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Augustine and Aquinas on Original Sin and the Function of Political Authority

PAUL J. WEITHMAN

THE REDISCOVERY OF Aristotelian moral thought in the thirteenth century influenced medieval political theory profoundly. Recovery of Aristotle's *Politics*,¹ for example, made available to political theorists of the period analyses of political institutions that differed significantly from those they found in Patristic sources. Differences between Aristotle's views and those of Augustine were especially striking. Thomas Aquinas was one of the first and most influential of the thirteenth-century Aristotelians. Charting the medieval assimilation of Aristotelian political ideas and the rejection of Augustinian politics therefore requires an adequate account of Aquinas's own political thought and of his departures from political Augustinianism.*

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¹ On the reception and interpretation of the *Politics* in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, see F. Edward Cranz, *Aristotelianism in Medieval Political Theory* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1938); Conor Martin, "Some Medieval Commentaries on Aristotle's *Politics*," *History* 36 (1955): 29–44; Jean Dunbabin, "The Reception and Interpretation of Aristotle's *Politics*," in Kretzmann et al., eds., *Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1982), 723–38. On Aquinas's interpretation and reinterpretation of Aristotle, see Harry Jaffa, *Thomism and Aristotelianism* (University of Chicago Press, 1952); also Anthony Celano "The Concept of Worldly Beatitude in the Writings of Thomas Aquinas," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 25 (1987): 215–26.

* The recovery of Thomistic politics may be of more than historical interest, as recent attempts to bring versions of it into contact with contemporary political philosophy suggest. For such attempts, see John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Right* (Oxford University Press, 1980); also Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1988). These attempts obviously raise a number of very important questions, but questions which lie beyond the scope of this paper.

According to most standard works on medieval political theory, Augustine and Aquinas offer very different explanations of political authority and subjection.³ Augustine, it is said, thought political authority essentially coercive. He considered subjection to a coercive political authority necessary because he thought that without restraint human beings acting on their lust, avarice, and desire for power would make society intolerable if not impossible. Aquinas, by contrast, found in Aristotle a more positive political theory according to which life in a well-functioning *polis* conduces to human flourishing. Political authority, on Aquinas's view, does not exist only to restrain the vicious and aggressive; it also has the positive function of leading human beings to virtue.

Scholars have long adduced passages in which Augustine and Aquinas discuss prelapsarian authority in support of this general and generally held account.⁴ Augustine's treatment of authority in the state of innocence is confined to a brief passage in *The City of God*. There he seems to assert that there would be no political authority had original sin not been committed. This is the view he would be expected to endorse if he thought that political authority is exercised only to coerce and restrain the vicious, since there would be no vice if there were no sin. Aquinas, like other Scholastics, treated the question of prelapsarian rule at somewhat greater length than did Augustine. He first took it up in his commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard; he returned to it years later in the *Prima Pars* of his *Summa Theologiae*. Because he thought that political authority makes a positive contribution to a life of virtue, he argued that it would have been found had the Fall not occurred.

These passages on prelapsarian authority are often employed *only* as proof-texts to establish that the two thinkers differ. But their *analysis* can also be expected to show exactly how Augustine and Aquinas differ by showing exactly what functions each deems essential to political authority. After the Fall it is difficult to distinguish functions that have accrued to political authority as a result of human sinfulness from those that Aquinas thinks are essential to it. In the state of innocence as Aquinas describes it, however, functions he

³ For this contrast, see A. P. d'Entreves, *The Medieval Contribution to Political Thought* (The Humanities Press, 1959), 24; Otto Gierke, *Political Theories of the Middle Age* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 145, note 137; Alan Gewirth, *Marsilius of Padua: Defensor Pacis*, Volume 1 (Columbia University Press, 1951), 85 and note 3.

⁴ For the claim that Augustine locates the origins of political authority in the consequences of the Fall, see J.N. Figgis, *The Political Aspects of St. Augustine's "City of God"* (Longmans, Green and Co., 1921), 62–63; Norman Baynes, *The Political Ideas of St. Augustine's "De Civitate Dei"* (The Historical Association, 1968), 6–7; Herbert Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine* (Columbia University Press, 1963), 39; Dino Bigongiari, "The Political Ideas of St. Augustine," *Essays on Dante and Medieval Culture* (Biblioteca dell' "Archivum Romanicum," 1964), 94. For the claim that Aquinas does not locate its origins in human sinfulness, see Bigongiari, "The Political Ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas," in *op. cit.* 110.

thinks consequent on sin would, *ex hypothesi*, be absent; only those he deems essential would be exercised. His discussion of prelapsarian authority is therefore crucial for determining his conception of political authority and hence for locating his departure from Augustine. Insofar as that conception reflects Aquinas's Aristotelianism, analysis of his discussion will also reveal what resources recovery of the *Ethics* and *Politics* made available to him and what use he made of those resources to effect a break with Augustine's political thought.

The fundamental difference between the two thinkers lies, I will argue, in the different values each ascribes to citizens' attachment to the common good. According to Aquinas, attachment to the common good of political society is part of the virtue of legal justice, the most important of the nontheological virtues. Such attachment is therefore an essential part of a well-lived human life. Aquinas thinks that possession and exercise of legal justice makes available another central feature of the good life: participation in the civic friendship that grows out of collective pursuit of a common good. Fostering attachment to the common good is therefore among the most important contributions Aquinas thinks political authority makes to a life of virtue; in this he departs significantly from Augustine. Augustine denies that attachment to the common goods of political society—earthly peace and national glory—are virtues at all⁵ and he denies that meaningful ties of friendship can develop in political society. This interpretation of the differences between Augustine and Aquinas points to important changes in the notions of civic virtue and the common good, and thus to the conceptual changes political Aristotelianism occasioned. It is also, I will argue, based upon a more faithful reading of the passages in which the two thinkers discuss prelapsarian authority than other interpreters propose. Let me begin my argument by presenting Augustine's views.

2.

Augustine never wrote a book or a treatise devoted exclusively to political theory. Remarks about politics can be found in a number of his works, but the different concerns that gave rise to those works, the different views expressed⁶ and the span of time over which they were written make virtually

⁵ Augustine makes an exception to this claim for Christian emperors, for whom this attachment is virtuous, "if they put their power at the service of God's majesty": *City of God*, V, 24. Thanks to Alasdair MacIntyre for reminding me of the significance of this passage.

References throughout are to the *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina; I have also relied upon *City of God* (Penguin Books, 1972) trans. Bettenson.

⁶ As on the question of whether heresy ought to be suppressed by political authority. The best treatment of this issue is Peter Brown, "St. Augustine's Attitude to Religious Coercion," *Journal of Roman Studies* 54 (1964): 107–16.

impossible the isolation of a political theory which could be described as Augustine's considered view.⁷ Even *The City of God*, the richest source of political material in Augustine's corpus, was composed over a period of twenty years and addresses a great variety of issues. The *locus classicus* of Augustine's views on sin and political authority, however, is Book XIX of that work, especially Chapters 14 and 15; it is to these that readers usually turn to substantiate differences between Augustine and Aquinas. I shall therefore concentrate on the views that Augustine puts forward there.

