

## CUTTING THE INFINITE DOWN TO SIZE

be, and so also the infinite is what will be in act, but [rather] since being is in many ways, as a day or the games exist by different [parts] always coming to be, so too does the infinite.<sup>5</sup>

In numbers and in the divisions of a line, the possibilities are infinite. But this does not mean that the infinite is one of the possibilities. A man contemplating marriage may consider three possible wives, but this does not mean that having three wives is among his possibilities. The dative in Greek and the adverb in English *specify* the adjective in some way, but they do not determine *in what way* the adjective is to be specified. In the present case, to say that there is a potential infinite does not mean that there can be an infinite number, or even an infinite number of possibilities (as if one could number the possibilities). Rather, it means that there is no greatest of the possible numbers (or multitudes), even though every number is finite. This is comparable to the infinitely small in magnitude. Though some have thought that there were such magnitudes ("infinitesimals"), most mathematicians now recognize that there are none, and that "infinitely small" means only that there is no smallest possible.

The need to rightly distinguish the meanings here may be illustrated by the similar case of the phrase "infinite power." When we say that an agent has infinite power, we might mean that he is capable of an infinite effect. Or we could mean that there is no greatest of his possible effects, though every one of them is finite. The potentially infinite in magnitude and multitude is like the second of these.

<sup>5</sup> *Physics* III, 206a19-23.

## THE AXIOMATIC CHARACTER OF THE PRINCIPLE THAT THE COMMON GOOD IS PREFERABLE TO THE PRIVATE GOOD

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1. The intention of the following remarks is to manifest as distinctly as possible that the principle that the common good is more desirable than the private good is an axiom, that is, an indemonstrable principle that is not confined to one science but is found in each according to the manner appropriate to that science. This is not to deny that the principle is usually contracted to the science of politics, where it enjoys the sort of preeminence that another axiom, the whole is greater than the part, enjoys in mathematics. And much of the consideration that follows will attend to the principle according to the force that it has in political science. Nonetheless, the principal intention is to manifest that it is an axiom and should be understood even in that science as an axiom.

2. Of course one cannot demonstrate an axiom nor can one demonstrate that some axiom is an axiom. Rather one must manifest the truth of the axiom in such a way that manifests that this truth is the kind of truth possessed by axioms. Such truth is not only known *per se*, but it is intelligible through our concept of being and the concepts that are convertible with that of being. I therefore intend to manifest three things: that

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this notion of common good is a division or 'part' of the concept of good insofar as that concept is convertible with being, that the truth of this principle is evident through the very notion of 'common good' taken together with the axioms prior to it and also that it is found in many sciences.

3. This will be achieved in two parts. First, I shall examine the concepts of common good and private good (4-21). Here I shall also explain the notion of preferable or better (21-28). Second, I shall show that the predicate 'preferable to the private good' can be drawn from the subject 'common good' by resolving the principle to axioms that are prior to it, axioms whose truths are present in it virtually (29-68). I shall explain this further and give an example of this method, when I turn to that part of this investigation.

4. Now this first part shall examine the concepts of common and private good not only so as to manifest their meaning but also to show that they divide the concept of good insofar as that concept transcends any category of being. Hence it must also be shown first that the concept of good is convertible with being.

5. Saint Thomas teaches in *De veritate* that the mind can add to the *ratio* of being in two ways. The first is by contracting it to some determinate mode, as occurs when we form the generic concept of each category. The second way the mind can add to the *ratio* of being is by expressing something that belongs to every being, although this is not expressed in the concept of being or *ens*. This latter occurs when we form the concepts that are called transcendental: one, thing, something, true, good. These are distinguished insofar as the first three concepts express some aspect of being that belongs to being in itself, while true and good each express an aspect of being that belongs to being in its order to another. Since the soul, and in particular the intellect, can *be* all things, that is, it can be perfected by the species of any being, the predicate 'true' names any being insofar as it is conformed or conformable to the intellect. But the same soul or intellect that knows all

things can desire not merely the species of any being but its existence, the existing being, and thus we name the being good. Thus the notion of good is the notion of something desirable. Any being bears the notion good insofar as it is the object of appetite.

6. The same understanding is manifested in the *Summa* through the concept of perfection.<sup>1</sup> Every being insofar as it is actual. But the actual, precisely insofar as it is actual, is perfect. For the perfect is what lacks nothing of the actuality proportioned to it. But the perfect is desirable. This can be manifested by experience, since anything is seen to incline to its proper perfection. Again, it can be seen through the notion of perfection. For the perfect does not lack. But desire is for what is lacking and is satisfied when one no longer lacks. Thus, being insofar as it is perfect is good, that is, desirable.

