THE COMMON GOOD

by

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to clarify the political uses of the notion of common good, and the related notions of common interest, public interest, and so on. Three different discussions of the subject are examined and criticized. Each of the three represents a different kind of approach to the problem. The first is a theory of the kind that defines public interest as a moral harmony rather than as an aggregate of individual or group interests. The second is of the sort that equates public interest with a particular sort of decision making process. The third is of the kind that tries to delineate the content of the concept in a specific way by identifying it with various substantive notions. The internal defects of each discussion are examined, and are seen to consist mainly of unnecessary and damaging assumptions together with an oversimplified view of the problem. Some more general objections to each type of theory are also noted, such as that the process type of theory results in a notion of public interest that cannot be used as we normally use it, and that the harmony view provides a poor guide for public policy because of its vagueness. The conclusions which appear in the final section are based on the argument that the notion of common good or public interest cannot be given more than a general designation, without a good deal of further study into the substance of the concept.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter IV</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footnotes</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to examine the concept of common good or public interest as it appears in the context of political theory. Inspite of its wide use, the concept has received scant attention from political philosophers. The common good appears to be a rather important concept in political decision making. One of its roles is that of an ultimate tribunal to which are made appeals designed to ensure the approval of policies. Another is its function as a negative limit on policy making; for example, we say that a policy may be adopted unless it is against the public interest. Now, if appeals are made to the authority of the public interest to justify political decisions, and if political decisions are important, then surely the authority itself is important. And if this is so, then it is not unreasonable to think it strange that so few attempts have been made to describe and understand the concept instead of merely taking it for granted.

My discussion of the problem takes the form of detailed examinations of three recent attempts to clarify the notion. Each of the theories discussed represents a different kind of approach to the problem of the common good. The conclusion is that for various reasons each attempt fails to give a satisfactory characterization. A separate section of the paper is devoted to the particular difficulties of each discussion,
and a fourth deals with some objections to the types of theories they represent and some general difficulties they share. My own suggestions for further investigation of the common good also appear in the fourth section.

The theories I have chosen to examine are the following. First, that which appears in Part II, Chapters 7 and 8 of Bertrand de Jouvenel's book, *Sovereignty*; second, that which appears in Howard R. Smith's *Democracy and the Public Interest*; and third, Alan Gewirth's discussion in "Political Justice". I have chosen these because they are useful in two ways. First, because they are all fairly straightforward, their defects are more readily apparent and easier to exhibit. Second, because they are representative of three kinds of approaches to the problem, they provide opportunities for displaying the defects of those approaches.

The three kinds of approach to the problem have been frequently used. The first, represented by de Jouvenel, views the public interest as something other than an aggregate of individual or group interests. The difficulty with this sort of conception is that its product may be too vague to be useful as a guide to policy making, assuming that the public interest when determined is to be such a guide.

The second type, exemplified by Smith's theory, explains the public interest in terms of a decision making procedure. Following such a path leads us to a strange and empty concept, as will be evident from the examination of Smith's arguments.
The approach represented by Gewirth places emphasis on the idea that the public interest must have a specifiable substantive content. But the problem here is that the concept cannot be tied to specific policies without at the same time reducing its applicability, and, hence, its utility.

My conclusions are that the public interest or common good, to be useful at all in guiding policy making, must be more generally specified than is done by these accounts.
I

Bertrand de Jouvenel, in his book, Sovereignty, states the problem of the common good thus: what is the common good and how is it to be achieved? The first thing he does before attempting to answer the question is to investigate the possibility that it may be a pseudo-problem. This could be the case if either of two possibilities were true. One is that the common good is self-evident, and the other is that it is entirely subjective. If the former is true everyone will always know intuitively what the common good is, and if the latter there will always be an infinite range of solutions each being as correct as any other.

It cannot be the case that the common good is self-evident, he argues, because whenever this view has been held the result has been tyranny. Tyranny is unacceptable, and so is any view that leads to it. So, because the nature of the common good is not self-evident, the problem of what that nature is remains genuine.

It is true that should the common good be self-evident there would be no problem about its nature. It is equally true that believing something to be self-evident can lead one to regard it as a final, absolute authority, or standard of judgment. Furthermore, it may be true that this sort of belief has, in fact, led to tyranny. But it is important to notice that there is no necessary connection between believ-
ing something to be self-evident and becoming tyrannical. There is no contradiction in saying, "I believe X to be self-evident, but I will not use tyrannical methods to ensure its implementation." So, although the tendency to become tyrannical may be strong, tyranny would not be the unavoidable outcome even if the common good were self-evident.

How does this affect his conclusion? It shows that he has failed to prove the non-self-evidence of the common good. Instead, we see that, because he believes it would lead to tyranny, he cannot allow the common good to be self-evident. But this is no proof. It might be that the common good is self-evident inspite of the fact that self-evidence leads to tyranny. That we disapprove of tyranny, if we do, proves nothing at all about the self-evidence or otherwise of the common good. After all, many things turn out to be the case whether we approve or disapprove of them. Of course, there may be a suppressed premise here to the effect that whatever the common good is, if it is anything, it can have nothing to do with tyranny. But there is nothing either to indicate or to support such a premise except the obvious fact that de Jouvenel has a deep abhorrence of tyranny. Furthermore, it is neither self-evident nor can it be taken for granted as a widely held belief shared by his readers that he need not explicate. I shall say more about this later; for now, suffice it to say that he has not proved the non-self-evidence of the common good.
This brings us to the discussion of the other alternative. Are there an infinite number of common goods and hence no common good? There are two questions here, he tells us: first, is everyone's private idea of the common good a reflection of the real common good which has absolute existence; or, second, is the common good only a generic name for a varied lot of private ideas which may be totally unrelated? Here, says de Jouvenel, we have the old dispute between the nominalists and the realists, and his contention is that we must become nominalists if our problem is to be genuine. His reason for saying this is that the search for the 'real' common good can yield nothing more than our own subjective preferences, which will not do. In other words, he thinks that the nominalist approach avoids this result.

Having decided to take the nominalist approach, we find him making the following statement. "I do not deny that the idea of the common good that I can make for myself is only my subjective preference, valid for myself only. But it is a preference in relation to something." At this point I find the argument confusing because there seems to be no important difference between the two positions. He has dismissed the realist view because it leaves one open to the charge of only formulating one's subjective preferences. And the next thing he says is that on the nominalist account one's idea of the common good is only one's subjective preference. Thus far, the two views are indistinguishable. He has said that the
realist believes all the subjective ideas are related to an absolutely existing, real notion. Now he says that the subjective preferences of the nominalist are all related to something. What is the difference? Perhaps it is in the nature of the thing to which they are related.

That to which the subjective preferences of the nominalist are related is his conception of this country, in de Jouvenel's case France. He says:

"...my compatriots and I, when we speak of 'France', have the feeling that we are talking at least of one and the same thing. France brings to my mind a great collection of men who have, as individuals, certain satisfactions, certain aspirations, certain discontents, certain attitudes of mind; I also envisage their relations between one another.... In [this] complex...there is more than individuals and their unceasing interaction; there are also emotions felt in common (as in a time of national disaster) and actions taken together...(as when we go to vote or pay our taxes...or go to war). And it is the possibility of these collective movements which makes the difference between a collection of individuals and 'a people'. Finally, we note that foreigners pass judgments on this whole...; they speak well or ill of France."  

All of this is said to indicate what the French relate their subjective preferences to, and from it we are supposed to see what all Frenchmen are talking about when they speak of the public good. They will have in mind the following preoccupations: the virtue and prosperity of Frenchmen, the excellence of their mutual relations, the capacity to feel and act in common and their reputation in the outside world. And all of this gives a certain substance to the common good
in the minds of Frenchmen. It consists of the common substance in their differing conceptions of the common good. True, these things may be seen in any number of differing ways subjectively, but the point he claims to have shown is that when we speak of the common good we are speaking of something "with a definite meaning". Indeed, he claims that at least one member of the above list is not entirely subjective, namely, the capacity of the people to act simultaneously or in conjunction or combination.

But what is the status of this substance that all the subjective preferences of the individual conceptions of the common good are related to? We must, I think, assume that it is not a 'real' universal having absolute existence, because that would make the view out-and-out realism, which he wishes to avoid. Nor can it be regarded as an absolutely determined content because that sort of thing might lead to tyranny. He seems to be trying to strike a compromise between the nominalist and realist positions. He wants to relate the subjective preferences of individuals to a common ideal substance, but he does not want to call it a 'real' or absolutely existing substance. Now, although this conception is perhaps too vague to serve as an objective criterion of policy assessment, we should note that there is meaning and practical effect in what he describes, as Burke argued. It is true that the cultural context is forceful in policy determination, because there is a strong tendency to view cultural values and traits as common goods. But there is a danger in identifying the
common good too closely with them, since that may lead to nationalism and the sorts of parochial chauvanism that make us see the qualities of our community as the only virtues. As I shall argue later, the result is a truncated notion of the common good.

Next, he discussed the question of whether the common good is comprised of the good of individuals. He says that legal persons are inferior to men; God became incarnate for the salvation of men; therefore, the duty of rulers is exclusively to individuals and the good of a social whole is made up entirely of the personal goods of the individuals who compose it. With these reasons as justification, he adopts this view provisionally as the starting point in investigating the problem of the common good.

