COMMON GOOD AND PRIVATE GOOD

(1) On first thoughts and second thoughts

Perhaps the two greatest theoretical questions concern the existence and attributes of God, and the immortality of the rational soul. And on these questions, it seems that most men, at most times and in most places, have thought rightly. Men generally have thought that there is a God, and have had some sense of His power and wisdom. They have also believed that the human soul survives the death of the body, and even, in some cases, that the good souls are rewarded and the evil punished in the afterlife. This is perhaps why St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, says that there is no excuse for acting as if these beliefs were not true; the evidence is conclusive even to a man of ordinary intelligence.

And yet St. Thomas, when he argues that Divine Revelation is necessary, points out that even with respect to what can be known about God from the things He has made, most men, without the aid of revelation, go seriously astray. Without faith, he says, the truth about God will be known only "to a few, after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors." How can this be?

It seems that our first conceptions of things, which are vague and indistinct, are generally right. Moved, as it were, by the instinct for truth which belongs to the very nature of our understanding, our first thoughts are true thoughts. With respect to these first conceptions, the movement of our mind is natural, like the falling of a stone; it is not within its power to think otherwise. But as the mind advances, seeking a clear, distinct, and detailed understanding, it begins to go astray. The Greek philosopher Thales, often called the first philosopher, said that all things come from one principle. In this, he spoke rightly: the one is necessarily prior to the many. But what is this one principle, in his view? It is *water:* the absolutely first principle *becomes* the things of which it is the principle. In this he erred grievously, but not unreasonably. Of all the things and principles which we experience, the material sems to be absolutely prior: it can be without the others, but not they without it. Even the agents or makers we experience presuppose the material from which they are made. We see, then, in the light of our Faith, that Thales' first thought was true, but his second, false. (One might almost say, *inevitably* false.) But if one's second thought is not right, what about one's third and fourth thoughts? It seems one must go further and further astray.

The history of human religions bears this out only too well. Monotheism gives way to polytheism, and the many gods recognized are invested with the passsions and follies of human beings, and , in all too many cases, are diabolical rather than divine. One regards with dismay the impressive remains of human religions in Central America and the Far East, which confirm so determinately the accounts given in the Old Testament, in which nearly all the representations of the divine have been degraded into the bestial and demonic. But it is only the light of Faith which rescues us from such disorders; without that light, we should likely all of us go fatally wrong, in one way or another, and probably be even more mistaken than our predecessors.

A survey of the funerary and burial customs of the ancients also indicates unmistakeably the disorder which infects our original true conception of the immortality of the rational soul. When we consider, for example, the arrangements which were made for the future bliss of the pharaohs of Egypt --buried as they were with all their possessions and under huge pyramids-- we can only wonder what conception of life after death could reasonably have supported so vast an effort. I read recently of a Chinese emperor, apparently the builder of the Great Wall, whose tomb has been discovered in the midst of a great army of clay soldiers, well prepared, it would seem, to wage war for their emperor, for ever and ever. Instructed by the Catholic Faith, we readily see the absurdity of such arrangements, while also recognizing the almost inevitable human weakness of mind that leads to such irrational disorders.

You may well wonder what all of this has to do with the subject of this lecture, which is the common good. This is its relevance. With respect to our conceptions of the good in general, and of common and private good in particular, the situtation I have described also obtains, though less manifestly. Our first vague and general conceptions of the good, and of the common good, are true and certain, for they are among the objects naturally known to us. But as we seek a more distinct and detailed understanding, we are prone to confusions and errors. Further, because a consideration of the good has an immediate bearing on choice and action, our own desires are very much involved. If these desires are unformed or disordered, we are not likely to think well about the good. In Aristotle's words, "As each man is, so does the end appear to him." Because the problem I have been discussing is manifest in the question mentioned before --concerning the existence and attributes of God and the immortality of the human soul-- I thought it better to speak of how it arises in these cases beforehand. Yet we shall see, as we proceed, how our understanding is also prone to go astray when we are thinking

about the good in general, and about the common good in particular.

