

Mathias Nebel
Thierry Collaud (eds.)
Searching for the
Common Good

Philosophical, Theological and
Economic Approaches

P V E R
V A L A
E R N G
L A G O



Nomos

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Introduction

The book that these lines introduce originated in an international colloquium on the common good that was held in Autumn 2015 at the University of Fribourg. Some participants were asked to develop their talks in writing, and these were supplemented by other essays (M. Keys, M. S. Kempshall). The resulting book, nevertheless, was not meant to be the acts of a colloquium; rather it was composed as an anthology of different perspectives on a common good that can only be a dynamic, multiform, and always elusive good.

If it is possible and even necessary to think about the common good today, this thought must be nourished by the rich philosophical and theological reflection that precedes us. Several of the essays collected here shed light on this indispensable genealogy. The necessary point of departure is found in Greek and particularly in Aristotelian philosophy; we are interested in seeing how it was taken up and remodeled on the one hand during the Greek patristic period, which is extremely important for Christian and particularly for Orthodox social ethics (C. Tsironis), and on the other hand in the medieval world in its scholastic version (M. S. Kempshall), and more specifically in the Thomistic one (M. Keys). These medieval syntheses pave the way for the modern version and for the contemporary inquiry about the common good. Now the distinctive characteristic of this inquiry is the doubt that grips it concerning its very object. Reflection on the common good has been a major element in philosophical reflections from Antiquity to the medieval period, but does it still have any relevance today? This question arises inevitably in a society marked by liberalism in which the just takes precedence over the good. Isn't the good that results from the demand for justice then reduced to a formal framework that opens up and maintains the space in which individuals can best achieve their singular goods, in other words, their preferences? The *good* is then fragmented into a multitude of goods. In economic liberalism, economic growth is associated with the means offered to each individual to have the most freedom possible in choosing his initiatives and making his life decisions. It becomes the marker of the common good.

Nevertheless, the question of the common good resurfaces when economic growth runs out of steam. Although in fact the three generations

that spanned the twentieth century had the impression of a constant improvement in their standard of living, the curve charting the growth of available material goods has probably peaked. Some people began to realize this in 2008 when the whole system was shaken by a major crisis that revealed its flaws and the injustices inherent in an exclusive pursuit of “ego-centric efficiency” (P. Dembinski). Can there be then a developing common good when the goods that can be accumulated by each individual diminish and the gap widens between those who possess and those who are in need? Add to this the parallel exhaustion of the democratic system which is supposed to guarantee freedom yet finds itself reduced to the people’s ability to elect leaders without a long-term plan who promise change in a circular fashion. Maybe this is what makes so urgent the question about a good that is something other than the quantifiable good, as Amartya Sen elaborates in his idea of capabilities (M. Bonvin) or else about a commonality that goes beyond individual interest. In this sense it is invaluable to discover the economic reflections that are capable, not of revoking the market, but of making it a “civil” place, a place that contributes to the construction of a common, of the *civitas* (S. Zamagni). In addition there will be a reflection on poverty and vulnerability that also illustrates a recognition of the other which prevents us from dissociating vital needs from dignity (J. C. Huot).

By way of contrast, these references heighten our awareness of the current loss of interest in the common good. Isn’t this connected with the disinterest in commonality that is the legacy of modern political reflection, in which the community is only an instrument with which to regulate the interactions of individuals and to manage distribution? The question that was thought to be obsolete, and yet is the basic question, is whether, prior to procedural and functional justice, a *political good* in the strong sense of the term exists, whether there is such a thing, for the community or communities to which we belong, as a *telos*, a prospect, a goal toward which we can go. Reconsidering an old, forgotten question is dangerous, particularly this one, because the prospect on the horizon can be confused with nostalgia for an idealized beginning (M. Nebel). If we give in to this false nostalgia, we run the risk of withdrawing into an identity, of reconstructing an imaginary commonality, an a-temporal commonality a commonality that we supposedly possessed and supposedly allowed to degenerate, but which, in a burst of identity, we will be able to bring back. There is no need to explain the danger of this movement.