I do not know whether de Jouvenel thinks this is an argument or not, but in any case, it is not at all clear that the supporting statements are true. There is an important body of argument, e.g. Plato, Hegel, etc., the purpose of which is to prove that legal persons, in the sense of states or countries, are not inferior to men, but are in fact superior. And except for those who hold a certain set of religious beliefs, the second statement is even more dubious than the first. In any case, the view he wishes to investigate needs no dubious justification for its plausibility. The mere fact that it is a widely held belief is reason enough to prompt enquiry.
That said, let us turn our attention to his discussion. If the common good is the particular goods of the individuals, he says, then we are immediately faced with the problem of how to reconcile all the particular goods because of conflicts among them. How much of a problem this will be depends upon how we define them. If they are defined in vague terms, such as the acquisition of virtue, the problem of reconciliation will not be difficult. On the other hand, if we define the particular goods to be the acquisition of scarce things like wealth and honor, the problem will be tremendously difficult. What we must do then, he says, is choose between two ways of designating personal goods. They can be designated according to either the ruler's conception of what the individual's goods are, or the individual's own conception of what they are. In other words, there are two ways of approaching the problem of reconciliation depending on whether the goods are defined by the ruler or the individual himself.

Taking the individual conception path first, he argues as follows. If it is the duty of the public authority to serve the public good, and if the public good consists of the personal interests, as perceived by himself, of each individual, then, because there will be an enormous number of these perceived interests demanding service with the likelihood that some of them will conflict, the conclusion must be that it will be well nigh impossible for the government to
act. This being the case, there are two alternatives open to the government. Either it can try all personal claims that are put before it, or it can declare itself incompetent to deal with them. But, he argues, neither of these alternatives is feasible. If the first is taken, then, because of various limitations such as a lack of time and inadequate financial resources, some selection will have to be made among the claims, and the problem will be how to make the selection. If we are strict and do not allow selection, the resulting flood will be so overwhelming that no action will be possible. On the other hand, how could any government declare itself incompetent and dismiss the claimants? Therefore, de Jouvenel concludes that, since this conception would render the public authorities impotent, the common good cannot be identified with the interests of individuals as seen by themselves. So he turns to the alternative of accepting the ruler's conception of the goods of the individuals.

But the consequences of this proposal are even more disturbing. If the government is to know each man's good better than he himself knows it, he says, it will need to know each person at least as well as a father knows his children, which is impossible. Instead, what will happen is that a stereotype will be conceived and the people made to conform to it with little or no deviation allowed. In
other words, the state will once again have degenerated into tyranny. So with both alternatives shown to be unacceptable, he concludes that the common good cannot be the infinite number of individual goods, no matter how conceived, since the result of such a view is either tyranny or chaos.

This account demonstrates one of the major difficulties of de Jouvenel's whole discussion, namely, his fascination with duality. He presents each argument in terms of the choice between two alternatives which he thinks are either exclusive or exhaustive or both, when in fact there may be other alternatives to the two he has picked, or the two may be reconcilable in some way. This method makes his whole treatment of the problem superficial.

In the argument we are considering, for example, we need not be forced to choose between the polar positions de Jouvenel presents if we think the common good is made up of all the individual goods. There is a reasonably satisfactory alternative. First, we admit that all individual claims are worthy of a hearing. Now because of their number, dealing with them will be a huge task. So, we institute a system of priorities which helps us to classify the claims according to some standard of importance. All are allowed to claim, but some claims will receive more attention than others depending on or according to their position in the list of priorities. For example, a claim for aid in a disaster area might be considered more urgent than and prior to a claim for an investigation into the trade in pornography. Indeed, there
is even a common sense realization of the justice of priority classification in many cases. In general, we might begin by classifying people according to their roles in their various capacities. All shopkeepers have interests qua shopkeeper, but they also have interests, which may be different from the former, in their roles as members of the public.

Second, there are times, in the modern state, when the rulers are in a better position than the people to know the proper course of action. For example, in matters such as defense, foreign and even fiscal policy, the government may have more knowledge about the situation than the people could possibly have, often simply because these issues require expert attention and cannot easily and quickly be simplified for lay consumption. In these cases, the rulers may in fact know what is in the interests of the people better than they do themselves. This is not to say that the government is always right. It is to say instead that it may be right sometimes about certain issues.

Still another alternative to de Jouvenel's dichotomy is the view that the people know what they want, and the government knows how best to get it for them. In other words, it is up to the government to find the best ways to achieve those things that the people want, and in so doing it is acting for the common good.

There may, of course, be interests that are irreconcilable, as de Jouvenel suggests, but they may not be
eternally so. It is possible to discuss them in search of a common ground, and there is always the chance that a future change in circumstances will afford the opportunity for a reconciliation.9

The foregoing suggestions indicate several more fruitful and realistic alternative interpretations than either of those presented by de Jouvenel. They show the failure of his attempted disproof of the view that the common good is made up of the individual goods of the members of the community by revealing a deeper complexity in the problem, of which he seems to be unaware.

But there is another possibility that de Jouvenel seems to have overlooked. He says there are two ways to designate personal goods one being from the ruler's point of view the other from the individual's. But the fact is that while ruler and citizen may disagree about what are the goods, at a deeper level they will agree because of the cultural context. So because they are both French, for example, the rulers and citizens most often are in fundamental agreement about what the goods are. This is the force of his comments about France and being French above and of views such as those of Burke and Bradley as well. Furthermore, when we consider the views of both Smith and Gewirth later we shall see them recognizing the power of the cultural context.

Having disposed of the individual goods view, he
next asks, does the common good consist in the social tie itself? This he sees as a plausible alternative for several reasons. It is often said that men can only be men in society. Only within the framework provided by a society can men conceive their good and have the opportunities for achieving it; the spectacle of society conditions the notion of good that a man acquires. God knew this when he gave us Jesus to imitate. Life in society is natural to man, he says, and the common good may be seen as that which binds men together in societies, whatever it may be.

What is the nature of this tie? Its basic prerequisites are the mutual trust and confidence that men have in each other. These are based purely on affection. It is in the personal interest of each person, he says, to be able to trust others. This personal interest is particular for each and the same for all, thus constituting a real common interest. He warns us that we cannot say this is an exhaustive description of the common good a priori, although we may have found its primary and essential constituent.

Citing several authorities in support of his contention, de Jouvenel presents us with the argument that the notion of friendship is of great importance in producing the proper affection among people, upon which is based mutual trust. If this is the case, then we must determine if the political authorities can promote social friendship. They can, he says,
by three means; namely, by making the people feel that they are all 'members one of another', by setting an example of the sort of consideration of others that fosters friendship, and by forestalling quarrels which are liable to disrupt the harmony of the society. The important point that emerges is that the emphasis must be placed on maintaining the harmony of the society, which is seen ultimately to be the common good.

As he is quick to note, this is the main premise in the theories of both Plato and Rousseau, so he is faced with the corollaries which follow from it just as they were. The maintenance of the social harmony is of such paramount importance that on no account must anything be allowed to weaken it, and anything which tends to do so is dangerous and evil. From this it follows that the size of the community must be kept small so that enough intimacy remains between the people to ensure a sufficient degree of harmony. Next the citizenry must be kept as homogeneous as possible, and the introduction of foreigners of differing backgrounds must be forbidden. Foreign beliefs and customs must also be forbidden, because, like foreign people, they tend to disrupt the psychological harmony of the whole. And finally, change and innovation must be discouraged because they only serve to introduce disharmonies into the society.

The trouble with these corollaries is that they are the foundations of tyranny. But, fortunately, he says he
can refute them. Here is his argument. Trustfulness within the group is the condition of various advantages which the members can confer on each other. One of the things it makes possible, for example, is the birth of new relationships. This means that trustfulness is more than just a good in itself. But if it can only be maintained at the cost of supressing individual initiative, as the corollaries indicate, it will become sterile, and will not be allowed its full beneficial scope in the community. Now, since the common good cannot be something that discourages certain benefits from being achieved by the community, the corollaries cannot be any part of that common good and are, therefore, refuted.

In other words the argument says this. Once a community is established and social harmony is achieved within it, the job of the government is to keep things as much as possible as they are, avoiding any hint of variation, so as not to disrupt the harmony. But if the harmony is based on trust and friendship, it will be impossible to keep it static because such trust gives men confidence and tends to make them expand their relationships and enter into new ones. So, if the social harmony is to be the common good, either trust must be abandoned, or new relationships must be allowed. He chooses to allow new relationships, thus rejecting the corollaries.

I wish to discuss several points with regard to this
argument. First of all, I do not think that the corollaries have been refuted. Secondly, although I think that the arguments in which the corollaries are deduced are logically valid, I wish to challenge the truth of the premise that innovation and change are damaging to social harmony.

de Jouvenel bases his refutation on the belief that trustfulness provides opportunities for acquiring new friends, and that this is a benefit that should be encouraged. But is trust really a producer of confidence and new friendships? It is probably true that one gains confidence from knowing one can trust certain people. But it is also true that one trusts certain people because one is confident that they can be trusted. The point is that trustfulness is not such a basic feature of human relationships as de Jouvenel would have us believe. Rather, it is on a level with confidence, and both are based either on belief or on knowledge, which are more fundamental. Trust is not something which instigates new relationships; it only enters them after they have been established. Other spurs are the causes of new relationships, things like loneliness, gregariousness, etc. Once contact has been made, then perhaps trust will be established, but not before. Indeed, it is considered a failing in people if they are too trustful of strangers, and it can lead one into costly errors of many kinds. It is true that trust provides certain benefits for the community, for example, it makes our dealings with those we know much
more relaxed and enjoyable than they could otherwise be. In¬
stigating new relationships, however, is not one of those
benefits. Trust is highly prized and not lightly given.

Another point is that de Jouvenel speaks of mutual
trust, which implies that there are two sides to the re¬
lationship, and which makes it difficult to see how such
trust could be extended to outsiders. I trust someone be¬
cause I know I can, and he trusts me because he knows he can.
But how can I trust someone I do not know, and how can mu¬
tual trust initiate new relationships? Much depends, of
course, on the interpretation given to the term 'new re¬
relationship'. I assume that it refers to relationships which
are begun with strangers, including those people who are
outside one's sphere of mutual trust, because the relation¬
ships with those inside that sphere are already established
and hence not new. But I still do not see how the mutual
trust in my present relationships can cause me to begin new
relationships. New relationships can begin, certainly, but
not because of trust.

