina revelatio eam . . . sublime extollunt.⁷

Pius XII says in the Encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*—and this is, indeed, a very remarkable passage which I do not hesitate to call the *Magna Charta* of the Christian doctrine of person:

Dum enim in naturali corpore unitatis principium ita partes iungit, ut propria, quam vocant, subsistentia singulae prorsus careant; contra in mystico Corpore mutuae coniunctionis vis, etiamsi intima, membra ita inter se copulat, ut singula omnino fruuntur persona propria. Accedit quod, si totius et singulorum mutua inter se rationem consideramus, in physico quolibet viventi corpore totius concretionis emolumento membra singula universa postremum unice destinantur, dum socialis quaelibet hominum compages, si modo ultimum utilitatis finem inspiciamus, ad omnium et uniuscuiusque membri profectum, utpote personae sunt, postremum ordinantur.⁸

It is, no doubt an exaggeration to say that Pope Pius XII “makes a plea for personalism.” Popes do not make pleas, they pronounce. It is rather Jacques Maritain who makes the plea for the full and intelligible acceptance of the Holy Father’s defense of the human person. His doctrine is indeed a serious and, on the whole, successful attempt to give expression, within the framework of a true philosophy and a correctly interpreted Thomism, to the ideas which are put forward in the above quoted documents and in numerous other papal pronouncements.⁹

⁷ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1927, p. 79.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1943, pp. 22ff.

⁹ May I be permitted to insert here, before beginning my critique, a note of a personal character. I have the privilege to regard both Jacques Maritain and Charles De Koninck as dear friends. The job, therefore, of examining and determining the truth of their respective positions is very painful to me. Yves Simon, who, if I am not mistaken, is in the same situation, has chosen a way out of the difficulty which I am unable to

II

PROFESSOR DE KONINCK ON PART AND WHOLE

On page 32 Professor De Koninck states that even the personalists will not have great difficulty in admitting, with him, that individual persons are subordinated to that ultimate separate and extrinsic good of the universe which is God, nor that this subordination is formally motivated by the fact that God is the common good. But this will not suffice. It must be stressed, indeed—such is the author’s thesis—that persons are subordinated to the intrinsic common good of the universe, i.e. its order. And they are thus subordinated because they are material parts materially composing and materially constituting that order and common good. For, is not the ultimate reason why God has created the intellectual beings or persons none other than exactly the order and common good of the universe?

Si l’on concède que les personnes singulières sont ordonnées au bien ultime séparé en tant que celui-ci a raison de bien commun, on ne concédera pas si volontiers que, dans l’univers même, les personnes ne sont voulues que pour le bien de l’ordre de l’univers, bien commun intrinsèque

follow. Yves Simon seems to be ready to admit the substance of De K.’s book and proposes to envisage its implicit criticism of, and opposition to, Jacques Maritain as a regrettable mistake, to be sure, but, after all a merely personal affair which the reading public might more or less easily forget.—I feel obliged totally and categorically to reject De K.’s thesis. I would never have come out with this judgment, had not Father Baisnée written his article; and I protest that I do not in the least enjoy the task which the circumstances have made an urgent necessity. The question with which I am faced is not to choose between friendship and friendship, but between manifest truth and manifest error, the criterion on being the *littera Sancti Thomae*.—Let it moreover be noted that this “Defense of Jacques Maritain” comprises exclusively the metaphysical doctrine of the person. None of the numerous factual or historical appreciations and judgments of Jacques Maritain is the object of the present study.

meilleur que les personnes singulières qui le constituent matériellement.

Let us here for the moment consider the second part of this thesis, viz. the statement regarding the intrinsic common good of the universe and its relation to the intellectual beings or persons. Even Professor De K. somehow seems to feel that his is a "revolting" statement (cf. p. 35). He, therefore, makes every effort to be very careful in establishing a Thomistic proof of it. In fact, he asks, is not the same statement repeatedly implied in St. Thomas' discussions of the question: What is the end God has proposed to Himself in the production of all things? Four texts are cited by the author.¹⁰ Let us here reproduce, in Latin, the first two, taken from *Contra Gentiles*, III, 64; they will sufficiently show in what specific set of Thomistic texts Professor De K. has found a proof, satisfying to his mind, of his assertion. The italicized sentences are not held worthy of quotation, by the author:

Deus res omnes in esse produxit, non ex necessitate naturae, sed per intellectum et voluntatem. Intellectus autem et voluntatis ipsius non potest esse alius finis ultimus nisi bonitas eius, ut scilicet eam rebus communicaret . . . Res autem participant divinam bonitatem per modum similitudinis. In quantum ipsae sunt bonae. Id autem quod est maxime bonum in rebus causatis, est bonum ordinis universi, quod est maxime perfectum, ut Philosophus dicit:¹¹ cui etiam consonat Scriptura divina *Gen. I*, cum dicitur (vers. 31), "Vidit Deus cuncta quae fecerat, et erant valde bona," cum de singulis operibus dixisset simpliciter quod "erant bona." Bonum igitur ordinis rerum causatarum a Deo est id quod est praecipue volitum et causatum a Deo. Nihil autem aliud est gubernare aliqua quam eis ordinem imponere. *Ipsae igitur Deus omnia suo intellectu et voluntate gubernat.*

Amplius. Unumquodque intendens aliquem finem, magis curat de eo quod est propinquius fini ultimo: quia hoc etiam

¹⁰ Pp. 34-35.

¹¹ *Metaph. xii*, 1075a 11.

est finis aliorum. Ultimus autem finis divinae voluntatis est bonitas ipsius, cui propinquissimum in rebus creatis est bonum ordinis totius universi: cum ad ipsum ordinetur sicut ad finem omne particulare bonum huius vel illius rei, sicut minus perfectum ordinatur ad id quod est perfectius; unde et quaelibet pars invenitur esse propter suum totum. Id igitur quod maxime curat Deus in rebus creatis, est ordo universi. *Est igitur gubernator ipsius.*

To be sure (Professor De K. continues arguing) in chapter 112 of the same work and book Aquinas seems to have made a statement contrary to the author's own. The intellectual creatures, St. Thomas says, are governed for themselves. How, then, can they still be a material part of the cosmos? How can it still be true that God's intention, in the creation of such beings, is "nothing but the order of the universe"? Let nobody be alarmed, Professor De K. assures the troubled reader! For, in this same chapter, if you read it to the end, the doctrine of the intellectual creatures as material parts of the universe shines forth even with greater clarity and splendor: "Le fait que les parties principales constituant matériellement l'univers sont ordonnées et gouvernées pour elles-mêmes ne peut que faire éclater davantage la suréminente perfection de l'ensemble qui est la raison intrinsèque première de la perfection des parties." For, attention must be paid to St. Thomas' words, *ibid.*, "Per hoc autem quod dicimus substantias intellectuales propter se a divina providentia ordinari, non intelligimus quod ipsae ulterius non referantur in Deum et ad perfectionem universi."

