

IS RECIPROCITY THE BEST PATH FOR THE COMMON GOOD?

JOSÉ T. RAGA

It is a great honour for me to undertake the task of commenting on Prof. Zamagni's presentation at this fourteenth Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, corresponding to the year 2008. There are three principal reasons for my personal satisfaction at this honour. Firstly, Professor Zamagni is a university colleague of proven rigour, a rigour applied with excellent results to the study of the Social Doctrine of the Church and its penetration in the development of the social sciences. Secondly, because his contribution to the Plenary Session is an example of his *modus operandi* with respect to the carrying out of scientific research, on a matter of such importance as that of determining the *iter* of a community to the common good, its own common good and that of universal society. Last but not least, our long and consolidated friendship, that *virtutis opinio* of which Cicero spoke,¹ is both a source of pleasure and a cause for gratitude.

We coincide in many aspects of doctrine and we share many commitments and objectives. Therefore, a special effort will be required on my part to achieve objectivity in these observations and enable personal closeness in thinking and criteria to give way to objectivity in the task entrusted to me.

The work of Prof. Zamagni shows a rich historical and doctrinal illustration of the space which man, and ultimately the community, occupies in the consideration of economic endeavour and in the scientific construction of the Economy and the models which tend towards the satisfaction of human needs: fundamentally, the Welfare State model. In this respect he moves with clarity and logic between free economy models and planned models, which have maximum public-sector intervention and

¹ See M.T. Cicero, *De amicitia*, XI, 37.

deny the capacity to choose of the singular subjects or individuals, if one prefers the latter term.

With great satisfaction, we have witnessed the differentiation, within liberalism, of individualist thinking, much at evidence in Hobbes' political philosophy, which would leave a great mark on subsequent liberal economic thinking, as opposed to the liberal humanist thinking of Adam Smith. In the latter, man is a social being, who benefits from society whilst at the same time, through his free and responsible action, benefiting it.

It is therefore, a question of distinguishing between three models. Firstly, we have the model of maximum public intervention, in which a society without people is shaped, a society whose objectives and preferences are set at a macro-social level, without necessarily bearing a relation to the goals and preferences of the subjects who make up the social nucleus.

Secondly, and diametrically opposed to the above model, is the individualist model, in which the individual is considered the only subject of decisions and where such decisions are established by the individual and for the individual, given that society is an artificial creation arising from agreement, which more often than not exercises its aggression on the individual himself when he enters into conflict with the rest of its members.

Finally, there is a third model in which the singular subject, and not so much the individual, far from living in isolation and with an aggressive attitude towards society, sees himself as a social being and therefore sociable. This leads him to the conviction of the negative or positive importance his decisions may have for the legitimate objectives of the community. Reflect on the real presence of social objectives – the good of society as a whole – when Adam Smith says: 'Every individual is continually exerting himself to find out the most advantageous employment for whatever capital he can command. It is his own advantage, indeed, and not that of the society, which he has in view. But the study of his own advantage naturally, or rather necessarily leads him to prefer that employment which is most advantageous to the society'.² The 'society' is clearly present in the thinking of the Scottish economist,

² Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. First Edition in W. Strahan and T. Cadell in the Strand. London 1776. The reference is from the edition of R.H. Campbell and A.S. Skinner. Liberty Classics, Indianapolis 1981, as an exact photographic reproduction of the edition published by Oxford University Press in 1776; Vol. I, p. 454.

as could only be expected of one who, sixteen years earlier had published *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*,³ a work in which social man was clearly profiled.

It is true, as Prof. Zamagni points out, that the man implied in the work of Smith, who acts in his own interests and in doing so provides the greatest benefit to society, is not easily perceptible in many current economic studies. In fact, for much economic research, the vision of man and his economic activity is developed in a purely mechanistic environment where the action chosen, preferred or passed over is conditioned by materialistic determinism, in the absence of spiritual considerations and moral behavioural restrictions.

It would not be remiss at this point to bear in mind the thinking of Mises when he states that 'Acting man chooses between various opportunities offered for choice. He prefers one alternative to others. It is customary to say that acting man has a scale of wants or values in his mind when he arranges his actions. On the basis of such a scale he satisfies what is of higher value, i.e., his more urgent wants, and leaves unsatisfied what is of lower value, i.e., what is a less urgent want'.⁴ This order, through which the subject chooses, is configured by a scale of values which includes not only material objectives of a physical order, but also objectives of a spiritual nature. Thus, the Austrian author added that: 'It is arbitrary to consider only the satisfaction of the body's physiological needs as "natural" and therefore "rational" and everything else as "artificial" and therefore "irrational". It is the characteristic feature of the human nature that man seeks not only food, shelter, and cohabitation like all other animals, but that he aims also at other kind of satisfaction. Man has specifically human desires and needs which we may call "higher" than those which he has in common with the other mammals'.⁵

Therefore, the reductionism with which certain currents of economic thinking view man as an actor governed only by extrinsic motives, leaving other disciplines to study those actions guided by intrinsic motives, focuses its analysis on purely materialist or economicist elements. It is therefore

³ See Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. London and Edinburgh, 1759.

⁴ Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action. A Treatise on Economics*. William Hodge and Company Limited. London-Edinburgh-Glasgow, 1949, p. 94.