7. As the object of appetite, however, we see that the good bears the notion of a final cause. For the final cause or end is precisely that which brings an end to movement or action by satisfying the appetite. For the appetite desires nothing beyond this and therefore the one having appetite no longer operates.

8. It is not difficult to see, as Aristotle points out in the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, that this notion of good or desirable is found in every category of being. Certainly one's substantial existence is desirable. So are the right size, a good temperature, favorable relations with others, and so on. Thus the concept is transcendental insofar as it names the desirable in any category.

9. It may be thought, however, that although the concept of good is transcendental, its reference to appetite limits its use in human sciences to the sciences of politics and ethics, which concern human activity. For in these sciences alone the human mind is able to order action through its knowledge of the good. The principle 'Do good and avoid evil', the first

<sup>1</sup> I Q. 5 a. 1 c.

to flow from our concept of good, is the first principle of practical intellect and therefore seems limited to sciences and arts that concern action.

10. Let me answer this objection with three brief comments. First, the science of politics is architectonic in its own manner. Both politics and ethics bear the notion of wisdom in a true, although limited, sense. Thus there is a qualified but true manner in which they are concerned with all things.

11. Second, at least some principles of practical intellect can also be contemplated by speculative intellect. So the principle 'Do good and avoid evil' is stated in a more speculative, and a more universal, manner in the axiom that good is diffusive of itself.<sup>2</sup> If the principles of politics and ethics were not in some way contemplated by the speculative intellect, these sciences would not be subordinated in any way to metaphysics or speculative wisdom. Metaphysics would therefore be only another wisdom *secundum quid*.

12. Third, the concept of good is first considered distinctly (and by all) in the practical order. It is also the concept fundamental to the practical sciences. Yet we see that it is found in other sciences as well. Natural science demands this concept, as Aristotle shows in *Physics* 2.8. Generation and other movements in the natural world are not fully intelligible without knowledge of the good at which they aim. Further, good seems to be the principal predicate said of God in the twelfth book of the *Metaphysics*. Again, even there in natural theology, the action of secondary gods or minds is made intelligible through their love of the first.

13. I have maintained so far that the concept of good is that of the appetible or desirable, that it bears the notion of final cause, and that this concept transcends any category of being and any particular science. Now I will show that the distinction between the common good and the private good is a *per se* division of the good. Such a division is one which divides

<sup>2</sup> Cf. I Q. 5 a. 4 ad 2.

the concept through what belongs to it from its essence. For example, a *per se* division of the sensible is one which divides it according to its essence, as an object of the senses. So the division of sound from color is a *per se* division of the sensible, for it considers them precisely as objects of the senses. But note that nothing prevents the possibility of more than one *per se* division of some nature, so long as there are many elements in its *ratio*. So the distinction between the proper and common is also a *per se* division of the sensible.

14. Now I have already referred to a well-known division of the good. Since the good is a desirable being, it is divided as beings are divided. It will have a *ratio* appropriate to each category of being insofar as the being of the category can bear the notion of desirable. But other divisions of the good are also *per se*. There is the division according to mode, species, and order.<sup>3</sup> Another division is that into the perfection itself, the thing that has its perfection, and the subject yet in potency to its perfection.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the most important is the division into the honest, the pleasant and the useful. This division attends to the good insofar as it bears the notion of final cause. One thing is desirable *per se* or through itself, another is desirable precisely insofar as the appetite rests in it, and yet another is desirable only because of something else.<sup>5</sup>

15. The division of the good into the common and the private good is also a *per se* division. For, insofar as the good bears the notion of final cause, it is good *to* something. But such a cause is distinguished as a cause to one or a cause to many precisely insofar as it is a final cause. For being a cause to one or to many concerns the very mode in which it is good. Something, such as food, can be good to someone in such a way that it can no longer be good to another. Something else, such as science, can be good to someone in such a way that

<sup>3</sup> I Q. 5 a. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Q. D. *De malo* Q. 1 a. 2, c.

<sup>5</sup> I Q. 5 a. 6.

it is still good to another. Yet it may even be that something, such as choral music, is not good to one unless it is good to another. Comparing these last goods with the private good makes it most clear that such a distinction is a distinction in the very manner of being good.

16. Of course, the notion 'cause to many' cannot be taken accidentally. An agent that brings about one effect by one action and another effect by another action is not, in the sphere of agent causality, a cause to many except accidentally. The mode of causation here would be the same, if two agent causes, rather than one, had brought about these two effects. So, to be a cause to many rather than a cause to one will divide final causes *per se* only if the cause exerts its causality on many insofar as it is one. Thus, while a private good is a final cause that 'moves' or causes one to act so as to attain it, a common good is a final cause which causes many to attain it insofar as it is one thing.