Such, then, are Professor De K.'s doctrine and arguments at this juncture. If they were true, then the personalists, and with them all the Christian Fathers and theologians and philosophers, should close their shops, go home and do penance, *in cinere et cilicio*, for having grossly erred and misled the Christian world throughout almost two thousand years. That is to say, they should do so provided the Divine Cosmos leaves to them such a "home" in which to do penance! For, be-

ing material parts of the cosmos and subordinated, as material parts, to the stars and the spheres, they will have just as much responsibility, just as much choice, as the pistons in a steam engine. Let it be said, at once, that we simply refuse even to discuss this, Professor De K.'s own, private doctrine and thesis which is most patently erroneous. Let us be charitable and forget that such a statement ("Les parties principales constituent matériellement l'univers . . .") has ever been made in a work which pretends to exhibit the pure wisdom of St. Thomas Aquinas.¹²

For the sake of the proper understanding of the present issue only one point remains to be set in relief: What is the true meaning of St. Thomas' texts quoted above? What is his authentic doctrine on the intellectual substances as parts, i.e. principal or *formal* parts, of the universe?

Will it be granted that it is inadmissible to read St. Thomas with scissors and paste, by cutting the texts out of their literary and historical context and just quoting what, in a particular instance, seems to be suitable? Will it be granted that, if St. Thomas has explicitly stated and solved a given problem, a Thomist worthy of that name is obliged to take account of this fact and can not afford to refer to some other texts which

¹² On p. 38 Professor De K. writes: "Les créatures raisonnables peuvent atteindre elles-mêmes de manière explicite le bien auquel toutes choses sont ordonnées; elles diffèrent par là des créatures irraisonnables, qui sont de purs instruments, qui sont utiles seulement et qui n'atteignant pas elles-mêmes de manière explicite le bien universel auquel elles sont ordonnées." Very well! But how does this statement stand to the other one: ". . . les parties principales constituent matériellement l'univers . . ."? —Would it not be desirable that an author who uses traditional philosophical notions knew exactly what they mean? In a recent work, *Saint Joseph, Père vierge de Jésus* (Montréal, 1944), Msgr. G. Breynat, a venerable missionary Bishop, in all seriousness and against the protest of a large group of theologians, defends the following definition of St. Joseph's paternity: It is "une causalité effective, négative, par abstention" of the child Jesus (pp. 84, 117ff.). Professor De K.'s notion of a principal part materially constituting the universe is of the same caliber.

either have nothing to do with the problem or, at best, refer to it in a distant and mediate fashion?

Here is the problem as stated by St. Thomas:

Videtur quod imago Dei inveniatur in irrationabilibus creaturis . . . [for, and this is the third *argumentum in contrarium*] quanto aliquid est magis perfectum in bonitate, tanto magis est Deo simile. Sed totum universum est perfectius in bonitate quam homo, quia etsi bona sint singula, tamen simul omnia dicuntur "valde bona," *Gen. 1* (St. Augustine). Ergo totum universum est ad imaginem Dei et non solum homo.¹³

The reader will not fail to remember the texts from *Contra Gentiles*, III, 64, quoted above. At this place in the *Summa* St. Thomas makes use of the same doctrinal and traditional material but applies it to a different problem, viz. that of comparing the universe and intellectual substance, the *Imago Dei*, with regard to their respective likeness with God. This problem has often occupied the medieval mind which was so sensitive to everything concerning the great and old controversy between Greek and Christian thought. See also St. Bonaventure, 3 *Sent.*, d. 2, 1. 1 (ed. Quaracchi, p. 37a and b); St. Thomas, 3 *Sent.*, d. 2, 1. 1, q. 3; 3 *Sent.*, d. 16, 1. 2; 3 *Sent.*, d. 32, 5, q. 4 ad 2; *De Caritate*, 7 ad 5; *ST*, III, 4, 1 ad 4.

The following is St. Thomas' answer:

Universum est perfectius in bonitate quam intellectualis creatura: extensive et diffusive. Sed intensive et collective similitudo divinae perfectionis magis invenitur in intellectuali creatura, quae est capax summi boni.—Vel dicendum, quod pars non dividitur contra totum, sed contra aliam partem. Unde cum dicitur quod sola natura intellectualis est ad imaginem Dei, non excluditur quin universum secundum aliquam sui partem sit ad imaginem Dei; sed excluduntur aliae partes universi.

St. Thomas' solution of the problem is so clear, so complete, and so perfectly balanced that it needs no explanation. Let

¹³ *ST*, I, 93, 2.

us however try to paraphrase: Which is more like God, i.e. more to the image of God, the whole universe, or one single intellectual creature? The whole universe is more like God "extensively and diffusively." That is, if you consider God as the cause and fountain-head of the whole universe and of every creature pertaining to it, you will judge that there is quantitatively more likeness in the whole than in the parts. But before you consider God as cause, you must first look at Him as He is in Himself the supreme good by His essence. In this way a single intellectual creature is more perfectly likened to Him, because only the intellectual substance (every single intellectual substance) is capable of being, by knowledge and love, united with God as God is in Himself. "Intensively," thus, and "collectively," i.e. considering the fact that the essentially most perfect likeness is gathered together in one single point, a single intellectual substance by far surpasses everything that might, in a certain sense, be said to be like God. The intellectual substance is, indeed, the only proper image of God.—Thus far, St. Thomas has proposed the same solution of the problem which already can be read in St. Bonaventure (*loco cit.*). The Angelic Doctor then continues, not by proposing another solution, but by stressing a certain aspect of the same solution which in the foregoing has been left aside. Are not the intellectual substances parts, i.e. of course, principal, formal, constitutive, primary, parts of the universe? Are they not, as it were, the sons of that great family or economy of the universe of which God is the *paterfamilias*?¹⁴ Are they not, just as sons are, very deeply interested in the vicissitudes of that which is their possession and heredity—and the possession and heredity of each one of them, according to Holy Scripture (Matth. 24:47): "Super omnia bona sua constituet eum"?¹⁵ The statement, therefore, that the intellectual sub-

¹⁴ *In Meta.*, XII, 12; *De Verit.*, 5, 5; *De Spirit. Creaturis*, art. 8.

¹⁵ "Inter omnes partes universi excellunt Sancti Dei, ad quorum quemlibet [!] pertinet quod dicitur Matth. 24: 'Super omnia bona sua constituet eum.' Et ideo quidquid accidit vel circa ipsos vel alias res, totum in bonum

stance alone is *ad imaginem Dei*, might be expanded by saying that the universe in one of its parts, and precisely in its first and foremost constitutive parts, is *ad imaginem Dei*. In this way a solution of the problem is obtained which is most properly "Thomistic" in that it takes account of every possible aspect of the problem.

Professor De. K. has not remembered that there are two entirely different problems in St. Thomas' cosmology.