To think about the common good is to think about the good of a community as a single body and not as an aggregate of individuals. In its identification of the community with the Body of Christ, Christianity provides us

with the paradigm of social corporeality (Th. Collaud). To state the good of this community, singularized this way in its corporeality, is to state its “good life” and the junctures between this common life and the personal lives that are pursuing their goodness too. This brings us back to Paul Ricoeur’s definition of ethics, which accords with the definition of the common good that we find in Jacques Maritain: “The ‘good life’ with and for others, in just institutions,”¹ can unfold only within “the good human life of the multitude.”²

These points for reflection are the subject matter of the essays in this book. It is made up of three sections: an historical section, an economic section, and a philosophical-theological section. These discussions pose three additional questions that will not be addressed explicitly yet underlie the whole reflection, and by way of introduction we ask them as keys to reading that will stimulate interpretation. We mean the questions about the boundaries of our communities, about the tension between the universal good and the particular goods, and finally about the need to return to the common good in a political philosophy that fully accomplishes its mission.

Boundaries

Contemporary discussions about the desirability or undesirability of globalization focus on boundaries, posing simultaneously the questions about their use and their misuse. Globalization frightens people because it seems to dissolve the ties that support us and cause us live in a homogenized world. Now anxiety always generates defense mechanisms: openness will be countered by self-enclosure, community by immunity,³ by racism, live-streaming communication by identity politics and isolation. In other words, when boundaries have or seem to have disappeared, people draw new ones that are stronger and more visible. But then there are many risks that they might become lethal, defensive boundaries that mark separation instead of the living, necessary boundaries that allow passage and contact, like the membrane of a cell. Will our encounters be made by armor that clashes or by skin that touches?

- 1 Paul RICOEUR, *Oneself as Another*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1992, 172.
- 2 Jacques MARITAIN, *The Person and the Common Good*, New York, C. Scribner’s Sons, 1947, 43.
- 3 Cf. Roberto ESPOSITO, *Community, Immunity, Biopolitics*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2012.

From this perspective, the question is still also that of the common good *of others*. This realization of *other commons* in other places is of fundamental importance in order to avoid the trap of the opposition civilized/barbarians. The whole history of slavery and of colonization tragically illustrates this forgetfulness of the other and reduction of him to a useful object. It is a denial of his ability to be human and to build a commonality that is at the same time similar to ours because it is human, but different because no concrete form of social organization exhausts the riches of a human community. The reflection on the common good must necessarily be a reflection on common *goods* in the plural and on their necessary intersections. This reflection can then serve as a wake-up call, in the sense that Levinas understands it, to recognize *the other* who comes to “core-out [*dénoyauter*]” self-centeredness that denied him and to “trouble” our heart, to extract it from a placidity and a somnolence that are lethal too.⁴ A fine example of these wake-up calls is reported to us by Bartolomé de Las Casas in his *History of the Indies*. In the sixteenth century, the Dominican Friars of San Domingo suddenly became aware that the common good of the Spaniards, conceived of essentially as conquest and enrichment, was being attained by denying the *commonality* of the Indians: “You kill them, so that you may extract and obtain more and more gold every day,” as the preacher Antonio de Montesinos said. Unfortunately it almost took the decimation of the indigenous population to bring about this awakening and an end of the self-centeredness. “Are they not men?” the Dominican friar asked, do they not have a social life and therefore their own common good, apart from the Spaniards? “Tell me, by what right or justice do you hold these Indians in such cruel and horrible slavery? By what right do you wage such detestable wars on these people *who lived mildly and peacefully in their own lands?*”⁵

We see therefore how the presence of the other, which arises in a society that has lost its homogeneity, stimulates reflection on the common good by obliging us to redefine our own *good* and to recognize at the same time the presence of other common goods, but also the emergence of a more global *commonality* that proceeds from the encounter with the particular goods.