In the opening sentences of Chapter 15 of Book XIX, Augustine asserts that servitude is a condition or institution not found in "the order of nature" in which God created man. God, Augustine writes, intended human beings to exercise dominion or *dominium* only over irrational creatures, and not over other human beings; he quotes Genesis 1:26 as evidence of God's intention.⁸ "The first just men," he continues, were therefore shepherds rather than kings; slavery, Augustine says immediately, entered the world as a result of sin.

It is important to see just what these brief remarks in Chapter 15 are usually taken to assert. Augustine thought that human beings would have lived a social life even had the Fall never occurred. He does not deny that some exercise of authority would have been necessary in a state of innocence. But Augustine's remarks in Chapter 15 are generally taken to indicate his belief that subjection to *political* authority as well as the subjection of slavery were instituted as a consequence of human sinfulness. What authority would have been exercised in a state of innocence would, Augustine is thought to have said, have been paternal authority like that the Old Testament patriarch or Roman *paterfamilias* exercised over his wife and children. It would not have been the political authority a king exercises over his subjects.⁹

Chapter 15 is clear enough about the origins of slavery but it contains no explicit assertion that political authority was established only as a consequence of sin; indeed the contrast drawn in passing between shepherds and kings is the chapter's only mention of political authority. It might therefore seem questionable whether the conclusions Augustine reaches about slavery in Chapter 15 apply to political subjection as well.

⁷ On the unsystematic character of Augustine's political philosophy, see Baynes, *The Political Ideas of St. Augustine's "De Civitate Dei,"* 3, 15; Brown, "St. Augustine," in Smalley, ed., *Trends in Medieval Political Thought* (Barnes and Noble, 1965), 1; Deane, *The Social and Political Ideas of St. Augustine*, vii–viii; Figgis, *The Political Aspects of St. Augustine's "The City of God,"* 7–8.

⁸ "Hoc naturalis ordo praescribit, ita Deus hominem condidit. Nam: 'Dominetur', inquit, 'piscium maris et volatilium caeli et omnium reptantium, que reptant super terram.'" The Revised Standard Version translates the quoted verse: "[A]nd let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air, [. . .] and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

⁹ For this interpretation, see the sources cited above in note 3.

But R. A. Markus, who has written the most penetrating study of passages in which Augustine and Aquinas discuss prelapsarian authority,¹⁰ cites three reasons for thinking that they do. First, he argues, "in the absence of positive grounds for excepting political authority, the most natural way of reading what Augustine says about the subjection of man to man is to take it quite generally, including within its scope the subjection of men to their rulers."¹¹ Second, Markus points to Augustine's quotation of Genesis in this chapter. In that verse, God gives human beings dominion over birds, fish, and reptiles. Augustine quotes it to underline the fact that God did *not* give some human beings dominion over others. Markus argues that the juxtaposition of this quotation with Augustine's contrast between shepherds and kings implies that Augustine intended his remarks about the origin of slavery to apply to political authority as well.¹² Finally, Markus draws on a lengthy discussion of dominion in Augustine's commentary on Psalm 124 to argue that "slavery and other institutions of human subjection are not fundamentally distinguished in Augustine's mind."¹³

Markus's third argument explains important features of Chapter 15 and in doing so supports its traditional interpretation. For one thing, the elision of slavery and political subjection shows why Augustine made what might otherwise seem an irrelevant allusion to kingship in the middle of his discussion of slavery. It also entails that Augustine's remarks about the origins of slavery apply to political authority as well, and provides more conclusive grounds for that claim than do Markus's other two arguments. Because of the weight it bears and because it purports to explain the text in which Augustine discusses the origins of political authority, I want to examine the argument more closely.

That there is no fundamental distinction between slavery and subjection to political authority seems highly implausible and a position that ought not to be ascribed to Augustine. Only the most tyrannical regimes subject their people to a condition that can plausibly be described as slavery; Augustine's study of history should have taught him as much. But Markus rightly points out that Augustine distinguishes the institution of authority, which is the subject of Chapter 15, from the way in which authority is exercised, which is the subject of the preceding chapter. Thus Augustine implies, in Chapter 14 of Book

¹⁰R. A. Markus, "Two Conceptions of Political Authority: Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XIX. 14–15, and Some Thirteenth-Century Interpretations," *Journal of Theological Studies*, New Series 16 (1965): 68–100. This essay appears, bifurcated, as two appendices to Markus's *Saeculum* (Cambridge University Press, 1988), 197–210 and 211–30.

¹¹Markus, "Two Conceptions of Political Authority," 72.

¹²Markus, "Two Conceptions of Political Authority," 72.

¹³Markus, "Two Conceptions of Political Authority," 72–73; Markus refers to *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 124, 7–8.

XIX, that paternal authority can be exercised either cruelly or for the benefit of those in one's care; the same applies to political authority or authority over slaves. The claim that Augustine does not distinguish slavery from political authority therefore does not imply that Augustine thinks political authority as repressive as slavery often is.

Moreover, Augustine's commentary on Psalm 124 comports well with other remarks of his in Chapter 15 of *The City of God*, Book XIX. In the paragraphs of his commentary to which Markus refers, Augustine takes up the question of why the good are often subject to the authority of the bad. He emphasizes that earthly authority should be obeyed for the sake of heavenly and that rendering service to masters of slaves and to political authority fosters humility. Both forms of subjection, he argues, thereby prepare the good "to possess [their] eternal inheritance."¹⁴ Both are teachers of humility, both rely on coercion or the threat of it, and both are needed only as a result of original sin, because of which human beings need to be taught humility.¹⁵ Thus the commentary does indeed suggest that there are important respects in which Augustine thinks the two forms of subjection similar. The commentary's emphasis on salutary humility is echoed in the relevant passages of *The City of God* where Augustine stresses that slavery was instituted by God as a discipline to humble those subjected to it. This suggests that the conception of political authority at work in Augustine's commentary on Psalm 124 is also at work in Chapter 15, Book XIX of *The City of God*. This conception, taken together with Augustine's remarks about slavery, does indeed support the traditional reading of Augustine on the origins of political authority.

Markus's reconstruction of Augustine's argument depends crucially upon the similarities Augustine sees between slavery and political subjection and, therefore, on the importance Augustine attaches to political authority's punitive and disciplinary functions. But Augustine ascribes another function to political authority, one which political authority does not share with the mastership of slaves. And he has available to him an argument that it too has its origins in the consequences of the Fall. That function—of which Markus takes no account—is the establishment of what Augustine calls "earthly peace" in a geographical territory over which that authority exercises supreme power.¹⁶

The earthly peace which political authority exists to secure is "a compromise between human wills in respect of the provisions relevant to the mortal nature of man."¹⁷ Among the ways in which it differs from true peace, Augus-

¹⁴ "ad possidendam sempiternam haereditatem," *Ennarationes* 124, 8.

¹⁵ The humbling function of political subjection is also stressed at Brown, "St. Augustine," 5.

