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Universal and particular:
***Fratelli tutti* in the light of St Thomas conception of universality**

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« Peut-être l'infatuation qui fait négliger les causes intermédiaires vient-elle d'un certain anthropomorphisme : on prête à Dieu l'ambition d'un homme qui, dans les choses dignes de louange, aime mieux tout accomplir seul, crainte que la personne que par magnanimité il ferait agir à sa place ou s'associerait, ne masque aux yeux de la foule son mérite à lui ; sa solution est sans doute médiocre mais elle apparaît sûre et à sa toise¹. »

De Koninck, C. (1959). Le scandale de la médiation (II). *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 15(1), 80-81.

Universal love sounds beautiful under the pen of Pope Francis. But genuine generosity towards other peoples seems quite utopic, heroic, or restricted to some holy men and women. At the same time the pope dedicates his encyclical to all people of good will². How can we understand the pope's aspiration?

In this text, I aim to show how Thomas Aquinas' thought is useful to understand properly the pope's conception of the relationship between universal love and particular friendship. While doing this, I will work as a philosopher. As the philosopher seeks for reasons, I will look for the reason why the pope says that universal love is fostered by particular love.

Actually, there are many ways to articulate the universal and particular, and many levels of universality and particularity. In the text, it is clear that Francis cautions against two mistakes in applying the distinction when comparing love of mankind and love of one's nation or local political community: the first would consist in reinforcing the particular against the universal; the second to promote the universal at the expense of the particular.

Of course, in politics, those two contradictory positions can lead to the following ideologies: first, "aggressive nationalism"³, which assumes that fostering universal fraternity pulls down the identities of nations⁴. What Francis calls the "false universalism"⁵ constitutes the opposite

¹ « Perhaps the infatuation which makes one neglect intermediate causes comes from a certain anthropomorphism: one lends to God the ambition of a man who, in things worthy of praise, prefers to accomplish everything alone, lest the person whom he would have act in his stead or associate with, by magnanimity, should conceal from the eyes of the crowd his own merit; his solution is undoubtedly mediocre, but it appears to be sure, and at its height »

² Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, §6. The quotes of the magisterium texts are from the website of the Holy see : www.vatican.va

³ *Ibid.*, §11.

⁴ "In some countries, a concept of popular and national unity influenced by various ideologies is creating new forms of selfishness and a loss of the social sense under the guise of defending national interests." (*Ibid.*, §11). It refers to the theme of the "culture of walls" (*Ibid.*, §27) and to the xenophobic mentality (*Ibid.*, §39).

⁵ *Ibid.*, §99: "This is a far cry from the false universalism of those who constantly travel abroad because they cannot tolerate or love their own people".

ideology, which argues that the existence of nations is an obstacle to universal fraternity, and this position endeavors to weaken the local political communities, which are said to obstruct the way towards universalism.

The pope's intention is to promote both poles. He tries to show a way towards "building fraternity, be it local or universal"⁶. He says more precisely: "We need to pay attention to the global so as to avoid narrowness and banality. Yet we also need to look to the local, which keeps our feet on the ground. Together, the two prevent us from falling into one of two extremes"⁷. But he not only promotes them simultaneously. According to the pope, the particular is a path to the universal. Indeed, in this text, which promotes universal love, he complains against a phenomenon that "fosters low national self-esteem"⁸ and recalls that "there is no worse form of alienation than to feel uprooted, belonging to no one"⁹. His advocacy for universal love does not lead him to despise local connections.

Such remarks leave no doubt, when we carefully read the encyclical, that Francis is convinced that promoting the local groups is a way to foster universal fraternity.

How can we understand this claim? It is not easy to interpret this double love. One could say that all the love I give to the members of my family can't be given to strangers. And all the love I give to strangers is not given to my family. We think we have to choose where to place the balance between the two poles, because our life and our love are not infinite. Although this claim of the pope deserves an explanation, one is not given in the text itself; but such an explanation is given in the philosophical tradition shared by St. Thomas Aquinas.

It is useful to mobilize St. Thomas's thought to enlighten this paradoxical assertion, because St. Thomas elaborated the notion of the common good, which is the heart of the question. Indeed, the pope just mentions, without arguing for it, that: "The common good likewise requires that we protect and love our native land"¹⁰. But which conception of the common good allows one to assert that ?