4 Emmanuel LEVINAS, *Of God who comes to mind*, Stanford University Press, 1998, 59.

5 Montesinos is quoted by Bartolomeo de LAS CASAS in his *History of the Indies*, New York, Harper & Row, 1971, chap. 4-6. The English version of the excerpt cited here is by Benjamin KEEN (ed.), *Latin American Civilization: History and Society, 1492 –the Present*, Boulder CO, Westview Press, 1991, 71-72.

From the particular to the universal: common goods

The boundaries are porous and urge us to acknowledge others in their own identity and in their goods. Along the spectrum from the individual person to the global community there is a multitude of places where the common good is spelled out. That implies two requirements for interpretation. First, it is a matter of pinpointing what *good* and what *commonality* we are talking about. Every intersubjective relational system seeks its *good*. We can thus differentiate the good of the person, the good of the family, the good of local and national communities, etc. In doing so we see that the complexity of the discourse about the common good is increased by the fact that there is not one unique common good that is to be identified, but that the notion of common good relates to different communities. Secondly, we are led to see the impossibility of absolutizing a particular good, and the constant tendency toward the prospect of a universal common good. As we said, the *good* that we identify for a concrete community is always confronted with the *goods* of other communities whose relevance we recognize. The very process of this recognition leads us to include ourselves with the other in a universality of good which, ultimately, always precedes us. When La Casas recognized that there is a common good for the Indians other than that of the Spaniards, he relativized each of these two goods so as to refer to the good of a more generic human community, a brotherhood resulting from a common humanity and more particularly from the relation to a common Creator.

The common good and political philosophy

Finally this complexity leads to the obligation to think. Speaking about the common good, while taking into account its topological non-closure and its overflowing universality, challenges us to undertake a work of political philosophy and theology.

Referring to the common good can be risky, as we have mentioned. The risk lies in the modern inversion of the relation between what is common and what is proper. What is common becomes a threat to what is proper to the individual, or else it turns into something exclusive that is proper to a collective with which some people identify. But to reject any reference to the common good, in other words to reject a common requirement transcending individual choices, in relation to which these choices must position themselves, is just as risky. It condemns the self-deciding ego to futility,

as Charles Taylor demonstrates. On the contrary, he says: “Only if I exist in a world in which history, or the demands of nature, or the needs of my fellow human beings, or the duties of citizenship, or the call of God, or something else of this order *matters* crucially, can I define an identity for myself that is not trivial. Authenticity is not the enemy of demands that emanate from beyond the self; it supposes such demands.”⁶

In order to be authentic human beings, it is therefore necessary to deploy our choices in relation to “a horizon of essential questions,” in other words, in a model that gives a coherent image of the world and of the human communities that take their place in it. Like any model, this one must be thought through, supplemented, and revised or reformed based on its confrontation with reality. This is the work of political philosophy and theology. It is necessary also for these disciplines to dare to think beyond the self-limitation of a philosophy which, according to Habermas, forbids itself “to elaborate a coherent image of the world” because of the “post-metaphysical postulate”⁷ The German philosopher then assigns to political philosophy the restricted role “of analyzing our understanding of the world and of ourselves” while relying on rational arguments. But since there is understanding of the world, is the function of political philosophy limited to validating or critiquing the reasonableness thereof, or does it instead have the task of helping to produce an image of the world that is coherent and open, an image of the world that not only validates its current forms but opens a horizon of meaning and stimulates individual and communal ethical creativity? Political philosophy, if it wants to be something other than a form of sociology, must be a forum for audacity, it must dare to propose models of understanding the world, even if it means constantly reexamining and reworking them. Isn't reading the essays collected in this book precisely an opportunity to open our minds beyond formal arrangements so as to think, in advance, of what the good is and what commonality is for the human person and for the community?

6 Charles TAYLOR, *The Malaise of Modernity*, Toronto, House of Anansi Press, Ltd., 1991, 40-41.

7 Jürgen HABERMAS, Michaël FÖSSEL, “Critique et communication: les tâches de la philosophie. Entretien avec Jürgen Habermas,” in *Esprit* 8 (2015), 40-54.