(2) On the good in general

Just as all our theoretical reasonings begin with the notion of *being*, so do all our practical reasonings begin with the notion of the *good.* Our fundamental conception of the good is stated by Aristotle at the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: "the good is what all desire" --a statement often quoted but seldom sufficiently considered. We are not saying that our concern with the good is *only* practical; we recognize many goods which cannot be the objects of our pursuit, and no explanation of any existing thing can be complete without an account of the good which is its perfection. For the good is the cause of causes. Rather, we are saying that there is no practical thinking or reasoning which does not begin with a consideration of the good. And from this first notion of the good, as St. Thomas notes, immediately comes the first axiom of the practical reason: good is to be done and evil avoided.

So far so good. To see that the good is the desirable is the right first step, a step we all make, at least implicitly. Aristotle deserves our honor, not for taking this step, but for pointing out that it is the *first* step. [Understanding a principle does not always involve the recognition that it is a principle.] But as we seek to clarify our notion of the good, and work out some of the details about it, we encounter questions and difficulties. The failure to answer these questions rightly, and resolve the difficulties which arise, will lead to serious confusions and mistakes later on, when we come to consider common good and private good. One such question which arises concerns the relation of goodness to being. Since they differ in notion or definition, one might suppose they also differ in reality. And do we not say that it is one thing for something *to be*, and quite another for it *to be good* ? Viewed under this aspect, the good appears to be something other than being, a sort of quality added to the being of a thing. And its mode of predication seems to support this, for it is said in answer to the question *how is it?*

However, such an opinion about the good cannot be sustained. It is evident, upon reflection, that when we desire something, we do not desire some quality which it possesses, but the thing itself. When a sick man desires health, he does not desire it in virtue of some *additional* quality of goodness which it has. It would be strange indeed to say he desires the goodness of health rather than health itself. A man suffering from the cold might desire fire for its warmth, but he

would not desire warmth for some additional quality of goodness which it possesses. Further, the mode of predicating "good" actually works against any such notion, for quality is a *per se* division of *being.* Accordingly, few, if any, philosophers have maintained that goodness is some quality in addition to the substantial and accidental being of a thing. And the argument to the contrary --that to be and to be good are not the same-- can be easily resolved, following St.Thomas, by distinguishing between substantial and accidental being, and pointing out that a thing is said to be good *simply* (i.e. without qualification) by reason of something other than its *substantial* being, but not something other than its being altogether. For to be just and temperate and brave, because of which we say that someone is a good man (without qualification), are part of the his being, though not part of his substantial being.

There is another opinion about the good, however, which is much more plausible, and has had adherents in antiquity, as well as in modern times. It is, in some respects, the opposite of the opinion we have just been considering. One might almost say that, since it concerns the good , the cause of causes, it defines modern philosophy, as it separates itself from the tradition of Plato and Aristotle, and the teachings of the Catholic Church.

This opinion takes its origin from a common principle, the definition of the good as the object of desire. Since the desire for an object is other than the object itself, one might consider the name "good" as no more than an extrinsic denomination. Goodness, in this view, would be no more than a name attached to one thing because of a reality which exists entirely in another. As the American philosopher John Dewey said, there is no reason whatever for calling a thing desirable except the fact that someone desires it. One version of this opinion is the familiar distinction of "values" from "facts" in contemporary social science. A statement of "value" --the assertion that something is good or bad-- does not, it is said, signify anything true about the object named, but only expresses the speaker's attitude. Those typically modern philosophers named "positivists" agree, for they maintain that statements of value are pseudo-statements, being in fact no more than expressions of emotion.

What makes this opinion plausible, at least when considered superficially, is the great diversity of human desires. Other men desire other things, and the same man desires other things at other times. In this respect, this opinion is analogous to the view that the truth is nothing other than what appears to each man. Struck by the universal and fundamental disagreements of the philosophers, one is

inclined to doubt that there is a single truth about any philosophical issue.