¹⁶ See also George J. Lavere, "The Problem of the Common Good in Saint Augustine's *Civitas Terrena*," *Augustinian Studies* 14 (1983): 6.

¹⁷ *City of God*, XIX, 17.

tine insists, is in the security and fellowship the latter provides. The condition of earthly peace is marked by treachery and the ever-present danger of civil and domestic strife.¹⁸ Political authority is a regrettable necessity.¹⁹ It employs coercive methods to insure the lack of overt hostility necessary so that all can have access to the material necessities; it cannot be sure of securing better conditions than these nor can it reliably lead its subjects to virtue.

Augustine would argue that this second function of political authority, like the first, would not be exercised had the Fall never occurred. Political authority exists to establish earthly peace because earthly peace is necessary for the best life human beings can live after the Fall. But if original sin had not been committed, conditions of true peace would have prevailed which far supercede earthly peace²⁰ in the opportunities they afford to cultivate friendships and exercise the virtues. A far better life, a life of what Augustine considers genuine virtue, would have been possible. The qualities of character developed and exercised in pursuit of earthly peace are not, therefore, qualities that sinless people would possess. This is confirmed by Augustine's attack on the heroes of the Roman republic. It is crucial to this attack that the virtues, like courage and self-restraint, which pursuit of earthly peace seemed to elicit in the Romans were really forms of sinful pride.²¹ They therefore would not be developed and exercised had the Fall not occurred.

Augustine does not indicate which of the two functions of political authority he thinks the more essential. No doubt the two were closely linked in his mind, for the law and the penalties by which political authority humbles and disciplines those subject to it are measures taken to secure earthly peace. The importance of noting this second function is that it shows what is at the heart of Augustine's critique of politics. Augustine locates the origins of political authority in the consequences of sin because he thinks that the moral improvement to which political subjection conduces is either remedial or illusory. The function of political authority on which Markus focuses produces genuine moral improvement, but it is improvement that only those prone to pride require. The second function aims at an end pursuit of which does not elicit genuinely virtuous behavior at all. Recognizing this critique of the morally improving functions of politics suggests a very different interpretation of Aquinas's departure from Augustine than the one Markus defends.

The problem with Markus's reading is that it obscures important differences between the ways in which Augustine and Aquinas think political sub-

¹⁸ *City of God*, XIX, 5; see also William Riordan O'Connor "The *Uti/Frui* Distinction in Augustine's Ethics," *Augustinian Studies* 14 (1983): 59.

¹⁹ Cf. *City of God* XIX, 6.

²⁰ Cf. *City of God* XIV, 10.

²¹ See *City of God* V, 12 and 13.

jection morally improving. For Augustine, political subjection improves by humbling and disciplining; other qualities that pursuit of the common good requires are not true virtues. For Aquinas, on the other hand, political authority genuinely improves those subject to it by fostering in them a concern for the common good of political society. The improvement is not merely a remedy for sin; this function of political authority would, Aquinas says, have been exercised even had original sin not been committed. The most profound difference between Augustine and Aquinas is therefore in the value each attaches to a citizen's concern for the common good of political society. This way of casting the difference between the two takes seriously the second as well as the first of the two functions Augustine ascribes to political authority. It also, I will argue, fits much better with Aquinas's discussion of the conditions of a state of innocence than does Markus's account.

3.

Aquinas first broaches the issue of rule in the state of innocence in his commentary on Book II, distinction 44 of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*.²² The question Aquinas poses—"Utrum in statu innocentiae fuisset dominium"—is not about what Adam and Eve did in the garden of Eden before their commission of original sin, but about what power (*dominium*) would have been exercised, in Eden and elsewhere, if original sin had never been committed and innocents had multiplied to people the earth.²³

Aquinas begins his answer by distinguishing two forms or modes of ruling. The first, he says, is "ordered to governing" (*ad regimen ordinatus*) and the second is "for the sake of domination" (*ad dominandum*). Aquinas immediately equates the second mode of ruling with that exercised by a master over his slaves. In order to elucidate this second mode and distinguish it from the first, he introduces a comparison with political rule, saying that "the rule of a master over slaves is like that of a tyrant over his subjects, as the Philosopher says in the eighth book of the *Ethics*."²⁴ The rule of a tyrant differs from that of a king, Aquinas says, in that a king orders his rule for the good of those

²² Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Libros Sententiarum* in *Opera Omnia* (Parma Edition), volume 6. All subsequent references to and quotations from Aquinas's work will be to and from this edition.

²³ Thus Aquinas uses *fuisset*, the pluperfect subjunctive, rather than the perfect or pluperfect indicative. It seems to have been standard to address the issue of power and original sin counterfactually, for Bonaventure in his own *Sentence* commentary uses the same form of the verb when he says that there would have been no power of one person over another had original sin not been committed: "Si enim homo stetisset [. . .]." See Bonaventure, *Opera Omnia* (Ludovicus Vives, 1864), volume 3.

²⁴ "Domini autem ad servum, ut in 8 *Ethicorum* Philosophus dicit, est praelatio sicut tyranni ad subditum" (my translation).

subject to it while a tyrant orders his rule for his own good. Therefore, Aquinas concludes, the difference between the two modes of rule is that the first aims at the good of those ruled; the second aims primarily at the good of the ruler and benefits those subject to it only incidentally.

With his opening distinction thus elucidated, Aquinas proceeds to argue that though the second mode of rule would not be found in a state of innocence, the first would be. Rulership aimed primarily at the good of the ruler would not be found in a state of innocence, Aquinas says, because rational creatures are *de se*; they exist, not for the sake of other rational creatures, but for their own sake. Ordering or governing some human beings for the benefit of others happens only when man "is compared to irrational creatures," as in Aristotle's comparison of slaves to animate instruments.²⁵ But the likening of human beings to irrational creatures, Aquinas says, occurs as a result of sin and therefore would not have been found had original sin not been committed.

Aquinas then returns to what he calls rule "ordered to governing" and distinguishes three of its functions: the direction of subjects "in what is to be done," the supplementation of certain defects (his example is a king's defense of the populace), and the correction of morals by the punishment of evil and the employment of coercion to induce acts of virtue. The last two functions, Aquinas asserts, would not have been necessary had original sin not been committed. However, Aquinas says, there would be some authority providing direction "in things to be done and known" even in a state of innocence, because even in that state some would have greater wisdom and intellect than others.

It is important that Aquinas does not depart from Augustine in thinking that human beings would live socially in a state of innocence. Moreover, the two thinkers do not disagree about whether or not some would have directed others had the Fall never occurred. The significant difference between them is on the question of whether rule exercised in a state of innocence could properly be described as an exercise of *political* authority.

Aquinas's remarks throughout his discussion of rule in the state of innocence suggest that he had a much clearer conception of political authority than did Augustine. He equates rule for the sake of domination with slavery, but as we saw he explicates the relationship between master and slave by analyzing that between a tyrant and his subjects. The consequent analysis of ruling for the sake of domination is less than thorough. Aquinas's argument does, however, show that far from assimilating tyranny to slavery, Aquinas relies upon an understanding of the former to explain the latter.

