

Truthfulness, the Common Good, and the Hierarchy of Goods

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An ongoing debate among natural law theorists concerns the way in which the various basic goods are related to each other. St. Thomas maintains that the ultimate good of human beings is the beatific vision. It follows that any action is good inasmuch as it leads one toward this goal, while an action is evil if it leads one away. Germain Grisez laments the way in which many post-Suarezian or “conventional” natural law theorists have used this understanding of the ultimate human end as a foundation for their natural law theory. According to Grisez, they have attempted to derive basic moral principles by combining a theoretical knowledge of human nature with the knowledge that God wills that we achieve the fulfillment of that nature.¹ By seeking to act in conformity with the natural purposes of one’s faculties, one fulfills the divine will, and this in turn leads to the attainment of the beatific vision.

This attempt at natural law theory leads to an otherworldly attitude, says Grisez, for the goods of this life have all been instrumentalized for the sake of religion, that is, obedience to the will of God.² His own theory avoids this otherworldliness by claiming that each basic human good is

1. Germain Grisez, “The First Principle of Practical Reason: A Commentary on the *Summa Theologiae*, Question 94, Article 2,” *Natural Law Forum* 10 (1965), p. 193; *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 1; *Christian Moral Principles* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), p. 104.

2. Grisez, *Christian Moral Principles*, pp. 17, 25.

irreducible.³ Hence while it may be true that religion is among the basic human goods, there are other ones as well, and their goodness is not deduced from their relation to the good of religion. Many Thomists have criticized Grisez for the way in which he puts the good of religion on the same level as that of play, another one of the basic goods in Grisez's scheme.⁴ Hittinger, for example, points out important reasons for Aquinas's claim that religion "commands all other virtues."⁵

This paper goes beyond the discussion of how religion is related to other basic goods, proposing that one can see the interrelationships among *all* genera of goods once one has looked at them under the light of the common good. The term "common good" has a broader meaning in this essay than it does in St. Thomas's own writings. Aquinas's treatise on law in the *Summa Theologiae* correlates the common good with law. According to this treatise, every type of law—be it eternal, natural, human, or divine—has its corresponding common good or end. In fact, even the participation by non-rational creatures in the Eternal Law has God as their common good. What this article proposes, however, is that the correlates of the different kinds of law are not the only species of common goods, for virtuous self-love and friendship likewise aim at a common good. Only by looking at these as common goods are we able to discern how the various genera of goods are related to each other.

The argument proceeds in two stages. First, it establishes an essential, twofold link between each sort of common good and the pursuit and expression of truth. That is, truthfulness is always motivated by the desire to attain a common good of some sort; conversely one can attain each sort of common good only inasmuch as the seeker is truthful. For example, virtuous self-love requires self-honesty or authenticity, and friendship requires honesty toward others.

After looking at the various levels of common good and showing how each is essentially linked with some type of truthfulness, the paper examines how the various types of common goods are related to each other. It argues that for Aquinas the inclination toward a more *universal* common good encompasses and perfects the inclination toward a more *particular* common good. Consequently, the quest for God as the common good of the universe encompasses and elevates the desire to live in society as well

3. *Ibid.*, p. 349.

4. Russel Hittinger, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), pp. 124, 142.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

as all other desires. This broader application of the term "common good" thereby makes it possible for one to identify a hierarchy among basic human goods, while avoiding the sort of instrumentalizing of the lower good to the higher one that Grisez associates with conventional natural law theory.

Authentic Self-love

In his *Commentary on the Nichomachean Ethics* and in the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas echoes Aristotle's analysis of how a virtuous person is first of all a friend of his self.⁶ Here we find a microcosmic analog to the common good. Consider how two friends share time together with each other and agree about what is painful and pleasant. These two characteristics are found in the self-love of a virtuous person as well. That is, he too enjoys spending time with himself inasmuch as he takes pleasure in reflecting upon his past, present and future. And just as two friends share joys and sorrows together, so too does a virtuous human find a kind of agreement between his sentient and rational appetitive principles.⁷

These two ways in which a virtuous person is a friend to himself seem to be interrelated. For the virtuous person distinguishes himself from the vicious one precisely by seeking the *good of his whole life*, and "whole life" here includes not only the events of his past, present and future, but also his sensory and intellectual operations. In fact, these two are interrelated: a life as a temporal whole and the whole of that life as formed by sense and intellect. In order to illustrate how they are interrelated, we should contrast the self-love of the virtuous person with the self-hatred that can be found in a particular kind of vicious person: one who is over-indulgent.