HISTORIC OVERVIEW. RECALLING THE RICHNESS AND
COMPLEXITY OF A NOTION AND ITS SELECTIVE TRANSMISSION TO
MODERNITY

The Language of the Common Good in Scholastic Political Thought

By its opportune choice of phrasing, an invitation to ‘delineate the problem’ of the common good seems to allow a welcome degree of both negative and positive freedom - to avoid the presumption of any definitive solution and to present instead an outline which will necessarily be open to further refinement and qualification. In accepting such an invitation, two approaches naturally present themselves. The ‘problem’ of the common good can be surveyed in terms of its historiography, that is, it can be analysed in terms of how a specifically medieval conception of the idea has been handled by more modern scholarship, chiefly but not exclusively in relation to the individual and the individual good. The result would provide a commentary on so-called medieval ‘corporatism’ and the emergence of natural ‘rights’, on the neo-Thomist distinction between individual and person, and on a broadly Protestant analysis of the birth of a ‘lay’ or ‘secular’ spirit in the centuries before the Reformation.¹ Alternatively, the notion of the common good can be scrutinised historically, that is, it can be viewed within the history of political and ethical thought and from a particular methodological perspective which concentrates on an idea, less as a reified abstract noun with an agency all of its own, and more as a means of thinking and writing that could be deployed in a series of specific situational and historical contexts, thereby reflecting not only a broader conceptual

1 For these themes, see for example Otto Von GIERKE, *Political Theories of the Middle Age*, Cambridge, CUP, 1900; Brian TIERNEY, *The Idea of Natural Rights – Studies on Natural Rights, Natural Law and Church Law 1150-1625*, Atlanta, Scholar Press, 1997; Janet COLEMAN, “On the Limits of Obedience and the Avoidance of Sin according to Late Medieval and Early Modern Scholars”, in Virpi MÄKINEN and Petter KORKMAN (Eds), *Transformations in Medieval and Early-Modern Rights Discourse*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2007, 3-36; Theodore I. ESCHMANN, “Bonum commune melius est quam bonum unius. Eine Studie über den Wertvorrang des Personalien bei Thomas von Aquin”, in *Mediaeval Studies* 6 (1944), 62-120; Antoine Pierre VERPAALLEN, *Der Begriff des Gemeinwohls bei Thomas von Aquin - ein Beitrag zum Problem des Personalismus*, Heidelberg, F.H. Kerle, 1954; Georges de LAGARDE, *La naissance de l'esprit laïque au déclin du Moyen-âge*, 3rd edn., 5 vols., Louvain, Éditions Nauwelaerts, 1956-70; Walter ULLMANN, *Principles of Government and Politics in the Middle Ages*, London, Methuen, 1961, 231-279.

framework but also the specific intentions and strategies of individual authors.² It is the second of these approaches which the title of this paper is designed to reflect and on the assumption of two fundamental premises. The first is an understanding that use of the term ‘language’ is understood permissively, that is, as an acknowledgment of the several possibilities that were open to medieval writers when they were choosing between the - often very different - ways of construing the phrase ‘common good’ that were on offer to them, and where their decision was, in turn, conditioned by the precise contexts for which that language was intended to be instrumental.³ The second is an understanding that the semantic precision with which this language was developed and deployed by scholastic philosophers and theologians in particular reflects the fact that it was these writers, perhaps more than any other group, who were able to explore the notion of the common good with unprecedented clarity and rigour and even, as a result, *themselves* ‘delineate the problem’.