²⁵ Aristotle, *Politics* 1253b30ff.; for Aquinas's commentary on this passage, see *In Libros Politicorum* Book 1, lect. 2.

This use of a political analogy to explicate slavery serves as a reminder of how frequently Aquinas employs such analogies to elucidate phenomena that are not at all political. This is particularly so in his later work. Aquinas frequently uses political models to explain various sorts of familial authority, though he follows Aristotle in thinking political and familial authority quite distinct.²⁶ Elsewhere, Aquinas uses the rule of a king over his subjects to describe that of the mind over the passions.²⁷ An especially remarkable example occurs in Aquinas's discussion of the effects of fear. There he notes that fear causes heat to contract toward the interior of the body, a phenomenon he likens to the citizens of an endangered city forsaking its exterior and racing for its interior parts.²⁸

These examples suggest that care must be taken in drawing conclusions from Aquinas's employment of political analogies and imagery. This is especially important to bear in mind when interpreting the passage from Aquinas's *Sentence* commentary on authority in the state of innocence. The importance of this passage is its argument that the authority exercised in the state of innocence would have been political. But the occurrences of political language in the passage can deceive the reader about what parts of the passage bear the burden of this argument.

The distinction between modes of rule with which Aquinas opens his discussion of prelapsarian authority might be thought to provide some reason for thinking that political authority would be found in a state of innocence. The first of the two modes Aquinas distinguishes is rule "ordered to governing," *ordinatus ad regimen*. This characterization of the first mode does not, however, imply that it is political. While Aquinas often employs the word *regimen* to denote political rule, his *Sentence* commentary contains many instances of the word in which it is clear that the governing being described is nonpolitical. Thus Aquinas speaks of the *regimen rationis* to describe reason's rule over the senses²⁹ and of *regimen mulieris* when talking about a husband's rule over his wife.³⁰ That Aquinas thinks authority in the state of innocence would be *ordinatus ad regimen* does not itself imply, therefore, that he thinks that authority would be political.

Not even the analogy Aquinas draws between the first mode of rule and

²⁶This is especially well documented in James Blythe, "Family, Government and the Medieval Aristotelians," *History of Political Thought* 10 (1989): 3-7.

²⁷For example, *Summa Theologiae* I, 81, 3; I-II, 17, 7; I-II, 56, 4; I-II, 58, 2; this work will hereafter be cited as *ST*.

²⁸*ST* I-II, 44, 1.

²⁹II *Sentences* d.24, q. 3, a.4; II *Sentences* d.30, q.1, a.1; III *Sentences* d.17, q.1, a.2; III *Sentences* d.37, q.1, a.3.

³⁰II *Sentences* d.22, q.1, a.3; IV *Sentences* d.35, q.1, a.4.

the rule exercised by a king over his subjects establishes that. Aquinas's opening distinction between the two modes is a distinction between two ways of exercising *any* kind of rule, and not just two ways of exercising *political* rule. Thus Aquinas thinks that political, familial, or ecclesiastical authority can be exercised in either of the two ways or modes. The parallels he draws between kingship and the first mode, and between tyranny and the second, are drawn to explain and illustrate the two ways of ruling that Aquinas distinguishes. The use of political analogy for illustrative or explanatory purposes is not, as already noted, uncommon in Aquinas's work. His use of such analogies does not imply that he thinks the phenomenon being explained is itself political. In this case, his appeal to kingship and tyranny to explain two ways of ruling does not imply that the rule he has in mind is political rule.

The strongest evidence that Aquinas is talking about political rule in this passage is his enumeration of the functions of rule "ordered to governing." The three functions he distinguishes—guidance, supplementation of defects, and correction of morals—are ascribed to political rule or political society in Aquinas's later works. In the passage of his *Sentence* commentary under discussion, Aquinas says that the last of these functions is fulfilled by punishing the evil and leading them to acts of virtue. The purpose of human law is described in virtually the same terms in the *Summa Theologiae*.³¹ And the propagation of laws which serve this purpose is, Aquinas insists, a function proper to political authority.³² The second of these functions, the supplementation of defects, is prominent among the reasons Aquinas cites for the human need to live in political society in the opening paragraphs of *De Regno*.³³ These suggest that an authority which combines these two functions with that of guidance "in things to be done and known" is political authority, and that Aquinas is analyzing political authority at the close of his remarks about *dominium* and original sin.

But an authority that acts only to guide those subject to it and which has been stripped of its coercive functions does not much resemble political authority as we after the Fall are familiar with it. Aquinas may be justified in claiming that some functions of political authority would have been exercised even had original sin not been committed. Description of the authority exercising that function as itself a political authority, however, might seem far less legitimate.

Markus's interpretation of Aquinas's position and his differences from Augustine depends heavily upon these considerations for its plausibility. Aris-

³¹ *ST* I-II, 95, 1.

³² *ST* I-II, 90, 3 and ad 2.

³³ *De Regno* Book I, chapter 1.

totle's claim that human beings are naturally political, Markus argues, implies that human beings are naturally subject to an authority that is fully political and not just one that exercises one of the functions of political authority. The prelapsarian authority of Aquinas's *Sentence* commentary is not, Markus says, an authority Aristotle would recognize as political; fidelity to Aristotle therefore required that Aquinas locate all three functions of political authority even in prelapsarian rule. Markus argues that as Aquinas became more deeply imbued with Aristotle's political theory in the years after he commented on the *Sentences*, he came increasingly to recognize the force of this requirement. When he returned to these issues in the *Summa Theologiae*, Markus says, Aquinas rejected his earlier conception of political authority as "a citizens' advice bureau," recognized that political authority is inherently coercive and claims that political authority "with the full apparatus of government and the power of enforcement" would have been found in a state of innocence.³⁴

The tensions in Aquinas's view begin to show when his views about the centrality of coercion are conjoined with his explanation of the origins of political authority. Aquinas's claim that political authority is not a consequence of sin implies that it would have been found even had original sin not been committed. The views about coercion Markus imputes to the mature Aquinas therefore imply that coercion would have been found even among the innocent. The problem is that Aquinas, like Augustine, thought that sinless human beings would have been fully free. Indeed, Markus says, it was Augustine's views about the freedom of the sinless which forced him to deny that coercive political authority would have been found in a state of innocence. But this route was not open to Aquinas. Aquinas's solution to the problem, Markus argues, was to adopt a notion of "positive freedom" according to which human beings are free even if coerced, provided that they are being directed to their own or the common good. Differences between Aquinas and Augustine on the origin of political authority in human sinfulness are therefore tied, Markus concludes, to deeper differences "about the meaning of 'freedom'."³⁵

4.

Markus's claim that Aquinas located the exercise of coercion in the state of innocence is definitely a minority interpretation,³⁶ one which must explain why Aquinas thought sinless human beings would need to be coerced. His claim that Aquinas thought coercion an essential function of political author-

³⁴ Markus, "Two Conceptions of Political Authority," 94.

³⁵ Markus, "Two Conceptions of Political Authority," 100.