It would be beyond the scope of our present concern to present a detailed critique of this view of the good. Later we shall explain how it is especially destructive of a right understanding of the common good, though, by reason of its universality, it is destructive of all right understanding of the good. Nevertheless, something about this opinion itself needs to be said before we proceed farther, since what we shall say by way of response and criticism will be helpful when we come to discuss common and private good.

To begin with, we distinguish between what is desired for itself and what is desired for another. It is evident that what is desired for another presupposes what is desired for itself, and that not everything desired can be desired for another. [In every genus of cause, the posterior presupposes the prior, and the intermediate presupposes the first.] So our discussion must concern what is desired for itself.

Now as regards such objects, the ones we desire for themselves, we say that they *attract* us. They have power and influence over us, not we over them. Though our desires may give a certain extrinsic lustre to their objects, before all our desire is the power of such objects to move us. If our desires caused their objects to be, or affected them in some way, or were simply contemporaneous with them, it would be reasonable to regard desire as an original fact about the world. But as it is, we recognize that we are *attracted, moved* and *affected* by the objects of desire. These objects are the *causes* and *principles* of desire, just as the objects of knowledge are causes and principles of our knowledge. Thus, rather than being simply an extrinsic denomination, "good" must signify the being of things, insofar as that being is the principle of desire. That is why the good is said to be *desirable* rather than *desired*: the "-able" in "desirable" does not signify the ability to desire in something else, but rather the object's *power* to cause desire.

Further, when we consider how the good desired for its own sake compares to the one desiring it, with respect to the being of each, we see that the former compares to the latter as *perfection* to the *perfectible*, or, to speak more generally, as *act* to *potency*. Thus, a man desires health, which is a form and actuality of the body, and knowledge, which is a form and actuality of the soul. Life compares to the living as act to potency, and even pleasure is a certain actuality of the soul or the composite of body and soul.

Accordingly, when St. Thomas argues in the *Summa Theologiae* that

being and the good are the same in reality, the first middle term is "perfection." For (he argues) the desirable is the *perfect* (for each thing desires its perfection), and a thing is perfect insofar as it is *actual*, and it is actual insofar as it *is*. Thus, in speaking most formally about the good, St. Thomas defines it as *perfectivum alterius per modum finis* --perfective of another in the manner of an end.

This final phrase, "per modum finis," is required to distinguish the causality belonging to the good as such from the causality of the agent. For although we use some of the same verbs to describe both kinds of causality, such as "move," "influence," and "attract," and in both cases we speak of the *power* of the cause, they are not the same in meaning. The agent cause is that *from* which movement originates, while the good is that *for* which, or *for the sake of* which, the movement is. Thus, for example, health is the for the sake of which the doctor acts, but that from which he acts is the medical art he possesses. A sign of the difference is that the end for which one is acting often does not yet exist --the sick man acts for the sake of the health he presently lacks, while it is essential to agent causality that the cause actually exist. So that is why St. Thomas adds "per modum finis" --to distinguish the causality of the good from causality "per modum agentis."

If the good, then, is real, and in things, the next question is whether it be one or many. For in any inquiry about causes and principles, the first question seems to be whether they be one or many. Thus Aristotle, when he investigates the principles of nature, first asks whether they be one or many. Likewise, then, in investigating the good, we must ask whether it be one or many. But is not the answer obvious: are there not many goods, just as there are many beings? This certainly appears to be common ground, but there seems to be at least one major dissenter. Plato seems to hold that there is a single form or species of the good in which all good things partake. Perhaps the one form is like *square* or *heat* --there are many square things and many hot things, but each of the particulars is said to be such by reason of a single form. This would seem to allow for many good things, and yet Plato's account of participation puts this in doubt. For participation is conceived as *imitation* --the particulars are *images* of the form, like reflections in a mirror or shadows on a wall. If so, there will be many imitations or images of the good, but only one which is good in itself. Plato seems to restrict *formal* causality to *exemplar* causality, where the effect becomes *like* the cause.