An Oxford nominalist is perhaps inevitably drawn to concentrate on one empirical instantiation of a concept or an idea in action, both in theory and in practice. In this case, the example - perhaps paradigm - is provided by Godfrey of Fontaines. Godfrey is a particularly interesting scholastic writer on whom to concentrate precisely because of the mixture of influences on his thought: he taught as a secular master, that is, as a member of the clergy but not of a religious order, and was therefore not necessarily tied to any one particular ‘school’ of thought; he studied at Paris under both Thomas Aquinas and Siger of Brabant and, as a result, was not only critical of the condemnations of 1277 but remained thereafter a defiantly close expositor

2 Matthew S. KEMPSTALL, *The Common Good in Late Medieval Political Thought*, Oxford, OUP, 1999.

3 For this conceptual range, see, for example, Theodore ESCHMANN, “A Thomistic Glossary on the Principle of the Preeminence of a Common Good”, in *Mediaeval Studies* 5 (1943), 123-165; Peter HIBST, *Utilitas Publica - Gemeiner Nutz - Gemeinwohl*, Frankfurt, Peter Lang, 1991; Jean GAUDEMET, “*Utilitas publica*”, in *Revue historique de droit français et étranger* 29 (1951), 465-499; Theodore HONSELL, “Gemeinwohl und öffentliches Interesse im klassischen römischen Recht”, in *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Romanistische Abteilung* 95 (1978), 93-137; Michael H. HOEFELICH, “The Concept of *utilitas populi* in Early Ecclesiastical Law and Government”, in *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Kanonistische Abteilung* 67 (1981), 36-74. For contextual range, see, for example, Pierre MICHAUD-QUANTIN, *Universitas, Expressions du mouvement communautaire dans le moyen-âge latin*, Paris, Vrin, 1970, and more recently, Elodie LECUPPRE-DESJARDIN, Anne-Laure VAN BRUAENE (Eds), *De Bono Communi – the Discourse and Practice of the Common Good in the European City (13th-16th c.)*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2010.

of Aristotle.⁴ Godfrey is also an interesting thinker because of the way in which his ideas were articulated over a period of some two decades in the 1280s and 1290s, chiefly as part of an extended - and dynamic - debate with other scholastic philosophers and theologians, most notably Henry of Ghent, another secular master, and the Augustinian James of Viterbo, the course of which can be traced in a series of quodlibetic questions that were delivered publicly at the university of Paris.⁵ Godfrey is not just a second-generation scholastic writer, in other words, a philosopher and theologian who was in a position to test the ethical and political ideas of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, analysing the lacunae and weak-spots in their initial syntheses of Aristotelian natural philosophy and Christian patristic theology, but he is also someone whose evolving ideas can be traced in the course of their development through the give-and-take of academic disputation and in response to external political events.⁶

So what do Godfrey of Fontaines' writings reveal about the terms in which the notion of 'the common good' came to be conceived by scholastic philosophers and theologians and, just as importantly, the ways in which these writers came to differ in their interpretation of how it should be analysed and understood? First and foremost, Godfrey took up and developed an association that had been made by both Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, namely the connection between the idea of the common good in human society and a metaphysical principle of goodness in the universe. Godfrey did so by expanding upon the idea of analogical predication, that is, the principle that individual goods participate in universal goodness by analogy - they are 'part' of goodness in the sense that they depend on it for their existence and are directed towards it as their goal.⁷ The result was a broad theoretical model for explaining how the good of individual human

4 John F. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Godfrey of Fontaines - A Study in Late Thirteenth Century Philosophy*, Washington, Catholic University Press, 1981.

5 HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibeta*, ed. Vitalis ZUCCOLIUS, Venice, 1613; *Opera Omnia*, ed. Raymond MACKENET *et al.*, Leuven, 1979; GODFREY OF FONTAINES, *Quodlibeta* I-XV, eds. Maurice de WULF *et al.*, Louvain, 1904-37 (Les Philosophes Belges, II-V, XIV); JAMES OF VITERBO, *Disputationes de Quolibet* I-IV, ed. Eelcko YPMA, Würzburg, 1968-75.