First. Against Greco-Arabian necessitarianism St. Thomas states that there exists an intelligent and loving Creator, i.e. a personal God and a divine and all-embracing Providence. Were this not so, he argues, the universe would fall apart into so many unconnected and unconnectable bits, and it would be impossible to maintain the fact of the order of the universe on whose existence and sublime beauty both the Greeks, and especially the Christian Fathers, have so energetically insisted. In this group of texts—it is a very large one—St. Thomas frequently, and with obvious enjoyment, avails himself of two quotations from Aristotle, viz., (a) *bonum commune est divinius . . .*, and, (b) *quod est optimum in rebus existens est bonum universi*.¹⁶ By these citations no proper doctrine on the common good is taught; and still less is anything said about the relations between the common good and the proper good of the intellectual substances. Their impact is clearly to show, against a Greek heresy, that, even in the Greek thinkers themselves, and above all in Aristotle, who was so fondly cherished in the Arabian world, there are principles upon which one may proceed to prove the fact of divine Providence.

This is the group of texts Professor De K. argues from. He should not have done so, because they do not properly and immediately belong to the question he undertook to treat.

Second. Another and entirely different problem in St. Thomas' cosmology is the question: What is the position and

eorum cedit."—*Expos. in Ep. ad Rom.*, c. 8, lect. 6.

¹⁶ *Eth.* i. 1; 1094b 9; *Metaph.* xii, 1075a 11.

rank, within the universe, of the intellectual or rational substances, among them, human souls? The treatment of this problem originates in, and is directed against, another set of Greek and Arabian errors, viz., the Greek (Stoic) divinisation of the cosmos, the Platonic world soul, the Plotinian theory of emanations, the Arabian unity of the intellect, and so on. In St. Thomas' discussion of these problems, a doctrine is set forth which may well be called Thomistic personalism (and which, by the way, is one of the major sources of Jacques Maritain's personalism).

This is the group of texts—an immensely rich one, as every Thomist knows—which Professor De K. should have taken into account. But he did not.

When St. Thomas says:

[substantiae intellectuales] ulterius . . . referuntur ad Deum et ad ordinem universi [*Contra Gent.*, III, 112],

he very exactly circumscribes the situation of those who are like the sons of God in the universal economy. They are, first, through a personal relation, ordained to God as He is in Himself. Only then, and second—since God is also the Creator of a universe—they are parts, i.e. formal, constitutive parts of that whole to which these substances, each one in its proper way, will bring the divinely appointed order.

The most essential and the dearest aim of Thomism is to make sure that the personal contact of all intellectual creatures with God, as well as their personal subordination to God, be in no way interrupted. Everything else—the whole universe and every social institution—must ultimately minister to this purpose; everything must foster and strengthen and protect the conversation of the soul, every soul, with God. It is characteristically Greek and pagan to interpose the universe between God and intellectual creatures. Is it necessary to remind Thomists that they should not, in any way whatever, revive the old pagan blasphemy of a divine cosmos?

III

PROFESSOR DE KONINCK'S NOTION OF GOD

Let us further examine the remarkable passage of Professor De Koninck quoted at the beginning of section II. For, if I am not mistaken, it presents still another very interesting feature.

The author supposes that his personalist opponents would not be unwilling to agree with him in saying that individual persons are ordered to the last "separate" good *en tant que celui-ci a raison de bien commun*. It is thus his own conviction that we are ordered to God *because* God is a common good. The precise and formal *ratio* why we find in God our last end and beatitude, why we must love God and obey His laws, is that God is a common good.

Taken, for the moment, in its purely verbal expression, this seems to be a very surprising affirmation, indeed.

For, up to now, according to common theological and philosophical language, we have held that our ordination to God is based upon the fact that God is the *most perfect* and *supreme* good, the *bonum per se*, or, as we also say, the *universal* good.

Surely, this language is not unfamiliar to Professor De K. It is, therefore, at once clear that in his mind the two notions, universal good and common good, are completely identified. They mean one and the same thing considered under one and the same aspect.

That this is indeed the case, we may find confirmed in the following passage. A few lines before the above-quoted passage Professor De K. speaks of "le bien commun qu'est la béatitude" and, describing its contents, he says:

L'universalité même du bien est principe de béatitude pour la personne singulière. C'est, en effet, en raison de son universalité qu'il peut béatifier la personne singulière. Et cette communication au bien commun fonde la communication des personnes singulières entre elles *extra verbum*: le bien commun en tant que bien commun est la racine de cette communication qui ne serait pas possible si le bien

divin n'était déjà aimé dans sa communicabilité aux autres: "praeexigitur amor boni communis toti societati, quod est bonum divinum, prout est beatitudinis obiectum."¹⁷

If I am not mistaken, this whole passage means that, according to Professor De K., the analysis of the essential structure of the order of man to God reveals four consecutive moments: (1) God is the universal or common good, *and this means*, a good communicable to others; (2) we immediately reach the divine good in the light (*sub ratione*) of this very communicability; (3) in this consists our beatitude which is, indeed, *formally* (cf. "rapport très formel," p. 26) a common good; (4) this our communication with that common good is the basis for the communications among ourselves.

To prove his assertion by a text of St. Thomas, Professor De K. extracts a few words from the *Q. D. De Caritate* (art. 2). The content of these words is so important that we ask the patient reader to excuse us for transcribing the relevant text in its entirety. We shall italicize the words to which Professor De K. draws attention.

Si [sic] autem homo, in quantum admittitur ad participandum bonum alicuius civitatis et efficitur civis illius civitatis: Competunt ei virtutes quaedam ad operandum ea quae sunt civium, et amandum bonum illius 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 Jerusalem, secundum illud *Eph. 2, 19*: "Estis cives sanctorum et domestici Dei." Unde homini sic ad caelestia adscripto competunt quaedam virtutes gratuita, quae sunt virtutes infusae, ad quarum debitam operationem *praeexigitur amor boni communis toti societati, quod est bonum divinum, prout est beatitudinis obiectum.*

To begin our criticism of this whole position, let us first say a few words with regard to the author's exegetical methods.

¹⁷ P. 31. The Latin text is extracted from *Q. D. De Caritate*, art. 2.

The word "praeexigitur," extracted from St. Thomas' text, is at once commandeered by Professor De K. to supplement the arsenal of his own ammunition. Whereas, according to St. Thomas' text, there is something prerequisite for the exercise of the infused virtues, according to Professor De K. this something is made a prerequisite for a moral philosophy and a social metaphysics. A facile device to support one's own assertions by authority! The solemn gravity of an apparently authentic quotation, given in Latin, turns out to be an empty show. Was this quotation intended to impress the reader or is it possible that the author himself was impressed by his pseudo-discovery?¹⁸ Strictly speaking, the disclosure of such an inept method of dealing with a text would authorize us in taking no further account whatsoever either of this excerpt or of the teaching based upon it.