17. Such an end, namely one that causes many to move toward it insofar as it is one, must also cause the union of the many by which they form one agent. However much such unity depends upon differences already present in the many, such as the varying vocal ranges necessary to the choir, it is the end that orders these differences to one another and to the whole. In relation to the end, the many with their differences become something complete, a complete agent. Thus the common good is divided from the private good precisely insofar as it bears the notion of good.

18. Any being therefore, according to the unity proper to it, whatever its category, can be a common good, if it can bear the notion of a final cause to many. So it is said that the common good is one that can be shared by many without diminishment. Unlike a private good that must be divided to belong to many, a common good belongs to all who pursue it without any division. This does not mean, however, that the common good will belong to all equally. Nor does it mean

that every common good is equally indivisible. Some can be shared by many and others by even more.

19. Note also that I have already asserted that the notion of common good can belong to beings of any category. In the marital act, the child is a good common to both parents and to itself. A certain number of singers for each part are good for a choir, and particular qualities of the voice are desirable for those singing in chorus. As shall be more clear in what follows, even the virtue in the soul of any citizen has the notion of a common good under the *ratio* of justice. Again, a common good can be an honest good, like knowledge; a pleasant good, such as a painting or a novel; or even a useful good, as public buildings or a road. The distinction between the common and the private good therefore transcends this division of the good as well as the division of being into categories.

20. The notion of the common good is also transcendental insofar as it is found in sciences other than politics and ethics. Aristotle uses this notion to explain generation in his discussion of the vegetative soul.<sup>6</sup> For the species aims at eternity and divinity as a kind of common good. He also uses it in showing that God has the notion of good in the *Metaphysics*.<sup>7</sup> For there he shows that God is good, by showing that the universe is ordered to Him as to an extrinsic common good. Again, we find by revelation that God is not only a common good to the universe, but that within God the divine goodness is possessed in common by three divine Persons. Even here the Persons, although each is in no way distinct from this goodness, are diversely related to one another in their common 'possession' of this goodness.

21. A final clarification about the distinction between the common and the private good. Often this distinction is de-

<sup>6</sup> *De anima* 2.4.

<sup>7</sup> *Metaphysics* 12.10.

scribed by the terms common and proper. This must not be confused with the distinction between the alien and the proper good. What is common is not alien. The alien belongs only to another. The common belongs to oneself and also to another. In this sense the common good *does* belong to him to whom it is good. It is *his*, although it is not proper to him.

22. Now I turn to the predicate. The common good is said to be 'better' than, 'more desirable' than, or 'preferable' to the private good. Note here that I am taking these three adjectives to differ only in what they express. For the second and third make explicit a reference, respectively, to appetite and will that is implicit in the first. For 'desire' speaks to any sort of appetite, while 'prefer' names an act by which it orders one good before another. Still, all three adjectives signify the notion of good comparatively. When these are compared with respect to their goodness and desirability, the common good is said to be more good, more desirable, than the private good. I shall therefore examine this concept of more (23-24) and its application to the notion of good (25-28).

23. Clearly the notion 'more' first arises in the category of quantity. For in quantity we first encounter the divisible: the line AB, for example, divisible at C. But in the divisible the mind recognizes in some whole one part and another, whether units or magnitudes. Here the parts are AC and CB. AB has within it the parts AC and CB and consists in these parts. Seeing that the whole arises from these parts, the mind recognizes that the whole is greater or more than the part. AB is greater than AC. AB is more than AC. For AB is AC and CB, that is AC *plus* CB.

24. The extension of this notion 'more' to other categories demands recognition that in something belonging to another category there is found some understanding of part and whole. This can in some cases be referred immediately to quantity. The strong man and the stronger man each lift a dumbbell. But what the stronger man can lift includes as its part what the

strong man can lift. So his strength is greater. In other cases the reference to quantity is less clear. One thing can do what another can and something else, that is something more. In the same circumstances, the hotter fire not only melts the ice but also heats it once melted. Melting and heating together stand to melting alone as a whole to a part, although they do not form a whole. Yet even where a quantitative whole is not present, one must find some kind of being in which there is this *plus* that, this and something *more*. Again, this is something one in which is found some manyness.

25. The application of the notion of more to the concept of good must involve a notion of this sort. What is more good will stand to what is less so as something complete to something incomplete. But they will do so precisely insofar as they are good, that is as desirable. What is more good will therefore in some way satisfy the appetite or will more completely than what is less good.

26. Note carefully that it does not follow that one will get from the greater good every particular satisfaction that one gets from the lesser good. For the goods compared are not in fact quantities, much less abstractly considered quantities. Very little experience makes clear that the exactness of mathematical calculation cannot be perfectly exemplified in quantities existing in matter. Much less should we expect this kind of exactness from an extension of a quantitative concept to other genera.