Relationship between universal fraternity and social friendship

We can start our reflection with the interpretation of the title of the encyclical. It gives a good idea of the link between local and universal in Francis's thought. Why "fraternity *and* social friendship" in the subtitle of the encyclical¹¹ ? Why not only "fraternity" ? The answer is that it would be a mistake to turn our back on local friendship in order to build global fraternity. We need both: "Universal fraternity and social friendship are thus two inseparable and equally vital poles in every society"¹². But further, they need each other: "A love capable of transcending borders is the basis of what in every city and country can be called 'social friendship'. Genuine social friendship within a society makes true universal openness possible"¹³. Social friendship, in the sense of a more or less extended society, is the condition necessary for an openness to a more extended fraternity. The true universalism is grounded on particular loves in particular places: "The solution is not an openness that spurns its own richness. Just as there can be no dialogue with 'others' without a sense of our own identity, so there can be no openness between peoples except on the basis of love for one's own land, one's own people, one's own cultural roots. I cannot truly encounter another unless I stand on firm foundations, for it is on the basis of these that I can accept the gift the other brings and in

⁶ *Ibid.*, §50.

⁷ *Ibid.*, §142.

⁸ *Ibid.*, §51.

⁹ *Ibid.*, §53.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, §143.

¹¹ "Sulla fraternità e l'amicizia sociale".

¹² *Ibid.*, §142.

¹³ *Ibid.*, §99. Cf. §154: "The development of a global community of fraternity based on the practice of social friendship on the part of peoples and nations calls for a better kind of politics".

turn offer an authentic gift of my own¹⁴.” This is why “Families are the first place where the values of love and fraternity, togetherness and sharing, concern and care for others are lived¹⁵”.

The sign of this articulation between the two poles is that the pope does not blame nationalism in itself, but only “violent nationalism¹⁶” or “narrow forms of nationalism¹⁷”. He does not condemn groups or couples, but only “closed groups¹⁸” and “self-absorbed couples¹⁹”.

But how is this articulation possible ? St. Thomas’s thought enables us to understand the possibility of promoting universal love without condemning particular loves.

St. Thomas’s conception of universal and particular

In the commentary of Aristotle’s *Physics*, St. Thomas asserts that there are two ways to understand universal causes²⁰. After lectio 5, where he presents the four species of causes, he dedicates the next lectio to the modes of causality, two of which are prior or universal or common on the one hand, and posterior and proper cause on the other. Following Aristotle, St. Thomas gives the example of the doctor who treats a patient. Assuming that medicine is an art, we can say that the artisan is a prior or universal cause of health, the doctor is the posterior or proper cause.

Those modes of causality can be found in each species²¹. The example of the man and the doctor is taken from the line of efficient causes, because here the man who cures is the efficient cause of health. Thomas gives an example of formal universal cause, saying that the “diapason” (or musical interval called now called the “octave”) is the effect of a formal cause, which is “proportio dupla” (or the double ratio of the chord lengths). But “proportio dupla” is a particular cause compared to “proportio numeralis” (numerical relation), a more universal formal cause. Thomas does not give further examples, and asserts that it is the same in each species. Consequently, in final causes, we will find universal causes as well. Considering that for St. Thomas, universal and common are synonymous here²², and that the final cause is the good to which tends each being,²³ we can say that the common good is another name for the universal final cause²⁴.

Because to love, in St. Thomas’s thought, signifies to be attracted to a final cause, we can say that universal love is an effect provoked by the final universal cause, by the common good. Of course, while using this key interpretation, we leave open for the moment the question of whether this universal common good is a political one.

Now, we are able to ask the question raised about Francis’s text in a more accurate way. To experience universal love without despising particular love means now to love the more universal common good without despising a less universal common good. But the main

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, §143.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, §114.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, §86.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, §141.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, §89.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ St. Thomas, *Commentaria in octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis*, lib. 2 l. 6 n. 3. All references of the quotes from St. Thomas are from <https://www.corpusthomicum.org/>.

²¹ *Ibid.* Lect. 6 n. 2.

²² For example, in the case of the artisan and the doctor, artisan is “*communior et prior*”. *Ibid.*, n. 2.

²³ See *Ibid.*, lib. 2 l. 5 n. 11. And “*id autem ad quod tendit actio agentis, dicitur causa finalis*.” (*Ibid.*, lib. 2 l. 10 n. 15); “*bonum est quod omnia appetunt*.” (St. Thomas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 1 a. 1 co.)