An over-indulgent person seeks what is sensually pleasing to the sense of touch while disregarding the relationship between pleasure and the rational good. He seeks the good *ut nunc* (as something to be had right now) rather than the good simply inasmuch as it is good, or *bonum simpliciter* (good without qualification). In this manner, he treats himself as if he were an animal.⁸ It might be more accurate to say that he treats himself as if he were an imperfect animal, that is, one without memory or foresight. For even perfect animals (*i.e.*, those with memory and anticipation) do a better

6. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* [henceforth *ST*], II-II, q. 25, a. 7, c.; *In Decem Libros Ethicorum Aristotelis ad Nichomachum Expositio* [henceforth *In Nich.*] (Turin: Marietti, 1949), IX, lec. 9.

7. *In Nich.*, IX, lec. 4, pars. 1808-9.

8. *In Nich.*, IX, lec. 8, par. 1864.

job of managing pleasures than over-indulgent humans. Perfect animals engage in painful or at least non-gratifying behavior when they expect it to lead to some anticipated good. Even though higher brutes cannot grasp order as such, they are naturally guided by instinctive judgment and appetite to act in an orderly manner. But like Callicles in the *Gorgias*,⁹ the over-indulgent person rejects order in his life. In seeking immediate gratification, the over-indulgent person avoids thinking about the past and future significance of his actions. That is, he refuses to think about his life as a temporal whole, seeking pleasure here and now instead.¹⁰ And in refusing to go beyond the present moment in his considerations, he refuses to consider what is good *simpliciter*.

The self-controlled person, on the other hand, has learned to distinguish the good *simpliciter* from the good *ut nunc* as a result of thinking holistically. That is, by relating his present to his past and future he discerns that the good of sense is ordered toward the good of reason. In other words, a person with goodwill toward himself recognizes that the sensory inclinations are good only to the degree that they are ordered toward the good of his whole life. This recognition involves a special kind of truthfulness, which we could call "authenticity" or being honest to oneself. Only a person with this virtue of authenticity is able to integrate his sensory and rational appetite and thereby enjoy the good *simpliciter*.

Thus we see that there is a close relationship between truthfulness and the common good, broadly conceived. For the virtuous person seeks the truth about his own well-being precisely because he regards his whole life as a kind of common good which he wishes to possess.

Love between Friends

The *sine qua non* of friendship is goodwill, i.e., the wish that the other person live well. Friends not only have goodwill; they also consistently act to achieve each other's well being. One should not suppose, however, that each friend acts in a manner that is utterly altruistic or self-oblivious. That is, one who acts for the sake of a friend need not forget about his own well-being. On the contrary, one's own well-being is furthered through acts of friendship. But that is not to say that one benefits a friend for the sake of some consequence beneficial to oneself. On the contrary, friendship in the fullest sense of the term does not involve one's

9. Plato *Gorgias* 492a.

10. *In Nich.*, IX, lec. 4, par. 1816.

instrumentalizing the other person. Instead of either using the other or forgetting about one's own well-being, a friend identifies his own good *with* the good of the other.¹¹

The core of the life of friendship seems to consist in what we might call collaboration or "cooperative ventures." That is, friendship germinates and grows only when friends act in concert in performing acts consonant with virtue. The goal of these collaborations typically seems to be some good other than friendship itself: friends who go skiing together, for example, enjoy the many things that happen during a skiing event as a concrete good enjoyed by both together. But we must add that the cooperation itself is a kind of common good, for both find it natural and enjoyable to act together. That is because the joint acts of friendship give one a chance to enjoy one's own excellence as reflected in one's friend. Furthermore, one enjoys one's own acts of self-generosity toward one's "other self."¹²

Aquinas points out that friends deliberate with each other.¹³ I would argue that this remark is a bit of an understatement because deliberation is just one phase in practical reasoning, and friends seem to deliberate together only because they have already apprehended the same goal. Furthermore, they typically deliberate because they also anticipate collaborating on the ends they seek. It follows that not just deliberation but the entire spectrum of practical reasoning tends to overlap between friends. And this overlapping underscores how truthfulness is a necessary condition for the cooperation that lies at the core of friendship. For friends cannot act together for the same goal unless they think together, and they cannot think together unless they communicate honestly. The cognitive, affective, and operative unity achieved by friends in their common pursuits is therefore rooted in truthfulness. And since one enjoys friendship itself as a good only after having reflected on this unity, it follows that one enjoys friendship itself as a common good only inasmuch as one believes that, as friends, they have been truthful to each other.