27. Rather, whenever one thing is said to be better than another, one must take pains to consider the manner in which it is said to satisfy appetite more completely. So, when intellectual goods are said to be better than sensible goods, it is clear that intellectual goods cannot offer the sensible pleasure that sensible goods do. They are said to be better because they satisfy an appetite, namely the intellectual appetite, that is complete compared to the sensitive appetite. This is sufficient for the truth of the claim.

28. In considering this principle, therefore, that the common good is preferable to the private good, one must not expect that these goods themselves will exhibit the relation of whole and part in a quantitative manner. Rather, one must investigate the way in which the common good is more capable of satisfying our appetite than the private good.

29. Now, in the second part of this consideration, I wish to manifest this principle as self-evident by showing that the predicate is contained in the *ratio* or definition of the subject. Since these concepts are rather complex, this involves a reduction of this principle to the axioms prior to it. Note that this does not constitute a demonstration. Rather, it merely manifests the order in which the mind proceeds in its understanding of reality.

30. As an example, consider the axiom that the whole is greater than the part. Once the concept of quantity is possessed, this truth is seen immediately by the mind. Attending to the divisible, one sees some whole, AB, in which one can distinguish many parts, AC and CB. The relation between the whole and either part is immediately recognized. The whole is greater. But notice that the concept of the divisible depends upon the principle of contradiction. AC is only divided from CB because each is itself and not the other. The otherness and manyness of AC and CB cannot be concluded from the principle of contradiction. It arises from the nature of quantity, from the distinction of position, the here and there, that is found in quantity. But, as Saint Thomas teaches, the plurality and division of anything else, and therefore of quantity, depend upon the very first division, namely of being from non-being.<sup>8</sup> For each part, so long as it remains itself, cannot be the other part. This truth is necessary for the truth that in quantity the here and there are distinct and many. But insofar as the parts that are here and there are distinct and many, they are together more than either part. Thus the power or virtue

<sup>8</sup> *Super Boetium De Trinitate* Q. 4, a. 1, c.

of the first truth is present in the truth that follows it, even though it does not follow *from* it. The first axiom is virtually present in the second.

31. In this manner I shall reduce the axiom that the common good is preferable to the private good to several axioms prior to it. For the virtue or power of these axioms is present in the axiom concerning the common good. The most important of these axioms is already clear, namely that the whole is greater than the part (32-47). The second is that actions belong to supposites (48-55). A third axiom is that any perfection is proportioned to the perfectible, which should itself be resolved to another, that the received is received in the mode of the receptacle (56-66). All of these axioms will be discussed when needed.

32. First, I will make remarks concerning how the axiom that the whole is greater than the part is present in the axiom about the common good. Since we say that the common good is more desirable than the private good, we must see that it bears to the private good the notion of something complete or whole, in which there is found some plurality. The common good cannot, however, be a whole of which private goods are the parts, except perhaps accidentally. For the common good, precisely insofar as it is one final cause, is a cause to many, but the private good bears the notion of one final cause to one only.

33. Rather, the manyness in the notion of the common good is the manyness of those to whom it is a cause. These are, most obviously, the members of some community that pursues such a good. So the orchestra requires many members to achieve the music proper to it. But these members are not parts of the common good. They are parts of the agent that achieves, maintains, and enjoys the common good. The most perfect agent of this sort is called a city or a state and I shall speak of it according to these names in what follows. I shall not attend here to any distinction in the concepts signified by these two names.

34. Now it is here, in the city, that one must discover the notion of whole needed for the axiom in question. The first whole, the quantitative whole, has already been examined. But it is worthwhile considering it again, to see whether the city is a whole in this manner.

35. Once the intellect possesses the concept of being as first said of substance, it discovers, through the sensible differentiation in this object, a being in which *this* being is not *that* being and again *that* being is not *this* being. The baby's rattle with its green bulb and blue handle is quite apt to move the mind in this way. The green bulb is something and the blue handle is something else, but the rattle itself is something in which the bulb and the handle are found, each something, but neither is the other. Thus Aristotle gives this *ratio* of 'so much' in *Metaphysics* 5.13: 'what is divisible into things present in it of which either or each is able to be something one and this thing here.'

36. As Aristotle goes on to say, that into which the quantity is divided bears the notion of part, while the whole is what lacks none of the parts of which it is naturally constituted and contains those contained so that these are one. Aristotle further qualifies the sort of whole I have so far examined as being one 'from these' parts. The whole is constituted or integrated from them. Thus, the first whole known to us, the quantitative whole, is an integral whole, namely what lacks none of the parts *from* which it is naturally constituted and contains these parts so that these are one *insofar* as it is from them.

37. As there are many sorts of integral whole, one can certainly ask if the city is such a whole. That the citizens of any city can be counted is clear enough. But it is likewise clear that such wholeness, that is being a numbered number, does not constitute the men of the city as a city. The same men could have the same number if they were so many hermits. For this number itself completes the men only in the category of quantity and not as an agent of any sort. Even if one were

to add the place where these men are located, as containing them, only the material of a city exists.

