

Review

The Common Good According to Great Men of Prayer and Economists: Comparisons, Connections, and Inspirations for Economics

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Abstract: This paper aims to present and compare contemporary concepts of the common good formulated by economists with reference to the understanding of the common good by the great men of prayer: Augustine of Hippo; Thomas Aquinas; Jacques Maritain; and Popes John XXIII, John Paul II, and Francis. It seeks to determine in what direction the economic theory of the common good can develop, taking into account inspiration drawn from Catholic social teaching (CST). Given the interdisciplinary nature of the common good, a historical and interdisciplinary approach, along with the descriptive method, was adopted. The paper highlights the tendency of economic theory toward one-dimensional and relativistic concepts of the common good and suggests a search for economic ideas of the common good that are simultaneously multidimensional and universalistic. It recognizes the achievements of CST, created by the great men of prayer, in enhancing the understanding of the category of the common good and posits that these teachings can serve as research inspiration for economists.

Keywords: common good; Catholic social teaching; prayer and social science; humanistic economics; economic personalism; heterodox economics; history of economic thought



Citation: Horodecka, Anna, and Andrzej J. Żuk. 2023. The Common Good According to Great Men of Prayer and Economists: Comparisons, Connections, and Inspirations for Economics. *Religions* 14: 1544. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14121544>

Academic Editors: Małgorzata Tatala and Konrad Janowski

Received: 17 November 2023

Revised: 7 December 2023

Accepted: 13 December 2023

Published: 15 December 2023



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1. Introduction

The concept of the common good, despite its ancient origins, remains a contemporary and intellectually challenging topic situated at the intersection of philosophy, Catholic social teaching (CST), and economics. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the common good, this paper adopts a historical and interdisciplinary approach, along with the descriptive method. This allows for the presentation of the most important ideas of economists against the background of philosophers and, especially, representatives of CST, contributing to a better understanding of the nature and character of economic concepts of the common good.

The primary objective of this research is to present and compare key contemporary concepts of the common good formulated by economists, with reference to the understanding of the common good by the great men of prayer: Augustine of Hippo; Thomas Aquinas; Jacques Maritain; and Popes John XXIII, John Paul II, and Francis. It seeks to determine in what direction the economic theory of the common good can develop, taking into account the inspirations drawn from the most prominent theorists of the common good in CST.

The choice of and focus on the main CST representatives was not accidental. The authors of the most important concepts of the common good were (or still are) undoubtedly the great men of prayer. Today, most of them are saints of the Catholic Church, but even those not yet canonized are widely recognized as people of God: serving God and humanity. Undoubtedly, prayer had or continues to have a central place in the lives of these people. Indeed, true men of prayer have access to the wisdom of God, who shows them the nature and meaning of the reality they encounter every day—they have some insight into how God himself sees things and matters. Therefore, it seems that one should definitely look at what

the great people of prayer in the Church understood by the common good and be inspired by their thoughts when creating theories in the social sciences, including economics.

The article consists of four main parts. Following the introduction, Section 2 of the study provides a historical overview of the most important concepts of the common good, mostly proposed by CST, from antiquity to the present day, distinguishing various traditions of perceiving the common good. Section 3 presents the concepts of the common good proposed by economists, characterizing the four most significant contemporary approaches. Then, in the fourth part of the article, the ideas of economists about the common good are compared and assessed in light of the concept of the common good within the CST framework. The study ends by defining and comparing the main characteristics of the analyzed concepts of the common good, offering insights into potential future research directions on the category of the common good in economics, consistent with the thought of the great men of prayer.

2. The Contribution of Great Men of Prayer to the Concept of the Common Good

Since the earliest days of philosophical and socioeconomic thought, the concept of the common good has been subject to intense scrutiny. Plato in *De Republica* stated that it is the responsibility of the state to ensure the common good, known as *κοινό καλό* in Greek, by defining it and convincing citizens through persuasion or force to build it. Therefore, according to Plato, the statutory law is the ultimate arbiter of the common good, which may sometimes conflict with the interests of individuals (Zamelski 2012). On the other hand, Aristotle, a student and critic of Plato, took a different approach in his *Ethica Nicomachea*. He did not view the common good as being at odds with the good of individuals but rather saw it as encompassing both the good of the polis and the good of individual citizens. Aristotle believed that the state existed to enable individuals to achieve their ultimate goal, or *telos*, which was personal happiness or *eudaimonia*, attainable through various virtues (Zamelski 2012). Additionally, Aristotle contended that the good of the state was a more perfect and encompassing good than that of the individual (Sadowski 2010).

Christian thought, drawing upon the philosophical achievements of the ancient Greeks and Romans, has played a significant role in the development of the concept of the common good. Augustine of Hippo's understanding of the common good (Latin: *bonum commune*) differs significantly from that of Plato's. Augustine posited in *De Civitate Dei* that it is not the state but the community that defines the common good through its affections because the pursuit of the common good determines the existence of the community (Sadowski 2010). Thus, the common good cannot be imposed on citizens by the state; it must be chosen and recognized by the citizens themselves.