³⁶ See for example Bigongiari, "The Political Ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas," 110; d'Entreves, *The Medieval Contribution to Political Thought*, 24.

ity and the textual interpretation he builds upon that claim do, however, have much to recommend them.

First, interpreters who deny that Aquinas thought the exercise of coercion essential to political authority must defend the propriety of Aquinas's describing noncoercive prelapsarian authority as political. For it might seem natural to think that Aquinas would assimilate the authority of the state of innocence to that form of postlapsarian authority which it would most have resembled. Since authority that exercises no coercive power seems so little like political authority as it exists after the Fall, description of the former in terms of the latter seems illegitimate. Markus's claim that prelapsarian authority would have been coercive avoids this difficulty.³⁷

Second, Markus's interpretation links Aquinas's appreciation of coercion's centrality to political authority with his gradual absorption of Aristotle's political theory. Markus therefore concedes that the young Aquinas was much less ready than the mature one to number the exercise of coercive power among political authority's essential or definitive functions. Markus appeals to the development of Aquinas's political thought in this respect to explain what appear to be very different treatments of prelapsarian political authority in the *Sentence* commentary and the *Summa*.³⁸

Third, the introduction of new political theories often involves, not only the introduction of new political concepts, but also the redefinition of concepts long regarded as fundamental.³⁹ Indeed conceptual change of the latter sort often plays a crucial role in the acceptance of novel ideas in political theory. Therefore an adequate explanation of a theory's novelty and of how it secured acceptance over previously dominant views often requires an accurate mapping of the conceptual changes that theory entails. Markus, by focusing on the new meaning Aquinas gave to the notion of political freedom, purports to provide just such an explanation of how political Aristotelianism differs from political Augustinianism and of how the former gained acceptance over the latter.⁴⁰

³⁷ This is the argument Markus presses against the view that prelapsarian authority would have been noncoercive; see Markus, "Two Conceptions of Political Authority," 94. A variant on Markus's objection to the usual reading seems to have been anticipated by Deane; see *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine*, 234, where Deane contrasts Aquinas's "idealization" of politics with the political realism of Augustine. For Augustine's political realism, see also Figgis, *The Political Aspects of St. Augustine's "City of God,"* 63.

³⁸ Markus, "Two Conceptions of Political Authority," 91–94.

³⁹ For but one discussion of this approach to the history of political theory, see Anthony Pagden's "Introduction" to *The Languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), ed. Pagden, 1–17; see 3ff. for discussion of how this methodology applies to political Aristotelianism.

⁴⁰ For the importance of this conceptual change in the acceptance of political Aristotelianism by Aquinas's successors, see Markus, "Two Conceptions of Political Authority," 96–97.

Markus's interpretation suffers, however, from a fundamental flaw. Fidelity to Aristotle's claim that subjection to political authority is natural does *not* require that Aquinas reject or modify the analysis of his *Sentence* commentary. Nor does it demand that he locate an Aristotelian conception of political authority in the state of innocence. It only requires Aquinas's acknowledgement that the natural processes of human development and perfection require human subjection to political authority. This acknowledgement is compatible with the analysis of the *Sentence* commentary because Aquinas insists that the state of innocence would be neither a state in which human beings exist in a purely natural condition nor one in which the processes of perfection are entirely natural. This is a point on which Aquinas's writings, both early and late, are consistent. It is one he makes most clearly and succinctly in question 5, article 1 of the *Summa's Secunda Secundae*. There he contrasts his own view that "man [was] created with the gift of grace" with the position that man was created in a purely natural state. Earlier, in his *Sentence* commentary, Aquinas had made the same point. There, he argued that the state of innocence would be one in which human beings were supernaturally perfected or were "elevated" above their nature by grace.⁴¹

Among the elevating effects of grace, he says there, was "the perfect obedience of the inferior powers to reason,"⁴² so that human beings in a state of innocence would have been less distracted by sensuous delights than are human beings after the Fall. It is precisely the attraction to what Aquinas calls "improper delights" that he says makes the coercive function of human law necessary.⁴³ There would have been no need for political authority to exercise coercion in a state of innocence, because in the state of innocence human beings would be elevated above their nature by the effects of grace. It is therefore neither surprising nor problematic that Aquinas thinks innocents would need only the directive government mentioned in the *Sentence* commentary. And because Aquinas considered the state of innocence an elevated condition, he would see no inconsistency between the Aristotelian dictum that human beings are naturally subject to political authority and the description of noncoercive prelapsarian authority as political.

Contract theory's employment of a hypothetical state of nature has perhaps inclined historians of political thought to read this intellectual device back into Aquinas. This reading is no doubt facilitated by Aquinas's having taken over from Aristotle a robust notion of nature. And it no doubt gains some plausibility from the imputation to Aquinas of modern philosophical

⁴¹ III *Sentences* d. 1, q. 1, a. 2 ad 9.

⁴² II *Sentences* 29, 1, 3.

⁴³ ST I-II, 95, 1.

interests—the interest, for example, in a state of pure nature in which are displayed the motives that give rise to political society.

But the concerns that led Aquinas to consider what authority would be exercised in a state of innocence are very different than those which led Hobbes and Locke to consider what life would be like in a state of nature. Hobbes and Locke were interested primarily in questions about what interests are secured by subjecting oneself to political authority, under what circumstances an authority is legitimate and into what constitutional form it is rational to contract. These questions reflect an interest in political theory. Aquinas, by contrast, was moved by interests that were primarily theological. In his discussion of what rule there would be in a state of innocence, he was concerned to establish, *not* that political subjection is natural, but that subjection to political authority is not the result of sin.

Once Aquinas's theological concerns are appreciated, there is less inclination to assimilate his state of innocence to a state of nature.⁴⁴ There is correspondingly less reason to suppose he thought that the coercive functions of political authority would be exercised there. There is therefore far less reason to endorse an interpretation according to which Aquinas became dissatisfied with the treatment given in his *Sentence* commentary, later located coercive authority in a state of innocence and consequently departed from Augustine on the nature of freedom.

The challenge that remains is to develop an interpretation which shares the strengths of Markus's reading, but avoids this error. Aquinas's claim in the commentary on the *Sentences* that political authority has one function that is not accounted for entirely by human sinfulness is in itself a significant departure from Augustine's political thought. Properly to understand that departure, it will be helpful to attend to what subtle differences do reveal themselves when Aquinas's early treatment of prelapsarian authority is compared with that of the *Summa*.

5.

In the *Summa* as in the *Sentence* commentary, Aquinas speaks of two modes of *dominium*. The first is the mastery of slaves; the second is *dominium* "in a general sense referred to any kind of subject."⁴⁵ It is exemplified by rule over

⁴⁴ I have tried to suggest that the equation of a state of innocence with one of nature underlies Markus's reading of the development of Aquinas's political thought. There is, however, only one brief passage—at Markus, "Two Conceptions of Political Authority," 93—in which the equation is explicit. The equation is much more flagrant in D. E. Luscombe, "The State of Nature and the Origin of the State," *Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, 757–70.