38. But Aristotle designates another sort of whole, the universal whole. This whole is first discovered in universal names, as man is said of Socrates but also of Plato, while animal is said of man but also of dog. Thus, not only dog is animal but man too is animal, while dog is not man, nor is man dog. Animal is 'more' than man, 'greater' than man. Aristotle determines the notion of whole to this sort by stating that it contains those contained 'so that each is one'. Animal contains dog and man, and dog and man are one in this whole, animal, but this occurs in such a way that a dog and a man is each an animal. The notion of the universal whole is thus 'that lacking none of the parts of which it is naturally constituted and contains those contained so that these are one' but such that 'each is one'. Thus it is predicated of each part, unlike the integral whole. Since the integral whole is constituted from its parts, it can only be predicated of these in their integrity.

39. Now the city is not a universal whole. Clearly, its members cannot simply speaking be called cities. Rather, they are denominated citizens from the city as if they take part in it. Further, if they were such a whole, the good appropriate to them as such would be likewise universal. Each member of the city would pursue his own good. This good would be common only by predication, insofar as various instances bear the same *ratio* and are called by the same name. But the common good is common precisely insofar as it is one cause.

40. Yet another kind of whole exists, the potential whole. This whole is first distinctly recognized in the study of the soul, the powers of which are called its parts. The intellectual soul has the power of reason, sensation, and vegetation, while the sensitive soul has only the powers of sensation and vegetation. Each of these souls is compared to its powers as a whole to its parts. The 'higher' soul is thus understood to have the lower soul within it as its part. Even the lowest soul, the vegetative, has powers conceived as its parts, the nutritive

and the generative faculties. Here too one first finds some reference to the integral whole. For these parts are distinguished by the organs in which such powers are seated, or even the lack of such an organ. But the use of such organs manifests the more fundamental distinction, the distinction of operations and objects. For the potential whole is one which contains within it power capable of being 'portioned' in some way. The power is able to come together with another power to form some notion of whole. To that extent the potential whole is 'greater' than any of these powers or it is greater than another whole that has less of these powers.

41. Aristotle does not, however, give the *ratio* of this whole in his discussion of this name in *Metaphysics* 5. But Saint Thomas situates it between the other two as if it shares in the nature of each:

[Totum potestativum] medium est inter totum universale et totum integrale. Totum enim universale adest cuilibet parti secundum totam suam essentiam et virtutem, ut animal homini et equo, et ideo proprie de singulis partibus praedicatur. Totum vero integrale non est in qualibet parte, neque secundum totam essentiam, neque secundum totam virtutem. Et ideo nullo modo de singulis partibus praedicatur; sed aliquo modo, licet improprie, praedicatur de omnibus simul, ut si dicamus quod paries, tectum et fundamentum sunt domus. Totum vero potentiale adest singulis partibus secundum totam suam essentiam, sed non secundum totam virtutem. Et ideo quodammodo potest praedicari de qualibet parte; sed non ita proprie sicut totum universale.<sup>9</sup>

Thus the soul, sharing in the universal whole, is present according to its whole essence in any of its parts. So every part is alive and lives specifically the life of the whole. But, sharing also in the integral whole, the power of the soul is divided according to organs or according to different species of living things. The whole power of any living thing is integrated

<sup>9</sup> I Q. 77 a. 1 ad 1.

from the powers residing in its many parts. Again the whole power of life is portioned among the various species so that some living things stand as parts to other living things. To adapt Aristotle's *ratio* of whole to the potential whole, one can say that the potential whole is that which is not lacking any of the parts of which it is naturally constituted and which contains those parts so that they are something one, yet such that it is present in each part, but its power is integrated from these parts.

42. The city, and any political or social order, is such a whole, the parts of which are its citizens. For the city is an agent pursuing a certain end, the common good. The pursuit of such a good demands various powers, the most prominent of which are its legislative and judicial powers, and after these its executive and military powers. Anyone who properly shares in these powers as ordered to the common good bears the notion of citizen, while whoever bears the authority and office of achieving and maintaining the common good is the sovereign. These powers are seated in the sovereign. For through these powers the sovereign attains and preserves the end.

43. As is clear, these powers can be found united in one sovereign or separated among parts of a sovereign body. Yet, even the most absolute of monarchs must communicate his power to ministers and take counsel with the wise. Again, no sovereign can pursue the common good without at least the active obedience on the part of citizens. Even if the authority of the sovereign is not shared, its office or at least its power must be shared. The action by which the common good is achieved and maintained must be shared in by many. Thus the power by which the entire city pursues and maintains the common good is divided among those who deserve the name citizen, in such a way that the very order constituted by this sharing of power is the order that constitutes the city, its constitution. The citizen, from the monarch and representative to the voter and even the obedient free subject, has some share,



greater or less, in the power by which the city achieves its good.