Centuries later, Thomas Aquinas took a more comprehensive and penetrating approach to the idea of the common good, building upon Aristotle's concepts. Like Aristotle, Aquinas viewed humans as social beings and always considered them as members of a community rather than individuals in isolation (Sadowski 2010). He, therefore, emphasized the interrelatedness of the good of the individual and the good of the community, defining the common good as a shared goal that each member of the community accepts as their own good and a motive for their actions because it serves to achieve their aims and perfection (Zamelski 2012).

The author of *Summa Theologiae* regarded the common good as a distinct value, not simply the sum of individual goods, and considered it higher than the good of the individual, provided that it belonged to the same hierarchy of goods and goals (Sadowski 2010). For instance, a community could not expect its members to sacrifice their personal goal of salvation for a particular common good, as God, their individual goal, is also the highest common good (Latin: *bonum commune separatum*), hierarchically above all other common goods.

It is important to note that, in Aquinas's view, the superiority of the common good does not threaten the primacy of the human person as an individual and a member of the community (Sadowski 2010). Aquinas believed that the social order unites individual aspirations for the common good and connects the human (social and individual) dimension of

the common good with God as the highest common good through the order of the universe. As such, not only individuals and the community but also authorities play an important role in the pursuit of the common good due to the significance of the social order.

Only a few centuries later, the concept of the common good was significantly redefined by Enlightenment philosophers such as Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. They approached the common good from different anthropological assumptions, resulting in diverse interpretations. [Bruni and Zamagni \(2017\)](#) note that differences in the understanding of the common good also stem from varying Christian traditions such as Lutheran, Calvinist, and Catholic approaches. Additionally, these differences resulted from a departure from the theological and teleological approach to the common good, which placed God as the ultimate goal of every human being ([De George 2004](#)). Instead, subsequent philosophers emphasized the importance of either the individual (as an end in themselves), as seen in utilitarianism or the doctrine of human rights, or society or the state, as developed in later philosophical currents such as Marxism and Hegelianism.

Therefore, in contrast to the integral approach of the medieval Christian thinkers, the definitions of the common good proposed later by Enlightenment shifted towards emphasizing either the role of the individual (referred to as liberal, individualist conceptions) or the role of society (referred to as socialist, collectivist conceptions). This departure broke the inherent bond between the development of the individual and the good of the community (society or state) that was present in earlier Christian thought ([Lutz 1999](#)).

The concept of the common good, which integrates the individual and community dimensions, was reintroduced through the social teaching of the Catholic Church. Pope John XXIII defined the common good by referring to St. Thomas Aquinas's understanding, stating that it is "all those social conditions which favor the full development of human personality" ([John XXIII 1961](#), p. 65). The Second Vatican Council also affirmed this approach, stating in *Gaudium et Spes* that the common good encompasses "the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment" ([Second Vatican Council 1965](#), p. 26). This definition has become increasingly universal, encompassing the rights and obligations resulting from respect for the entire human race. As such, each social group must consider the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups, as well as the general well-being of humanity as a whole.

According to [Enderle \(2018\)](#), there are four aspects of this definition of the common good. First, it pertains to the conditions of social life rather than being a substantive goal of all people in society (German: *Gemeingut*), meaning it is an instrumental value (*Dienstwert*) rather than an internal value (*Selbstwert*). Second, these conditions are necessary for both social groups and their individual members to realize their life plans and achieve self-fulfillment. Third, the common good encompasses all of these social conditions. Finally, globalization and increased interdependence across the world mean that these conditions apply to all of humanity.

Jacques Maritain, drawing on the thought of Thomas Aquinas and the teachings of the Church, developed the concept of the common good within the framework of Christian personalism. Maritain's conception posits that the common good is "common to the whole and the parts, the persons" ([Maritain 1951](#), p. 11), thus existing as a distinct entity rather than being the sum of individual goods. Although the common good is deemed more important than the individual goods of society members, it does not imply the subordination of individuals to society at all times. Firstly, the primacy of the common good, according to Thomas Aquinas, applies to values of the same order (e.g., economic values), not to higher values of the human person (cognitive, spiritual, moral, and ideological values) since their infringement would lead to the destruction of the common good. Secondly, no society is an end in itself since it exists for the people who constitute it, and they are separate entities—persons—with their dignity, autonomy, freedom rights, and own aspirations for higher education and life tasks. Therefore, the common good must not conflict with the good of the individual but instead contribute to the good and development of each person.

Thus, it is not “the proper good of the whole”, which, “like the hive with respect to its bees, relates the parts to itself alone and sacrifices them to itself”, but it is “common to both the whole and the parts into which it flows back and which, in turn, must benefit from it” (Maritain 1966, p. 51). Consequently, the rulers of society cannot wholly subjugate individual persons, as the latter ones can be directly and entirely subordinated solely to their ultimate goal, i.e., God, who surpasses all created common goods. Therefore, the authority necessary for the implementation of the idea of the common good must serve the common good and not attempt to control it.