⁴⁵ "Alio modo accipitur dominium, secundum quod communiter refertur ad subjectum qualitercumque" *ST I*, 96, 4.

free persons. The first mode, Aquinas says, would *not* be found in a state of innocence. The argument Aquinas provides is much the same as that found in his earlier work, though without the analogy between slavery and tyranny. Aquinas argues that being ruled for the utility or good of another is a cause of sadness and can happen only as a punishment for sin. This argument like the earlier one turns on the claim that human beings are created for their own sake rather than to be used for the good of another. Aside from the absence of the political analogy, the argument of the *Summa* differs from that of the *Sentence* commentary only in its allusion to unhappiness, which makes clearer than did the earlier work in what the punitive character of slavery consists.

Aquinas offers two arguments to support the claim that the second mode of rule would be found in a state of innocence. One returns to considerations mentioned briefly at the end of his discussion in the commentary on the *Sentences*. He says in the *Summa* as he did in the earlier work that even in a state of innocence, some would be wiser than others. The gift of superior wisdom, he argues, should be used for the benefit of others and would be so used were the wisest employed in the direction of those whom they exceed.⁴⁶ The second argument is premised on the claim that human beings are naturally social and so would have lived socially even had original sin not been committed. Social life, Aquinas argues, is not possible without someone presiding who intends the common good. In defense of this claim, he writes that "many people *per se* intend many ends; one, however, only one." Even in a state of innocence, Aquinas concludes, there would have to be some authority to direct all to the common good.

The treatment of the *Summa*, like that of the *Sentence* commentary, lacks a clear statement that political authority would have been exercised had original sin not been committed. The second mode of rule is authority taken generally and not specifically political authority. And direction to common goods is a function of paternal as well as political authority. Aquinas seems to conclude that some authority would be needed in a state of innocence, but seems to leave open what sort of authority it would be. The problem of interpreting Aquinas's remarks is complicated by the "elevated" condition of the innocent, for not all the functions of political authority would need to be exercised in a state of innocence.

Here reference to Aquinas's earlier work is helpful. In the *Sentence* commentary, Aquinas had argued that one of the functions of political authority

⁴⁶ For an interpretation that makes much of this line of reasoning, see Samuel H. Beer, "The Rule of the Wise and the Holy: Hierarchy in the Thomistic System," *Political Theory* 14 (1986): 391-422; for a convincing response, see Brian Tierney, "Hierarchy, Consent and the 'Western Tradition,'" *Political Theory* 15 (1987): 646-52.

would be exercised in a state of innocence. He shows no signs of having repudiated his earlier views. Therefore the most natural way to read the passage from the *Summa* is as concluding that both paternal and political authority would have been exercised even had original sin not been committed. Paternal authority would have been exercised in family life and political authority over other groups. Of course the graced condition of the innocent entails that the disciplinary functions of these forms of authority would not be exercised. But in the *Summa* as in the *Sentence* commentary, Aquinas argues that one function would be. The most significant departure from the commentary on the *Sentences* is the function of political authority that Aquinas says innocents would require. Where the Aquinas of the *Sentence* commentary spoke vaguely of guiding the innocent "in things to be done and known," the later Aquinas emphasizes in the *Summa* that even innocents would need direction to their common good.

That Aquinas considered pursuit of the common good an important function of political authority is not open to doubt. Pursuit of the common good is definitive of what Aquinas calls "regnative prudence," the virtue by which political authority is wisely or prudently exercised.⁴⁷ In *De Regno*, Aquinas argued that political authority is needed to direct members of political society to the common good. That argument is virtually identical to the second argument Aquinas adduced in the *Summa* to demonstrate that even the innocent would need to be governed.⁴⁸ Direction to the common good is thus the function of political authority that, according to the *Summa*, would be exercised even had the Fall never occurred.

The centrality of the notion of the common good to Aquinas's mature political thought has long been recognized. Development of that notion in Aquinas's thought has not, however, been studied sufficiently. Attention to the textual evidence of this development suggests why, by the time Aquinas wrote the *Summa*, he characterized the governmental function exercised among the innocent as direction toward the common good rather than in the terms employed in his discussion of the same issue in his *Sentence* commentary. It also provides a promising clue to the nature of his departure from Augustine.

The notion of the common good is present in the commentary on the *Sentences*. In Book III, for example, Aquinas notes that legislators frame laws to promote the common good.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, the common good plays a far less important role in the *Sentence* commentary than it does in Aquinas's later work. To see this, it is helpful to consider Aquinas's discussion of the virtue of

⁴⁷ *ST* II-II, 50, 1.

⁴⁸ *De Regno*, Book I, chapter 1.

⁴⁹ III *Sentences* d.37, q.1, a.2, q.2 ad 5.

legal justice, which he says in the *Summa* has the common good as its object.⁵⁰ Comparison of Aquinas's later treatment of legal justice with that of the *Sentence* commentary suggests that as Aquinas's thought matured, his grasp of the common good became firmer and the importance he accorded it as a motive increased.

In the *Sentence* commentary, the link between the common good and the virtue of legal justice is tenuous at best. In that work, legal justice is characterized as the virtue by which one obeys the law.⁵¹ While he says that laws are framed for the common good, the impression his remarks convey is that the virtue of legal justice moves those who possess it to obey only the letter of the law. He contrasts legal justice with the virtue of *epieikeia* which, he says, "obeys the intention of the legislator."⁵² In the *Sentence* commentary, there is no clear statement that the person of legal justice obeys the law because her obedience promotes the common good.

In his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, by contrast, Aquinas illustrates how the common good can function as a motive by appealing to an example taken over from Aristotle—that of a soldier who holds his place in battle. The courageous soldier holds his place because of equanimity in the face of danger and because of the dishonor associated with forsaking his post. The soldier exercising the virtue of legal justice, however, is moved to an act of courage primarily by his attachment to the common good of his political community. While Aquinas notes that acts of courage are required by law, he implies that it is the soldier's knowledge that his community will be open to greater danger if he forsakes his post that motivates him to remain and fight.⁵³ The example of the steadfast soldier shows how attachment to the common good can function as the reason or the motive to perform acts of other virtues like courage which the law requires; Aquinas also thinks that such attachment can be the motive for performing acts of temperance.

Indeed Aquinas argues in the *Summa* that attachment to the common good can provide a motive for performing acts of all the other virtues.⁵⁴ Acts of bravery, temperance, prudence, or particular justice can all be motivated, ultimately, by a concern for the effect of one's actions on the common good of one's community and by the desire to promote or maintain the conditions in which the common good consists. Attachment to the common good of political society can therefore, Aquinas thinks, be central to one's structure of motives. The person for whom the common good is a dominant or, in Aquinas's termi-

⁵⁰ *ST* II-II, 58, 6.

⁵¹ *III Sentences* d.33, q.33, a.1, q.5.

⁵² *Ibid.*, ad 5.

⁵³ *In Libros Ethicorum*, Book V, lect. 2.