6 KEMPSHALL, *op.cit.*, Chs. 8-9.

7 Eg. AQUINAS, *Sententia Libri Ethicorum* (Leonine edn., Rome 1969) I.7; *Summa Theologiae* (Leonine edn., Rome 1888-1906) Ia 6.3-4; Ia 26.3; Ia IIae 34.3; IaIIae 90.2.; Cf. John F. WIPPEL, *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas*. Washington, Catholic University of America Press, 1984; ID., "Thomas Aquinas and Participation", in ed. John F. WIPPEL, *Studies in Medieval Philosophy*. Washington, Catholic University of America Press, 1987, 117-158.

beings could be understood to be always included within the common good of the human community and thus a framework in which to place Aristotle's trenchant comparative terminology from book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: «For even if the good is the same for an individual as for a *polis*, that of the *polis* is obviously greater and more perfect to obtain and preserve. For while the good of an individual is desirable, what is good for people or for politics is nobler and more divine». ⁸

In emphasising the analogical predication of goodness in all individual things, Godfrey of Fontaines relied upon Aquinas' explanation of how the common good could be described as 'superior' to the individual good in qualitative (*perfectius*, *melius*, *divinius*), and not just quantitative (*maius*), terms. ⁹ In doing so, however, Godfrey effectively sidelined an alternative model for understanding the relationship between individual goods and the common good, one which Aquinas had also articulated and again drawn from Aristotle, in this case from book XII of the *Metaphysics*: «We must also inquire how the nature of the whole [universe] contains the good and the highest good, whether as something separate and self-subsisting or as the order of its parts. Or is it in both ways, as an army does? For the good of an army consists both in its order and in its commander, but mainly in the latter; for he does not exist for the sake of the order, but the order exists for him. And all things, both plants and animals..., are ordered together in some way, but not alike; and things are not such that there is no relation between one thing and another, but there is a connection. For all things are ordered together to one end». ¹⁰ According to this so-called twofold, or 'dual', order (*duplex ordo*), parts of a whole are formally ordered towards one another but also towards an exterior good - typically, in the case of the metaphor of the army, individual soldiers have a relation

8 ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.2 1094b7-10, ed. René Antoine GAUTHIER, Brussels-Leiden, 1972 (Aristoteles Latinus, XXVI.3), 142: «*Si enim et idem est uni et civitati, maiusque et perfectius quod civitatis videtur et suscipere, et salvare. amabile quidem enim et uni soli, melius vero et divinius, genti et civitatibus*».

9 AQUINAS, *Sententia Libri Ethicorum* I.2. Cf. ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Super Ethica Commentum et Quaestiones* I.2, Bernhard GEYER, Wilhelm KÜBEL (Eds), *Opera Omnia*, Münster, 1951-, vol. XIV.1, 11; *Ethicorum Libri Decem* I.3.14, ed. Auguste BORGNET, *Opera Omnia*, 38 vols., Paris, 1890-9, vol. VII, 48-49; KEMPSHALL, *op.cit.*, Chs. 1-2.

10 ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, XII.10 1075a11-15, ed. Gudrun VUILLEMIN-DIEM, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1995, 266.

towards one another but also towards their commander and towards a shared goal of military victory.¹¹

The availability of this second model - from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* - and Godfrey of Fontaines' explicit preference for the first - from Aristotle's *Ethics* - provides the first generalisation which might be made about a specifically scholastic analysis of the common good, namely that, at the most fundamental level, the concept could be construed in two ways, *either* as an all-inclusive principle of goodness *or* as a structure of mutual relations. Translated into straightforwardly human and political terms, this meant that the common good of the human community could be understood *either* as the perfection of moral virtue to which all human associations should aim *or* the more limited and instrumental goal of peace, concord and security which will make that moral perfection possible. The availability of alternative models, of *two* ways of conceptualising the common good of human society, is an important point to emphasise. Its significance becomes particularly apparent when Godfrey of Fontaines is compared with his sparring-partner Henry of Ghent, where it is a striking feature of their exchanges that, whereas Godfrey consistently appeals to the common good of the human community in terms of its all-inclusive goodness, Henry shows much greater willingness to conceive of this good as something more limited and material, and even as a common good within which the individual good might *not*, in fact, be included.¹²