We could summarize the relationship between truthfulness and friendship in the following manner: (1) the desire to attain a common good motivates friends to communicate in a truthful manner; (2) friends act as one only to the degree that there is truthfulness; and (3) one can enjoy the acts of friendship only to the degree that one perceives that both friends' interactions have been grounded in honesty.

11. *In Nich.*, IX, lec. 8 par. 1860, Aquinas describes friendship as a kind of oneness.

12. *ST*, I-II, q. 4, a. 8, c.

13. *ST*, I-II, q. 14, a. 3, ad 4.

Justice

Aquinas informs us that there is a parallel between the way in which the ability to think abstractly enables members of society to communicate with each other, and the way in which it enables them to work together for the common good. This parallel illustrates how truthfulness and the common good are interrelated at the societal level.

With animal communication, non-rational animals are guided by instinctive judgment. Although this instinctive judgment is a kind of participation in reason, these animals do not possess reason's grasp of what is universal. Therefore, they seek only particular goods at a particular place and time. Humans too seek particular goods, but they do so under a universal formality.¹⁴ That is, they pursue particular goods *qua* participating in the universal good. This difference has consequences for the ways in which humans and other social animals communicate. Because brutes rely upon sentient cognition—which is concerned with the here and now—they *can only communicate with one who is present here and now*. But humans, as Aquinas points out in his *Commentary on Aristotle's De Interpretatione*, are capable of intellectual cognition, which abstracts from the here and now. This abstraction enables humans to consider future and distant objects. Aquinas says therefore that only humans resort to writing because only an animal capable of abstraction would bother to communicate with those who are remote in time and place.¹⁵

This ability to communicate with those who are absent, says Aquinas at the beginning of his *Commentary on the Politics*, is closely related to the human ability to recognize what is just and unjust. That is, brutes can convey only how they feel here and now, while humans can talk about what is useful and harmful as such. Therefore, he concludes, humans and not brutes can thematize the good and the bad, the just and the unjust.¹⁶

The parochial way in which non-rational animals think and operate is most apparent in those cases in which an animal is hostile toward those that do not belong to its group, even though they may be of the same species. It is proper to non-rational animals *qua* non-rational to be friendly only towards those with whom they are familiar and hostile

14. *ST*, I, q. 80, a. 2, ad 2.

15. Thomas Aquinas, *In Aristotelis Libros Peri Hermeneias* (Turin: Marietti, 1955), I, lec. 2, par. 2.

16. Thomas Aquinas, *In Libros Politicorum Aristotelis* (Turin: Marietti, 1951), I, lec. 1, par. 29.

toward those with whom they are unfamiliar.¹⁷ That is because brutes perceive only “this good” (e.g., the good of their “family”) rather than the good as such.¹⁸

We can contrast the animal hostility toward the unfamiliar with the way in which just human beings work together with strangers at the cash register, in a government office, etc. Those who engage in the latter transactions may form a kind of friendship which Aristotle calls the friendship of utility.¹⁹ One could argue, however, that this kind of friendship flourishes only within the context of a broader solidarity that exists among those who agree about justice. Consider how virtuous members of the same society whose personal interests are in competition with each other will show self-restraint in their pursuit of their particular, competing goals when they believe that it is just to do so. Just members of society will treat even competitors and adversaries in a fair manner. It should be noted that in certain situations, even friends may find their goals somewhat diverging from each other. In such cases, justice preserves friendship while injustice destroys it. In all of these scenarios, justice guides those who for some reason are not functioning as friends in the full sense of the term to act together for the common good.

From the above we can infer the relationship between truthfulness and the common good in society. A society is a living, cohesive whole only to the degree that those who are not necessarily familiar with each other wish to act in unison for a common good. This social cohesion requires communication that reaches beyond the here and now. It requires the ability to communicate both with those with whom one is on familiar terms as well as with strangers. Aquinas notes, therefore, that societies get along better when members speak the same language.²⁰ But more important than the commonness of a shared language are the shared beliefs that are communicated through speech and action. And the principle of all of these beliefs is that it is fitting that all members of this society (both the familiar and the stranger) share in the same common good. This belief animates all fruitful discussions about how to achieve justice.