44. The city therefore stands to the citizen as a potential whole to its part. This is particularly manifest from the fact that sometimes the operation of the parts is attributed to the whole. Any number of actions are quite clearly attributed to the city or the state: military action, the work of jurors and legislators, even the act of voting. For we say that one state invades another, that the state prohibits certain actions and then prosecutes those accused of performing such actions. Again we say that a certain country 'votes' on a certain day. In fact, every statement that predicates some action of a state is so predicated in virtue of some part that performs the action. In all such operations the action of the state arises from a power that is integrated from the power of many.

45. But according to the formula stated above, the potential whole exists in each part according to its whole essence. This is not immediately evident in the case of the city. Yet the manner in which this is so becomes clear, if one considers the fact that the city is essentially an agent and therefore acts not through the mere possession of a power but through the appetite for the end. This appetite for the end of the city is clearly present in any citizen properly so called. He does not love this good accidentally, merely insofar as he finds in it some good for himself. Rather he loves it insofar as it is good to him *and* others. The citizen has an appetite that concerns not himself alone but the whole. In fact, the man who does not so love the city's good is only called a citizen abusively.

46. Note also that neither the vehemence of such love for the common good nor the scope with which such love embraces all other citizens (both of which certainly exist more and less in the various citizens) bear any necessary proportion to the power held by such citizens. Rather, these depend upon the virtue in his soul, a virtue that has been cultivated by any city truly worthy of the name. This lack of proportion is itself a sign that the love is not for the share that shall arise

to him but for the good as it belongs to the whole. And it is precisely from the citizen's love for the good of the whole and through the power portioned to him that the city truly works in him as in its part.

47. Thus the city and the citizen are as whole and part. But the city dwells in the citizen according to part of its power but according to the whole of its desire for the common good. With reference to power, the city is therefore greater than the citizen. But with reference to his appetite for the city's good, the citizen is animated by the very essence of the city, insofar as he loves this good as belonging to the whole. In this respect, the city is wholly within him. How this is compatible with his being a part and therefore less than the city will be made clear later (63).

48. Consideration here of another axiom will serve three purposes. Through it I shall first show why the city must be a potential whole (51). Then I shall make the predicate, 'better' or 'preferable', more clear (52-53). Finally I shall prepare for the consideration of the third axiom (54-55).

49. Now the following axiom is taught by Aristotle and quoted often by Saint Thomas: actions belong to particulars or supposites. Saint Thomas explains this by stating that nature is that by which one acts. It is not that which acts. Rather, the primary substance or supposite is the subject and principle of action. As I understand the principle, it determines an immediate relation between first substance and action which also concerns other categories of accidents. For the nature may cause some accidents, even particular accidents, such as a substance's natural powers, the relations that follow such powers, and so on. But actions themselves and accidents that depend upon action cannot be sufficiently caused by the nature. These must be caused by the supposite.

50. This principle is an axiom, as far as I can see, for at least two reasons. First, it relates various categories, at least substance and action, and to that extent it transcends any category. Second, both the subject and the predicate involve other

categories in some way. For the first substance or suppositum can be considered here insofar as its nature causes various accidents, such as its size and its powers, by which it is completed as an agent. Thus, it refers to many categories. Again, the dependence upon first substance that is attributed to action is communicated to any accidents that depend upon action.

51. Through this axiom first we see why the city must be a potential whole. We see at the same time why any body of men that serves as its part, an army, legislature, or jury, must also be a potential whole. For the operation of the whole exists through the operations of its parts. Since this whole has many first substances as its parts, it does not act except insofar as its parts act. This does not deny the fact that when its parts act, it is in fact the whole that acts. Rather this axiom leads us to see that the action by which the whole attains to the common good is composed of actions that belong to the citizens, each of which is a first substance, while it is the whole which operates in the citizens, animating them with love for the good to be attained.

52. Now, second, the meaning of the predicate 'preferable' is made more clear through this axiom. As already stated, the proper principle of these operations is the appetite or desire for the good in the one who operates. So, the appetite for the common good exists in the citizens themselves. In fact, the virtues by which the citizen is a citizen order his appetites and operations to the common good. When it is said, therefore, that the common good is more desirable than the private good, this comparison must be understood with reference to the citizen. It is to him that the common good is more desirable than the private good. It is the citizen who must prefer the common good to the private good.

53. If the common good were understood to be more desirable to the city taken as a whole, without reference to the appetite of the citizen, the principle would be conceived according to a totalitarian understanding. In that case the desire of the city for its good would be greater than the desire of the

member for his private good. But the demand that the citizen choose the common good would arise, not from this axiom, but from the greater power possessed by the whole, as one sees, for example, in Hobbes' understanding of political life.