Furthermore, he says that the trustfulness which is
supposed to allow the start of new relationships is based on
affection. But valid affection within the group often breeds
antipathy towards those outside the group. Thus, for ex¬
ample, group feeling is strongest in the face of an external
threat to the group. So, rather than providing encouragement
for the beginning of new relationships, mutual trust and
affection may in fact be hindrances.

I wish now to consider a premise from the argument in which the corollaries are deduced. The argument is as follows. Given that the social harmony is valuable and should be maintained, then whatever tends to weaken or injure it in any way must be avoided. The items that are treated in the corollaries do, in fact, tend to damage the harmony, and therefore the corollaries follow from the main premise. The deduction is sound, but I question the truth of the statement that diversity, outside influence, different customs and beliefs, novelty and innovation tend to weaken the social harmony.

The reason for thinking that in a large, diverse community the harmony is weakened is that one cannot feel as strongly about those whom one cannot know very well. As Hume notes, the larger the number in the community, the weaker the affection that binds them together. The strength of these feelings is inversely proportional to the number of people who must be included. But surely it is a mistake to think that feelings can be maintained at a given level of intensity, because their intensity varies for many reasons. One is the continual change of circumstances which inevitably evokes different reactions from us. Another is what we might call human nature; we just do in fact have changes of mood and feelings, which affect our view of and reaction to our surroundings. These cannot be ruled out.
Furthermore, the feelings of affection change in intensity regardless of the size of the community. At times of national emergency the intensity will be very high, in times of peace and tranquility it will be low, numbers having nothing to do with it. It is wrong to see size as the only, or even the most, significant variable factor in the variation of intensity, just as it is wrong to think that intensity can be maintained at a constant level.

In his refutation of the corollaries, de Jouvenel argues that novelty, innovation, etc., contribute to the good of society, hence, the corollaries must be rejected. But there is a better reason than this for rejecting them, namely, that change and innovation just do occur, and there is nothing we can do to stop them. A theory which tries to do so can only be a dream. It just is not possible to remain aloof and be protected from the inevitable changes that will occur. It would be better to develop a theory of social harmony that incorporates and uses changes, since, no matter what their consequences, they cannot be ruled out.

A consequence follows from the rejection of the corollaries which is that the principle they were derived from has been abandoned. This should not be surprising, because corollaries are the necessary consequences that follow from a principle. Surely, therefore, if they are refuted, the principle must be refuted as well. With this in mind, there are two further points I wish to make about this argument.
First, I do not think de Jouvenel produces a refutation of the corollaries. A refutation would consist in showing that the corollaries do not follow from the principle in question, that they are inconsistent with it. If this could be shown, we could still retain the principle. But if the corollaries, though logically deducible from the principle, are false, both they and the principle must be rejected. de Jouvenel does neither. Instead, he sees that the corollaries follow from the principle and decides that because they lead to tyranny they must be rejected. Then, after arguing that the things which the corollaries prescribe, because they can be of benefit to the community, ought not to be prescribed, he declares the corollaries to be refuted. But this is no refutation. It only shows that the corollaries do not fit in with another principle he holds.

Second, we have noticed throughout his whole discussion that he continually finds conclusions unacceptable. The most frequent recipient of this condemnation is the prospect of tyranny. This leads me to think that there must be some principle at work behind the scenes by which he is able to judge the results of his discussions. In other words, I think he is operating from a foregone conclusion about the common good. The question arises whether in seeking to define a concept one must know, in some sense, what one is seeking in order to recognize it. One must, I think in some vague way know enough to be able to recognize the quarry.
But de Jouvenel has quite a clear idea of what he is chasing, so clear that he can use it as a standard with which to measure the merit of all other suggested definitions. It is made up of the beliefs that tyranny is wrong and social harmony is most important, and it includes the attainment of individual goods. He is perhaps a bit confused about what his idea of the common good actually is - it is never clearly articulated - but there certainly is one lurking behind his arguments.

de Jouvenel is a representative of the general approach to the public interest which finds it in some conception of social harmony as opposed to those which find it in the aggregate of individual and group interests. The confusion of his account is, perhaps, indicative of the problematic nature of this sort of approach. The major objection to so defining the public interest is that the definition does little to clarify the concept defined, and if the public interest is to be a guide to public policy, it must be clearly defined. This difficulty is evident in de Jouvenel's case when, for example, the social harmony view presents him with the basic principles of tyranny as its guides to policy. A consistent defender of the social harmony view, of course, need not balk at the threat of tyranny. Little attention is paid to the means of promoting the public interest, and its specific contents are not emphasized. But
something more than the individual goods of members is claimed as the essence of the public interest, as de Jouvenel's discussion of what France means to Frenchmen illustrates. Social harmony may be one feature of the common good, but the only way to fully define it is to equate it with the good of the community, as I shall argue later.
II

I now wish to consider Howard R. Smith's discussion of the public interest in *Democracy and the Public Interest*. Smith develops his view along the following lines. Democratic theory is regarded as being paradoxical, so there must be some mechanism by which it can be saved from absurdity. The public interest is a concept which constitutes such a mechanism. It is made up of two parts, one of which is what he calls consensus, the other is the decision procedure known as majority rule. Each is discussed in detail. I will first examine the arguments by which democratic theory is shown to be paradoxical. Secondly, I will examine his account of the nature of public interest. My enquiry shows that Smith's argument leads to conclusions that should be unacceptable to him. First, the concept of public interest, as he conceives it, cannot do the jobs it is ordinarily thought to do; next, his theory tends towards absolutism, which he abhors; his confusion of various concepts such as conflict produces a distorted view both of democracy and of the public interest.

Smith argues that democracy is paradoxical for several reasons. He begins by discussing the principle of equality. It implies, he says, that because each individual personality is worthwhile as such, each has the right to secure the values it believes in to the same extent as every other personality,
and this belief, he thinks, leads us directly into the paradox in democratic theory. In what follows, I examine some of his arguments in support of this contention.

Smith claims that having the right to secure the values one believes in raises the problem of having the ability to do so. Some have it, some do not, and some have it more than others. Hence, there will be frustration, of all the people some of the time, and of some of the people all the time. Smith calls this the problem of the distribution of power, because the ability to secure ends is the power to do so.

There are two points here that require our attention. First, is the ability to secure values the same as the power to secure them? They are not quite the same. If I have the ability to do something I can do it. But if I have the power, I may not have the ability. For example, I am not able to repair a television receiver, but if I can pay someone to repair it for me, then, surely, I have the power to get it repaired. A rich group may not have the ability to secure some value, but they can hire those who have the ability to do it for them. They have the power to get it done, but not the ability to do it. To have the power means I can get it done, to have the ability means I can do it. In the context of politics, however, the two are very often equated without much confusion. Let us note, however, that a difference does exist.
Second, all have the right to secure their values, but not all have the ability to do so. To secure one's values is to be satisfied, so not all can be satisfied. But is this the problem of the distribution of power? The principle of equality, says Smith, is that one is entitled to secure one's values or be satisfied, not that one is entitled to have the ability to secure them. It is not clear that to be satisfied means to have satisfied oneself, by one's own ability. Having the ability to satisfy oneself does not seem to be included in the notion of being satisfied. For it is entirely possible that one's values can be secured by the agency of others whether they be the values of a group or an individual. Imagine, for example, that I am a member of the opposition in a legislature, and suppose further that I, together with my party, believe in the value of a nationalized electric power industry. Now suppose that the government nationalizes the power industry, without any help from either my party or myself. Then, through no exercise of any of our powers or abilities, no matter how conceived, the value we believed in has been secured. So it seems that to have the values one believes in secured does not necessarily imply that one must have the power or ability to secure them. It may be helpful, but it is not necessary. So the problem of the distribution of power may not arise from the fact that each has the right to secure the values he believes in.
The tension between having the abstract right and lacking the ability or power to attain it is real enough, however, and Smith is right to note it. But it is, perhaps, an oversimplification to focus only upon the distribution of power in discussing it. The securing of one's rights is not solely dependant on one's own power or ability, which is what Smith seems to say.

Smith's next illustration of the paradoxical nature of democratic theory is that because it does not allow power to be concentrated in a central authority, it cannot control conflict with the same ease and efficiency as organizations that do allow such power concentration.\(^4\)

It may be true that power concentration makes the control of conflict easier, but I fail to see how this is relevant to the question of democratic theory being paradoxical. All it shows is that there may possibly be more internal conflict in democracies and that it may be more difficult to control in some marginal times than in other types of social organization. But nowhere in the theory of democracy is there a principle saying that internal conflict must be avoided.

Conflict is a vague concept, and Smith is either fooled by, or uses, its ambiguity. It can mean any violent physical confrontation from street fighting and rioting to nuclear warfare. But it can also refer to the non-violent debating of
different ideas, opinions and policies. Violent physical conflict is discouraged in democracies, and there are power groups such as police forces designed to deal with it. But conflicts of opinion and debates of policy are encouraged, and there are institutions specifically designed to facilitate them. Yet another sort of conflict to note is that which occurs between politically important, non-ignorable groups and concerning which it may be impossible to create any sensible or beneficial public policy. But this does not make the case for a paradox in democracy. It merely indicates that democracy, by allowing the expression of strongly differing opinions, harbors conflict. This leads to consensus as a device for resolving conflict, since if the parties can come to some consensus the dispute will end. But this is only one aspect, and a minor one at that, of what consensus eventually becomes for Smith, as we shall see. So it seems that only through playing on the ambiguity in the notion of conflict could one say there is a paradox.