Is it true that St. Thomas taught, as Professor De K. would have us to believe, that the object of our beatitude, the very first and essential element of our ordination to God, is the divine good, insofar as the good is a common good, constituting, first and foremost, a society ("amor boni communis toti societati, quod est bonum divinum, prout est beatitudinis obiectum")? By no means! This interpretation is false. St. Thomas' argument in the *De Caritate, loco cit.*, proceeds *a simili*, i.e. by comparing two highest goods, each taken in its own order, not, properly speaking, two common goods. The highest good of the earthly city is called a common good. No description or definition of it is given in this text. St. Thomas is here not lecturing on social metaphysics or political philosophy, but on charity; and the example of the city is only used as an *argumentum ad hominem*. To the earthly city, referred to in the example, the Heavenly City corresponds as the thing exemplified; and, through the words "quasi [!] civis" (to which

¹⁸ On p. 26 De K. quotes the same text of the *Q. D. De Caritate* in its entirety and in a correct French translation. Do the readers, meeting on p. 27 a piece of the same text, now given in Latin, remember its original and authentic setting and meaning?

corresponds in the parallel text, *Summa*, I, 60. 5 ad 5, “quoddam [!] bonum commune”), St. Thomas takes care, at the outset, to keep us from over-extending the simile and, thus, getting on the wrong track. To confuse examples with formal teaching is quite inadmissible. Let us paraphrase the passage in question, in order to set its true significance in relief: Prerequisite to the exercise of infused virtues in the Heavenly City is the love of the highest good which is the divine good, the object of beatitude. In like manner, the love of the earthly city’s highest good, i.e. its common good, is prerequisite to the exercise of natural virtues. In a certain sense, the divine good might also be called a common good (*quoddam bonum commune*). But the object of charity is, of course, not a common good; rather it is the divine good (“Bonum commune non est obiectum caritatis, sed summum bonum,” *Q. D. De Caritate*, 5 ad 4). Considered as a common good, the highest good of the Heavenly City would be, indeed, the object of supernatural general justice, not of charity. Charity and justice must not be confused.—It is very significant that St. Thomas chooses to say *bonum commune toti societati (caelesti)* instead of *bonum commune totius societatis*, as he usually does when speaking in terms of political philosophy.

May the patient reader excuse the length to which this exegetical problem has obliged us to go. Let us now turn back to the substance of Prof. De K.’s teaching.

Is it not the most fundamental and absolutely unshakeable cornerstone of Christian ethics that the term of our ordination to God is God as He is in Himself, i.e. the Good by His essence and the essence of goodness (*bonum universale in essendo*)? Is it not the very first care of a Christian ethicist to make sure that the conclusion of his very first argument directly reaches this *bonum universale in essendo*? This, at least, is the content and intention of that great argument which opens the *pars moralis* of the *Summa* (I-II, 1. 1-2. 8) and whose conclusion is: “Ex quo patet quod nihil potest quietare voluntatem hominis nisi bonum universale, quod non invenitur in

aliquo creato, sed solum in Deo, quia omnis creatura habet bonitatem participatam” (ibid., 2. 8.). St. Thomas has here completely forgotten to speak about Professor De K.’s “common good” by which man’s ordination to God is *très formellement* determined. I am afraid that on pages 31-32 of this book a suspicion which the expert reader has felt all the way along, from the first page on, becomes definite, namely that the author has pushed the “primacy of the common good” very far, so far indeed that, if the consequences of his position are made explicit, we must in our Christian ethics re-do our work from the beginning. In setting up a “principle of the New Order” Professor De K. has done a work which is—shall we say—surprisingly radical and daring: he has at the same time taken in his stride a new foundation of Christian ethics and moral theology.

Professor De K. has confused *bonum universale in essendo* and *bonum universale in causando*. “The creature,” St. Thomas says (*Summa*, I, 103. 4), “is assimilated to God in two respects: first, with regard to this that God is good; and thus the creature becomes like Him by being good; and, secondly, with regard to this that God is the cause of goodness in others; and thus the creature becomes like God by causing others to be good.”—The common good, and every common good, is formally *bonum universale in causando*: it is not, formally, *bonum universale in essendo*.

The very first and essential element of our ordination to God is not the fact that God is the first *bonum universale in causando*, the fountain of all communications, but that He is the *bonum universale in essendo*.

From this it follows that our own (personal) good is a participated good. Through this participation a “certain common good” (“quoddam bonum commune”) emerges, i.e. a good which, in a certain way, is common to God and the creature. Considering the supernaturally elevated creature, this common good is constitutive for a community or “society” between God and the supernaturally elevated creature, a society

which is called, by St. Thomas, *societas suae (i.e. Dei) fructio- nis*.¹⁹ It is the divine friendship to whose *essential* constitution no multitude of creatures is required.²⁰ The fact that there is such a multitude of creatures does not yet formally come into consideration.

This fact becomes only now, i.e. in the third place, relevant. For *if*²¹ there are several creatures sharing in the same participated good they will have something in common. Here, then, there will be a common good properly speaking, i.e. a good pertaining to a multitude of beings in such manner that each and everyone communicates in it. God is, as St. Thomas says, the last common good among men, i.e. that good in which they finally must or should unite: "Homines non uniuntur inter se nisi in eo quod est commune inter eos. Et hoc est maxime Deus."²²

Professor De K. has, throughout his treatise, neglected these fundamental considerations. On the very first page of the treatise proper (p. 15) he has omitted to pay due attention to St. Thomas' words: "Dicitur autem hoc [scilicet bonum commune] esse 'divinius' eo quod magis pertinet ad similitudinem Dei, qui est ultima causa omnium bonorum."²³ Obviously the words "qui est ultima causa omnium bonorum" are, in St. Thomas' mind, restrictive; and if the famous principle, "Sanctus Thomas formalissime loquitur" ever finds its application, it surely does so here. Let us paraphrase: Aristotle gives to a common good the attribute "divine," because this good, being the cause of the particular goods contained in its

¹⁹ [Deus] non tantum diligit creaturam sicut artifex opus, sed etiam quadam amabili societate, sicut amicus amicum, in quantum trahit eos in societatem suae fructio- nis, ut in hoc eorum sit gloria et beatitudo, quo Deus beatus est.—2 *Sent.*, d. 26, 1, 1 ad 2.

²⁰ "Si esset una sola anima fruens Deo, beata esset, non habens proximum quem diligeret."—*ST*, I-II, 4. 8 ad 3.

²¹ "Supposito proximo."—*loco cit.*

²² *In II Thess.*, c. 3. lect. 2.

²³ *In Eth.*, 1, 2. ed Pirota n. 30. The next quotation in the article is from the same place.

order and sphere, is *in this respect* more like God insofar as God is the cause of any and every good. There is, however, another respect to which the above text gives no consideration. This is the likeness to God *in linea essendi*. And in this respect the speculative intellect being, in the beatific vision, informed by God and most intimately united with Him, is by far superior to anything which is like God *in ordine causandi*. St. Thomas explicitly states:

Similitudo intellectus practici ad Deum est secundum proportionalitatem, quia scilicet se habet ad suum cognitum [the highest object of the practical intellect is a common good—II-II, 47, 12], sicut Deus ad suum. Sed assimilatio intellectus speculativi ad Deum est secundum unionem vel informationem: QUAE EST MULTO MAIOR ASSIMILATIO.

These last words are the most concise and the most explicit statement of what we now call Personalism. For, is not this act and good of the speculative intellect a personal good?

Professor De K. has constantly bypassed this most essential thesis of Thomistic ethics and, indeed, of Thomism as a whole.