54. In the third place, this recognition that the appetite and action for the good of the city belong to the citizen makes clear how one must consider the final axiom, that any perfection is proportioned to its proper perfectible. The axiom that the common good is preferable to the private good immediately considers the common and private goods as desirable to and perfecting the citizen precisely insofar as he is a citizen and again insofar as he is merely a man. As citizen, he has an appetite that looks to what is good to himself and to others. For as citizen he is part of the city and is ordered to its good. Thus the citizen has an appetite for a good that perfects not only himself but also others. The citizen is only part of what is perfectible by the common good, although he desires this good insofar as it perfects the whole. As merely a man, he has an appetite that looks to what is good to himself alone, to the perfection of his own substance. Thus a citizen is perfectible in these two ways: merely as man and as citizen.

55. Of course, man is naturally political; one can draw his association in cities from the nature signified by the name man. Yet this name does not express his participation in the city. Rather, it names him as a primary substance of such a nature. To speak of his good as he is merely a man is to speak of a good that belongs to him precisely as a primary substance or individual of this nature. Again, the *Nicomachean Ethics* shows from the concept of human nature that man is perfected by virtues that demand his participation in a city. But in doing so moral philosophy analyzes the powers and operations of the soul in some detail. The name man is prior to such analysis, and so it can be used to express the individual without such an attention to his powers and operations. Thus the good of man merely as an individual man speaks of goods that are able to perfect a man only insofar as he is an individual.

56. Now the third axiom: any perfection is proportioned to the perfectible. This is very close to saying that actuality is proportioned to the potency of which it is the actuality. For perfection is the actuality by which something is lacking none of the actuality proper to it, while the perfectible is what is apt for such perfection. But, so far as I can see, we grasp the *proportion* between these two pairs insofar as they bear the notion of the received and the receptacle. An act that is proportioned to potency is received by that potency, and such perfection is received by the perfectible.

57. But the proportion between the received and the receptacle is first seen in the category of where. To see this distinctly, one must attend to two relations between the place and the placed: the place as receiving the placed and again the placed as 'in' the place.

58. First, insofar as the place is said to receive, we describe through the notion of action, its actualization as a place. This is not an action but we grasp reception, as well as containment, through the concept of action. For in becoming a place the place does not act. It is the mobile that has some actuality, the actuality of movement. Through this actuality, the place is conceived as if it 'does' something. For insofar as the place 'receives' what is 'placed', that is insofar as the mobile moves into the place, what is potentially a place becomes an actual place. This is to say, a body's inner surface actually contains another body. This is the 'actualization' of what Saint Thomas describes as the *virtus locativa*, the 'locative power' of a place.<sup>10</sup> The place 'becomes' an actual place insofar as it receives the mobile, and by moving into the place, the mobile, so to speak, 'actualizes' the place.

59. Of course, the place does not undergo an 'actualization' as if it changed. It is the mobile that changes. Nonetheless, insofar as it enters a place and fills it, that is to say insofar as the place 'receives' it, the mobile of a determinate size bears, at

<sup>10</sup> I Q. 8 a. 2 c.

least to the imagination, the notion of an actuality that makes a potential place an actual place. In the categories to which the notion of reception will be extended, what is received will in fact be the actuality of what receives.

60. Second, insofar as the mobile is in fact somewhere, that is 'in a place', it is measured by that place. For the surface of the place is an extrinsic form that measures the mobile by its coincidence with the mobile's own surface. 'To be in' names the relation of the placed to the place. But this is to be in a measure. For place bears the notion of quantity insofar as it is an extrinsic measure.

61. Here one sees the notion of mode or proportion. The received must be received in the 'mode' of the receptacle, that is, according to the determination of the receptacle. Again, the received is proportioned to the receptacle. The receptacle can only receive what will fit in it. To speak transcendently, the actuality or nature of the receptacle (and this even includes prime matter insofar as it has a 'nature') determines what it can receive.

62. Now the citizen as citizen has an appetite for a good that perfects himself and others. He has another appetite merely as man for a good that perfects only himself. (Keep in mind that even if these goods are external, some perfection is received in the agent, insofar as he uses them.) But we see that these perfectibles have the notion of whole and part. For one good perfects himself only, the other perfects 'himself and others', 'himself *plus* others'. Since the perfectibles stand as whole to part, the perfections stand as whole to part. The common good, insofar as it is good, stands to the private good as a whole to a part. Thus the common good is 'more' good. The common good is better, more desirable, preferable.