⁵ Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action. A Treatise on Economics*. William Hodge and Company Limited. London-Edinburgh-Glasgow, 1949, p. 19-20.

easier to apply quantitative methods and the implicit principle is that *what cannot be measured or weighted simply does not exist*.

This also implies that, for the model, it is better to have a rational subject, one who is certain and has perfect knowledge of ends and means and the way in which the former are achieved as a result of the latter, or that once the former (ends) are established, he will know how to choose, rationally and with economic logic, the means necessary, and only those necessary, to achieve these ends.⁶ However, real man is quite different from that man who is sure of himself, certain in his conceptions, aware and perfectly informed of the environment that surrounds him and capable of making decisions in the certain knowledge of the outcome. More commonly, the man we find every day taking decisions in society is a dubitative, erroneous person, sparsely informed with regard to both means and ends and the link between them, but who, conscious of his shortcomings and weaknesses, is a subject who makes decisions to achieve a particular objective and assumes the inherent risk of error.⁷

This is the man who constitutes the nucleus of conviviality that makes up a society. A community whose harmony will be in accordance with the values on which the action of the subject is based, the action of each singular subject and of each person within the family nucleus, which is the primary and most basic cell of the widest community of them all: the human family. This man, capable of loving and of feeling loved, is he who, in the language of Zamagni, is fit to perfect a 'relational' conviviality in which the fundamental goods are spiritual ones – trust, friendship, love – the 'relational goods'. Goods, services and material goods in general are those that, *per accidens*, are placed at the service of people to satisfy needs of that nature.

The paper of Prof. Zamagni is founded on the relational environment of the economic subjects, as people with a capacity for sacrifice and mutuality in order to profile a civil society of these characteristics. This has as its objective and is aimed at the achievement of a 'Civil Well-being' model as opposed to the 'Welfare State' model. The latter has been traditional in economic literature since German Historicism, which was based on Eisenbach's *Manifesto* and enjoyed the doctrinal support of the *Verein für Sozialpolitik*.

⁶ See Lord Lionel C. Robbins, *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*. MacMillan, London 1932.

⁷ See Carl Menger, *Principles of Economics*; with an introduction by Frank H. Knight. Free Press. Glencoe, Illinois, 1950. Also with an introduction by F.A. Hayek. New York University Press. New York, 1981.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE CONTENT OF PROF. ZAMAGNI'S CONTRIBUTION

I am aware that these observations deal more with the semantics employed than the doctrinal content. However, it is my precise intention to avoid possible confusion in the latter arising from the use of ambiguous words or words with multiple meanings or different meanings depending on the time and place in which they are used. Perhaps my personal reason for focusing on this is related to the vacuous nature of some of the expressions used by Prof. Zamagni, which, in my country, Spain, and perhaps not only in Spain, would have quite a different meaning.

A) The first term upon which I wish to focus attention is *civil society*. For Prof. Zamagni, using the same thinking as Giambattista Vico and Genovesi, it consists of 'that set of lifestyles, rules and institutions that enable the ambivalent nature of human beings, their unsociable sociability, to be directed to the common good'.⁸ In our opinion, it cannot be said that the term 'civil society' is unequivocally identified with a society that, given its axiological structure, is aimed at the achievement of the common good. Indeed, we would dare to say that in the bosom of so-called civil society, there is no formally or informally accepted understanding of what common good means or the way or alternative ways to its achievement. The exception of course is when the common good is the good established as such by the dominant class or part of the social segment which has the opportunity or privilege to be able to dominate or substantially influence society as a whole.

To guarantee that civil society implies a personalist and therefore relationist structure, committed to man and the human family, would require assurance from those who configure it that said structure was fully impregnated by the values of humanism and specifically by those of fraternity, freedom, love, etc. Otherwise it would merely be a structure with its own dynamic, its own preferences and its own objectives.

Furthermore, when we speak of civil society, we assume a structure generated by the spontaneous order of society in its civic duty rather than one created by human initiative. It is, therefore, not the result of coinciding wills at a given time and place for the creation of a structure convenient to their objectives. It is rather, personalist relational action that unites ideas and objectives from an initial postulate that takes the form of the good

⁸ Stefano Zamagni 'Reciprocity, civil economy, common good'. Paper presented to the XIV Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. Vatican City 02-06 May 2008. Not yet published; p. 474 of this volume.

desired by the community. If this is so, prior to the configuration of the civil society, a series of human values shared by the members of the community – from the narrowest to the widest – would be necessary. This is what would give rise to the will to live and share said values, and testimony would be borne to them by action aimed at achieving the common good as established by the society itself as a whole.

At times, the concept of civil society is identified with the so-called Third Sector, in reference to organisations where gratuitousness predominates over compensation – call it profit or simply remuneration – at least for those at the head of the organisation, though naturally not for those whose work is to provide the service or fulfil the stated mission of the entity. Though it is true that these organisations representing the Third Sector, the NGOs, wear a halo of communicability, relationality, sociability and therefore are identified with the most worthy of a society's objectives – perhaps even with the common good – it is no less true that they have very diverse aims, which cannot always be assumed to lead to a better society. Indeed, the only implication of the name is that they are simply non-governmental, so it is reasonable to infer that they can carry out any initiative that does not fall within the term 'governmental' and that though they are presented to the public as altruistic, such altruism may be merely apparent.