IV

PROFESSOR DE KONINCK ON BEATITUDE

Ever since the days when Plato stated the problem of the philosophers and kings, every occidental theory of society has ultimately proved its truth and its value by the regard it has paid to, and the place it has left open for, that which is not society nor action, viz. solitude and contemplation. The modern problem which we are now accustomed to state in terms of Person and Society is nothing but the continuation of the age-old discussion of Philosophers and Kings.

Professor De Koninck will already have surprised the attentive reader by the statement quoted above, that our beatitude

is a common good ("le bien commun qu'est la béatitude," p. 31). Let us have a closer look into this statement.²⁴

On page 56 the author composes (one might be tempted to say concocts) the following "objection" against his thesis of the absolute primacy of "the" common good:

L'ordre pratique est tout entier ordonné à l'ordre spéculatif. Or, le bonheur parfait consiste dans la vie spéculative. Mais, la vie spéculative est solitaire. Donc, le bonheur pratique de la société est ordonné au bonheur spéculatif de la personne singulière.

Professor De K.'s answer to this "objection" is as follows:

Nous répondons que le bonheur pratique de la communauté n'est pas, par soi, ordonné au bonheur spéculatif de la personne singulière, mais au bonheur spéculatif de la personne en tant que membre de la communauté. [Here is quoted Petrus de Alvernia, *In VII Pol.*, lect. 2.] Il serait, en effet, contradictoire qu'un bien commun fût, de soi, ordonné à la personne singulière comme telle. Il est très vrai que la vie spéculative est solitaire, mais il reste vrai aussi que, même la béatitude souveraine qui consiste dans la vision de Dieu, est essentiellement bien commun. Cette apparente opposition entre la vie solitaire et le bien commun qui est l'objet de cette vie s'explique du fait que cette félicité peut être considérée, soit de la part de ceux qui en jouissent, soit de la part de l'objet même de cette félicité. Or, cet objet est, de soi, communicable à plusieurs. Sous ce rapport, il est le bien spéculatif de la communauté. Le bien commun pratique doit être ordonné à ce bien spéculatif qui s'étend comme bien commun aux personnes. L'indépendance des

²⁴ Speaking of the Aristotelian *eudaimonia*, St. Thomas sometimes calls the felicity a common good: "Felicitas autem est finis humanae speciei, cum omnes homines ipsam naturaliter desiderent. Felicitas igitur est quoddam commune bonum possibile provenire omnibus hominibus, nisi accidat aliquibus impendimentum quo sint 'orbati'" (Arist. *Eth.* i. 1099a).—Of course this is not what Professor De K. means by *le bien commun qu'est la béatitude*. The Thomistic notion of common good is an analogical and very elusive notion. See below note 25.

personnes les unes des autres dans la vision même n'exclut pas de l'objet cette universalité qui veut dire, pour toute intelligence créée, essentielle communicabilité à plusieurs. Loin de l'exclure, ou d'en faire abstraction, l'indépendance présuppose cette communicabilité.

Is this somehow "magisterial" *Nous répondons* in conformity with Master Thomas' famous *Respondeo. Dicendum?*

The "Thomistic" basis for the author's answer is not St. Thomas but Peter of Auvergne. The quotation from this continuator of St. Thomas' *Commentary on the Politics* is here all the more surprising since for the point in question a rich and authentically Thomistic documentation was at hand. It is, indeed, a fact as un-understandable to any serious Thomistic scholar as it is characteristic for Professor De K.'s scientific methods that at a juncture where the most proper and important point of the whole discussion is under debate—*hic Rhodus, hic salta!*—the author completely forgets about St. Thomas. The reader is avid to get good Thomistic bread, but he must content himself with *Ersatz*.

Peter of Auvergne, as is well known, is a secular priest, a member, in the last decades of the thirteenth century, of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Paris and, at one time, a disciple of St. Thomas, whose lectures he attended in Paris, somewhere between 1269 and 1273. Although, because of his general doctrinal outlook, there is no doubt that he must be counted among the representatives of the oldest Thomist school, nevertheless, in every question of detail the quality of his Thomism is a matter, not of assumption, but of examination. For it is not impossible that the Averroistic atmosphere of the Parisian Artists might somehow have colored his doctrine, as it happened, not infrequently in those times, for instance and especially, in the case of another Parisian Artist, John Quidort, O.P. As long as the notion of a doctrinal *source* retains any proper and intelligible meaning, it is surely impossible to use Peter of Auvergne unqualifiedly as a Thomistic source; and, let it be noted, the same applies, of course, to

Cajetan, John of St. Thomas, etc., commentators whom Professor De K. puts, without any distinction, on equal footing with St. Thomas himself.

In fact, the author's misfortune is that Peter of Auvergne's statement appears to be questionable in the light of St. Thomas' authentic and explicit doctrine.

In order to explain, in his own words, the suppositions of a certain passage of the Aristotelian *Politics*,²⁵ Peter combines the following four notions: (1) felicitas speculativa secundum unum hominem (operatio hominis secundum virtutem perfectam contemplativam quae est sapientia); (2) felicitas speculativa totius civitatis (speculatio totius civitatis); (3) felicitas practica secundum unum hominem (operatio hominis secundum perfectam virtutem hominis practicam); (4) felicitas practica totius civitatis (operatio prudentiae totius civitatis). These four notions, then, are severally combined and examined under the point of view of their respective value.

The clumsiness both of the notions themselves and of the whole procedure of combining and comparing them, is at once striking. For, what is this *operatio prudentiae totius civitatis*? And if, in spite of the manifest clumsiness of the terminology, and intelligible meaning might finally be discovered in this notion—what in the world can *speculatio totius civitatis* be? It is exactly this notion which, most unfortunately, Professor De K. has picked out to be the cornerstone of his answer.

St. Thomas speaks quite a different language:

Sicut bonum unius consistit in actione et contemplatione, ita et bonum multitudinis, secundum quod contingit multitudinem contemplationi vacare. Hoc est verum, quod . . . assecutio finis quem intellectus practicus intendit, potest esse propria et communis, in quantum per intellectum practicum aliquis [!] se et alios dirigit in finem, ut patet in rectore multitudinis [!] Sed aliquis ex hoc, quod speculatur, ipse solus dirigitur in speculationis finem. Ipse autem finis intellectus speculativi tantum praeminet bono intellectus prac-

²⁵ Bk. vii, chap. 3; 1325b 14-23.

tici, quantum singularis assecutio eius excedit communem assecutionem boni intellectus practici. Et ideo perfectissima beatitudo in intellectu speculativo consistit.²⁶