Another point Smith makes is that democracy encourages us to individual achievement, which generates conflict and competition among us. Democratic theory is paradoxical because it tells us to be both the same (equal, peaceful) and different (unequal, conflicting).

But here again there are confusions. We are not encouraged to violent conflict and competition, but only to
certain peaceful kinds. On the other hand, the equality that is preached is not meant to imply that we are all identical in all respects, or that we must not compete one with the other. The equality we are supposed to have only applies to certain qualities and aspects of our lives, it is not applicable to all of them. As individuals we have equal value and equal rights to secure values, but this does not imply that we must all be and do the same things. It means that we are all to be considered the same in certain respects, i.e. as individuals, and in having certain rights, etc. It may be true that the notion of equality has some bearing on, and even implies certain things about how we compete, but it does not mean that we cannot compete, or that because we are equal we cannot be different. This is not to say that there is not a problem here. There is because what we mean by equality is so unclear. It is true that democracy is a difficult system to operate, but this is not because of a paradox in the theory of democracy.

The paradox is stated as a dilemma between power diffusion and concentration, and between individuality and equality. The latter is not true because equality is not the same as non-individuality or conformity. The former is inaccurately named paradox, because it is simply the problem of balancing the two, which occurs in all types of organization.

Having examined some of Smith's arguments purporting
to show that democracy is paradoxical, I conclude that they have failed to do so.

Smith now discusses two questions which, he says, will help us see the nature of the public interest.

1. Those who hold power do not usually wish to share it, so why, in a democracy, do they share it?

2. Why is the concept of the common good such a central notion in democratic thinking?

To answer these questions, Smith resorts to a device he calls the consensus. Underlying any society, he claims, there is a thought system or myth which holds the group together. It is made up of what he calls value-impregnated beliefs. These beliefs give the members of the community a certain similarity of outlook, a common way of viewing and interpreting the world around them. It is a unifying mental set that enables men to employ a particular perception pattern, and hold a certain specific set of values. It is unconscious, but nevertheless exerts great influence in the life of the community. Furthermore, what we see here is a view which is similar to that of de Jouvenel when he talks of France and to those of Burke and Bradley all of which argue that there is an underlying set of beliefs and feelings shared by all members of a given community whether they know it or not, which has power and influence in their actions.

The consensus contains various devices which help people to cope with their environment. It also provides a
foundation for a political system. One component of the myth of democracy, for example, is the notion of equality, which we have already discussed. Another is the notion of common good. To give some idea of the nature of this consensus, I will discuss some of Smith's examples of its operation and descriptions of its character.

For example, in any social organization, there is always a need for something which serves the function of making might appear to be right. No matter how we view a community, he says, we always come up against the fact that certain portions of it are coerced by certain other portions. In an aristocracy, or a totalitarian dictatorship, a small elite controls enough power to be able to coerce the majority to do its bidding. In a democracy, the majority controls the power, and coerces the minority with regard to any decision. This being the case, it is also true that those in power, always give their exercise of it the appearance of legitimacy. This requires the use of various devices to distort and disguise the true situation. In democracies, this is often done by claiming that the decisions are right because they contribute to the good of the community. The coercion is camouflaged by a feature of the underlying consensus, namely, the concept of public interest. In other words, by saying that the policies preferred by the majority are in the public interest, power-holding majorities give their activities, including the coercion of minorities, the appearance of
Another feature of the consensus is that it contains our belief in the value and efficacy of the decision procedure known as majority rule. It is essential for there to be general agreement among citizens that this procedure will be the final arbiter in the community, because if some did not agree to abide by it, they could sabotage the whole system at any time by refusing to accept the decision of the majority. In other words, even the losers in a vote must have agreed to accept the decision duly made.

Smith uses this feature of the consensus to provide an account of the notion of consent. That all public policy making should be based on the consent of those affected by it is one of the basic beliefs of the liberal democratic tradition. But since first it was proposed by Locke, fundamental difficulties have plagued the idea. How can we ever truly say that all the citizens have consented? There may be some who vote against a policy, and some who do not vote, and how have subsequent generations consented to policies enacted by their ancestors? Can a system based on minority coercion really be based on consent, he asks?

Smith claims to find an answer to this problem in democracy's view of majority rule. Majority rule is a workable decision procedure only if there is general agreement to accept decisions made by it. Hence, there must be a
general willingness to entrust decision making to it. The willingness is found in the underlying consensus, which is a major feature in the liberal democratic system.

Other features accompany this willingness and help to provide safeguards for the minority. One is the fact that no group, whether majority or minority, is ever of a completely single mind, but, instead, contains various shades of opinion. An other is that no policy, once chosen, is absolutely fixed and unchangeable but is always open to revision and repeal in the future. This stems from a basic belief, residing in the consensus, that policy matters are never settled once and for all because of the diversity of opinion and the inevitability of changes in circumstances that are recognized, and because of the value the consensus places on that diversity. So although we may not all consent to a given policy decision, the argument is that we, as members of a community, partaking of and being moulded by its underlying consensus, all consent in agreeing to settle our disputes in a standard way. We need not be aware of this agreement, but because it is so much a part of our community nature, we are all included in it. We all believe in and are willing to entrust ourselves to majority rule.

I will return to discuss this solution, but first, here are some more examples of the powers of consensus.

Smith insists that the consensus does not a provide any direct indication of which policy is the one we should choose.
And furthermore, the decision making process itself is, to use Smith's term, value-neutral, and does not point to the right policy either. But somewhere, he says, there must be a guide to values, because it is values that interest us when we are making policy. We are always after the best course of action or the best decision. Since, the public interest is a guide to policy making, there must be more to it than the value-neutral decision making process and the uncommitted consensus. What can it be?

Well, it is, once again, another part of the consensus. Although the consensus does not provide any clear-cut decisions for us, it helps us towards them by providing a certain amount of identification with a basic status quo. This is a primary cementing force in the community that can withstand the disputes and differences resulting from the efforts of individuals and groups to have their particular policies adopted. Smith calls it the status quo consensus. In effect, it protects us from going to extremes in policy making, and it helps prevent disputes from becoming too violent and disrupting the community. There is, also, deep in the consensus, an understanding that there are limits to what can become public policy. That policies will always be responsive to the substantive community consensus is assured by the nature of the consensus and the way it operates. Policies will always be sensitive to or reflect the influence of the consensus.
This is how it works. Any policy that is advanced as an alternative to be voted on is always consciously or unconsciously related to the consensus by its advocates. The one most successfully so related, i.e. which seems best to fit in with the basic beliefs of the consensus, is the one that will be chosen because it will strike responsible cords in the hearts and minds of the voters.\(^1\)

Smith concludes his account by saying that the public interest is made up of two main features. They are the consensus, which provides all the basic features of the community, and the process of majority rule, as the procedure for decision making.\(^2\)

We have seen that in laying the foundations for his theory, Smith has found it necessary to discuss the nature of democracy. Because he finds the theoretical basis of democracy to be paradoxical, he decides that there must be some mechanism that overcomes this paradox and saves democracy from absurdity. To provide the salvation of the theory, he postulates the consensus. In what follows, I hope to show that his arguments lead to implications which are unacceptable to him and which defeat the theory in general.

Smith claims that a consensus underlies every society, but he gives little evidence to support the claim. It consists mainly of the contention that most social scientists agree that some such thing exists. Possibly there is some sort of psychological unity shared by the members of any com-
munity, but I do not think that we know enough about it, even if it does exist, to be able to use it to solve problems the way Smith does. I do not intend to investigate the question of whether or not such a thing exists. That is a question for psychologists. Furthermore, it is an empirical question, it may be irrelevant to democratic theory whether a consensus exists or not. I also think it is a mistake to use such a vague and indeterminate device to overcome theoretical difficulties because its use may lead to as many problems as it solves; indeed, it may be a 'multiplication of entities beyond necessity'. Any difficulties in the theory of democracy must be handled within the theory itself. It is not enough to say the theory is deficient and then excuse it with the claim that the deficiency is not important because in real life it is provided for by some device or other. It is a highly questionable procedure, even if such devices do exist, to attempt to fit them into the theory to make it sound. Instead, we must seek a theoretically consistent theory. With this in mind, let us examine Smith's argument in detail.

For Smith, the public interest is a combination of two things, namely, the underlying consensus and the majority rule procedure. On the one hand he argues that the majority rule procedure is itself based in the consensus. On the other hand, the public interest is said to be a feature of the consensus, playing an important role in its operation.
So the public interest appears to have two aspects. It is an instrumental device providing an essential function within the consensus, and it is also a separate entity composed of the consensus and the majority rule procedure. But Smith is trying to have it both ways. The public interest is first said to be a part of the consensus, and later on the consensus is said to be a part of the public interest, its other component being majority rule. But the question is, how can something which is a part of another thing end up with that other thing as a part of itself? In other words, how can A be a part of B when at the same time B is a part of A? Surely, this could only be the case if the two were identical. That is to say, the consensus and the public interest must be one and the same if they are both parts of each other.

This brings out what is perhaps the greatest difficulty in Smith's account. If the public interest is reduced to identity with the consensus because all of its parts are either identical with or included in the consensus, we are left with a useless definition, because the consensus is such a very unsatisfactory concept itself. It abounds in contradiction. We are told at one point, for example, that the consensus cannot provide substantive answers on policy issues. But later on, we are told that the consensus contains certain features, such as the status quo consensus,
which guide us to the 'right' decisions. The 'right' ones are those which best correspond to the value-impregnated beliefs that make up the consensus. In other words, the consensus both does and does not provide us with solutions to policy questions. The consensus also solves the problems of consent theory, or at least the practical problems arising from them.