As opposed to this positive concept of 'civil society', and in contrast to its wealth of content, the exclusive concept of its meaning is no less frequent. Perhaps more so, but not just in Mediterranean countries, the term civil society is simply identified as opposed to political organisation, or, perhaps more functionally, with the public administration. The public administration is predetermined by the structure of the laws that configure it. It fulfils the function assigned to it by the public service – in theory to satisfy the social objectives that have become manifest as a result of the democratic voting process – whereas civil society, with its tools, more often than not informal in origin, materialises through the practical action, the worries, the objectives and the access to relational goods, which have become perceptible as a result of living within a community.

In this way, the concept of civil society would simply be determined by what it is not rather than by what it is. This would lead us to a lower valuation of its inherent structure, given the shortcomings of a profile that would vary depending on changes which might take place in the structure of the public administration, on whose exclusion its character and content depends. The model might be operative within smaller communities, where communication and the presence of relational goods are more spontaneous

and less complex but may not work in wider communities, where the lines of communication and knowledge are more imperfect and the motivation of subjects lower as a result of imperfect information.

It is therefore reasonable to ask where exactly civil society begins and ends. Less need for the state could be considered an advantage of a civil society model, since, arising from its proximity to needs and its greater relationality, civil society itself has the capacity for the self-regulation required to ensure that its action is successfully aimed at achieving the desired result. This would make the presence of state authority redundant. However, in Prof. Zamagni's paper, the presence of the state intervening in the scenario of civil society is quite noticeable.

A particularly striking case of public intervention occurs in the so-called social-quality markets.⁹ Here, far from trusting the market, the public sector is responsible not only for financing – there are other formulae which would better guarantee the efficiency of resources – but also, through the public administration, defining priority goods for society and setting minimum quality standards for the legal supply of those goods.

It is true that a system that finances the user or demander, rather than one which finances the enterprise or institution that supplies the good, injects a certain confidence into the market. There is no doubt that this type of financing, to the extent that it permits the demander to choose the supplier, achieves greater efficiency in the use of resources. At the same time, the demander, if adequate information is available, will select not so much the abstract quality of the good but rather the degree of satisfaction it affords. Excellent examples of this are to be found in the area of education, in the form of the system known as the *school cheque* or *school bond*, rather than the direct financing of schools and educational institutions. There are few doubts about the superiority of financing the user, though it does generate inefficiency and dissatisfaction owing to restrictions in supply with respect to the wishes of demanders and more so if good information is available. This does not take account of the positive or negative effects of the location of demanders with respect to the location of the good on supply.

Again with respect to the financing of demanders, it is worth considering whether the superiority of the system in the example of the so-called school

⁹ See Stefano Zamagni 'Reciprocity, civil economy, common good'. Paper presented to the XIV Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. Vatican City 02-06 May 2008. Not yet published; p. 495 of this volume.

cheque can be extended to a greater number of public goods or is applicable only to a reduced number of merit goods. We see no reason, *ab initio*, to believe the contrary, assuming that the same conditions apply, particularly conditions with respect to the quality of real information about the good on offer and those governing its supply. Taking this consideration to its logical limit, and within a scenario of an abundance of goods being publicly financed through the financing of demanders, one question needs to be posed with respect to taxation policy. Would it not be best, rather than penalising citizens with taxes and then returning part of those taxes in the form of demander financing, to reduce from the outset the taxes paid by demanders and allow them to pay in the way they would for a private good or indeed, having paid for the good, permit them to deduct the payment from their taxes?

B) The second aspect on which I wish to comment, again for reasons of possible confusion arising from terminology, is what Prof. Zamagni calls 'reciprocity'. This is the basis for the achievement of a Welfare State, which along with the relational ingredients of the civil society would give rise to a superior state called Civil Well-being and which, in our opinion, is used as a synonym for Common Good.

In the paper presented, the term 'reciprocity' has a meaning that differs greatly from what we generally understand by this word. This is true to the point that in Stefano Zamagni's text, reciprocity is not univocal, though it bears some relation to subsidiarity. Whilst in some passages it is fully equivalent to subsidiarity,¹⁰ in others it identifies with a third dimension of subsidiarity,¹¹ as opposed to the traditional vertical and horizontal dimensions of the term.

For us, reciprocity implies a rational expectation of compensation. In reciprocity, we fail to see free giving or any generosity in the activity of the subject. This is because he expects to find an equivalent attitude – reciprocity – from the beneficiary of the initial action. Whether it has been established from the outset – and hereon will be based the distinction as to whether or not reciprocation can be demanded as a result of the agreement – an attitude based on the principle of reciprocity implies a service accompanied by compensation from the other party.

¹⁰ See Stefano Zamagni 'Reciprocity, civil economy, common good'. Paper presented to the XIV Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. Vatican City 02-06 May 2008. Not yet published; p. 489 of this volume.

¹¹ See Stefano Zamagni 'Reciprocity, civil economy, common good'. Paper presented to the XIV Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. Vatican City 02-06 May 2008. Not yet published; p. 499 of this volume.

The four forms presented by Paulo¹² in *Digesto*, are to be found in all reciprocity models: 'I give that you may give', 'I give that you may do', 'I do that you may give' and 'I do that you may do'. Any or all of these form part of the contractual relationship between two economic subjects and is common in the traffic of goods and services between those who, guided by their own interests are unwilling to give free of charge, unless such an action is also met by a similarly generous attitude on the part of other members of the community.