In the light of our Catholic faith, we see that Plato has spoken well, and not well. In saying that there is a single good by which all things are good, and

that it is separate and independent in being, he speaks well. But in saying that there is only one form of the good, and that all other things are only like the good, and not good in themselves, he speaks badly. ('God saw all the things that He had made, and they were very good.") Rather, all these particular goods are like the *first* good; the intrinsic forms of things, whereby they have their own goodness, are what they are and are good only in reference to the extrinsic form of the One Who is Goodness itself. But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

If there are many goods, how are they to be distinguished? No doubt the good can be divided in many ways, but most of these divisions will be accidental. [For example, I can divide *triangle* in many ways: into red and and blue triangles, and hot and cold triangles, but these are accidental divisions.] If our division is to be *per se*, we must look to what defines the good as such. Accordingly, if the good is the desirable, a *per se* division of the good must be based upon the different *ways* or *reasons* for naming something good.

The most fundamental division is the one given by St. Thomas in the First Part of the *Summa Theologiae.* There the good is divided into the honorable, the pleasant, and the useful. This division follows a consideration of the *ways* in which, or the *reasons* why, a thing is desirable. The honorable is what is desirable for its own sake, the pleasant is what is desirable insofar as it pleases, and the useful is what is desirable for the sake of something else. As St. Thomas points out, these goods are not opposed; one and the same thing can be good in all three ways. The honorable ought to be pleasant, and it can be useful, though there are some goods which are only desirable for the sake of something else, and others which are only desirable because they are pleasant. But the *reasons* are opposed: these are three essentially different reasons for desire.

But if there are many goods, and many reasons for calling something good, what order is there among them? For where there is formal distinction, there is order, and with this, before and after, and more and less. Now some would say that there is no order among the goods themselves, but that each man puts them in some particular order in accordance with his own preferences. We might name this the "democratic view" of the order among goods, since it follows the two tendencies which characterize democracy --toward equality and toward freedom (understood as self-determination).

Thus, we find that the common views of the chief human good fall within the threefold division we have been considering. Some consider wealth the chief

good, others prefer the life of pleasure, while still others make honor their chief pursuit. A few consider virtuous activity the chief good. And then, of course, those who put their end in one one member of this division disagree among themselves about whatis pricipal within it. Not all who live for pleasure, for example, prefer the same pleasures. Nevertheless, the fact that men put their chief good in one of these indicates that the division is universal and fundamental .

But it is not difficult to see that the order among goods is not simply due to individual preference. This is clearest in the case of the useful good, which is desired after that for which it is useful, and less than it, though wealth has a certain likeness to the chief good because of the apparent universality of its power. And the honorable is naturally prior to the pleasant, though many would deny this, at least implicitly, by their way of living. For those who consider the life of pleasure to be the chief good cannot give a reason to prefer one pleasure to another, nor can they give an account of why certain pleasures are bad. Pleasures differ in kind according to the actions or passions they accompany; thus, if a pleasure is judged to be good or bad, or better or worse, *in kind*, the principle of judgment must be the action or passion it accompanies. So pleasure is no longer the supreme standard and measure. Therefore, in order to be consistent, those who make pleasure the chief good can only invoke individual preference as the principle of order. But this is a denial that the good is in things. For if the extrinsic fact of preference is what makes one thing better than another, it is the extrinsic fact of desire that makes it good in the first place.

There is, then, this order among the goods: the honorable is first, the pleasant, second, and the useful, third. Having come so far, we are not surprised to find that even among the things which are good in themselves, there is also an order. The goods of the soul are before the goods of the body, and some goods of the soul are before others.

(3) On common good and private good

This concludes our account of the first division of the good. The second *per se* division, which presupposes the first, of that of the common good and the private good. The latter is also named "proper good." However, we prefer to call it "private," to avoid a certain misunderstanding which might immediately arise from an imprecise use of the word "proper." "Proper" can mean "one's own" as *opposed* to "another's"; in the present context, this might imply the the common good is not

one's own good, but the good of another. This in turn easily leads to what has been called the "totalitarian" notion of the common good, the notion that the good of the community is not the good of the members of that community. "Private," on the other hand, clearly signifies what is one's own and *not* another's.