How conscientious, how realistic a thinker is young St. Thomas who wrote these passages already in or about 1255 to 1256! He, indeed, never indulges in combining his notions merely for the sake of obtaining some neat scheme, but he examines them with regard to their inner possibility and truth. In the first passage it seems to be evident that St. Thomas somehow inclines towards something like Peter of Auvergne's *speculatio totius civitatis*. Yet Aquinas at once checks himself by adding, with remarkable finesse: *secundum quod contingit multitudinem contemplationi vacare*. Is contemplation, as a genuine social or common act, possible at all? In the second text to the *assecutio communis finis intellectus practici* the right, personal subject is assigned, namely the *rector multitudinis* (cf. II-II, 47, 12). And St. Thomas now vigorously sets in relief the inner impossibility of an *assecutio communis* of the end of the speculative intellect. The words IPSE SOLUS DIRIGITUR IN SPECULATIONIS FINEM and the subsequent statement of the absolute pre-eminence of the SINGULARIS ASSECUTIO of the speculative good—deserve to be written as a motto at the head of a treatise of Thomistic social philosophy. And be it noted that this whole statement is the Thomistic answer to the following *argumentum in contrarium* which most exactly states the problem of the pretended absolute pre-eminence of the common good:

Videtur quod beatitudo magis consistat in actu intellectus practici quam speculativi. Quanto enim aliquod bonum est communius, tanto est divinius, ut patet in I Eth. Sed bonum intellectus speculativi est singulariter eius qui speculatur. Bonum autem intellectus practici potest esse commune multorum. Ergo magis consistit beatitudo in intellectu practico quam speculativo.²⁷

²⁶ 3 *Sent.*, d. 35, 1, 4, sol. 3 ad 2; 4 *Sent.*, d. 49, 1, 1, sol. 3 ad 1.

²⁷ 4 *Sent.*, d. 49, 1, 1, sol. 3 ad 1. The first part of St. Thomas' answer

A complete collection of the Thomistic texts regarding the *dictum authenticum* of the relative primacy of a common good²⁸ very impressively brings to light the fact that the main preoccupation of St. Thomas, in discussing this "authority," was to explain it in such a way that the superiority of Christian contemplation and solitude, i.e. of the highest personal good, remained uncontestedly safe.

To come back to Professor De K.'s *Respondeo. Dicendum*: In the light of St. Thomas' explicit teaching, the view (a) that "le bonheur pratique de la communauté . . . [est ordonné] au bonheur spéculatif de la personne en tant que membre de la communauté" must be rejected. For, speaking of human communities—and of what else do we speak if mentioning "practical felicity"?—the very notion of the "speculative felicity of the person qua member of the community" is contradictory. In fact, to be a member of the community means to be imperfect, perfectible, and *in via*; whereas to have

to this argument (the second part has been quoted above) is as follows: "Bonum cui intellectus speculativus coniungitur per cognitionem, est communius bono, cui coniungitur intellectus practicus, in quantum intellectus speculativus magis separatur a particulari quam intellectus practicus, cuius cognitio in operatione perficitur, quae in singularibus consistit."—To understand this and similar texts (one of which is quoted by De K., p. 22, note 13) it must be noted, first, that the notion of common good is an analogical notion which St. Thomas has not always used in the same nor in its proper sense; and, secondly, that the Thomistic discussion of the primacy of the common good is frequently not, in the first place, a discussion of a doctrine, but of an "authority." A *dictum authenticum*, to a medieval writer, is always true. The only thing, therefore, that can be done about it, is to sustain it and to interpret it. A student of the Thomistic primacy of the common good must first of all know the characteristic medieval techniques of how to deal with a *dictum authenticum*. Cf. M. D. Chenu, O.P., "Authentica' et 'Magistralia'. Deux lieux théologiques au XII-XIII siècles." *Divus Thomas Placent.*, XXVIII (1925), 257-285. Etienne Gilson has very aptly remarked that the results of this brief study are more valuable than a lot of certain other big volumes of "Thomism"; *Revue d'histoire franciscaine*, III (1926), 128.

²⁸ See *Mediaeval Studies*, V (1943), 142ff.

reached speculative felicity means to be perfect and *in termino*. St. Thomas says: "Sicut ergo id quod iam perfectum est praeeminet ei quod ad perfectionem exercetur, ita vita solitariorum [i.e. contemplantium] . . . praeeminet vitae sociali" (*II-II*, 188, 8). It is impossible to develop here this marvelous article of the *Secunda Secundae* which, in my opinion, contains the essence and the last word of St. Thomas' social theory, a theory which is, through and through, of a "personalist" stamp because it is based upon the Christian notion of contemplation. I am sorry to be obliged to state, for the sake of Thomistic truth, that Professor De K. has succeeded, in the above-quoted proposition, in disfiguring all the fundamental notions, all the essential lines and innermost intentions of this Thomistic theory.

Speaking, not of "speculative facility"—for this denotes a final status—but of contemplation or the contemplative life as it may be lived on this earth, there is of course, a sound and intelligible meaning in saying, with St. Thomas, that "the works of the active life must be derived from the plenitude of contemplation": "Et hoc praefertur simplici contemplationi. Sicut enim maius est illuminare quam lucere solum, ita maius est contemplata aliis tradere quam solum contemplari."²⁹ If—to speak again and always St. Thomas' language—the Pope decides to call a man away from the "garden of contemplation" in which he enjoys the sweetness of conversing with God, and to set him on the dusty roads of the active life, at the head of a diocese, for the sake of the common good, this man will obey. If—to hint at a recent splendid example—the head of a state appoints a philosopher, i.e. a lover of the contemplative life, to be ambassador to the Holy See, for the sake of the common good which, doubtlessly, is admirably served by such an appointment, made in conformity with the age-old demands of the Greek thinkers as well as the Christian Fathers, this man again will obey, although he realizes

²⁹ *ST*, II-II, 188, 6.

that almost everything he has fondly cherished throughout a long life will have to be abandoned. But why do both men obey? Is it because the common good is, simply and absolutely speaking, higher and more valuable than their (personal) good of contemplation? By no means! Is it because they have been enjoying the *dulcedo contemplationis* as parts of the community, and thus, already, in subordination to its interests and laws? By no means! Their obedience is, according to the clear and precise *littera Sancti Thomae*,³⁰ intrinsically motivated by the fact that sometimes, in some circumstances (*in casu*) the common good and its necessities are more urgent. The common good has a relative and limited pre-eminence *in via utilitatis*, because it is essentially a *bonum utile*, the highest *bonum utile*, but nothing more. It has no absolute pre-eminence, i.e. no primacy *in ratione dignitatis*. And, for the sake of one of the most essential truths of Thomism, any attempt, by whomsoever and in whatever way, to disfigure these elementary lines of the Thomistic social system must most energetically be rejected.

Furthermore, and again in the light of the *littera Sancti Thomae*, we refuse to accept Professor De K.'s statement, viz. (b) that "la béatitude souveraine qui consiste dans la vision de Dieu est essentiellement bien commun."

Objectively, i.e. viewed from the part of its uncreated object, the vision is not a common good: it is not even God as Common Good (to speak of common good in a proper and adequate language) but it is God Himself, the *Bonum universale in essendo*, as has been shown above.