²⁴ Here it is necessary to understand the common good in a broad sense, which transcends the merely political application of the concept. For recent insights on the common good as final cause, see Aquinas Guilbeau, *Charles De Koninck’s Defense of the Primacy of the Common Good*, Doctoral thesis, University of Fribourg (Switzerland), 2016, p. 140.

difficulty remains: how can the same effect be performed by two causes, one universal, and one particular ?

Two kinds of universality

Here we have to distinguish between two interpretations of “universality,” because the answer will not be the same in the two cases. In the text commented on above²⁵, Thomas distinguishes two kinds of universality: “it must be noted, however, that the universal cause and the particular cause, and the prior cause and the posterior cause, can be taken either according to a commonness in predication, as in the example given about the doctor and the artisan, or according to a commonness in causality, as if we say the sun is a universal cause of heating, whereas fire is a proper cause²⁶.” Notice that the universal *in praedicando* is the result of an abstraction, as in the example of the artisan and the doctor, who are numerically the same in reality, whereas a universal cause *in causando* is numerically different from the particular one. For example the hand, which is able to produce many kinds of effects, is not the tool, which is a particular cause of only one type of effect.

In the order of universality *in praedicando*, we do not deal with different causes, but with different formalities in the same cause. As Ronald McArthur says: “We do not infer, by the distinction of ‘artist’ and ‘doctor,’ that there are two causes, but that the same cause is known under two formalities²⁷”. We can easily recognize, in this type of universal, the whole abstracted from its part, which is object of a confused knowledge. Because the genus, when compared to the specific difference and the species, says in a confused way the same thing, we can say with McArthur that “the more general is the universal *in praedicando*, the more superficially does it explain the objects of which it is said²⁸”. Consequently, “superiority, then, in the case of the universal *in praedicando*, is synonymous with potentiality and confusion, because the universal is less intelligible than its inferiors²⁹.” We can say that the more universal a cause, the less he has an action proper to the effect. The doctor merely insofar he is an artisan has a weaker impact on health than does the doctor as such.

We could put forward the idea that in this conception of universality, the existence of lower causes weakens the power of the higher. To understand that, we have to keep in mind that universal is a relative concept. Something is universal versus something else. And in the same way that artisan is more universal than doctor, but particular compared to man, we can say that the common good of the village is a more universal final cause than the common good of the family, but less universal than that of the nation. With this in mind, we can say that the causal power of the superior formality decreases as its universality increases. If one must operate as a physician, the power of the physician as a man to determine the effect is weak. Now, if one has to operate as a physician surgeon, and a surgeon specialized in dermatology, the relative power of determination of the man will be even weaker. In other words, one finds all the less trace of the cause in the effect that the cause is universal *in praedicando*.

Consequently, the more particular causes (here specific formalities under which the agent acts) are interposed between the cause and the effect, the more the cause will be relatively universal with respect to its effect, and the more its power of determination on the effect will decrease.

²⁵ *In Physic.*, lib. 2 l. 5.

²⁶ “Advertendum est autem quod causa universalis et propria, vel prior et posterior, potest accipi aut secundum communitatem praedicationis, secundum exempla hic posita de medico et artifice; vel secundum communitatem causalitatis, ut si dicamus solem esse causam universalem calefactionis, ignem vero causam propria”. *Ibid.*, lib. 2 l. 6 n. 3.

²⁷ Ronald McArthur, “Universal *in praedicando*, universal *in causando*”. *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 18 (1), 1969, p. 60.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

It works on the opposite way in the order of universality *in causando*. According to St. Thomas, “the higher the cause the greater its scope and efficacy: and the more efficacious the cause, the more deeply does it penetrate into its effect, and the more remote the potentiality from which it brings that effect into act³⁰”. More universality means more diversity among the effects³¹, but more universality leads also to a deeper impact in the effect. As McArthur says: “The more universal cause, therefore, not only causes more effects by a single act, but, in virtue of its power it also attains those effects more intimately and determinately than does the inferior cause. The more universal is the cause, the more is it the cause of its effects in all their determinations³²”.

And this manifests the enormous difference between the ways to conceive of the universal. As McArthur says: “this order seems to be similar to the order within our universal predicates, but the difference is really immense, for the greater extension of causality, characteristic of the more universal cause, does not mean that it is more remote or potential. It is, in fact, because of its perfection and greater actuality able to attain its effects more perfectly and intimately than does the inferior cause. If the universal causes were potential and indeterminate, as is characteristic of the universal *in praedicando*, the higher causes would be more remote than the inferior causes, with the result that they would attain their effects less determinately³³”.