The argument begins to look suspicious, however, and if we follow it carefully to its logical end, we arrive at a very unsatisfactory result. Take the part about the correct policy being chosen. There is no obvious, absolute, guiding principle, but we do have a definite set of value-impregnated beliefs which point, unconsciously and subtly, perhaps, but nevertheless definitely, towards the correct policy. Surely, though, this begins to have a taint of absolutism about it. The basic beliefs in the consensus are the principles which guide us to the right choice, and guarantee that there will be no great divergence from the status quo. Smith may have seen this danger, for he tries to avoid absolutism by saying that the basic principles are alterable. But this will not do, for, no matter what the content of the beliefs is, the form of the choice mechanism remains absolutistic. The beliefs, regardless of their content, are always the final authority in the choice of policy, and such formal reliance on a belief system is no way to avoid tyranny. It is a fond hope that there is some basic guiding principle for decision
making, but the uncomfortable truth seems to be that there is none and cannot be except at the risk of tyranny.

Another difficulty in Smith's account follows from his argument that any policy which is chosen by the process of majority rule and is in accord with the consensus is in the public interest. This implies that even if a policy proves to be in any way undesirable after it is chosen, if it emerged in the accepted fashion, from the proper grounds, it is still in the public interest. The only policies not in the public interest are those that do not correspond to the beliefs in the consensus and have not been chosen by the majority rule procedure. It is relatively easy to determine whether a policy has been chosen by majority rule. But it is virtually impossible to tell if a policy corresponds to the consensus. Smith seems to be aware of this problem when he says we can rely on the operation of the consensus to ensure that policies will not be wrong, that it will guide us whether we are aware of it or not. But if this is true, we may as well forget about consensus being an important part of the public interest, because it means that any chosen policy is the 'right' policy. With consensus no longer a part of public interest, we are left with the dictum that any policy chosen by majority rule is in the public interest, which is patently absurd. We judge policies in terms of the public interest according to their intention, content and
consequences, not according to the method by which they are chosen. The consequence of Smith's account is that the public interest is nothing more than a certain method for choosing policies. We can use the term 'public interest' to identify what is served by method of selection used in democracy. Policies chosen by that method are in the public interest by virtue of the method of choice.

Smith also says that policies of a totalitarian origin cannot be in the public interest. But his own premises produce the opposite conclusion. Presumably, in totalitarian communities, there is an underlying consensus just like there is in democracies. And, although there is no majority rule, there is some sort of policy-making process related somehow to the consensus. If so, then the policies that emerge in this community from its choice procedure must be in its public interest, as are the policies chosen by democratic methods for a democracy. If he wants to claim more than this, i.e. that the notion of public interest has no application outside democracy, then he must tell us more about it. All he is entitled to say so far is that policies chosen by totalitarian methods cannot be in the public interest of a democracy.

Smith's discussion is representative of a general approach to the public interest, which finds it to be a policy choice procedure. A similar discussion of the common good can be found in Social Principles and the Democratic
State, by Benn and Peters. The general difficulty with this whole approach is that it deflates the substance of the concept, and leaves us only the procedure. Procedure is important, but such a characterization of the common good limits it too much. It allows only ex post facto assessment of policy and no substantive assessment of its content. When we discuss whether or not a given policy is in the public interest, we are concerned not with how to choose it, but with whether or not we should choose it, whether it is the right policy in the circumstances. I do not think there is a general answer to this question, that will show us in every case which is the best policy. And I think that until this is realized, we will continue to hear arguments like Smith's, which try to find such an answer.

The problem of the common good is how to find a definition that includes substance by which to assess policy. Smith relies too much on choice procedure and fails to give any substance to the notion. The common good may be realized through the operation of a given decision procedure, but it cannot be identified with that procedure. Rousseau's attempt to equate the General Will with the will of the majority is worth remembering in this context, but unlike Smith, Rousseau seems more concerned to argue for substance as well, recognizing that procedure alone will not suffice. Smith is tempted by procedure, and has left substance to the
unconscious, uncontrolled working of the consensus. But consensus on Smith's account includes practically everything and is, therefore, so problematic a notion that it cannot be acceptable, and on it Smith's account founders.
Having dealt de Jouvenal and Smith, I turn now to a theory I find more interesting and valuable. It is the account of the common good by Alan Gewirth in this paper "Political Justice!"

Gewirth argues the position of what might be called the cautious democrat. He tries to find a kind of intrinsic relationship between the common good and the principles of democracy. Why he is led in this direction is not altogether clear, but it may be for reasons such as these. He has rightly seen that views like Smith's, which find the common good in some decision procedure or other, are inadequate. In fact he explicitly rejects Smith's view on p.159. He is also unsatisfied with a purely corporatist approach. Instead, he seeks to combine the corporatist and individualist views into a composite conception that includes the substance of both, together with the values of democractic theory. Insistence on a substance for the notion of common good is right, I think, but the inclusion in that substance of the values of a particular socio-political system is wrong. So Gewirth's theory is right in direction but wrong in final outcome. How this comes about I hope to show.

To begin with, Gewirth is a democrat, but like all thoughtful democrats, he sees that the procedures of democracy are not, in themselves, satisfactory as an account of the
common good. This is so for several reasons. For one thing, procedures cannot say much about the substance of policy. At their simplest, and restricted to their electoral use only, they tell us that to choose a policy we should vote, and act upon the policy the majority judgment supports. But without a substantive notion of the common good, self-interest can hardly help presenting itself as the guide to choice, leaving little common ground for policy. The procedures of choice say nothing about policy content. But if the common good is a guide policy choice meaningfully, then it needs substance. The appeal to procedure denies substance a place in policy selection by saying that as long as the policy is properly chosen it is for the common good. This procedural accounts are insufficient.

Second, Gewirth is aware of the dangers of the corporatist approach which tends to ignore the values and interests of the individual in the name of the common good. There may be an occasional accidental coincidence between the corporatist common good and individual goods. But accidental coincidence is not sufficient either, because we believe that the rights and values of individuals are worthwhile in themselves and should be considered and weighed in the choice of policy. The tendency in the corporatist approach is to identify the individual's interests with those of the community. Such views may lead us to place too much
authority and power in the hands of the state to the detri-
ment of individual rights and freedoms. The common good,
both for Gewirth and for us, cannot be something which en-
dangers the se values, so he must reject the purely corporatist
view.

We all feel the problem of how to achieve the best
balance between the two sets of interests, public and private,
at least as forcefully as does Gewirth. A proper account of
the common good should resolve the difficulty. We can have
procedures which allow us to arrive at suitably fair decisions;
for example, majority rule qualified by due process, equal
protection of the law, and so on. And if we can connect the
procedure with an account of the goods which are common,
that conjunction should serve as well as anything can to
guide policy making. The account of goods will have to con-
tain both sorts of goods, those of community emphasis and
those of individual emphasis. Thus some of the so called
'corporatist' goods will remain as will some of the individual-
ist goods. So the problem of the state unduly emphasizing one
sort or the other will be solved by a conception of the common
good that contains both. This is how Gewirth sets about
solving the problem. But before I get into how he does it,
I'd like to review briefly some of the history of the problem.

From Plato onward, theories have tended to line up on
either side of the issue of the relation between public and
private interest. We find Plato, for example, arguing that
the good life for man can be found only in a civil society
that is organized and controlled by those who possess wisdom. Only they should conduct the affairs of the state. Knowledge of the good must dominate if the good is to be achieved. Democracy is rejected as inadequate because it cannot give knowledge and wisdom enough influence in the deliberations of the policy makers. The requirement of knowledge constrains Plato to argue that the state must be ruled by a knowledgeable, wise minority if the best society for all is to be attained. Such a state is anathema, of course, to the liberal democrat. While acknowledging the need for knowledgeable policy making, the democrat argues that such knowledge cannot be the exclusive province of any group or individual, since no one is an expert in such matters. Those who qualify as citizens may be assumed to be equally able to vote or at any rate not so different as to make some unfit to participate in the electoral process. Furthermore, individual members will be better able to see to their own interests than will an elite group of wise rulers. Now I understand that democrats are uneasy and ambivalent on the question of knowledge, its place in the process, and its ubiquity. My point is that the Platonic view of the place of knowledge is not convincing to the democrat. Plato's account is surely a corporatist approach to the common good despite the fact that his theory of the soul argues that individual interest is intrinsically related to the good of the community as a
whole, not merely casually related. The substance question is solved by having the leaders choose policy, while the procedural issue is left aside as unimportant except insofar as the process of educating the leaders ensures that they will choose policy wisely. The procedure of choice is irrelevant in the specific case, and substance is taken care of by the demand for knowledge. The purpose of the state is the good life, so that is the common good.

Another view, that of Hobbes, allows for a democratic sovereign, but prefers a monarch. Democracy is not preferred because Hobbes thinks its divisive nature will jeopardize the peace and security of the state. The problem for Hobbes is the establishment and maintenance of a civil order. He does not feel so strongly the need to protect the citizen's individual interests and rights within the state since he is concerned to provide a strong, protective civil framework without which human life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." In any community there must be a sovereign whose power is complete, and who can both defend the state from attack and arbitrate the disputes of the citizens within the state. If individual rights are to be protected at all, it will be done by the arbitration of the sovereign, beyond whom there is no appeal.