Formally, i.e. viewed as a created act and good, the vision is that supreme, personal good by which a created intellect,

³⁰ *ST*, II-II, 182. 1; 185. 2 ad 1, etc.—All these sayings might and must seem hard to us, inveterate and deep pragmatists that we are. But—there they are! For the "garden of contemplation" and the "dusty roads of the active life," see 4 *Sent.*, d. 38, 1. 4, sol. 1 ad 3 (*hortus contemplationis*); 3 *Sent.*, d. 35, 1. 4, sol. 2 (*pulvis terrenorum*); 4 *Sent.*, d. 29, 4 ad 4; *ST*, II-II, 185. 2; et alibi.

elevated by the light of glory, is most intimately united with, and most perfectly likened to, God.

With these two elements the *essence* of the vision and of final beatitude is fully circumscribed. No further element needs to be added. No further element pertains to the *intrinsic nature* of final beatitude.

Extrinsically, however, i.e. in virtue of the fact that there is a multitude of the Blessed sharing, as it were, in the same good, the vision might be called a certain common good which, then, is the constitutive of a certain "society," a society which St. Augustine has called *societas fruendi Deo et invicem in Deo*.³¹ With regard to this "society" all that St. Thomas has to say is that it *quasi concomitanter se habet . . . ad perfectam beatitudinem*³² because, speaking of the essence of things, every single "member" of it has his full sufficiency in God and in God alone.

Any serious Thomistic consideration of the Problem of Person and Society must needs lead to, and terminate in, the mystery—tremendous and consoling at the same time, as every mystery is—of the soul, and every soul, in the face of God, and God alone. St. Thomas has given this mystery yet another very illuminating but also, at first glance, disquieting formula. In the *Opusculum De Perfectione Vitae Spiritualis*, chapter 13, he says (Let us note that this work was written against the pragmatism of Gerald of Abbéville whose main mistake was to have turned the relative primacy of the common good into an absolute one!): "Proximus autem noster non est universale bonum supra nos existens, sed particulare bonum infra nos constitutum." Will Professor De K. be able to give us a fitting explanation of this "infra nos" of St. Thomas? I cannot help but think that he will not. According to the suppositions of his system he will protest (in fact, he does so, on similar occasions) that this is the "base abomination of egoism." We have no reason to recede even one iota from the clear and

³¹ *De Civ. Dei*, XIX, 13.

³² *ST*, I-II, 4. 8 ad 3.

precise *littera Sancti Thomae*. That it contains no egoism at all is clear to everyone who, with St. Thomas, knows how to distinguish between *amor sui ordinatus* and *amor sui inordinatus*.

Professor De K.'s root mistake, in his whole treatise on the primacy of the common good, is that he rashly assumed an absolute identification between God and "the" common good. It was inevitable that this initial error should lead to the distortion of that which is foremost in Thomism, namely, the primacy of the spiritual, which, in its turn, is all there is in the primacy of the personal. That is why I think that Professor De K.'s book will have to be re-written.

A certain danger of misrepresentation is almost inevitable in any monographic account of our problem. If you insist on the personal good above the common good, it will be very difficult, if not altogether impossible, to avoid the impression that in a certain way you minimize the common good. The extant literature on "personalism"—it is large, and perhaps even a bit too large, and the authors, sometimes, do not seem to have grasped the correct synthesis in a question which is one of the most subtle and illusive of philosophy—gives ample proof of this fact. A writer cannot say everything on every occasion. Let us by no means forget that St. Thomas is among all medieval authors the one who has most extensively and most vigorously emphasized the primacy, within its order (i.e. the practical, "political" human order) of the common good over everything which falls within this same order of which the common good is the immediately last end and the supreme rule and measure. If Professor De K. meant only to protest against the manifest and, as I have said, hardly avoidable minimization in modern Thomistic literature, of the common good, his book would have been, in principle, unobjectionable. But he did infinitely (in the true sense of the word!) more than this in that, of a relative primacy he makes an absolute and absolutely all-embracing primacy. According to Professor De K.'s principles man is forever entangled in the net of common goods, without any hope of

ever tearing up these chains (for chains they are, in a definite, i.e. metaphysical, not moral, sense) and of freeing himself for God and for God alone Who is first and primarily God—*Ego sum qui sum*—the divine Good, the object of our personal beatitude (*bonum universale in essendo*), rather than being, first and primarily, the creator of all things and therefore the supreme common good in which all beings are finally united (*bonum universale in causando*). According to the same principles, the common good is infinitely more than that supreme good which the *practical* intellect or reason might constitute. It (i.e. the univocally same good) is also the supreme object which can ever be offered to the *speculative* intellect. With this position, metaphysics (and theology), and the first, decisive part of ethics (and moral theology) are in ruins. This being the effect of Professor De K.'s thesis, I do not in the least hesitate to say, that from the point of view of the *littera Sancti Thomae* this book is a danger to every reader who has neither the time nor the sufficient training to discover for himself, in a problem of extreme subtlety, the genuine Thomistic truth.

V

JACQUES MARITAIN AND ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

Our "Defense of Jacques Maritain" has been, so far, rather a defense of St. Thomas. Let us, therefore, cast a brief glance upon the specific doctrine of Jacques Maritain. Let us ask exactly how it stands in relation to the *littera Sancti Thomae* and whether, or not, a *fruitful* discussion may be opened with regard to its main thesis.

It seems to me—*salvo meliore iudicio*—that the bare essence of this doctrine might be summed up in the following *enthymema*: St. Thomas says: *Ad rationem personae exigitur quod sit totum completum*; or again: *Ratio partis contrariantur personae*.³² Hence, Jacques Maritain concludes, the person, qua person, is

³² 3 *Sent.*, d. 5, III, 2.

not a part of society: and if a person is such a part, this "being part" will not be based upon the metaphysical formality and precision of "being person."

The *antecedens* pertains to the *littera Sancti Thomae*. The conclusion is not to be found there in such explicit words, and thus, if it is correctly drawn, it will be part and parcel of that "greater Thomism" whose task it is to develop the Thomistic principles and, eventually, make them an actually living truth.

Maritain's conclusion is evident. Its necessity and intelligibility are exactly the same as the necessity and intelligibility of the following inferences: Act as such means pure and limitless perfection. Hence, if there is a limited or participated act, this limitation will not pertain to this act, qua act, but qua mixed with potency. Or again: The intellect as such is not capable of error. Hence, if there is an intellectual being which errs, this will not happen to it, insofar as it is an intellect but insofar as it is something else.

All these inferences, the one on the person not excluded, bear a certain similarity each with the other, insofar as the perfection is always said to be perfection.

There is not the slightest doubt that Maritain, at what I assume to be the fundamental point of his doctrine, is right. The only question which can ever be raised with regard to this position is this: Why is it that St. Thomas did not draw this conclusion? Why did St. Thomas, in his ethical or social doctrine, never turn to that chapter, if I may say so, of the metaphysics of the person in which its absolute and formal essence is defined? This is a question not of living but of historic Thomism. The eminent historian of medieval philosophy, Etienne Gilson, speaking, in *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*,³⁴ of the age-old and undeniable fact of a Christian personalism, wonders why there is

not a word throughout the whole of the mediaeval moral philosophy on what the mediaevals themselves held to be

³⁴ Transl. by A. H. C. Downes (New York: Scribners, 1936), p. 205.

the highest in man and therefore in all nature. How shall we account for the fact that in the very moment of a discovery [by medieval thinkers] of such immense importance, Christian thought seems to stop suddenly short and renounce all effort to exploit its success?