Consequently, in the field of universal of causality, the lower cause is not an impediment for the universal one, because it is “subject to the higher cause, and takes its very determination in causing from it, so that both work *per modum unius* towards the production of their effect in all its determination³⁴”. And because a universal is relative to the particular, it is possible to say that in the line of the universal *in causando*, a universal cause is in some sense more powerful thanks to particular lower causes, which proportion the universal cause to the effect, as the hand is more powerful with a hammer than without it³⁵.

Applying this assertion to final causes, we have to say that a more universal common good, which is nothing else than a universal final cause, is in a sense more attractive to people thanks to the intermediate common goods that also attract them³⁶. This answer assumes that the commonness of the good is understood as a universal *in causando*.

A parallel in the line of efficient causes

³⁰ “*Quanto enim aliqua causa est altior, tanto est communior et efficacior, et quanto est efficacior, tanto profundius ingreditur in effectum, et de remotiori potentia ipsum reducit in actum.*” (St. Thomas, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, corpus.)

³¹ See also S. Thomae Aquinatis, *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis exposition*, Ed. M. R. Cathala, R. M. Spiazzi, 2^a ed.: Marietti, Taurini-Romae, 1971, lib. 6 l. 3 n. 15.

³² McArthur, *op. cit.*, p. 73-74.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

³⁵ The hand is, practically speaking, more powerful with a hammer than without one, but the hammer itself is an artifact, something made by the hand, so the hammer’s power comes from the hand (and the mind). Certainly we don’t want to say that God is, without qualification, more powerful because of his instruments ; but we do want to say his power is in some sense more determined or focused by his creation and use of those instruments, so in that sense he is more powerful

³⁶ For the common good as universal *in causando*, see Gregory Froelich, « On the Common Goods », *The Aquinas Review* 15 (2008): 1- 28.

We can have an example of this relationship between universal and particular causes in the way God governs creatures. Of course, it is in the field of efficient causes, but it will be possible to draw an analogy with the field of final causes³⁷.

St. Thomas asks how the same effect is from God and from a natural agent³⁸. And we will ask a similar question: how a universal love can be provoked simultaneously by a universal common good and a particular one? St. Thomas first says that “it seems difficult for some people to understand how natural effects are attributed to God and to a natural agent³⁹.” We already raised the same difficulty for final causes when we asserted that it is difficult to understand how our love can be attracted by the national common good and the universal common good.

St Thomas says, “For it does not seem possible for one action to proceed from two agents⁴⁰”. For our case, we can say that it does not seem possible that our love be oriented towards two objects simultaneously without there being a certain tension or competition between these loves. St Thomas adds: “Again, when a thing can be done adequately by one agent, it is superfluous for it to be done by many; in fact, we see that nature does not do with two instruments what it can do with one. So, since the divine power is sufficient to produce natural effects, it is superfluous to use natural powers, too, for the production of the same effects. Or, if the natural power adequately produces the proper effect, it is superfluous for the divine power to act for the same effect⁴¹.” Applied to the line of final causes, this signifies that when a local common good is powerful enough to attract our love, it would not be necessary to assume attraction to a more universal common good. And when the universal common good is attractive, it is counterproductive for an attraction to a particular common good to intervene between individuals and this universal cause.

Here is the way Thomas answers those difficulties: “In every agent, in fact, there are two things to consider: namely, the thing itself that acts, and the power by which it acts. Fire, for instance, heats by means of heat. But the power of a lower agent depends on the power of the superior agent, according as the superior agent gives this power to the lower agent whereby it may act; or preserves it; or even applies it to the action, as the artisan applies an instrument to its proper effect⁴².” If we make the analogy from the efficient causes to final causes, we find the following duality in the lower group of particular final causes: the lower final causes themselves, which cause the love of the participants, and the power by which they attract love. We can now understand better how the intermediate causes facilitate the causality of the highest cause. In the case of final causes, we can say that the local common good has a causal power, because it owes it to the more universal cause. The universal common good communicates its causal power to the particular. Another text of Thomas goes deeper into the explanation of the subordinate causes, and will give us the reason why the particular cause depends on the universal one:

“Nor can the second cause by its own power have any influence on the effect of the first cause, although it is the instrument of the first cause in regard to that effect: because an instrument is in a manner the cause of the principal cause’s effect, not by its own form or power, but in so far as it participates somewhat in the power of the principal cause through

³⁷ As Thomas writes : “sicut est ordo in causis agentibus, ita etiam in causis finalibus. Ut scilicet secundarius finis a principali dependeat, sicut secundarius agens a principali dependet” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3 cap. 109.