Hobbes seems content to rest on the power of his sovereign. He has no explicit notion of common good or public interest. Though Hobbes plainly hoped or assumed otherwise,
nothing in his theory can ensure that his sovereign will be or represent anything more than a particular private interest and judgment, to which all others have agreed to submit. There is, given the nature of man, only competing private interest. In recognizing the need for peace and security, however, Hobbes, implicitly at least, sees a common good. But his view leaves us the problem, given peace and security, of the balance between public and private goods. If we say peace and security are the common good, then on Hobbes' account there is no limit to the methods the sovereign may use to attain it. Except for giving up his own death, wounds or imprisonment, form which one may not lay down the right to defend oneself says Hobbes, all that the sovereign orders must be done without question. All have agreed to make the sovereign's will absolute, even though it may be nothing more than another merely private will. If the sovereign does not make policy in the public interest, in our sense of the word, too bad, as long as peace and security are maintained. Nor, of course, is Hobbes concerned about procedure, with the exception of the choice of sovereign which must be done by unanimous agreement of all citizens. Private interests are left to sort themselves out under the protective mantle of peace and security provided by the sovereign. All problems can be handled by the power and authority of the sovereign, so substance, procedure, and the balance between public
and private interest and problems that get left aside. Despite its powerful logic and fundamental correctness about the need for a final authority in the community, most of us are left feeling uneasy about the Hobbsian notion of the absolute sovereign. Such a powerful authority having no responsibility will soon be corrupted. The excesses may far outweigh the value as arbiter, and the individual citizen's interests could be trodden upon, because the arbitration will become too arbitrary to serve them adequately. Thus Hobbes' view is inadequate, though forceful and enlightening.

The problem of how to reconcile any good and our good remains, and Rousseau thought he could provide the reconciliation. He believed, however, that the problem had to be solved more in terms of the individual and his rights than either Plato or Hobbes did, and he developed the notion of the General Will to do it. The General Will is the real will of all and is expressed when under appropriate conditions the citizens select policy by means of majority rule. The citizens together make up the sovereign body. The private will of the individual, which is only his apparent will, must submit to the General Will, since that is his real will, and only thus can the real interest of all be served. Any who think otherwise have got the wrong view of the nature of the General Will and the relation between it and private interests. But there is still a problem.

Rousseau may place too much faith in the General Will.
He had a procedure for arriving at policy, i.e. majority rule, but the question of substance as a guide to choice remains unsolved. Although Rousseau has a conception of the individual good that is Platonic in character, his solution of the problem of how to arrive at that good leaves that conception aside. The majority judgment expresses the General Will, but the General Will is not the majority will, therefore, the problem is how to identify the General Will apart from the majority will. Although Rousseau draws our attention to this issue, he fails to provide an identification. Two more points may usefully be made here. One is that there is always the danger of tyranny of the majority when all are urged to accept without question majority decisions. Rousseau's insistence on a difference between majority will and the General Will is evidence of his concern with this danger, but his failure to clarify the difference leaves the danger undiminished. The second point is that Rousseau takes no account of the relation between wisdom or knowledge and policy choice. He does not argue that the sovereign majority needs wisdom to select policy, and there seems to be no connection between policy choice and the conception of individual goods which could serve as a guide in selection. There is only the majority will to indicate that the General Will is operating. Substance remains a problem. and Rousseau leaves the discovery of the common good to the operation of a decision procedure, despite his uneasiness.

The theory of the state that has come to us from
Hegel and his interpreters and followers seems to have gone to an extreme by burying the good of the individual within the good of the state. On some interpretations, the state becomes a sort of metaphysically independent entity whose value, significance, and power lie beyond those of individuals. The interests of the community are paramount and those of the citizen secondary in the conduct of the state, with some supporters of this view even arguing that there is no difference between the two. So the problem of the relation between public and private interest is resolved by reducing the latter to the former, in effect denying the independent reality of private interest. But this submersion of the private in the public is unacceptable, because it is not the case that private good is unimportant, even though we might agree that public good is in some sense more important. What is needed instead is a conception of the relation between them that allows each its rightful place in the civil order.

In contrast to this are the views of people like Bentham, Mill, Locke, and the authors of the Federalist Papers. Here the individual is given much more prominence. His needs, interests, and rights are kept uppermost in the organization of the state, and personal freedom is a major purpose of the civil society. The problem is how to retain this freedom within the corporate enterprise that the state must, to some degree, be. The answer provided by liberal democratic views is to make the citizens the governing authority and sovereign.
Their interests and rights will be served and protected by themselves as governors. The state must not interfere with their pursuit of their private interests except to prevent each of them from interfering with the rights of others. The state becomes a sort of referee between and assistant to the citizens, protecting them from interference and helping them pursue their interests. As long as each citizen pursues his private interests without impinging on the pursuit by his fellows of theirs, the state should leave him to his pursuits. It might be argued that there is recognition of the common good here, but the answer is that the common good is nothing more than the sum of the private goods, so that when the individual citizens do well, the common good is achieved. But the question of how a policy which requires restriction of the citizen and maybe sacrifice of his interest in the name of the common good can be for the common good now arises. And if it can be for the common good to sacrifice an individual interest in a given case, how can such sacrifices be limited? In other words what criteria are appealed to when private interest is to give way to public? Democratic theory does not easily answer this question, partly because it has not worked out well the relation between individual and common good. It is not alone in this deficiency, but the deficiency plagues it especially severely when sacrifice is called for in the name of the common good, while the power of the private
good continues to be expressed through the ballot.

A final account we may consider in this brief survey is agreement theory, and the theories of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, for example, should be kept in mind. Tussman sets forth the theory as follows. On the model of voluntary associations, the state is seen as a group of persons related by a system of agreements. Membership requires being a party to the system, and the members agree to act together in pursuit of a common purpose and place themselves under a common authority. The common good is the purpose for which the members come together and to which they are committed. The agreement imposes certain restraints on the pursuit of private interests and places certain obligations on the individual citizens to perform in certain ways despite what private interest may dictate. In this way, it is argued, the common good, whatever it may be, can best be realized. The subordination of private to public interest is implicit in the agreement to participate, as well as the subordination of private to public judgment. The substance of the common good is not specified in agreement theory, and, although it does not identify the common good with a particular political system, it does seem implicitly to favor democratic procedures. So with neither a particular substance nor a procedure in mind, agreement theory seems insufficient with respect to the problem of the common good, despite its apparent strength in
dealing with the problem of relating public and private interest.

This brings us to the end of the brief survey the point of which was to highlight various aspects of the problem of the common good and show how some thinkers have tried to deal with it. It also provides a background in which to place Gewirth's account which attempts to give substance to the common good and to show that certain procedures and political systems are conducive to achieving the common good while others are not. He attempts to bridge the gap between corporatist and individualist views, and I turn now to consider his account.

The common good, Gewirth argues, must have substance and be something which is neither insensitive to private interest nor neglectful of the public interest. It can have neither the Hegelian detachment on the one hand, nor the neutrality of a decision procedure recognizing no content that is relevant to choice, on the other. In order to arrive at a conception Gewirth suggests a content for each of two views of the common good and argues that a synthesis of the two is possible which when accomplished will be a definition of the common good. He lists the contents of both sorts, then claims that the synthesis contains all features of both. In effect this is what happens. The liberal democrat and individualist in Gewirth is unable to accept the full emphasis on group interests of corporatist
accounts, yet he is not so fiercely individualist or democratic, as to ignore the importance of group interests. Recognizing them to be distinct and different from private interests, and though of equal importance sometimes in conflict with them, he tries to find a middle ground between them. But his belief in democracy is strong enough to lead him to argue that whatever the common good may be it must be found within a democratic framework. In order to locate it there, he includes the principles of democracy in the synthesis of goods. The result is a definition of the common good which, reminiscent of Tussman, incorporates substantively the principles and values of democracy. His lists provide the contents and the conclusion, but there is reason to suspect that the lists are too carefully compiled, perhaps with the outcome in mind. The account seems mistaken, because it blurs a distinction which must be maintained. This is the distinction between the content of the common good and the sorts of political organization that may be used to achieve it. These may differ so much that the common good can be achieved by various forms of organization some of which will be incompatible with each other. Furthermore, those things which are seen as goods from the democrat's point of view may not be seen as goods in the non-democratic view, while both may still agree on common goods. In other words, there are different roads to the same place, even though it
may be true that certain roads are preferable to others. In what follows, I hope to show where Gewirth's account goes astray.

Gewirth provides some explanation of the terms 'good' and 'common'. For each, he says, there is a range of meanings. 'Good' stretches between subjective and objective while 'common' ranges between the poles of individualism and corporatism. Somewhere between these extremes lies the truth. In his later lists of common goods, various combinations of these four extremes appear. They do not appear there as extremes, of course, and it is not the case that they need to be so viewed. They appear as characterizations of the substantive common goods listed. Thus personal liberty is a common good in Gewirth's lists which is more individualist than corporatist and more subjective than objective, while the necessary conditions for the survival of any society is a common good that is more corporatist than individualist and less subjective than objective. So Gewirth, in seeking his substantive definition of the common good, uses these extremes as touchstones to aid our understanding of the definitions. His view is that there is a substantive content for the common good, so it must be more objective than subjective and midway between individual and corporate, or at least have some aspects of both interwoven in it. Only such a definition will provide the sort of standard that is required if the policies and decisions of legislators are
to be objectively judged. I think Gewirth is probably right about this matter, though I think his account needs careful scrutiny.

The substantive definition can be approached from two points of view: that of the individual or that of the society. An underlying assumption is that there are needs both of the individual as such and of the society as such. Identification of the needs and from them the goods of each is possible and gives rise to the content of the common good. So Gewirth lists what he calls the common goods of the individual and then of the society. I turn now to a detailed examination of those lists.

From the individual point of view the common goods based on private individual wants are:

1. numerically diverse, qualitatively similar objects each person possesses or enjoys: e.g. food, clothes, books, personal freedom (from Locke), etc.;

2. objects individuals can have or use collectively: e.g. public parks, art galleries, etc.;

3. values of interpersonal communication: e.g. shared appreciation of pleasures, ideals, etc., and human community;

4. the total environmental context - physical, biological, legal, political - which provides the indispensible means of attaining goods 1, 2, and 3. It may not be valued or enjoyed individually because some may be unaware of it, but it is a necessary means to the other goods;

5. what men would value as an end if they were more enlightened; no examples are given; and
(6) the moral virtues of charity, etc., which require the consideration of the good of others: e.g. foreign aid.  