To the historian and lover of the *littera Sancti Thomae*, in all its concrete conditions, it is, indeed, a problem of more urgent interest to know why St. Thomas, in a given case, did not envisage a certain problem than to know how he would have answered it, had he envisaged it. Any discussion of so-called Thomistic personalism will, in the first place, have to say what is meant by that term and where, in St. Thomas' works, to go looking for it.

The attentive reader of the present article will have observed the fact—and perhaps wondered at it—that in the foregoing sections our Thomistic documentation has preferably been chosen not from that chapter of metaphysics in which the absolute and formal definition of Person is stated, but from the other chapter in which metaphysics elaborates, mainly by recurring to the final cause, the relative definition of the created person, thereby, fulfilling her "royal" function which is to assign, to the particular sciences—in our case, to ethics—their subject. St. Thomas has written this chapter in the great metaphysical *Prooemium* to the *pars moralis* of the *Summa*, I-II, qq. 1-5. The chief "personalist" text is the one we have quoted above, namely, q. 3, art. 5, especially *ad 1: quae est multo maior assimilatio*.

May I submit, not that Maritain's metaphysical foundation of the ethics (and social philosophy) of the person be replaced—I will say later that and why no such replacing is needed—but that it be made more evident and gain its proper place as well as its full weight, when, first and foremost in our discussion of the problem of personalism, we insist on such a relative definition of the created person as St. Thomas has taught us.

Let me try to enumerate some of the advantages of such a procedure.

First. A closer contact with the *littera Sancti Thomae* would be obtained. It is, indeed, a fact, easily verifiable, that a very considerable and striking part of St. Thomas' discussion of the *dictum authenticum* (a common good is better and more divine than a particular good) centers around the comparison between the common and the personal good. St. Thomas, it seems to me, has, in the later years of his academic and literary career, especially after his discussion with the Geraldine pragmatism (1269), insisted with greater and greater energy on the superiority of the personal good of contemplation and divine charity over the common utility.³⁵ If a Thomist wishes to treat the problem of Person and Society in immediate contact with the writings and judgments of St. Thomas, he can do so only by following, step by step, the numerous efforts of the Angelic Doctor to master the problem of contemplation and action, love of God and love of neighbor. To be endowed with a speculative intellect and ordained to the beatific vision is, most exactly, that relative definition, *ex parte causae finalis*, of the created and human person to which I referred above.

Second. Through this closer contact with St. Thomas a more direct approach to our problem would be possible. For is not this problem, properly speaking, a problem of ethics and social theory? Where else, therefore, should its immediate metaphysical foundation be sought for than in that part of metaphysics where the subject of ethics is determined? It will also be easier, through the same procedure, to see the problem more clearly in its historical connections. I have already pointed to the fact that anyone, who in the context of *Philosophia Perennis*, speaks of this problem, is in truth continuing the old Greek controversy between philosophers and kings, and must with the Christian Fathers, especially St. Au-

³⁵ See *Mediaeval Studies*, VI (1944), 62ff.

gustine and St. Gregory, insist on the higher merit of contemplative life.

Third. If the *littera Sancti Thomae* is closely followed, it will be clear at once, and without even the slightest possibility of mistake, that our Christian personalism has nothing to do with the secularized personalism of nineteenth-century philosophy. The entire interest of Christian and Thomistic personalism is, indeed, taken up by that spiritual and personal order whose ultimate end and supreme "rule and measure" is the beatific vision. What this personalism wishes to emphasize is that universal Christian vocation to contemplation which St. Thomas liked to find expressed in the words of Psalm 45, *Vacate et videte, quoniam ego sum Dominus*.³⁶ To use (and extend) the language of an old and venerable papal document of the eleventh century, the so-called *Canon Urbani*—a document which has played an important role in the medieval canonist and theological discussions of our problem³⁷—it is not the personalist contention that nobody dare resist the caprices of any given individual person, of Tom, Dick, and Harry, but that nobody dare resist the Holy Ghost (Act. 7:51). The resistance, in the extant anti-personalist literature, obviously has its origin in the fear that personalism is nothing but individualism and egoism. This fear is unjustified, of course, especially as far as Jacques Maritain's doctrine is concerned. The very starting point of Christian personalism should, once and forever, caution any adversary against the quixotic venture to rise and gird himself for battle against an imaginary enemy.

After all this is said and done, it will be easy to pass over to the absolute and formal definition of the person qua person. This will even be necessary since it is in this chapter of metaphysics that all our knowledges find their final resolution

³⁶ 3 *Sent.*, d. 36, 3 ad 5.

³⁷ *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, C. 19. Q. 2, c. 1: *Ed. Lips. sec.* (Friedberg), vol. I, col. 839f. Cf. *Mediaeval Studies*, VI (1944), 100ff.

and firmness: *Oportet quod cuicumque apprehenso per intellectum, intellectus attribuat hoc quod est ens.*³⁸

* * *

Properly speaking, the principle of the primacy of the common good is valid only within the "practical," "moral," "political" human order. Outside this order the notions *common good, community*, etc. lose their significance unless they be taken analogically. The whole human order whose highest good is the common good is subordinated to things divine, among the first of which after God, is the created intellect, which is *capax summi boni*. This capacity is a personal good. With reference to our present problem, this is, it seems to me, the very quintessence of St. Thomas' doctrine, immediately and explicitly verifiable in the *littera*. If the term "personalism" (in itself, no doubt, a bad one) is purged of the connotations

³⁸ *De Ver.*, 21, 4 ad 3. I must confess that it has taken me a long time to understand Maritain's metaphysics of Person and Society. See *Bulletin thomiste*, IV (1936), 714ff., 517ff. I seem now to realize what was the reason for this skepticism. One cannot be, indeed, too much of a metaphysician, just as one cannot love God too much. But is it not possible to be a metaphysician too exclusively, just as, according to St. Thomas, *ST*, II-II, 27, 8, there is some possibility of loving God too exclusively? Properly speaking, the problem of Person and Society is a problem of ethics and social theory: How do Christians stand to society and, especially, to the state? It seems to me that much of the extant opposition to Maritain is due to the fact that a very sublime and absolute metaphysical theory is—if I may say so—sprung on the ethicists and takes them unawares while they are discussing, not a different problem, but the same problem on quite a different level. In truth, Maritain's elucubrations are much richer, much more varied than it might seem from the description of their "bare essence" given above. But is it not likewise true that in the literature following in his wake, not infrequently, there is no question of anything else than of that metaphysics? I cannot bring myself to admit that, in the problem of person and society, everything is said and everything is done, once an absolute, ontological comparison between person and society is instituted. After the Encyclical of Pius XII and after renewed studies I grant that thereby the very last or, if you like, the very first thing—and, in this sense, all—is said and done.

it has through its sources in modern philosophy, there is no objection to calling this Thomistic doctrine personalist.