³⁸ *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3 cap. 70.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, n. 1.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, n. 2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, n. 3.

⁴² *Ibid.*, n. 5.

being moved thereby: thus the axe is the cause of the craftsman's handiwork not by its own form or power, but by the power of the craftsman who moves it so that it participates in his power⁴³."

The reason why the instrumental cause has a power on the effect, is its participation in the power of the higher cause. For our perspective, a particular common good has a causal attractive power for men insofar as it participates in the more universal common good. Moreover, in the synthesis of his *respondeo*, Thomas gives the reason why the higher cause has a greater impact on the effect through the lower cause:

"If, then, we consider the subsistent agent, every particular agent is immediate to its effect: but if we consider the power whereby the action is done, then the power of the higher cause is more immediate to the effect than the power of the lower cause; since the power of the lower cause is not coupled with its effect save by the power of the higher cause: wherefore it is said in *De Causis* (prop. i) that the power of the first cause takes the first place in the production of the effect and enters more deeply therein⁴⁴."

The power of the lower cause is so dependent on the power of the higher cause that we can say that when the lower cause acts, it is still the higher cause which acts through the lower. The effect remains the effect of the universal cause⁴⁵.

From this analogy with universal efficient causes *in causando* we can conclude that to be attracted by a local common good means to be attracted by the more universal common good by means of the local one. There is no rivalry between the particular and the universal common goods, because they are two essentially subordinated causes that, as we said, "both work *per modum unius*". It would be inappropriate to think that the causal action of the tool hinders or is a rival with the causal action of the craftsman. To love humanity as a whole is heroic. But to love one's neighbor, who gives a concrete appearance to humanity, is easier. The love of humanity as universal common good is easier because of less universal common goods that proportion the causality of the universal final cause to the effect. Because we are made in such a way that our knowledge always begins with the senses, we need intermediate common goods, perceptible to our faculties, in order to proportion the causal power of the more universal common good to our capacities for knowledge and love. That is why it is easier to love humanity as a whole because there is first in front of me a particular man to love. It is easier to love my country, because I have a son and a daughter who are the visible

⁴³ *De potentia*, III, 7 resp.: "Nec causa secunda potest in effectum causae primae per virtutem propriam, quamvis sit instrumentum causae primae respectu illius effectus. Instrumentum enim est causa quodammodo effectus principalis causae, non per formam vel virtutem propriam, sed in quantum participat aliquid de virtute principalis causae per motum eius, sicut dolabra non est causa rei artificatae per formam vel virtutem propriam, sed per virtutem artificis a quo movetur et eam quoquomodo participat." It is important to prevent the reader against the reduction of all less universal cause to an instrumental cause. The universal/particular distinction is in every kind of cause (*In Physic.*, lib. 2 l. 6 n. 2), whereas the instrumental cause is only one kind of the efficient cause ("*causa adjuvans*", *In Physic.*, lib. 2 l. 5 n. 5). See Charles De Koninck. « Le scandale de la médiation » (II). *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 15(1), 1959, p. 79. But the instrumental cause is more known for us, and makes a good pedagogical analogy to understand the relations between first and second cause.

⁴⁴ *De potentia*, III, 7 resp.

⁴⁵ The very reason of this doctrine has to be taken from the *communicatio* of God's goodness. Talking about the position of those who "*dicebant quod ignis non calefacit, sed Deus creat calorem in re calefacta*", Thomas says: "*Repugnat etiam divinae bonitati, quae sui communicativa est*" (*De potentia*, q. 3 a. 7 co.). In this light, the false universalism of which Pope Francis speaks can be understood as a political version of occasionalism.

face of my nation. It is the sense of the pope's claim: "No one can experience the true beauty of life without relating to others, without having real faces to love⁴⁶."

The common good in *praedicando*

At this step of our reasoning, we can rise a question: why do our contemporary culture have so much difficulty understanding that the love for a particular common good is not an obstacle for the love of the universal common good ? Why do we so easily make the mistake of thinking that nationalism is an obstacle to universal fraternity ?