The list moves from specific, individual needs to general, personal but non-individual values. It has no special reference to desires or other subjective 'good' characteristics because the needs in question are so pervasive as to be non-controversial, says Gewirth. All are substantive, having definite, specifiable content.

To get the other party to the issue before us before considering in detail what the lists contain, here is the list of common goods from the point of view of the needs of society. They are three groups of necessary conditions for:

(1) the preservation of any society: e.g. order, security, provision for economic needs, food, clothing, shelter, etc.;

(2) the preservation of a specific sort of society: e.g. political and intellectual freedom in the US, and political and intellectual repression in the USSR; and

(3) extending and advancing those values: e.g. like 2.

Commenting on these, Gewirth says that they form a hierarchy with the first set being the most fundamental, than 2, then 3, and that they may overlap to some extent. Now let's look more closely at the lists.

The first list of individual goods moves from specific to general. The first three sets may appear uncontroversial. But notice that included in the first and therefore most egocentric set is the notion of personal freedom or liberty
on the ground that Locke included liberty in the notion of
property. But despite Locke, there seems to be reason to
question the inclusion of liberty here. Liberty is not
obviously a numerically diverse object, nor would it be
granted by all to be a good qualitatively similar to food, for
example. Food, clothing, and shelter are necessary for life,
but this is not the case with other personal possessions
which may be desired and had by each. Indeed, some people
eschew personal possessions yet seem to survive quite well
without them. Liberty is one of the things they may eschew.
The point is simply that it is possible to survive without
most personal possessions as well as without liberty, so
these are not essential to survival. Of course, Gewirth
may not be trying to include merely those things necessary
to survival though he is implying that they are basic goods
for all men. There are things we might see as goods for
other reasons than their necessity to our survival, some of
which no doubt are personal possessions of some sort.

But there is another reason for rejecting the inclusion
of personal liberty here. Personal liberty is not seen by
all as a good thing in the way liberal democrats see it to be.
If it is the sort of personal liberty that is characteristic
of liberalism that Gewirth means, then it is wrong to include
it here in the list of what are purported to be goods of
the individual that are basic to all. It is wrong because
it makes what is merely one principle of a specific political belief a general good for all men. However much we may believe that liberty is such a good, saying it does not make it so. Nor does the fact that Locke thought it should be included in the notion of property make it so. General goods of the kind that seem to be meant to go into the first set must be more general than personal liberty. The list may well be shorter than Gewirth thinks, and personal liberty is included to the detriment of the conclusion he seeks, though he is right to include many of the things he does as basic goods which are common goods.

The contents of Gewirth's second set of goods are mostly uncontentious. Public parks, etc. are public goods. But I wonder if it is correct to include them in the common good. They certainly are not necessary to the continued existence of anyone or any society. It might be better to say that the provision of parks and so on contributes to the common good in certain ways rather than saying they are themselves part of the common good. It might be argued that they should be included in a definition of the common good because they are goods and they are for all to enjoy, but there must be more to the common good than that, if we are to identify specific things that belong to it. The criterion for inclusion in the common good must be more than the simple fact that something is for all to enjoy. So the inclusion of parks, etc. is odd.
The third set proposed by Gewirth suffers from vagueness but is generally uncontentious. People need human community and fellowship and the sharing of experience if life is to be at all rich in human terms. Gewirth does not import into this set any principles of specific social systems either, so that is not a problem.

The fourth set is once again a mixed bag. The total environmental context is general enough to be part of the common good, but as Gewirth describes it it contains factors which are too specific to be allowed. Furthermore, some of its factors are givens and may be unalterable. This last is particularly true of the necessary physical and biological conditions he includes, though what sort they should optimally be is, wisely, not stated. Obviously, we are unable to be very specific. Now with respect to the other inclusions, the same may be said. There must be some sort of social, legal, political framework, or at least something that could be so described even if unsophisticated or embryonic. As long as these are not too finely specified, so that they become identifiable as parts of a specific system, e.g. democracy, and exclude others, then they are acceptable as parts of the common good. So I agree with his inclusion of these factors.

The fifth set of goods is interesting: what men would value as an end if they were more enlightened. It is not clear, first of all, what values more enlightened people
would discern, discover, or pursue as an end. Thus Gewirth seems to be assuming that enlightenment *per se* will ensure that some better end will be valued. Surely this is questionable, and the record does not show it to be true. But there is a venerable history behind this view reaching, of course, back to Plato, and including Mill's point about the difference between the human being and the pig and Socrates and the fool.

We are all tempted, to some degree at least, to acknowledge the force of the view that the wise and knowledgeable should because of their wisdom and knowledge be better able to govern than the foolish and ignorant. If this is what Gewirth has in mind, then perhaps he should be saying that increased enlightenment is the common good, instead of the end the more enlightened would value. It could also be the case that he implicitly accepts the democratic view that the governing citizenry should be informed and enlightened. The later emergence of democratic ideals as part of the common good is, of course, compatible with that implication. Indeed, it may be argued that it is only from a democratic point of view that enlightenment can be viewed as a personal common good, which is where it occurs in his lists.

The sixth group seems less like a set of personal goods than the other five. Consideration for the good of others is more like a moral principle than a political or common good. It may be argued that the highest attainment
of public goods will have to include these sort of things as aims, at least if the common good is to be fully defined. Without such principles, the common good can only be less than we know it might be. The sort of ideal he suggests is a kind of altruism. Because altruism is a sort of moral position that one may or may not accept or believe. Its inclusion in the common good is subject to the same sorts of criticism as is that of the principles of democracy. It is too specific and limited to be usefully included. After all, Why pick altruism? What's wrong with the Golden Rule or some sort of enlightened eogism instead? But maybe Gewirth is not plumping for a given moral principle. He may instead be saying that the attitude of compassion and sympathetic concern for others should be a part of the common good. We can sympathize with such a view, of course. But a closer look reveals problems. How can an attitude be a common good? It seems more accurate to say that an attitude may serve the common good and therefore ought to be fostered and encouraged. But if that is so, then we must know what the common good is before we can know which attitudes are most likely to serve it. And in that case, what should be said here is that whatever is served by this or that attitude is the common good or part of it, not that the attitude is. Perhaps, more deeply, Gewirth is trying to say that the attainment of the status of some sort of personal moral agency is a part of the common good or one of the common goods from the individual
point of view. I would be inclined to agree that it is, and Rousseau's view of both personal morality and the moral purpose of the state supports such an interpretation, but Gewirth is unclear. Some sort of recognizable morality might be included in the common good, but once again to be too specific in urging any particular view will defeat the general purpose of finding a substantive definition for the common good.

I turn now to look briefly at the three common goods Gewirth finds from society's viewpoint. The first, the conditions necessary for the preservation of any society, is not problematic if properly understood. Presumably, if society is good, then the conditions for preserving it must be so too, at least as means of preserving it. But Gewirth is unclear. I'm not sure if he means that the conditions are the goods. That is what he says, but I think he must mean that the social order itself represents 'a' or 'the' common good as opposed to no social order. What must be done in that case is to attain those conditions that will ensure that a social order continues to exist. But that is only a means to the end of preserving a common good, namely, the social order. What is gained by focussing on the conditions for preserving it except the reminder of where our vigilance should be directed, I fail to see.

The second and third common goods Gewirth sees arising from the social point of view I find unacceptable. I cannot see the necessary conditions for the preservation of a given
society being truly common goods. Apart from the question of focusing on conditions as goods rather than what they are conditions of, I find the implicit assumption that a given society is good disturbing. For one thing, since there are several different sorts of society, which one is the good one that ought to be preserved? No doubt we will think it is ours, with its warts removed of course, and others will think it is theirs. But all cannot be common goods, since all are different from, and many are incompatible with, each other. It makes sense to say that the social order is a common good, but I find it odd to say that any particular one is a common good also.

The same questions arise regarding Gewirth's third set of social common goods, the necessary conditions for extending and advancing a given sort of society. What I have said about the second set applies mutatis mutandis to this set, so I will not discuss it further.

Before passing on to consider Gewirth's proposed synthesis, one further point needs comment. Both de Jouvenal and Smith make much of the cultural context as a central feature of the common good. Gewirth, by contrast, says little about it explicitly. Implicitly, however, it is there. His fourth individual common good, for example, the total environmental context, could contain the cultural features the others comment on. The inclusion of things such as liberty and altruism also suggests that he takes the cultural context for granted, as does inclusion of the conditions
necessary for the preservation of a given sort of society. Thus we see the importance of the cultural context even when it is not explicitly discussed, reminding us of the importance Burke and Bradley give to it.

We need finally to consider the synthesis. Gewirth argues that from the two lists comes a synthesis that is a suitable definition of the common good. I think he may be right in general, though I do not wish to go as far as he in specifying detail. As my comments show, he includes too much in the lists, even apart from questions of the clarity and correctness of their contents. The common good emerges as the liberal democratic sort of society, which is, for the reasons noted, an inadequate definition of the common good. The common good cannot be so strictly limited and narrowed as to be identified with the basic principles of one particular sort of society. It cannot be the case, for example, that non-democratic societies are unable to provide for the common good, nor that their provision for it is meaningless because they are non-democratic. Rather, as Aristotle notes, the common good must be general enough to be meaningfully applied to all societies. It must be a notion that may be used as a criterion by which to measure the worth of any social order, if it is to be substantively significant. It cannot be identical with the principles of this or that type of social order if it is to be a standard by which to evaluate the legitimacy and worth of political organizations.
and policy decisions in general. It is not a common good that this or that society be preserved, but it is a common good that there be a social order. And while we may argue that this or that sort of order best enables the common good to be realized, it does not follow therefore that this or that one is the common good.