The principle of this division is the notion of the good as an end --*that for the sake of which.* For the end is twofold, and desire has a double object. There is the good desired and one for whom it is desired. For example, to desire health is to desire that someone be healthy. Thus, we say that the doctor does what he does for the sake of health, and for the sake of the patient. In considering the good, we necessarily consider the one for whom it is a good. Because of this we can distinguish goods on the basis of *whose* goods they are.

Now sometimes these distinctions are accidental --that is, the goods distinguished are not good in different ways or for different reasons. Thus, for example, when we distinguish what is good for George from what is good for Harry, we do not make a *per se* division of the good. Their shoes may be of different sizes --George's shoes do not fit Harry-- but they are not good in different ways or for different reasons. Distinctions of this sort do not involve the greater and lesser goods, or the order of one good to another. Those for whom these goods are goods differ materially rather than formally.

But some distinctions arising from this principle make a *per se* division of the good, and involve greater and lesser goods, and the order of one good to another. In particular (and this is the theme of our lecture), some goods are *universal* in their goodness. Such goods are named "common," as opposed to "private." A private good, in the strict sense, can only be the good of a single individual --it cannot at the same time be the good of another individual. My shoes, for example, are my private good; they cannot be given to another without being lost to me. Other goods, however, are universal or common in their goodness, in that they can belong to many at once, with ceasing to be the good of each one of that many. They are shared by many, without being lost or diminished in the sharing. For example, truth, which is the good of the understanding, is a good of this sort; it can be shared by many, without loss or diminution. Thus, one does not try to *appropriate* such a good; rather, one seeks to share it with others. [This attitude is illustrated even in small matters. When one hears an especially good joke, one can hardly wait to tell it to others; it is "too good to keep to oneself."]

Such goods and called both "universal" and "common," the one name determining and clarifying the other. For each of these names is said in several ways. The common which is universal is not opposed to the *uncommon* --it does not mean "ordinary"-- but to the private. And the universal which is common in the strict sense is distinguished from the logical universal (such as the genus), which has only a unity *in notion.* For the common good is a universal *in causando* (in causing) and, in one case, a universal *in essendo* (in being).

When one recognizes that a good is common, and not private to oneself, there are two natural consequences. One of these is that one orders oneself to the good, rather than the good to oneself. Wonder, reverence, and dedication naturally result from recognizing that one is exceeded, in some cases infinitely, by the good one desires. [Some, from a mistaken humility, withdraw from the pursuit of such a good.] The other natural consequence is that one sees oneself as part of a whole. The common good is the good of a whole, of which one is a part, and one pursues it and enjoys it as part of that whole.

This can be exemplified in many ways. One small but instructive example can be seen in the members of an athletic team. Their effort, in a game, is directed to a common end
--victory, and each member of the team is expected to pursue that end as part of the whole team, and to enjoy the eventual victory as part of the whole team. Any attempt on the part of an individual member to achieve personal glory at the expense of the common effort is rightly condemned, and even the offending member, and even in these corrupt times, is thoroughly ashamed of himself.

This dedication to a common good is shown in a greater and a nobler way in warfare. For example, one reads with wonder and edification of the behavior of American soldiers and sailors during the surprise attack of the Japonese upon Pearl Harbor in December of 1941. Without warning or preparation, they faced an enemy more numerous, better equipped and better trained, with the military advantage of surprise. But these excellent men did not run for cover; they ran to their battle stations, and made as strong a counter-attack as they could muster. Without hesitation, they offered their own lives for the safety and integrity of their country, of which their station at Pearl Harbor was an outpost.

Other examples, more often to the contrary, and closer to home (as they say), can easily be found, though most of them are painful to contemplate. How often have you found yourself in the middle of an argument, defending and even

advocating a position, because it is your own, even though you can see, if only dimly, through the haze which the passion of disputation creates, that your adversary has a better case? For those of us who are involved in the intellectual life, this is a major stumbling-block and occasion of sin. If the truth is not a common good, what is? If we subordinate the good of truth to the private good of our self-esteem, what excuse can we offer to the One Who is the Truth itself and the Good Who is common to every creature? Given the universal goodness of the truth, the only right attitude is to order oneself to it --to discover it, communicate it, and defend it.