Seen from this perspective, reciprocity demands a return, a return perceived by the subject. In this respect it can be distinguished from charity, from solidarity, from unconditional and generous sacrifice or from any name we wish to give it. Reciprocity is defined as 'mutual or bilateral action'.¹³ It has a second meaning 'The mutual concession of advantage or privileges for purpose of commercial or diplomatic relations'.¹⁴ The *Real Academia Española* has defined it as 'mutual correspondence between one person or object and another'.¹⁵

Similarly, it has been said that 'The last stage in acquiring roles involves recognizing reciprocity between oneself and others'.¹⁶ In another context, it has been said that 'The child understands that members of other countries are as attached to their own lands as he is to his; this is the principle of reciprocity'.¹⁷ Or perhaps, we could cite Gouldner, who postulated the existence of a universal rule of reciprocity which stipulates that '...people should help those who help them'.¹⁸ Without doubt, the relational perspective of Prof. Zamagni, who considers that '...is not that of exchange but that of reciprocity'¹⁹ is closer to these concepts of reciprocity, than it is to attempts to place it within a third dimension of the principle of subsidiarity.

¹² Paulo, *Digesto* 19, 5, 5. *Do ut des, do ut facias, facio ut des y facio ut facias*.

¹³ Bryan A. Garner, *Black's Law Dictionary*. English Edition. Thomson – West. St. Paul, MN. 2004. See 'Reciprocity'.

¹⁴ Bryan A. Garner, *Black's Law Dictionary*. English Edition. Thomson – West. St. Paul, MN. 2004. See 'Reciprocity'.

¹⁵ Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*. Madrid 1992. See 'Reciprocidad. – Correspondencia mutua de una persona o una cosa con otra'. [Translation by the author].

¹⁶ T.M. Newcomb, *Journal of Social Psychology* IX, 1952, p. 308.

¹⁷ G.W. Allport, *Personality and Social Encounter* XI, 1960, p. 175.

¹⁸ Gouldner, *Journal of Social Psychology* LXXXVII, 1972, p. 89.

¹⁹ Stefano Zamagni, Reciprocity, civil economy, common good. Paper presented to the XIV Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. Vatican City 02-06 May 2008. Not yet published; p. 479 of this volume.

These objections and others of a similar nature, based fundamentally on possible *confusio in terminis*, added to the personal conviction that reciprocity is not a safe path to the common good, leads me, convinced of the fact that we are not speaking of different things but rather that we do so in different ways, to outline in the following pages my personal vision of the problem. For this purpose, I shall endeavour to use parameters that have clearly been established both by tradition and more particularly by the Social Doctrine of the Church.

PERSON AND SOCIETY

I could not agree more with Prof. Zamagni when he postulates that what is needed is a new cultural humus. That cultural transit 'from the conception of liberty as the power of self-determination to that of the power of self-realization'.²⁰ My agreement is even greater when he states that: 'Perhaps what we need is a new anthropological orientation within economics, capable of enlarging the scope of economic research in order to make it more relevant for the analysis both of policy means and policy ends'.²¹

As opposed to the building of a category of civil society of a relational nature, which as we have pointed out would require a new culture, we would prefer to evangelize for a new culture that recognizes the centrality of the human person. We speak, of course, of the human person from whose nature, of necessity, springs mutuality, life in common, and who transmits to society the good represented by his greatness, whilst also benefiting from the teaching provided by it. All of this with generosity and giving without the prior expectation of correspondence or reciprocity but rather motivated by a sense of otherness whereby the *alterum*, the 'other', becomes part of 'me', to the point where they are indistinguishable from each other.

And in the same way that I would not make reciprocity a categorical imperative – unless it aspired to exist merely within a trade-oriented society – I would seek such a Kantian principle for that committed solidarity and

²⁰ Stefano Zamagni 'Reciprocity, civil economy, common good'. Paper presented to the XIV Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. Vatican City 02-06 May 2008. Not yet published; p. 493 of this volume.

²¹ Stefano Zamagni 'Reciprocity, civil economy, common good'. Paper presented to the XIV Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. Vatican City 02-06 May 2008. Not yet published; p. 500 of this volume.

sacrifice, that are offered without the expectation of reciprocal reward, in which the 'other' ceases to be such but rather becomes an extension of the 'me' by virtue of becoming part of my very being. In the words of Kant, "The categorical imperative is...unique...*act only in accordance with a maxim that you could wish to be a universal law of nature...*Therefore, the universal imperative should be formulated as: *act as though the maxim governing your action should become, by virtue of your will, a universal law of nature*'.²² We must not forget that the categorical imperative is, and has often been used as a synonym for, a 'moral law', where the 'maxim' is none other than the subjective principle governing human action. In other words, it is the principle, according to which, the subject acts.

The human person is, by nature, a social being and he is so by express design of the Creation. 'Yahweh God said, "It is not right that the man should be alone. I shall make him a helper"²³ Therefore, and without taking in any manner from the greatness and dignity of the human being – the only being created in the image and likeness of God, wherein lies his inalienable dignity – man needs to live in society for his own perfection. He requires social life to find and avail of the opportunities society offers him to do the good and devote himself to others.