This is the mistake Gewirth makes when he includes the various criteria and principles of liberal democracy in his lists of common goods. Clearly, from lists containing such principles as the continuation of a specific sort of society, personal liberty, altruism, and a particular kind of legal-political framework as common goods, liberal democracy must follow. To get a suitable substantive notion of the common good from lists of common goods we must begin with even more selective and formal lists. Gewirth's lists, while selective, are not selective enough. If we remove the liberal democratic goods from them, we may arrive at a suitable substantive definition that will serve as a meaningful, objective criterion for assessing political decision and policy proposals. We need to remove the notion of personal liberty, the insistence on maintaining and extending (an unclear notion by the way) a given society, and the altruism, and keep the rest of the goods to arrive at a more useful notion. It will contain the fundamentals for life, social order, community, companionship, fellowship, the social-physical-biological
context, and provision for peace, security, and some level of economic welfare. Beyond these general goods, which are common to all men, there cannot be further specification, without danger of parochialism and all its evils. On these shoals Gewirth's account founders. But removing them leaves us with a notion that does make some limited sense.

To sum up then: Gewirth's account of the common good is better than the other two I've considered, because it does try to define common good in terms of objective goods that are generally recognized. It is weakened, however, by his inclusion of things that are goods only from the point of view of liberal democracy, making it too specific and limited to be satisfactory. Removing these limited goods may make the notion arrived at more satisfactory, as I have suggested.
In this fourth and final chapter, I shall summarize what has been learned from the foregoing study of the common good, and indicate, rather tentatively, some directions further study of the nature of the common good might take.

What have we learned? My overall conclusion is that we have found that the common good is somehow a significant concept that has a proper use in talking about public purpose and policy making. But, while that may be true, it is also true that we have not been able to go very far towards specifying precisely what the common good is. This sounds paradoxical, no doubt, but I think I can show that it is a correct characterization of the findings.

Dealing first with the significance of the concept, we have seen that there is a general acknowledgement that some kind of standard called the common good exists, and that we can in at least some cases recognize in a gross but meaningful way when a state is serving it and when not. There seems to be that sort of agreement between the three accounts considered, and, while differing in detail, all three agree that the democratic form of government is the best way to provide for the good so recognized. If no such good were recognizable, then no judgment about which form of government might best attain it could be made. The fact that such judgments are made shows that some such recognition exists. Furthermore, the brief survey of other theories shows that the notion
has been deemed significant in that all more or less agree that civil order is necessary to it, and that it constitutes the decisive measure of civil policy. So there is reason to believe that the notion is more than mere rhetoric.

But we have also seen that there is very little that we can now say to specify precisely the content of the concept. Consider, for instance, the inadequacy of Gewirth's lists of common goods, and the vagueness of de Jouvenal's cultural context. They are not irrelevant yet provide little help when it comes to the definitive detail demanded in policy selection. The exhortation to do what promotes France, to use de Jouvenal's example, fails us where we most need help, namely, in identifying what promotes France. The historical survey in Chapter III has a similar result. All theories seem agreed that there is a public good, yet what it is and how to promote it are problems to which no theory provides clear solutions. So, while we seem forced to conclude that there is significance in the common good, on the one hand, we seem equally unable to specify what it is, on the other.

There are some other things learned from the study which rate comment. One centres on the distinction between substance and procedure, which seems to arise throughout the foregoing chapters. Each of the views considered, while more or less acknowledging the distinction, arrives at a conception of the common good that incorporates both. Smith re-
sorts to mere procedure, in the final analysis, for example, and provides no substantive guides to choice. Since it is impossible, he thinks, to find the sort of substance sufficient to guide policy choice, all we can do is make sure that the choices are made by the best method. de Jouvenal, too, includes procedure in his notion of the common good, although he is ostensibly more concerned with substance than Smith. Gewirth does the same by including the principles of democracy in his analysis and therewith the procedures implicit in democratic systems. But it seems to me that, even if we knew much more than we do about what to pursue, we would still be in a position to argue about how to pursue it. Once it is clear what the common good is, then the question of how to attain it can be addressed. If the common good is primarily a substantive notion which should tell us what to aim at in policy selection and legislation, as I have argued, then accounts of the common good should concentrate on what it is, not on how to attain it. The question of content or substance is the prior but more problematic question, and when it is not well resolved the drift into emphasis on procedure occurs. Substance and procedure are related, of course, but the distinction between them must be maintained if we are to avoid confusion.

Something else which emerges from the discussion is that the question of the relation between public and private interests needs much more attention in accounts of the common
good. How they ought to be related is, to me, both the most central and the most difficult question in trying to give accounts of the common good. Gewirth's view tries to give an answer, as we saw, but his lists, although generally acceptable, are somehow too unilluminating to do justice to the depth and force of the public/private problem. We need only consider his list of goods from the society's point of view to sense the lack. On the whole, however, the three accounts try to take care of the problem by retreating into democracy which, while allowing the participation of all, does not ensure the serving of either public or private interests. But surely this is the central problem. Unless we are prepared to deny the reality of either the private or the public good, thereby moving to one of the extremes where one is reduced to the other, we must find a way to relate public and private such that each is duly considered and served. It seems clear that there are public and private goods and interests, so we must reject the extremes and squarely face the problem of accommodation. Attempts to resolve it by appeals to democracy deal inadequately with the public/private question. Despite its virtues, democracy does not treat that relationship in terms of substance. While its procedures may give the appearance of ensuring due consideration, we must remember that a majority can be tyrannical. Nor does democracy deal well with the problem of the sacrifice
Another thing we learn from the foregoing study is that the common good is not identical with nor does it contain the principles of any specific sort of political system. In each case considered, the ideals and principles of democracy found their way into the conception of the common good. But it seems abundantly clear that the common good may be attainable in many ways, not just one. Saying that the state must be democratic if the common good is to be served is simply wrong. Even we democrats distinguish between those states which seem to us to be serving the common good and those which do not, regardless of their political systems. In particular, we make the distinction among non-democratic states. We say, for example, that Cuba appears to serve the common good while many South American republics do not. And despite repression, harshness, and autocratic actions, we say the same of China as opposed to either Uganda or Rhodesia. We might be hard pressed to justify these judgments, though we could say some things which would substantiate them. So despite the arguments of Gewirth and others, the common good does seem attainable outside democracy.

Another reason to avoid identifying the common good with any particular political system is that such identification narrows the notion unnecessarily. To be truly common a good must be universally applicable. It must not be hedged
about and qualified in ways that weaken its generality. To insist that the common good include the principles of democracy restricts its breadth, for it is far from clear that democracy is a universal good of the sort required. In fact, some philosophers have presented strong arguments to show that it is not. It is just one of many sorts of political organization, any of which may be means of pursuing the common good. As both Plato and Hobbes argue, there may be more to be said against it than for it. The truth is that no one system is demonstrably and without question the best. They are different ways of working toward the common good, but none is the common good as the three theories have suggested.

A third reason to avoid identifying the common good with democracy or any other system is that we do not know which one to chose until we know what the common good is. It is the common good that will be our criterion for choosing among systems. To build the principles of a given system into the common good would be to beg the question of which is the best system. Therefore, even though we may have good reason to believe that democracy is the best system, we still cannot identify it with the common good.

A final reason to avoid such identities is that they tend to reduce the common good to the status of a mere community or national interest. But we know that to imbue national or community ideals, understandings, and wisdom with the status of common or universal value or worth invites a too
narrow conception of human well-being. Surely the common good cannot be so parochial, when it can be demonstrated that what seem like basic truths about human good to one group are rejected as such by others. The common good must transcend chauvinism, nationalism, racism and their like to be truly common. It must be what is truly fundamental and basically good for all men. While we may believe that individual freedom is such a thing, we need only realize that for many peoples, e.g. the Chinese, such a notion has little importance, because their whole history and culture teaches otherwise.

Finally, a few tentative comments about the direction further investigation of the common good might take. One thing this study seems to show is that there is significance to the notion of the common good, that it has more than mere rhetorical value. The problem, having said that, is specifying the significance. To do that we need to concentrate on substance in analysing the notion. At the same time, we should remember that the concept must have sufficient breadth to transcend the bounds of particular conceptions of the good of any group or community. It must have the widest possible application. But unless we can specify substance, to some degree at least, we shall be forever vague about the common good. One place to seek further clarity is in a study of the relation between public and private goods. A clear understanding of that relationship will give us a better grasp of the common good, because it is that relationship that
political organizations must deal with. If the common good is the purpose of the political community, then it is directly connected with the public/private relationship. Much needs to be done to clarify that relationship, and clarification will go a long way to illuminate the common good.

With these brief suggestions, I end this study in the belief that it has shed some light on the problem, despite its rather negative conclusion.
Introduction

1 Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1957.
2 Athens, Ga.; University of Georgia Press, 1960.

Chapter I

2 Ibid., p. 108.
3 Ibid., pp. 108-9.
5 Ibid., p. 109.
8 Barry, op. cit., p. 16; and Plamenatz, loc. cit.
9 Plamenatz, op. cit., pp. 311-315.

Chapter II

1 University of Georgia Press, Athens, Ga., 1960.
2 Ibid., Chap. 2, passim.
3 Ibid., pp. 11-12
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., p. 15.
Chapter II - Continued:

7 Ibid., p. 19.
8 Ibid., pp. 53-59.
9 Ibid., pp. 65-77.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., pp. 74-88.
12 Ibid., p. 71.
13 Ibid., p. 80.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., pp. 81-82.
16 Ibid., p. 80.

Chapter III

2 Leviathan, I, 14.
4 Gewirth, pp. 162-165.
5 Ibid., pp. 165-167.
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