However, it is not essential to the common good that it be *actually* possessed in common, as if it became such a good by being actually shared by many. If this were the case, the common good would not differ in kind or in its intrinsic goodness from the private good, or be preferable to it, and the order among goods would be established extrinsically, by the desires of those who pursue them. On this supposition, the good would not be in things. No, what is essential is the *communicability* of such a good, which is the effect of its abundant goodness. Neither is it essential that the common good be pursued in common, though, for the most part, attaining such a good requires common action of some sort. This is certainly true with respect to the common good of civil society; civil peace, for example, requires the co-ordinated efforts of many. And although the contemplative life is solitary, the attainment of its good requires the efforts of many who communicate one with another

Up to this point, our account of common good and private good seems true and uncontroversial. But let us recall what we said at the outset about first thoughts and second thoughts. We then noted that when we attempt to clarify and deepen our understanding of some fundamental truth, and work out its details, we are prone to fall into error, and lose what we have gained through our original insight. So it is with our understanding of of common good and private good. Let us see how this comes about.

First of all, misunderstandings of the nature of the good in general are especially destructive of a right understanding of the common good. Thus, those who identify the good with that which is in fact desired cannot hold that there is a common good. For there are many who desire, and each one's desire can only can make its object the singular good of the one who desires it. My desire cannot make its object your good, nor can your desire make its object my good. If such a view were true, no man could be part of a true community (for community supposes

a common good), but each man would be, as it were, his own whole, and could only order everything to himself. [This is the view we find in Hobbes' *Leviathan*; each individual, in Hobbes' view, enters into a social body entirely with a view to his private advantage.]

Similar disorders result from from a bad understanding of the first division of the good. Some apparently identify the good with the useful. For whenever the goodness of something is under consideration, they ask, "What is it good *for*?" This is essentially the position of those who always judge the goodness or badness of an action by its consequences. But such a position could hardly be held as stated, because it is obviously irrational. What is desirable for another must presuppose what is desirable for itself. The principal object of desire must be that for the sake of which the useful is desired, and one cannot be forever looking to some further consequence. And indeed, when one examines such positions in detail, one sees that what is really held to be the chief good is the pleasant. The useful is what is finally useful for the pleasant, and the consequences feared are the *unpleasant* ones. Public discussion of good and evil in a democracy is usually carried on in this way, and we often hear some trying to dissuade others from engaging in certain activities by telling them "they will feel very badly about it later." We refrain from bad actions because we fear the torment of "guilt feelings" which would likely ensue, and when we have acted badly, we seek therapists to relieve that torment.

Now the view that the good is the pleasant, like the view that is is simply what is in fact desired, is destructive of a right understanding of the common good. For the pleasures, like the desires, are many, and other men have other desires. And even though a good which is pleasant may be common, one who holds this position and lives accordingly, orders that good to his own pleasure. So the good, which is shared, is ordered to the pleasure, which is not shared. Unless it be understood, then, that the good is the honorable, the pleasant, and the useful, and that the honorable is the first in order, one cannot have a just conception of common good and private good.

But even if one rightly conceives the good in general, and has a true understanding of its primary division, and the order within that division, difficulties and confusions arise when one seeks a fuller understanding of how common good and private good are distinguished and ordered. A common mistake is to confuse the universality of the common good, which is a universality of causality, with universality in predicability. This sort of mistake can arise in the consideration of

every genus of cause, in at least three ways.

First of all, because the account of the cause is always given in universal terms, one is inclined to think that cause is to effect as universal to particular. This is especially likely when one is explaining the attributes of an individual from the species to which it belongs. One corrects this mistake by noting that when cause and effect are rightly correlated, universal causes are assigned to universal effects, and particular causes to particular effects.