17. Note that the implication here is that all animals that are *naturally* hostile to strangers of the same species are irrational. No claim is being made for the converse, i.e., that all irrational animals are hostile to strangers of the same species, for some animals are in fact friendly toward strangers of the same species.

18. “This good” signifies a particular good at a particular time and place, as opposed to “the good as such.”

19. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, chap. 3.

20. Aquinas, *In Peri Hermeneias*, I, lec. 2, par. 2.

Two conclusions about a just society result: first, truthful communication with strangers is desirable precisely because one recognizes a common good which transcends one's immediate family or circle of friends. An honest person recognizes not only the good of his immediate family and acquaintances, but also that of society as a whole precisely by apprehending *the good* under a universal formality.

Secondly, one can achieve the common good of society only to the degree that there is truthfulness among its members. Aquinas points out that society would not be able to function if its members could not trust each other.²¹ This claim is true on more than one level. First and most obviously, if members of society were to lie to each other frequently, eventually they would be unable to cooperate in the activities that constitute the life of a society. But on a deeper level, we could argue that the very act of lying immediately alienates the perpetrator from his listeners. One who lies in order to influence the actions of others is treating those whom he deceives like sub-human animals. And a government that acts in this manner may well be treating its citizens like cattle to be herded. Certain material benefits may accrue to citizens as a result of these manipulations, but it cannot be called a common good of rational beings.

Approaches to God

Let us now turn to the proposition that humans seek knowledge of God precisely inasmuch as they realize that God is the common good of the universe.

We may begin by defining what is meant by "common good of the universe." In Book III of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Aquinas uses the principle that every agent acts for the sake of a good to argue for the conclusion that God, as the highest good, is cause of the goodness of all things and is the end of all things. Aquinas calls God the common good of the universe in order to indicate that "the good of all things taken together depends on [God]."²²

The claim that God is the common good of the universe plays a central role in Aquinas's theory of natural law. The eternal law, which consists of the divine ideas, is promulgated by God's giving each creature its natural inclinations. Each creature therefore participates in the eternal law by seek-

21. *ST*, II-II, q. 109, a. 3, ad 1.

22. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* [hereafter *ScG*], III, cap. 17, par. 6. See also *ST*, I-II, q. 94, a. 2, c.

ing its own good. And in seeking its own good, each creature in some sense seeks God.²³ Unlike sub-rational creatures, however, rational ones are cognizant of the good as such. That is, we seek particular things only inasmuch as we apprehend them as sharing in goodness.²⁴ It follows that happiness, which is the complete attainment of what rational creatures strive for, consists of the most complete possession of goodness that a rational creature could wish for. That is, the ultimate end of man is the beatific vision of God, i.e., an immediate cognitive union with God.²⁵

Although every human is searching for happiness, certainly it is not clear to every human being that happiness consists of the vision of God. Aquinas acknowledges as much at the beginning of the *Summa* when he says that we have a general and confused notion of God planted in us by nature. That is, we naturally desire happiness but we do not necessarily have a clear idea of what constitutes happiness.²⁶ A key task here, therefore, is to describe how speculative wonder is essentially ordered toward the contemplation of God. We can do this by considering the stages through which a philosopher might come to recognize that knowing God constitutes our true and complete happiness.

Up to this point, we have examined truthfulness as it relates to the active life. That is, we have pointed out that friends and fellow members of society find it desirable to communicate truthfully at least inasmuch as doing so enables them to engage in transitive actions (i.e., physical interactions with one's environment) through which they come to possess a common good. Truthfulness as it falls under this description pertains to practical rather than speculative reasoning. But there are other cases in which the *very* possession of truth seems to be the goal of human striving. These occur only when we seek to possess and share truths about *necessities*, that is, about realities and aspects of reality that cannot be changed by human action.

One may argue that a human being desires to know necessary truths because of a fundamental desire to understand the order that exists in the world as a whole. Consider how we may be struck with the desire to understand why one type of thing functions as it does. If our desire for knowledge is not merely subordinated toward transitive actions, then we will not be satisfied with looking at that object in an isolated fashion. In-

23. *SCG*, III, cap.17, par. 2.

24. *ST*, I, q. 80, a. 2, ad 2.

25. *ST*, I-II, q. 3, a. 8, c.