In essence, the difference between these two conceptual models is reflected in a fundamental semantic distinction - between the common good when it is considered as *bonum commune* and the common good when it is considered as *communis utilitas*. This linguistic differentiation had a precise frame of reference in Aristotelian terminology, which was taken, once again, from the *Ethics*, in this case the distinction that was drawn between three categories of goods - the morally worthy, the useful and the pleasurable - and, by extension, between the different types of human association to which these goods could give rise. On the one hand, Aristotle argued, there are natural associations, such as the household and the *polis*, which are based on moral worth or virtue; on the other, there are those associations

11 AQUINAS, *Sententia Super Metaphysicam* XII.12, ed. Roberto BUSA, *Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia*, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: 1980.

12 HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibet* IX.19, 293-295. Cf. George de LAGARDE, « La philosophie sociale d'Henri de Gand et Godefroid de Fontaines », in *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 14 (1943-45), 73-142; ID., *La Naissance de l'esprit laïque*, II Ch. 8; KEMPSHALL, *op.cit.*, Ch. 6.

which are based on utility or pleasure alone and are designed merely to secure mutual and temporary material self-interest. «Those who love one another for the sake of utility,» he writes, «love the other person, not in himself, but only in so far as they will obtain some good for themselves from him.... So those who love for the sake of utility are fond of the other because of what is good for themselves, ... not in far as the person they love is who he is, but in so far as he is useful... These friendships, then, are incidental, since the person is loved, not in so far as he is who he is, but in so far as he provides some good. Such friendships are thus easily dissolved..., when the parties to them do not remain unchanged; for if one party is no longer... useful, the other stops loving him. What is useful does not remain the same, but differs according to different circumstances. So when the reason for their being friends has gone, the friendship is dissolved as well, since it existed only for that reason».¹³

In discussing the precise nature of the relationship between the common good and the individual good, both Godfrey of Fontaines and Henry of Ghent were drawn to examine the principles of identity and superiority which were set out in book I of the *Ethics* and, by extension, proceeded to discuss the inclusion or non-inclusion of the individual good within the common good of the human community. In doing so, however, both Godfrey and Henry were also drawn into a more detailed analysis of one further passage from Aristotle, namely the account of civic self-sacrifice which had been put forward in book IX of the *Ethics*. «It is true also of the good person,» Aristotle writes, «that he does a great deal for his friends and his country, and will die for them if he must; he will sacrifice money, honours, and in general the goods for which people compete, procuring for himself what is noble. He would prefer a short period of intense pleasure to a long period of mild pleasure, a year of living nobly to many indifferent years, and a single noble and great action to many trivial ones. Presumably this is what happens with those who die for others; it is indeed a great and noble thing that they choose for themselves.... In all praiseworthy actions, then, the good person is seen to assign himself the larger share of what is noble».¹⁴ In the case of self-sacrifice, in other words, Aristotle seemed to argue that, in the process of laying down their life for the common good (that is, for the common good of happiness and the life of virtue), the individual will thereby secure their own greater (*maius*) or greatest (*maximum*) good. In doing so, and in using this sort of terminology, his argument clearly invited

13 ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, II.3 1104b30-1; VIII.2 1155b17-21.

14 ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IX.8 1169a11-b2.

a debate over how such a principle could be made consistent with the 'greater and more perfect' common good in book I of the *Ethics*. When the individual lays down their life, are they, first and foremost, giving priority to their own greatest individual good - namely a supreme act of virtue - rather than the common good of the human community which will then result from their action?