⁵⁴ *ST* II-II, 58, 6.

nology, a “general” motive,⁵⁵ acts on the virtue of legal justice. This shift in the characterization of legal justice is accompanied by a more nuanced description of the relationship between *epieikeia* and legal justice. In the *Summa*, Aquinas says that *epieikeia* is a part of legal justice, because the virtue of legal justice can be understood to command obedience “either to the letter of the law *or* the intention of the legislator.”⁵⁶

Comparison of Aquinas’s earlier and later treatments of the virtue of legal justice suggests that as his political thought developed, he came increasingly to appreciate the value of the common good as a motive central to one’s character. It further suggests that the virtue of attachment to the common good manifests itself in activity which the law enjoins. Finally, the difference in the two accounts of legal justice which such a comparison reveals suggests an important development in Aquinas’s analysis of political authority. It suggests that the *Summa* goes beyond the *Sentence* commentary in numbering among the functions of political authority the framing of legislation which permits citizens to cultivate and act on the motive of attachment to the common good.

This account of Aquinas’s development explains the difference between Aquinas’s discussion of prelapsarian rule in the *Summa* and in the commentary on the *Sentences*. According to both accounts, a ruler of innocents exercises only one of the functions characteristic of political authority. Aquinas’s views on the importance of legal justice and the common good were not, however, fully developed at the time he commented on the *Sentences*. Therefore only according to the later account of the *Summa* is the governmental function exercised in a state of innocence described as that of guiding innocents to their common good.

The account also highlights one of the most important issues at stake in the discussion of prelapsarian political authority. According to Augustine, the earthly peace which is the common good of political society after the Fall is sought so that human beings can secure “the things relevant to mortal life.”⁵⁷ The obedience to law necessary to sustain it and the humility which such obedience teaches are not qualities which would be needed or exercised were human beings not sinful. Augustine therefore thinks that there would be no political subjection had original sin not been committed. For Aquinas, on the other hand, political subjection makes possible citizens’ development of an attachment to the common good and orders society so that citizens can act on that attachment. Aquinas, unlike Augustine, thinks this is genuinely perfect-

⁵⁵ *ST II-II*, 58, 6. The notion of a general motive is a very important but underexplored one in Aquinas’s thought. For other sources, see *ST II-II*, 23, 8 where charity is treated as a general virtue; see *De Malo* 8, 2 and *ST II-II*, 162, 7 and 8 for pride as a general vice.

⁵⁶ *ST II-II*, 120, 2 ad 1, emphasis added.

⁵⁷ *City of God* XIX, 17.

ing and not merely a remedy for sin. He therefore concludes that one of the functions of political authority would have been exercised even in a state of innocence. One of the most profound differences between the political views of Augustine and Aquinas is that between the value each attaches to being motivated by the common good of political society.

This argument, insofar as it denies that Aquinas thought coercion an essential function of government that would have been exercised in the state of innocence, concurs with the usual interpretation of Aquinas's political thought. Insofar as it stresses the role of authority in securing attachment to the common good, however, it is at odds with prevailing views. The commonly accepted reading holds that Aquinas thought the essential function of government, and the only one that would be exercised in a state of innocence, is that of guiding individuals' pursuits of their own ends. This is suggested by Bigongiari⁵⁸ and by the early work of Yves Simon⁵⁹ and is explicit in an essay by Jean Dunbabin.⁶⁰ The essential functions of political authority, on this view, include that of coordinating the pursuit of individual goods, guiding subjects in the pursuit of common goods when mutually exclusive ways of attaining common goods are available,⁶¹ promoting the goods of culture so important to a well-lived life,⁶² and preserving a social order in which enriching relationships are possible.⁶³ It is, however, crucial to the political thought of the mature Aquinas that attachment to the common good is developed by being subjected to political authority. Fostering this attachment, and not just arranging the pursuit of private goods so that the common good is realized, is in Aquinas's view the most important function of political authority. The proper interpretation of Aquinas's remarks on the state of innocence reveals this cardinal tenet of his political thought.

6.

There are, no doubt, a number of reasons why Aquinas broke with Augustine on the moral value of a citizen's attachment to the common good. In his

⁵⁸ Bigongiari, "The Political Ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas," 109: "Order, then, comes into existence when a multiplicity of individuals *are brought together and so arranged* that by their united efforts a common end may be attained" (emphasis added).

⁵⁹ See Yves Simon, *The Nature and Functions of Authority* (Marquette University Press, 1940), 16ff. For qualifications of this view in Simon's later work, see his *Philosophy of Democratic Government* (University of Chicago Press, 1951), 59ff., especially note 23; also his *A General Theory of Authority* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), 50–60.

⁶⁰ Dunbabin writes: "For St. Thomas, social intercourse among men would be quite impossible in the absence of government. Hence his famous doctrine that even in the state of innocence there would have been dominion. For men in a body need one man in authority over them to look after the common good while they pursue their individual interests." Jean Dunbabin, "Aristotle in the Schools," in Smalley, *Trends in Medieval Political Thought*, 79.

⁶¹ Simon, *The Nature and Functions of Authority*, 18.

⁶² Bigongiari, "The Political Ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas," 108.

⁶³ Dunbabin, "Aristotle in the Schools," 79.

interpretation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* on legal justice, Aquinas imputed to Aristotle the view that the common good could function as the definitive motive of the good citizen. His reverence for Aristotle's moral thought no doubt strongly inclined him to reject Augustine's view. Moreover, Aquinas found in Aristotle's works the concept of natural virtues, which he contrasted with the theological or infused virtues.⁶⁴ This concept enabled him to argue that the life of a good citizen in a well-structured political society was a life of virtue without implying that such a life was a life ordered toward God. Augustine, who lacked the concept of natural virtue, thought that the only truly virtuous activity was activity ordered to God.⁶⁵ He therefore argued that there can be no justice in a society in which the true God is not worshipped.⁶⁶

In conclusion, I want to consider another and complementary explanation of why Aquinas should have thought, in the face of Augustine's insistence to the contrary, that attachment to the common good of political society is morally perfective. I will develop it by considering an objection to the reading of Aquinas that I have been defending. Responding to the objection and further explaining Aquinas's departure from Augustine helps bring out what Aquinas considers the primary purposes of political subjection and political authority.

The notion of the common good is a notoriously elusive one in Aquinas's political thought. At one point he remarks enigmatically that it consists of "justice and peace."⁶⁷ But whatever the common good includes, the common good of a society in the state of innocence is certainly very different from the common good of a political society that exists after the Fall. Because of the elevating or perfecting effects of grace, the ties that Aquinas would think obtain among innocents would differ significantly from those that Augustine, for example, sees among members of political society. Relations among the innocent would be much like those which Aquinas thought the infused virtue of charity makes possible: relations of peace, love, and undisturbed harmony.⁶⁸

Aquinas therefore seems to have paid a very dear price for his claim that one of the functions of political authority would have been exercised in a state of innocence. He seems forced to claim that political authority exists to secure an end that is hardly recognizable as an object of political rule. Moreover, the development of his thought and the increasing importance he attached to the common good seem only to have elevated the price. His remarks in the *Sentence* commentary imply that prelapsarian rule would not be fully political because only one of the functions of political authority would have been exercised. The claim that that function is a function of political authority,

⁶⁴ On this contrast, see *ST I-II*, 41, 4 and 63, 3; also *De Virtutibus in Communi* 1, 10.