26. *ST*, I, q. 2, a. 1, ad 1.

stead, the quest for an adequate understanding of it will lead us to ask broader and broader questions until it develops into universal wonder. This tendency illustrates how the desire to understand the nature of this or that type of thing is animated by an inchoate desire to know how *all* of reality coheres or fits together. It seems, therefore, that the kind of wonder that drives speculative inquiry is *cosmic* in nature or it is not wonder at all. That is, speculative inquiry is fueled by the desire to understand what kind of order exists in the universe as a whole.

Our philosophical desire to understand the order that exists in the whole world is rooted in the awareness that our own well-being is tied to that order. We understand that our own being is better than that of non-cognizant things and that of non-rational animals. In fact, humans are the highest beings to be found in the material world, although there are higher, immaterial beings. Thus the degree of goodness that we possess fits into a kind of cosmic order. On the other hand, if there were no such order, then calling our life "good" would be a mere convention or a result of an anthropocentric perspective.

Of course, the order existing among the parts of the universe has an implicit reference to that which is best, i.e., to Goodness Itself. The desire to know order, therefore, is fulfilled only with the knowledge of God as the very Source of being of all creatures and hence their common good. Therefore, God as the Common Good of the universe is the ultimate object of speculative inquiry in this life. And to the extent that one understands that the best of all beings is a personal being (*i.e.*, one characterized by knowledge and will), one will regard the very existence of the universe as the result of a free, creative act on God's part. One will also regard this personal being as likewise capable of communicating with creatures. It may be natural for man to desire to communicate with and live in a kind of society with the Best of all beings. But since friendship presupposes equality among friends, some may consider it impossible to enter into friendship with God—impossible unless we somehow were enabled to share in the Divine Nature. Nevertheless, even such a person may at least wish for what he regards as impossible, so that the highest striving of mankind is for a kind of divinization that makes friendship with God possible.

The preceding remarks about God as the Common Good of the universe can be summarized with two conclusions. First: one engages in speculative inquiry because one desires to know the purpose of the universe. This inquiry may lead to the conclusion that God is the common good of the universe, which may in turn awaken a spiritual longing for unity with God. Secondly, the ultimate way in which we may attain union

with God is through a cognitive union with God which Aquinas calls the beatific vision. Once again we attain a common good only inasmuch as truth is shared.

The Interrelations among Human Inclinations

Let us now examine how the various inclinations are related to each other. It can be argued that some common goods are more universal than others, and that the love of the more universal common good perfects one's love for the more particular. The key to arriving at an understanding of these interrelations is the following analogy: authentic self-love is related to the love for the common good one shares with a friend as the love for the common good that one shares with fellow members of one's society is related to the love for the common good of the universe. In other words, there is an analogy of proportionality among the pairs that we can construct out of these four terms. To put it in formal language, $A/B : B/C : C/D$, where A is the self-love; B is the love that animates friendship; C is the love that animates the virtue of justice;²⁷ and D is the desire to know the common good of the universe, which animates virtues such as philosophical wisdom and religion.

Each of the first terms in the above analogy is related to the second as the "particular" is to the "common." For example, self-love is concerned with what is particularly one's own, i.e., one's own well-being, while friendship focuses on the goods that human beings who know each other can share in common. Friendship is concerned with the good of those whom one has encountered within the confines of one's own particular place and time, while justice (at least inasmuch as it distinguishes itself from friendship) seeks to share a common good even with those who are outsiders, strangers, competitors, foreigners, etc. Finally justice is directed toward the common good of one's own particular society at a particular place and time, while wisdom and religion are directed toward the common good of the entire universe for all places and times.

27. The word "justice" in this section signifies principally the virtue that Aquinas calls "legal justice" (*iustitia legalis*). This virtue relates all moral virtues to the common good of society: see *ST*, II-II, q. 58, a. 5, c; q. 61, a. 5, ad 4; *In Nich.*, V, lec. 2, par. 13. For that reason Aquinas in *ST*, II-II, q. 58, a. 6, c. notes a parallel between legal justice and the virtue of charity. Yet the term "justice" in this section may also apply to the virtues of distributive and communicative justice inasmuch as these are motivated by goodwill. Through this goodwill one wishes the common good of society for particular individuals: *ST*, II-II, q. 61, a. 1, ad 4.