In the words of Friar Abelardo Lobato O.P, this natural integration of the human person in the social life that befits him and of which he forms an inseparable part, is an enriching instrument of good both for himself and for the society which, by means of his contribution, he enriches and makes greater. He states that '...personal life requires communication with the world of others for its own enhancement...Because of his social dimension, that is so by nature, the human person is essentially social and communicative. He needs association with others to achieve perfection and disseminate what he possesses. Therefore, the person is never, in any aspect or in any circumstance, totally independent from society. Nor is his well-being, which is to be

²² M. Kant, *Fundamentación de la metafísica de los costumbres*. Translation from German '*Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*', by Manuel García Morente. Espasa Calpe. Madrid 1946. Octava edición 1983; págs. 72-73. Literally: 'Der kategorische Imperativ ist...einziger...*handle nur nach derjenigen Maxime, durch die du zugleich wollen kannst, da? sie ein allgemeines Gesetz werde...*so könnte der allgemeine Imperativ der Pflicht auch so lauten: *handle so, als ob die Maxime deiner Handlung durch deinen Willen zum allgemeinen Naturgesetze werden sollte*'. Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*. Der Philosophischen Bibliothek – Band 41. Verlag von Felix Meiner. Hamburg; pp. 42-43.

²³ Genesis 2:18-19, *The New Jerusalem Bible*. Doubleday. New York, 1990.

found in the common good of society. Herein lies the obligation to achieve the common good upon which depends the individual good of the person'.²⁴

Man is born, lives, grows and dies in society. In society he learns to know and identify his own needs and those of his brothers, whilst at the same time learning about the commitment which obliges him to attend to, insofar as possible – even renouncing that which he himself needs – the needs and shortages of other members of society. Social life is essential to the development and perfection of the person.

'Man's social nature makes it evident that the progress of the human person and the advance of society itself hinge on one another. For the beginning, the subject and the goal of all social institutions is and must be the human person which for its part and by its very nature stands completely in need of social life...

Among those social ties which man needs for his development some, like the family and political community, relate with greater immediacy to his innermost nature; others originate rather from his free decision. In our era, for various reasons, reciprocal ties and mutual dependencies increase day by day and give rise to a variety of associations and organizations, both public and private. This development, which is called socialization, while certainly not without its dangers, brings with it many advantages with respect to consolidating and increasing the qualities of the human person, and safeguarding his rights'.²⁵

Man, a rational and free being, exercises his freedom in accordance with his nature when he tends towards good, because the achievement of good is an objective of man's humanity itself. Saint Thomas Aquinas said: 'A rational power is not to be directed to all opposite purposes, but to those which are contained under its proper object; for no power seeks other than its proper object. Now, the object of the will is good. Wherefore the will can be directed to such opposite purposes as are contained under good... for the will can be directed to either under the aspect of good'.²⁶ A will aimed

²⁴ Abelardo Lobato O.P. (Dir.), 'El pensamiento de Santo Tomás de Aquino para el hombre de hoy'. Vol. I, *El hombre en cuerpo y alma*. EDICEP C.B. Valencia 1994, p. 828. [Author's translation].

²⁵ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, 'Pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes*'. Rome 07.12.1965, n. 25.

²⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. 1-2, q. 8, a. 1. Second and Revised Edition, 1920. Literally translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Online Edition 2008 by Kevin Knight (www.newadvent.org).

towards one's own good and the good of society, as outlined by F. Lobato. One's own good and the common good are conditioned in such a way that the individual good cannot be achieved while ignoring the common good and the common good has no place if it excludes the good of those persons who constitute the community.

Hence, '...there should be mutual friendship among men, in accord with which they assist each other either in spiritual or in earthly functions. Of course, it is a greater thing to help another in spiritual matters than in temporal affairs, as much greater as spiritual things are more important than temporal ones, and more necessary for the attainment of the end which is beatitude. Hence, he who gives up, through voluntary poverty, the possibility of succoring others in temporal things, so that he may acquire spiritual goods whereby he may more beneficially help others, he does not work against the good of human society...'.²⁷ A preference for the supreme goods – those of the spirit – as opposed to temporal and ephemeral goods – material ones –; a preference that is an integral part of the very nature of man.

The axiological order is such, both in the determination of the end and the means used to achieve it. 'As the end is something desired in itself, and what is used to achieve it, in this respect, is only desired because of the end, it is clear that the will can be aimed at the end, without necessarily being aimed at that which leads to it. However, the will cannot be aimed at that which leads to the end, in this respect, without being aimed at the end itself'.²⁸ An end which of necessity is the common good, owing to the internal coherence of the subject created as a social and sociable being. 'Just as nothing stands firm with regard to the speculative reason except that which is traced back to the first indemonstrable principles, so nothing stands firm with regard to the practical reason, unless it be directed to the last end which is the common good'.²⁹

²⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*. Book Three, Chapter 134, paragraph 4. Translated by Vernon J. Bourke. Edited, with English, specially Scriptural references, updated by Joseph Kenny, O.P. New York, Hanover House, 1955-57.

²⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. 1-2, q. 8, a. 3. Second and Revised Edition, 1920. Literally translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Online Edition 2008 by Kevin Knight. (www.newadvent.org).

²⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. 1-2, q. 90, a. 2. Second and Revised Edition, 1920. Literally translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Online Edition 2008 by Kevin Knight (www.newadvent.org).