⁶⁵ *City of God* XIX, 25.

⁶⁶ *City of God* XIX, 21.

⁶⁷ *ST I-II*, 96, 3.

⁶⁸ See *ST II-II*, 29, 1 and ad 3.

however, seemed unexceptionable. The treatment of the *Summa*, on the other hand, is vastly more problematic. There too Aquinas claims that only one governmental function would be found in a state of innocence. But that function seems little like any of the functions which political authority actually exercises.

Aquinas would certainly concede that the common good sought in a state of innocence differs in significant respects from the common good of postlapsarian political society. He would argue, however, that before the Fall as after, guided collective effort toward a common good produces ties of friendship among those subject to guidance. Aquinas thus takes from Aristotle the notion of civic friendship and argues that ties of civic friendship obtain among citizens of a well-structured political society after the Fall. And he would argue that, regardless of the differences among the common goods sought, the ties that would develop among innocent adults guided to a common good are appropriately described as ties of civic friendship.

Aquinas does not discuss the friendship among the innocents. But that their relations could be described as *civic* friendship is suggested by Aquinas's willingness to broaden the notion of civic friendship beyond political contexts. *De Perfectione Vitae Spiritualis* is a late treatise and therefore one which can be taken to express Aquinas's mature views. In chapter 14 of that work, Aquinas considers the Scriptural injunction to love one's neighbor as oneself. He says that the love of charity depends upon there being a natural community among human beings all of whom are ordered to beatitude. The ties among members of that community are, Aquinas says, perfected by charity. He uses a political model to explain the nature of the community itself, saying that all men are under God, as "the highest ruler of all and font of beatitude, and the legislator of all justice."⁶⁹

Aquinas's use of a political model in this context is very suggestive. It conveys the impression that the charity to which God guides all men is best understood as a more perfect form of the civic friendship to which political authority guides its subjects; this despite the fact that the common good to which God guides humanity is very different from that at which political authority aims.⁷⁰ Aquinas thus thinks that civic friendship or a more perfect form of it obtains even among those who are not cooperating to secure the ends of postlapsarian political society. There is therefore no reason to think Aquinas would deny that it would obtain among the innocent.

⁶⁹ *De Perfectione Vitae Spiritualis*, chapter 13.

⁷⁰ On charity as the perfection of friendship and the implications of this for Aquinas's politics, see the very general remarks of G. B. Phelan, "Justice and Friendship," in his *Selected Papers* (Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1967), 213–30, especially 224ff.

Aquinas's assertion that authority before the Fall would be political rests on his claim that those before the Fall are guided, as are members of a well-ruled society after the Fall, in activities that promote the ties of civic friendship. The development of civic friendship among members of political society is, in Aquinas's view, the most important function of political authority, for he writes that: "the principle intention of human law is that it produce [*faciat*] friendship among men."⁷¹ This development bulks large, he argues, among the ways in which political authority perfects those subject to it.

The importance Aquinas attaches to civic friendship constitutes a significant departure from Augustine. For Augustine, the ties that develop among members of political society are extremely uncertain⁷² and pale beside the communion of fellow members of the City of God.⁷³ For Aquinas, ties of civic friendship are important among the goods that political subjection makes available; and they significantly resemble the ties binding those who love one another with the love of charity. Aquinas's appropriation of the concept of civic friendship from Aristotle and the links he establishes between it and the guided pursuit of a common good therefore proved crucial in his break from political Augustinianism.

There are, moreover, reasons to believe that the links Aquinas forged among the notions of legal justice, the common good, civic friendship, and the love of charity proved important to the later acceptance of his political Aristotelianism. The importance of these links for the development of ideas of community in fourteenth-century Italy, for example, has been stressed in a recent essay by Antony Black⁷⁴ and was previously documented by Nicolai Rubinstein.⁷⁵

Aquinas's political theory was especially well-received in the Italian city-states. There instilling citizens' love of the common good was seen as a way of restoring peace and civic friendship to citizens divided into factions, and provided a way of doing so that did not rely on despotic authority.⁷⁶ Rubinstein argues that the frescoes in the council chambers of the Sienese city government were designed to illustrate and teach these Thomistic political ideas: the frescoes show a cord linking the personifications of justice and the common

⁷¹ *ST I-II*, 99, 2.

⁷² *City of God* XIX, 5; O'Connor, "The *Uti/Frui* Distinction," 57–59.

⁷³ *City of God* XIX, 27.

⁷⁴ Antony Black, "The Individual and Society," *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 1988), ed. Burns, 596.

⁷⁵ Nicolai Rubinstein, "Political Ideas in Sienese Art: The Frescoes by Ambrogio Lorenzetti and Taddeo di Bartolo in the Palazzo Pubblico," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 21 (1958): 179–207.

⁷⁶ Rubinstein, "Political Ideas in Sienese Art," 184.

good.⁷⁷ The further tie that Aquinas saw between justice and the common good on the one hand and concord among citizens on the other is similarly depicted.⁷⁸ Shown above the personification of the common good is the personification of the virtue of charity. The superposition of charity, Rubinstein argues, emphasizes the social functions of that virtue⁷⁹ and suggests that the truest attachment to the common good and to one's fellow citizens is that rooted in love of God. This is a suggestion, I have noted, that can be found in Aquinas's later work.

Not all of Aquinas's influence on Italian political thought and practice was direct. His ideas were also transmitted by Ptolemy of Lucca, who continued his unfinished treatise *De Regno*. Ptolemy's work, like Aquinas's and like the Sieneese frescoes, asserts a link between charity and the political virtues.⁸⁰ Aquinas's ideas were also transmitted, to Italy and to Dante, by the Florentine Dominican Remigio de Girolami.⁸¹ Remigio's works are especially remarkable for the way in which Augustine's ideas about peace are juxtaposed and interpreted to agree with Thomistic ideas about peace, justice, the common good, and the ends of political society. Remigio, it seems, has so thoroughly absorbed Aquinas's political Aristotelianism that he was blind to the profound changes Aquinas had wrought in the notion of society's common good.

How Aquinas's political thought was assimilated into medieval politics and political theory is a long and complicated story, one I cannot tell here. But the examples of Remigio, of Ptolemy of Lucca, and of the Sieneese frescoes suggest that his discussion of the fundamental political and theological concepts on which I have focused in this paper played a crucial role in securing his views what success they enjoyed.

University of Notre Dame

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 186.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 185–86.

⁸⁰ In Ptolemy's case, between charity and *amor patriae*; see Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton University Press, 1957), 113. For more on the Sieneese frescoes, see the sources cited at 112, note 74.

⁸¹ Charles Till Davis, "Remigio de Girolami and Dante: A Comparison of Their Conceptions of Peace," *Studi Danteschi* 36 (1959): 105–36.