The above comparison helps us to see how the virtues and practices that perfect the inclinations toward more common goods influence the inclinations toward more particular goods. The minimal condition for loving oneself is for one to be concerned with one's own bodily existence. But friendship transforms self-love to something more profound than the mere will to survive. One who has friends desires not only to stay alive rather than die, but also to live with one's friends rather than be alone. In loving one's friends, one loves friendship as a good for oneself. Friendship therefore transforms and deepens one's self-love. Wishing to spend time with a friend is, if you will, a better way of loving oneself than merely wanting to stay alive.

The virtue of justice transforms and deepens friendship, for one who recognizes strangers as sharing in a common good is able to love one's own friends in a more perfect manner than one who fails to value the well-being of strangers and other outsiders. Furthermore, the love that animates justice deepens self-love, for a person guided by this solidarity with fellow citizens wants not only to live well with his family and friends but also to share in the life of a community that extends beyond the duration of his own bodily life. He is more clearly aware of the excellence of the best part of his soul (*i.e.*, the rational part), for he recognizes that he shares reason in common with all other humans. We should note in contrast that those who contribute to society for merely tribal reasons do not have a clear grasp of what is good about themselves. They fail to love the best part of themselves. We could say, therefore, that a just man loves himself more profoundly than those who show goodwill only toward those in their immediate circles.

One can argue that the virtues associated with knowledge of the common good of the universe transform all others. For example, devotion to God can transform goodwill toward fellow citizens into something greater than justice, for a person who loves God wishes the same transcendent good (*i.e.*, union with the divine) for his fellow finite rational beings as well as for himself.²⁸ Furthermore, the one who is devoted to God is able to enter into friendships in which the greatest degree of mutual love abounds, for the common good that religious friends share is greater than any other

28. *ST*, II-II, q. 25, a. 1, c. & a. 2, c. Note that this love for God may be either the natural love for God as creator and final end or common good of the universe, or the infused theological virtue of charity through which one loves God as the object of beatitude: *ST*, I-II, q. 109, c & ad 3. See also *ST*, I, q. 60, a. 5, c.

common good.²⁹ And since this person wishes the greatest good for him or herself, we might say that the one who loves God has perfect self-love.

In each of the above cases, the inclination directed toward a more universal good transforms the inclination directed toward a more particular good into something more excellent. That is, one who loves God is able to attain more perfectly all of the goods that one seeks through acts of justice; one who is just is able to attain more perfectly all of the goods that one seeks through acts of friendship; and one who is a genuine friend may attain more perfectly the goods that one seeks through self-love. It follows that the inclination to know the truth about God can transform all other inclinations. The virtue of religion, animated by the love of God, directs all other virtues by transforming them into something greater.

Conclusion

All human inclinations are rooted in the rational creature's natural love for the universal good. But one only gradually comes to recognize that God alone corresponds to this natural love. One starts with a more particular understanding of what is good, and after a process of making many comparisons, learns to distinguish what is more particular from what is more universal. For example, one becomes a good friend by recognizing that the same goods that one wishes for oneself can also be wished for those with whom one lives in close contact. And one becomes a good member of society by recognizing that the same good will that one has toward one's family members and close friends can also be had toward strangers. In making these and similar discoveries, one learns that the particular good is good only inasmuch as it is ordered toward the common good. Moral growth is therefore a process through which one comes to recognize the nature of the universal good more and more clearly.

Thus the discovery that only union with God, as the common good of the universe, can satisfy the longings of the human heart need not instrumentalize other goods. This discovery does not annul the goodness of all other things that one sought, so that they are now seen as worthless; rather, it intensifies our appreciation of their goodness, for one who acquires a theocentric moral perspective loves himself, his friends, and fellow members of society more deeply than before. There is no question here of instrumentalizing other goods for the sake of religion or for the

29. Note that Aquinas recognizes that in this life, contemplation requires friends: *ST*, I-II, q. 4, a. 8, c.

sake of attaining the beatific vision.

Moral philosophy attains the status of a science to the degree that it explains why specific actions are good, which it does by referring all particular goods to the universal good. For example, a philosopher can say that the enjoyment of friendship is good inasmuch as it is ordered toward the enjoyment of God. To say this, however, is not to regard friendship as devoid of intrinsic goodness other than its instrumentality toward the beatific vision. Rather, it is to recognize that friendship itself possesses an inner teleology that is fulfilled only inasmuch as it is permeated by our quest for and possession of the highest good. By showing that we are ultimately seeking to know God, the moral philosopher simply renders explicit what is implicit in our quest for happiness.