THE COMMON GOOD, A SOCIAL OBJECTIVE

The common good is the ultimate objective of man's behaviour. In other words, the common good is the first principle in the operative order around which practical reason revolves. This is so, in that, by principle, the part is ordered, for its perfection, to achieve the perfect whole and, in our case, the individual man forms part of the perfect community.³⁰

It is true that each human person in his daily endeavour, bearing in mind his singularity, carries out multiple actions and that his will takes diverse decisions on specific matters that affect his person directly and those persons in his immediate environment. However, it is no less true that all these actions, being singular, have a second dimension, in that they can be connected and associated with the common good, insofar as '...the common good is said to be the common end'.³¹

Furthermore, 'The common good is the end of each individual member of a community, just as the good of the whole is the end of each part'³² and insofar as the parts are subordinate to the whole, the common good is preferable to the particular good of the singular person. Far from being a purely quantitative dimension, St Thomas Aquinas specified that 'The common good of the realm and the particular good of the individual differ not only in respect of the "many" and the "few", but also under a formal aspect. For the aspect of the "common" good differs from the aspect of the "individual" good, even as the aspect of "whole" differs from that of "part"'.³³ In effect, the common good is presented to man as the goal at which to aim his will and an objective that he should strive to achieve. This is so in that man is called to commit his humanism to the humanity of which he is a part. Along these same lines, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

³⁰ See Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. 1-2, q. 90, a. 2. Second and Revised Edition, 1920. Literally translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Online Edition 2008 by Kevin Knight (www.newadvent.org).

³¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. 1-2, q. 90, a. 2. Second and Revised Edition, 1920. Literally translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Online Edition 2008 by Kevin Knight (www.newadvent.org).

³² St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. 2-2, q. 58, a. 9. Second and Revised Edition, 1920. Literally translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Online Edition 2008 by Kevin Knight (www.newadvent.org).

³³ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. 2-2, q. 58, a. 7. Second and Revised Edition, 1920. Literally translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Online Edition 2008 by Kevin Knight (www.newadvent.org).

states that, “The common good does not consist in the simple sum of the particular goods of each subject of a social entity. Belonging to everyone and to each person, it is and remains “common”, because it is indivisible and because only together is it possible to attain it, increase it and safeguard its effectiveness, with regard also to the future’.³⁴

John Paul II said that ‘...prior to the logic of a fair exchange of goods and the forms of justice appropriate to it, there exists *something which is due to man because he is man*, by reason of his lofty dignity. Inseparable from that required “something” is the possibility to survive and, at the same time, to make an active contribution to the common good of humanity’.³⁵ And in the words of John XXIII, ‘...the common good is something which affects the needs of the whole man, body and soul’.³⁶ It is therefore a good that is unfailingly linked to human nature itself. It is not something extrinsic or accidental which might well be replaced by something similar. Instead, it is a good that is inseparable from the very concept of the human person.

‘Consisting, as he does, of body and immortal soul, man cannot in this mortal life satisfy his needs or attain perfect happiness. Thus, the measures that are taken to implement the common good must not jeopardize his eternal salvation; indeed, they must even help him to obtain it’.³⁷ This is why many of the texts of the Social Doctrine of the Church give guidance so that our actions, in the temporal order of things, far from encouraging selfishness, materialism and alienation, contribute to personal perfection and that of society as a whole, by contributing, in accordance with our means, to the achievement of the common good of the human family.

The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council defines common good as, ‘the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment’.³⁸ Prior to that, John XXIII said that ‘It is generally accepted today that the common good is best safeguarded when personal rights and duties are guaranteed’.³⁹

³⁴ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Città del Vaticano 2004, n. 164.

³⁵ John Paul II, ‘Encyclical letter *Centesimus annus*’. Rome 01.05.1991, n. 34.

³⁶ John XXIII, ‘Encyclical letter *Pacem in terris*’. Rome 11.04.1963, n. 57.

³⁷ John XXIII, ‘Encyclical letter *Pacem in terris*’. Rome 11.04.1963, n. 59.

³⁸ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council ‘Pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes*’. Rome 07.12.1965, n. 26.

³⁹ John XXIII, ‘Encyclical letter *Pacem in terris*’. Rome 11.04.1963, n. 60.

Two years previously, the same Pope John had been more explicit in a number of specific references: 'On the national level they include: employment of the greatest possible number of workers; care lest privileged classes arise, even among the workers; maintenance of equilibrium between wages and prices; the need to make goods and services accessible to the greatest number; elimination, or at least the restriction, of inequalities in the various branches of the economy – that is, between agriculture, industry and services –; creation of a proper balance between economic expansion and the development of social services, especially through the activity of public authorities; the best possible adjustment of the means of production to the progress of science and technology; seeing to it that the benefits which make possible a more human way of life will be available not merely to the present generation but to the coming generations as well'.⁴⁰

From this text we can infer the broadness of this concept of common good. Quite a number of items are considered to shape it, but it would be complex to confine in a narrow sense, with exclusion of others. This is the reason why the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, has no doubt in stating that: 'The demands of the common good are dependent on the social conditions of each historical period and are strictly connected to respect for and the integral promotion of the person and his fundamental rights. These demands concern above all the commitment to peace, the organization of the State's powers, a sound juridical system, the protection of the environment, and the provision of essential services to all, some of which are at the same time human rights: food, housing, work, education and access to culture, transportation, basic health care, the freedom of communication and expression, and the protection of religious freedom. Nor must one forget the contribution that every nation is required in duty to make towards a true worldwide cooperation for the common good of the whole of humanity and for future generations also'.⁴¹

As can be seen, the scope of the common good far exceeds the common good associated with the welfare state, regardless of the definition used for its analysis. So much so that the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace is of the opinion that: '*The common good of society is not an end in itself; it has value only in reference to attaining the ultimate ends of the person and the*

⁴⁰ John XXIII, 'Encyclical letter *Mater et magistra*'. Rome 15.05.1961, n. 79.