Here we have to question our conception of common good. It is necessary to remember that the harmonic articulation between the universal and particular cause is such as long as we stay in the field of universal *in causando*. If we understand this articulation in the field of universal *in praedicando*, it will not be the same. The universal cause *in praedicando* is as remote to the effect as there are, as it were, many intermediate causal agents. The universal cause is less powerful if there are many intermediate particular causes. In this case, the intermediate mitigates the impact of the universal cause. This is the case when we think of the common good on the pattern of a whole that would be like a mathematical sum. A sum is somewhat like an abstraction. It is a total constituted from his parts, and it abstracts from the specificity of the parts that constitute it. The common good, in this conception, is constituted *a posteriori* from the particular goods. It is in the field of the universal *in praedicando*. The common good considered to be a consequence of a mathematical addition is far from the common good as a cause of particular goods, just as a number is not a cause of its units. If it is difficult for us to understand how the particular cause can facilitate the role of the universal, it is because our conception of common good is affected by an inappropriate idea of commonness.

Indeed, Charles De Koninck remarks judiciously that if this kind of mathematically common good can be called "common," it loses the characteristic of a good insofar as it is distant from its effect. About an "abstracted and quantitative conception of the common good", he writes:

"One could believe, indeed, that the good of the highest number is also the most perfect and the most secured. Let us suppose that it is the most common, the most general: does it follows that it has more the nature of a good ? Because, provided that we talk of the common good of a political society, it has to be a good "operable" by ourselves, a good to be realized by our own activity. [...]. As soon as we are talking of a human good, it has to have the needed appeal, known practically, in order that it inclines us to action in an efficient manner⁴⁷".

The most universal, the less powerful to attract love: this is the characteristic of a good that would be in the line of universal *in praedicando*.

Political consequences

⁴⁶ *Fratelli tutti*, §87.

⁴⁷ *La confédération rempart contre le grand Etat*, in *Œuvres de Charles De Koninck*, Tome II, vol. 3, Presses Universitaires de Laval, 2015, p. 85. The translation is ours: « On pourrait croire, en effet, que le bien du plus grand nombre est aussi le bien commun le plus parfait et le mieux assuré. Mettons qu'il soit le plus commun, plus général: s'ensuit-il qu'il ait davantage la nature de bien ? Car du moment que nous parlons du bien commun de la société politique, il doit être un bien « opérable » par nous-mêmes, un bien à réaliser grâce à notre propre activité. [...] Dès lors qu'on parle d'un bien humain, il lui faut avoir l'attrait nécessaire, connu d'une manière pratique, afin qu'il nous incline à l'action de façon efficace. »

Now we can see the political consequences of the fact that one's love for particular causes facilitates one's love for the universal cause.

An adjusted nationalism is the first consequence of the relationship between the universal and particular⁴⁸. As we have already said, the pope does not blame nationalism, but only "violent nationalism". What is a good nationalism ? It is the love of one's nation that is open to a more universal good⁴⁹. In this light we can see the nation as a particular expression of humanity⁵⁰.

Here is a question about what we call the universal common good. The validity of St Thomas' doctrine of the universal and particular does not excuse us from being aware of the specificity of the reality to which we apply this doctrine. We could assume, without examining it, that there is a continuity of nested communities from family to the global population. But the natures of those human groups are not the same. They differ not only according to their size, but according to their very "species". Families and nations are actual communities, insofar as they are linked by a common culture, a common history, and a common goal. In this respect, it is difficult to be certain that the global population is an actual community, because there is no common culture, nor living together. As Aristotle says for interpersonal relations : "distance does not break off the friendship absolutely, but only the activity of it. But if the absence is lasting, it seems actually to make men forget their friendship; hence the saying 'out of sight, out of mind'.⁵¹". There is no community without friendship, and no friendship without living together. Consequently, there is no global community. Pope Francis speaks in accordance with this idea when he reserves the term friendship for local interactions, and uses the word fraternity for love that transcends borders. It remains true that sound nationalism is characterised by its openness to the more universal good. But does that imply that this universal good is the common good of a community ? It would be possible to speak of community, but in an analogous way. Indeed, the brotherhood that derives from a similarity of kind (in the initial sense of family deriving from the same father) is a certain community, even if the brothers have no other relations between them than their common birth without knowing each other. In this case, the unity is made according to the anterior causes, which cannot take the place of final cause. To expect the antecedent causes to play the role of a common good is the error that we reproach to racist nationalism, and that we can reproach just as much to those who promote world citizenship in the name of an initial brotherhood of the sons of Adam. As Charles De Koninck says about nationalism: "the life of man does not consist in a return to the initial principles of his being, but in tending towards an end which is the good of his reasonable nature, and which one should not look for as rigorously pre-established in natural origins⁵²." The reason why the unity of origin cannot guarantee the existence of a harmonious political community is proposed by Charles De Koninck: "nature does not have of itself that unity which reason can achieve. As we see so clearly in animals, equilibrium in nature depends on the play of opposites. If fish could not swallow each other, and the beasts of the jungle devour each other, this animal life would soon be exterminated. A