63. In sum, to draw the predicate distinctly from the *ratio* of the subject, the common good is the perfection of the citizen as such. For it is the appetite for such a good that defines the citizen. But this appetite, the essence of the city within the citizen, is the appetite of the city for the good of its many

citizens. For, although the city must grant the citizen, who is a primary substance or supposite, a share in its power and therefore in its action, it informs him with a love for what is good to himself and others. Such an appetite compares to his appetite for his good as a mere man, the appetite for what is good to himself alone, insofar as he is the matter to the city, as a whole to a part. Thus the goods are as whole and part, and the common good is preferable to the private good.

64. Understood as a principle of action, this axiom conceives the common good and the private good as two kinds of good belonging to the same man. Each is a perfection that he desires and pursues. When both cannot be possessed, he must prefer the sort of good he possesses in common to that he possesses privately. For the common good is something that satisfies an appetite in him insofar as he is an agent in common with others. But the private good is something that can only satisfy an appetite he has for something as he acts as himself alone.

65. The force of this axiom can be felt by considering two formulations that go beyond this one. At the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle states that 'Even if the good is the same for one man and for the city, yet to attain and preserve the good of the city seems better and more perfect. For while it is lovable even to one man alone, yet it is more noble and more divine for a people and for cities.' Here he takes the good of the particular man insofar as it is substantially the same as that of the city. But he conceives it as nonetheless belonging only to him rather than to the whole. Now a man cannot attain this good apart from community. This is an abstract consideration. Yet it is close to the notion of 'enlightened self-interest'. In either way the man acts so as to achieve something that is in fact good for the whole but it is considered formally only insofar as it is good to him. On this consideration, namely only as it is ordered to the part abstracting from its relation to the whole, though it is substantially the same, it is still less desirable than the same good insofar as

it belongs to the whole. The appetite is satisfied by the same good, a good that can belong to many. But it is more satisfied by that good as possessed by oneself and others, than as possessed only by oneself. The former is a greater satisfaction.

66. A yet more abstract consideration is offered by Saint Paul. In Romans 9 he asserts, 'I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh.' He proposes the notion of one who gives up his own participation in the common good, so that the remainder of the whole of which he is a part may possess this good. This notion is not in itself abstract. Men die daily in battle so that others may possess a good that they by this very act shall no longer share. So our Lord gave up His possession of the temporal common good to obtain for us the eternal common good. But with regard to eternal beatitude this is impossible. First, to lose this good would demand a loss of the charity by which a man desires it for his kindred. Second, such loss of charity involves a contempt of God for whose sake he desires salvation both for himself and his kindred according to the flesh. Yet he recognizes, through an impossible hypothesis, namely that his damnation could achieve the salvation of the Jewish nation, that the salvation of the whole nation is more desirable than that of one man.

67. To conclude, all substances, according to perfections that occur in all the genera, are ordered as to a common good to the ultimate good of the universe, both the intrinsic good which is the very order of the universe and the extrinsic good which is God. Some substances are ordered immediately to these goods. Some substances are ordered to these goods through other substances. Aristotle manifests this at the end of *Metaphysics* 12. Within the complete order of the universe to these ultimate goods, there are found various orders to some common good that possess an intelligibility sufficient for particular sciences. It belongs to the particular science to determine what sort of appetite, whether natural or rational, is satisfied by these common goods. But, according to any of

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these orders, the common good is more desirable than the private good. The common good will stand to the private as a whole to a part and thus will satisfy the appetite of that substance more completely. This truth transcends any particular science or any genus of being.

68. And even in God Himself, where there is neither any pursuit of the good nor any multiplication of appetites, the truth of this axiom can be found according to our faith in its *transcendent* principle. For His goodness is so complete that it must be perfectly communicated in order among three eternal Persons. Now God is in no way subject to axioms. Nor is His being the consequence of some other truth. Rather, the axioms that express the truth of created natures depend upon His uncreated truth. Here too in the order of the good: although we cannot see this now, it is because the notion of common good is found within God Himself, that in all creation the common good is preferable to the private good.

## A THOMISTIC DEFENSE OF THE TRADITIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

*Fr. Sebastian Walshe, O.Praem.*

### Introduction:

Recently there has been a significant amount of research concerning the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. Among the key elements under investigation is a more precise determination of the manner in which Christ can be said to be present in the Old Testament, or Hebrew, Scriptures. This article proposes to examine and apply the exegetical principles of St. Thomas Aquinas to this matter in light of recent studies.

While there are various modes of presence, in this article, we will restrict ourselves to one particular mode in which Christ can be said to be present in the Old Testament. Namely, we intend to address the question of whether Christ is signified in the Old Testament according to the literal sense. This question, and the issues which it raises, pertain to various levels: philological, philosophical, apologetic and theological. And while we believe that significant progress towards determining an answer to this question can be made at these various levels, it is our contention that, the final resolution of this

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