⁴¹ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Città del Vaticano 2004, n. 166.

universal common good of the whole of creation. God is the ultimate end of his creatures and for no reason may the common good be deprived of its transcendent dimension, which moves beyond the historical dimension while at the same time fulfilling it...A purely historical and materialistic vision would end up transforming the common good into a simple *socio-economic well-being*, without any transcendental goal, that is, without its most intimate reason for existing'.⁴²

In that precise manner, the common good calls upon man as such. Man who feels himself to be a member of the community and as such, all related to the community befits him and therefore all his means and all his personal capacity are soon placed at the service of the community. This is what we, with extreme clarity, call a sense of *interdependence*: of interdependence among people, of interdependence among nations, of interdependence on a world scale, in the bosom of what we know as the human family. 'Every day, human interdependence grows more tightly drawn and spreads by degrees over the whole world. As a result the common good...today takes on an increasingly universal complexion and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race. Every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups, and even of the general welfare of the entire human family'.⁴³

It is the human person who becomes the cornerstone and the driving force toward that interdependence, when feels the call for community integration; a community that starts with the closest ones in order to be spread to the whole human family. Out of man there is no possibility of community or, at least, of an interdependent community.

'The centrality of the human person and the natural inclination of persons and peoples to establish relationships among themselves are the fundamental elements for building a true international community, the ordering of which must aim at guaranteeing the effective universal common good. Despite the widespread aspiration to build an authentic international community, the unity of the human family is not yet becoming a reality. This is due to obstacles originating in materialistic and nationalistic ideologies that contradict the values of the person integrally considered in all his various dimensions, material and spiritual, individual and community...

⁴² Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Città del Vaticano 2004, n. 170.

⁴³ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, 'Pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes*'. Rome 07.12.1965, n. 26.

The coexistence among nations is based on the same values that should guide relations among human beings: truth, justice, active solidarity and freedom'.⁴⁴

John XXIII, from that world view, did not hesitate to state that '...relationships between States must be regulated in accordance with the principles of truth and justice... . We must bear in mind that of its very nature civil authority exists, not to confine men within the frontiers of their own nations, but primarily to protect the common good of the State, which certainly cannot be divorced from the common good of the entire human family'.⁴⁵ It is the road to solidarity, and not so much the way to reciprocity, that Pope John proposes as the path to achieving the common good. And speaking of the universal common good, special consideration must be given to the poor, those who suffer precariousness in their lives, those who are marginalised, those whose fate in the so-called human society is exclusion, both within each social group and within each nation and above all, at world level where a multitude of people and countries suffer extreme poverty, whilst in other regions there is abundance and waste. For this reason, 'The demands of the common good on the international level include: the avoidance of all forms of unfair competition between the economies of different countries; the fostering of mutual collaboration and good will; and effective co-operation in the development of economically less advanced communities'.⁴⁶

The responsibility of each singular person and each nation is in accordance with their means and capacity to contribute to the common good. There is no place for talk of the responsibility of power or leadership if it does not have the objective of enhancing the entire human consortium. 'It is timely to mention – and it is no exaggeration – that a leadership role among nations can only be justified by the possibility and willingness to contribute widely and generously to the common good'.⁴⁷ Indeed, it is the achievement of the common good that legitimizes the action of a given government. Therefore, 'The attainment of the common good is the sole reason for the existence of civil authorities. In working for the common good, therefore, the authorities must obviously respect its nature, and at the same time adjust their legislation to meet the requirements of the given situation'.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Città del Vaticano 2004, n. 433.

⁴⁵ John XXIII, 'Encyclical letter *Pacem in terris*'. Rome 11.04.1963, n. 98.

⁴⁶ John XXIII, 'Encyclical letter *Mater et magistra*'. Rome 15.05.1961, n. 80.

⁴⁷ John Paul II, 'Encyclical letter *Sollicitudo rei socialis*'. Rome 30.12.1987, n. 23.

⁴⁸ John XXIII, 'Encyclical letter *Pacem in terris*'. Rome 11.04.1963, n. 54.

PARTICIPATION IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE COMMON GOOD

This is a task that affirms human dignity, and therefore, nobody can feel exonerated from the duty to do all within their means to achieve this good social objective. Saint Thomas said that, ‘...to order anything to the common good, belongs either to the whole people, or to someone who is the viceregent of the whole people...since in all other matters the directing of anything to the end concerns him to whom the end belongs’.⁴⁹

If, as was said at the beginning, we take as a starting point that man is by nature a social, and therefore, sociable being, human existence cannot be disassociated from the society in which it takes place. The relationship with the other members of the community enriches man and singular man, by means of his actions, enriches the community. The Pontifical Council stated that: ‘*Unique and unrepeatable in his individuality, every person is a being who is open to relationships with others in society.* Life together in society, in the network of relationships linking individuals, families and intermediate groups by encounter, communication and exchange, ensures a higher quality of living. The common good that people seek and attain in the formation of social communities is the guarantee of their personal, familial and associative good. These are the reasons for which society originates and takes shape, with its array of structures, that is to say its political, economic, juridical and cultural constructs’.⁵⁰

If it is true that all individuals, associations and intermediary groups in general, including those that emerge from the very nature of civil society, have the moral obligation to strive towards and actively participate in tasks aimed at the achievement of the common good, ‘The main consequence of this is that they must harmonize their own interests with the needs of others, and offer their goods and services as their rulers shall direct – assuming, of course, that justice is maintained and the authorities are acting within the limits of their competence. Those who have authority in the State must exercise that authority in a way which is not only morally irreproachable, but also best calculated to ensure or promote the State’s welfare’.⁵¹

⁴⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. 1-2, q. 90, a. 3. Second and Revised Edition, 1920. Literally translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Online Edition 2008 by Kevin Knight (www.newadvent.org).