⁴⁸ About the roots of Francis' conception of the nation and people, see Juan Carlos Scannone, « Pope Francis and the Theology of the People », *Theological Studies* 77, n° 1 (1 mars 2016): 118- 35.

⁴⁹ This assertion follows the traditional positions of the Church. See for example Pope John Paul II, *Memory and Identity: Conversations at the Dawn of a Millennium* (New York: Rizzoli, 2005), p. 69.

⁵⁰ See Pierre Manent, *Metamorphoses of the city: On the western dynamic*, trans. Marc LePain, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2013.

⁵¹ *Nichomachean ethics*, VIII, 6, 1157b10. See St. Thomas : « *Multae amicitiae dissolvuntur per hoc, quod unus alium non appellat, id est non colloquitur et convivit alteri.* » *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 8 l. 5 n. 2.

⁵² De Koninck, Ch. 2015. « La confédération, rempart contre le grand État », in *Œuvres de Charles De Koninck*, Québec, Les presses universitaires de Laval, II-3, p. 68. Translated by us.

similar contrariety exists everywhere in nature. It is therefore not by turning back to nature alone that we can achieve harmony between nations⁵³”.

Here we have to be reminded that the common good is a broad notion, and is certainly applicable to political realities, but not only to such. The common good of humanity is not necessarily the common good of a political community.

2. The second is the relationship between “universal destination of created goods⁵⁴” and private property.

In *Fratelli Tutti*, as in the continuity of the magisterium on the social doctrine of the Church, the pope recalls “the social purpose of all forms of private property⁵⁵” according to the principle of the universal destination of goods⁵⁶, formulated in *Gaudium et Spes*⁵⁷ in accordance with the Thomistic conception of private property⁵⁸. The doctrine of the relationship between the universal and the particular as set out above sheds a fruitful light on the relationship between private property and the universal destination of goods, because if the particular good would be an obstacle towards universal, it would be inappropriate to promote private property.

In the light of St. Thomas’s doctrine, we can assert that the universal destination of goods will not be hindered by the promotion of private property. Indeed, to possess something in particular does not signify that this material thing is only for me. We can say that “to be mine” is not the same as “to be for me”. On the contrary, I make it mine in order that it can be for all.

The way the pope justifies the love of one’s country from the theme of the universal destination of goods is original in the magisterium: “Everyone loves and cares for his or her native land and village, just as they love and care for their home and are personally responsible for its upkeep. The common good likewise requires that we protect and love our native land. Otherwise, the consequences of a disaster in one country will end up affecting the entire planet. All this brings out the positive meaning of the right to property: I care for and cultivate something that I possess, in such a way that it can contribute to the good of all⁵⁹.” The universal common good requires that everyone takes care of a particular place. The love of a particular place is the concrete means to the love of all.

3. The doctrine of the universal and particular explains also how the work towards universal fraternity should not eliminate the differences between local cultures and identities. For the pope, unity is not uniformity⁶⁰. Indeed, we could easily think that local identities are hindrances to a universal fraternity. But in the light of the proper relationship between the

⁵³ *Ibid.* Translated by us. This argument presupposes the Aristotelian theme, recurrent in the Quebec philosopher, of reason as the power of opposites. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Z, 7, 1032b1-6; Θ, 2. See also De Koninck, C. (1955). “Deux tentatives de contourner par l’art les difficultés de l’action”. *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 11 (2), 188; De Koninck, C. (1968). “Tout contingent opposé au nécessaire implique un rapport au bien”. *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 24 (2), 207.

⁵⁴ *Fratelli tutti*, §120.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, § 171. Available on <https://www.vatican.va/>.

⁵⁷ “God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples. Thus, under the leadership of justice and in the company of charity, created goods should be in abundance for all in like manner. Whatever the forms of property may be, as adapted to the legitimate institutions of peoples, according to diverse and changeable circumstances, attention must always be paid to this universal destination of earthly goods. In using them, therefore, man should regard the external things that he legitimately possesses not only as his own but also as common in the sense that they should be able to benefit not only him but also others.” §69. Available on <https://www.vatican.va/>.