Godfrey of Fontaines and Henry of Ghent were both agreed that the act of self-sacrifice which was described in book IX of the *Ethics* constitutes an individual's expression of the virtue of love (*caritas*) or, in Aristotle's own terms, friendship (*amicitia*).¹⁵ Where Godfrey and Henry disagreed, and disagreed profoundly, is on how this virtue actually operated within a hierarchy of goods in Creation - what was usually termed in scholastic theology the 'order of love' (*ordo caritatis*). For Henry of Ghent, the *ordo caritatis* comprised a hierarchy of love of God, love of self and love of neighbour. In his view - and for support he appeals directly to book IX of the *Ethics* - the common good of the human community is simply the result or consequence of an individual's self-love being properly directed towards God.¹⁶ For Godfrey of Fontaines, by contrast, the *ordo caritatis* comprises love of self, love of neighbour and love of God, but with love of the common good being interposed between neighbour and God. Godfrey justifies this insertion by appealing to the transformative nature of love which, he argues, necessarily goes beyond Aristotle's definition of friendship as love for another individual or for a second self. Instead, Godfrey argues, individuals are motivated by love of self and love of neighbour but also by love for what unites and transforms the two individuals, namely their shared or common good of virtuous activity and ultimately their shared or common good in God. The love of true friendship, therefore, involves more than two individual goods, more than just reciprocal self-interest - it actually involves a third good, namely union or communion in a shared or common good of a life of virtue. As a result, for Godfrey, an individual has a greater love for the common good than for their own individual good because their individual good is always included in the common good and depends on it for its existence - the individual good will indeed result from an act of self-

15 For the latter, see Bénédicte SÈRE, *Penser l'amitié au Moyen Âge: étude historique des commentaires sur les livres VIII et IX de l'Éthique à Nicomaque (XIIIe-XVe siècle)*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2007.

16 HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibet* IV.11, f. 160 r.; XII.13, 67-79.

sacrifice but, in the performance of this virtuous action, the individual will still love the common good more.¹⁷

Godfrey's detailed analysis of the relative priority of individual good and common good in the act of self-sacrifice opened up still further points of disagreement with Henry of Ghent, but it also drew him into a sharp exchange with James of Viterbo, who had succeeded Giles of Rome as the Augustinian master in theology at Paris. According to James of Viterbo, book IX of Aristotle's *Ethics* demonstrates that human beings will always have a greater *natural* love for themselves than they do for the common good, whether that common good is identified in the human community or in God. Only grace, or rather the gracious love of *caritas*, will enable humans to love the common good more than themselves. As far as James was concerned, therefore, what Aristotle's *Ethics* proved was that greater natural love always follows greater union or unity and, in this regard, there is no greater natural unity than that of an individual human being with themselves. Like Henry of Ghent, therefore, James of Viterbo concludes that, in an act of self-sacrifice, the individual shows a greater natural love for himself than for the common good which will thereby result as a consequence of his virtuous action.¹⁸

Godfrey's response to this line of argument was to maintain that individuals have a greater unity or conjunction with what serves as the cause of their own being or goodness. In the process, however, he was also moved to analyse a fourth and final passage from Aristotle, once again from the *Ethics* but on this occasion taken from the beginning of book V: «Justice is, in a sense, complete virtue, not without qualification but in relation to another person... And it is complete virtue in the fullest sense because it is the exercise of complete virtue. It is complete because he who possesses it can exercise his virtue in relation to another person, not only himself... Justice, in this sense, is not a part of virtue, but the whole of virtue».¹⁹ These brief remarks formed the starting-point for an extensive - and indeed exhaustive - discussion by Godfrey of the sense in which general or legal justice can be said to be all virtue. Justice is the same as virtue, he argues,

17 GODEFROY OF FONTAINES, *Quodlibet* VI.10, 182-218; X.6, 318-325. Cf. Thomas M. OSBORNE, *Love of Self and Love of God in Thirteenth-Century Ethics*. Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2005.

18 JAMES OF VITERBIO, *Quodlibet* II.20, 202-214.

19 ARISTOTILE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, V.1 1129b26-1130a14, V.2 1130b5-1131a9, 454-457: «*iustitia virtus quidem est perfecta sed non simpliciter sed ad alterum... in iustitia autem simul omnis virtus est, et perfecta maxime virtus quoniam perfecte virtutis usus est... iustitia non pars virtutis sed tota virtus est*». Cf. AQUINAS, *Sententia Libri Ethicorum*, V.2-4.