Secondly, a more plausible mistake results from confusing causes universal in causality with causes universal in predication. This can be illustrated by an apparent contradiction in the works of Aristotle. For in the *Metaphysics*, he says that universals are the hardest for us to know, since they are the most removed from sensation, while in the *Physics,* he says that we must begin by considering the most universal principles, because they are best known to us. St. Thomas resolves this paradox by explaining that in the *Metaphysics* Aristotle is speaking of the causes that are most universal *in causality*, which are distinct in being from particular causes, and are the causes of them, while in the *Physics* he is speaking of the *genera* of the causes, which are distinct from the particulars only *in notion*. Thus, for example, the sun is a universal cause of growth, distinct in being from the particular causes of growth (such as the vital principles within each living thing), which all depend upon it. But when we say that the soul is universally the cause of growth, we do not conceive it as a single thing, distinct in being from particular souls, and a cause of them. Here universality is in understanding, not in causality. Accordingly, the account in the first two books of the *Physics* concerns matter, form, agent, and end, which are not four single causes, but the *genera* of causes. In the *Metaphysics*, on the other hand, one is principally concerned with the substances separated *in being*, which are the causes of those in matter.



This distinction can be found in all four kinds of cause. For example *letters* and *syllables* are the matter of words, and letters are the matter of syllables. Letters are more universal in causality than syllables; they are the matter of matters. *Sound of voice*, on the other hand, is more universal than letter or syllable, but not in causality, but in predication. Likewise, in an army, the *general* is more universal than a *captain* in causality, for he commands the captain; he is a commander of commanders. But in predication, *soldier* is more universal than general and captain. Again, the *exemplar* form is distinct in being from the *intrinsic* forms which imitate it, and is a cause of them, while *form* is more

universal than *soul* only in predication. Finally, *health* is more universal than *exercise* in causality, for one exercises for the sake of health, while *good* is more universal than health in predication.

Thirdly, a confusion of universal cause with universal predicate also arises from an implicit assumption that principles of the knowledge of a thing are also principles of the being of that thing. This is the illicit conversion of the true statement that principles of being are also principles of knowledge. It is illustrated by the common assertion that natural events occur as they do *because of* the laws of nature, or that they *obey* those laws. [Though 'obey', here, might be simply a metaphor.] The "laws of nature" are general descriptions of the behavior of natural things, not the causes of that behavior. And likewise, no one acts for the sake of the good *in general*; a doctor, for example, acts for the sake of the health of this patient, a health which is singular and private to the patient. To say that the art of medicine is ordered to *health* is simply to describe in general the goods which are pursued in each particular case. There is no universal health which is the principal object of the doctor's concern.

Accordingly, when we speak of the common good, as opposed to the private good, we mean a good which is universal in causality, rather than in predication. *Health*, for example, is a good common to many --for there are many healthy men-- but it is universal only in predication. The many do not share in one and the same health, though each is called "healthy" for the same reason. But when many know the *truth* , it is one and the same truth that they know. When I desire health, what I desire is the same in kind as your health, but differs individually; it is another particular of the same species. But the truth I desire is not another truth than the one you know; it is not another truth of the same species.

One finds a similar communicability in lesser goods. There can be many performances of the same piece of music, and many who hear it. Nothing of it is lost, nor does the music suffer any division, in the sharing. Even a good joke (to take our earlier example) has this sort of communicability. The joke I am telling you is the same joke I heard; it is not another joke of the same species.

This distinction, then, between the common good and the private good, seems clear enough, when proposed in general, and with clear examples. But when we begin to consider these goods in detail, and with respect to particular situations, we run into difficulties. Some of these are occasioned by disorders in our own desires. Imitating, unwitttingly, the Father of Lies, we are inclined, through original sin, to prefer our private good, which we order to ourselves, to the

common good, to which we should order ourselves. For a lecture of this sort, which is not a sermon or a homily, it is sufficient to advert to this fact, though it is, I think, the most significant fact bearing upon a disordered disposition toward these goods.

Other difficulties arise, however, from our indistinct understanding of the first and universal good which is the first principle of practical reasonings. The good which we first understand in this confused way seems to be *generic* relative to the particular, clearly conceived goods which are the objects of particular preferences. One tends to think, then, that the particular goods have a greater determination in themselves, and specify, as it were, the universal good which is the our first object of our understanding.