⁵⁰ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Città del Vaticano 2004, n. 61.

⁵¹ John XXIII, ‘Encyclical letter *Pacem in terris*’. Rome 11.04.1963, n. 53.

It is obvious that if we speak of the different responsibility of each subject in the task of striving for the common good, this responsibility is more intense in those empowered to guide the nation on the road to the common good, so that it reaches and can be enjoyed by all, without preference for any particular group or class. Therefore, '...a sane view of the common good must be present and operative in men invested with public authority. They must take account of all those social conditions which favor the full development of human personality. Moreover, we consider it altogether vital that the numerous intermediary bodies and corporate enterprises – which are, so to say, the main vehicle of this social growth – be really autonomous, and loyally collaborate in pursuit of their own specific interests and those of the common good. For these groups must themselves necessarily present the form and substance of a true community, and this will only be the case if they treat their individual members as human persons and encourage them to take an active part in the ordering of their lives'.⁵²

A person, as a member of a community with active participation in common tasks, is tantamount to saying, as we pointed out earlier, a sense of interdependence. When we speak of this, we refer to 'It is above all a question of interdependence, sensed as a system determining relationships in the contemporary world, in its economic, cultural, political and religious elements, and accepted as a moral category. When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a "virtue", is solidarity. This then is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all'.⁵³

An interdependence in which, the 'other', has ceased to be a rival, has ceased to be a competitor, has ceased to be an alternative option because mutuality has determined his integration in the 'I'. This interdependence, this integration with the 'I' has caused him to become a visible brother, since it is not for nothing that we share a common paternity. This is the reason for my insistence, my firm determination in the common good, in which the entire human family will participate.

This attitude cannot be false. It must correspond to the true being of the person, and only as a person. Otherwise, such solidarity would be no more

⁵² John XXIII, 'Encyclical letter *Mater et magistra*'. Rome 15.05.1961, n. 65.

⁵³ John Paul II, 'Encyclical letter *Sollicitudo rei socialis*'. Rome 30.12.1987, n. 38.

than a show of pharisaism. "The exercise of solidarity within each society is valid when its members recognize one another as persons. Those who are more influential, because they have a greater share of goods and common services, should feel responsible for the weaker and be ready to share with them all they possess. Those who are weaker, for their part, in the same spirit of solidarity, should not adopt a purely passive attitude or one that is destructive of the social fabric, but, while claiming their legitimate rights, should do what they can for the good of all. The intermediate groups, in their turn, should not selfishly insist on their particular interests, but respect the interests of others".⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

"The political community pursues the common good when it seeks to create a human environment that offers citizens the possibility of truly exercising their human rights and of fulfilling completely their corresponding duties...

The full attainment of the common good requires that the political community develop a twofold and complementary action that defends and promotes human rights. "It should not happen that certain individuals or social groups derive special advantage from the fact that their rights have received preferential protection. Nor should it happen that governments, in seeking to protect these rights, become obstacles to their full expression and free use".⁵⁵

We believe this to be the firmest and most secure path towards the common good. A path on which singular man assumes the responsibility as a social being, and as such is determined to achieve the good of the community. It is true that intermediary structures can be useful to this end, and that is why man is there to found and create them, but our confidence is in man and not in the structures.

At the end of the day it is man who thinks and acts in liberty and not structures; it is man who hopes for an end to result from his action, not structures; it is man, the only creature deserving of the eyes of God and,

⁵⁴ John Paul II, 'Encyclical letter *Sollicitudo rei socialis*'. Rome 30.12.1987, n. 39.

⁵⁵ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Città del Vaticano 2004, n. 389.

consequently, the only creature capable of saving or condemning himself.

I agree, with Prof. Zamagni, in that a new culture is necessary. Indeed, I believe that what is needed is somewhat more than a new culture. It is necessary to promote an internal change of attitude, which of necessity would be visible on the outside, in the relationship with our brothers. Therefore, in accordance with John Paul II, what is required is a *conversion*. This ‘...change of behavior or mentality or mode of existence is called “conversion”, to use the language of the Bible [Mk 13^{3,5}; Is 30¹⁵]. This conversion specifically entails a relationship to God, to the sin committed, to its consequences and hence to one’s neighbor, either an individual or a community. It is God, in “whose hands are the hearts of the powerful” and the hearts of all, who according to his own promise and by the power of his Spirit can transform “hearts of stone” into “hearts of flesh” [Ezek 36²⁶].’⁵⁶

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⁵⁶ John Paul II, ‘Encyclical letter *Sollicitudo rei socialis*’. Rome 30.12.1987, n. 38.

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