⁵⁸ St Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, II II, q. 66, a. 2.

⁵⁹ *Fratelli tutti*, §143.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, §144.

universal and particular, it is possible to understand how a diversity of cultures is a precondition for an expanded fraternity. The universal common good needs particular cultures to proportion its power of attraction to each people.

In the commentary of the *Politics* of Aristotle, St. Thomas explains Aristotle's criticism of Plato's theory about the unity of the city. First, he presents Socrates's reasoning: "Socrates supposed as a principle, as it were, that it was best that the political community should be as unified as possible. And so he wanted all things, even sons and wives, to be common, so that citizens were united with one another to the greatest extent⁶¹." For St. Thomas commenting on Aristotle, there are two ways of understanding unity. It can be either unicity or similarity. In both cases, Aristotle gives objections, but those directed against a city's unity as similarity will interest us. St. Thomas reports the three reasons Aristotle gives, the third is as follows: "the things out of which it is necessary to make a perfect thing differ in kind. And so we find that every perfect whole in things of nature is composed of parts different in kind (e.g., human beings of flesh, bones, and nerves). But every whole composed of parts of the same kind (e.g., air, water, and other purely material substances) is imperfect in the way of nature. And so it is clear that a political community, since it is a perfect whole, needs to consist of parts dissimilar in species⁶²". The perfection of a whole consists in the diversity of its parts. Likewise, then, the perfection of the human world consists in the diversity of cultures⁶³.

If we consider that the perfection of the whole is the universal common good, we can say that its causal attractive power can be fostered better through the diversity of particular common goods. The variety of effects of the common good is a sign of its universality. The perfection of a common good is measured less by the quantity of effects produced than by their specific diversity. This conceptual context enlightens the Pope's blame against "One model of globalization" which "in fact 'consciously aims at a one-dimensional uniformity and seeks to eliminate all differences and traditions in a superficial quest for unity... If a certain kind of globalization claims to make everyone uniform, to level everyone out, that globalization destroys the rich gifts and uniqueness of each person and each people'. This false universalism ends up depriving the world of its various colours, its beauty and, ultimately, its humanity⁶⁴." The heterogeneity of local cultures is not the sign of an imperfection of the universal common good; on the contrary, it results from its perfection.

Conclusion

In some sentences the style of Pope Francis can sound disruptive and far from the Magisterium's traditional manner of expression. But we have shown that on the main subject⁶⁵ of *Fratelli Tutti*, the pope's thought appears rooted in the Thomistic tradition. Sound nationalism, the universal destination of goods, and cultural diversities depends on a fair conception of the relationship between universal and particular causes in Thomas' writings.

⁶¹ St Thomas, *Sententia Politic.*, lib. 2 l. 1 n. 10.

⁶² "*Ea ex quibus oportet unum aliquid perfectum fieri, differunt specie unde omne totum perfectum in rebus naturalibus invenitur esse constitutum ex partibus diversis secundum speciem; ut homo ex carnibus, ossibus et nervis. Totum vero quod componitur ex partibus eiusdem speciei est imperfectum in genere naturae, sicut aer et aqua et alia inanimata corpora. Unde manifestum est quod, cum civitas sit quoddam totum perfectum, oportet quod consistat ex partibus dissimilibus secundum speciem*" (*Sententia Politic.*, lib. 2 l. 1 n. 12).

⁶³ As well as the perfection of the world requires diversity of things. See *Summa theologiae* I, q. 47.a. 1 & 2, *Contra Gentiles*, II, 45 and III, 97, and for an application to the question of the common good see Charles De Koninck, 2009. "In Defence of St Thomas, A reply to Father Eschmann's Attack on The primacy of the common good", in Ralph McInerny (Ed), *The writings of Charles De Koninck, Notre Dame (Ind.)*, University of Notre Dame Press, Volume 2, p. 239.

⁶⁴ *Fratelli tutti*, §100. See also §191.

⁶⁵ See *Ibid.*, §6.

Those political conceptions lean against an adequate theory of intermediate causes that provide a structure to the natural order, and such theory is specific to the genuine Catholic natural philosophy. The text of the pope, despite the sometimes confusing wording, remains rooted in this tradition. It endorses the principles of this natural philosophy and uses it to apply the traditional principles to the *Res novae* of the twenty-first century.