Karol Wojtyła (later known as Pope John Paul II) developed the concept of the common good in light of Christian personalism. He posited that the common good is a distinct social good and not the mere sum of individual goods of the members of society. It determines the good of individuals, and there is no conflict between the “true common good” and the “true good of the person” (Wojtyła 2018, pp. 79–80). According to John Paul II, the most crucial aspect of the concept of the common good is the respect for the human person’s dignity and rights. In this regard, it is imperative to establish the appropriate conditions for each member of society to fulfill their calling. This principle, in turn, translates into the prosperity and economic development of a given community. Thus, according to John Paul II, the common good serves as the cornerstone of the social order, and it is the obligation of society to create conditions that allow for the full development of all its members (John Paul II 1993). John Paul II made numerous references to the common good in his socioeconomic encyclicals, namely *Laborem Exercens* (John Paul II 1981), *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (John Paul II 1987), and *Centesimus Annus* (John Paul II 1991). He proposed a broad and comprehensive definition for it as “the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all” (John Paul II 1987, p. 38). John Paul II emphasized that the common good should not be confused with attitudes that prioritize individual benefits or the interests of one’s own social group through class conflict (John Paul II 1987, 1991). He regarded the common good as a higher value, which provides direction for the necessary transformation of spiritual attitudes that serve as the basis of all human relationships (John Paul II 1987).

Pope Francis’s encyclicals *Laudato Si’* (Francis 2015) and *Fratelli Tutti* (Francis 2020) focus on the practical aspects of the common good, emphasizing its importance as a relational good rooted in social relationships and human interactions. The encyclicals use metaphors such as “a common home” and “brotherhood” to highlight the interconnectedness of humanity and the need for mutual care and responsibility. In *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis employs the metaphor of the common good as a common home. This metaphor is introduced in the title itself, and at the beginning, he references St. Francis of Assisi to describe “our sister and mother Earth” in its natural and climatic dimensions. By doing so, he extends the concept of the common good to include not only human beings but also common resources and all of creation. Here, the common good is envisioned as a common home that fosters feelings of love and care. *Laudato Si’* emphasizes the interconnectedness between human beings and the environment, calling for a renewed sense of global solidarity and recognizing that environmental degradation disproportionately affects the poor and vulnerable. In *Fratelli Tutti*, another metaphor of the common good is introduced, the one of brotherhood (*Fratelli*) that exists between people. Considering others as brothers and sisters is crucial for building the common good as it emphasizes the principle of inclusion and the removal of barriers that contradict this principle, such as all forms of exclusion (e.g., of immigrants and people with disabilities). These goals are still present in development strategies, but due to the pandemic, they have become even more significant as rising inequality and unemployment have intensified the plight of vulnerable people. According to Francis, worsening conditions for the most vulnerable individuals lead to the erosion of the principle of fraternity, which, in turn, undermines the common good expressed by this principle.

In summary, it is worth emphasizing that the contribution of the great people of prayer to the understanding of the common good has largely shaped the core values and principles of CST. These include “first and foremost, the primacy of the human person with

his transcendent dignity; solidarity, understood as a fraternal relationship for the common good; the principle of subsidiarity, which guarantees the right and duty to participate responsibly in common decisions”, and “the principle of the common good”, interpreted as “the defence of the quality of human life, in the sense of both the ecology of the natural environment and the spiritual ecology, which advocates respect not only for the material but also for the higher moral and spiritual needs of human life, both individually and collectively” (Marek and Jabłoński 2021, p. 2).

3. The Concept of the Common Good According to Economists

Although the concept of the common good has not been extensively discussed in economic theory, there are a few modern economists who have given it attention, including Sen, Tirole, and Ostrom, who were awarded the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel.

Sen (2008), in his capability approach, recognized that the primary goal of economic policy should not be limited to GDP growth but rather focused on providing individuals with greater opportunities to choose different “functionings”, i.e., “parts of the state of a person, in particular the various things that he or she manages to do or be in leading a life” (Sen 1996, p. 57). The capability approach is implicitly linked to the common good idea, as Sen (1992, p. 40) conceptualizes capability, i.e., “the various combinations of functionings that a person can achieve”, as oriented towards the freedom to choose different functionings (“beings and doings”), which aligns with liberal theories of the common good. In this sense, the common good is not directly linked to the well-being of the community as a whole and its members, but rather only to the diverse and varying good of its members (cf. Argandoña 2013).

Tirole, in his book *Economics for the Common Good* (Tirole 2017), explicitly refers to the concept of the common good and questions how economics can contribute to achieving it. However, he does not define the common good in detail, stating in general terms that it is “our collective aspiration for society” and understanding it as the “well-being of the community” (Tirole 2017, pp. 2, 5).

Tirole suggests that economics can contribute to the pursuit of the common good in two ways. Firstly, it can focus on the ultimate goals inscribed in the concept of the common good and distinguish them from the means or instruments used to achieve them. This way, the means do not become the ends themselves, losing sight of the ultimate goal of the common good. Secondly, economics can assist in developing tools such as institutions and policies that can help achieve the common good once “a definition of the common good has been agreed upon” (Tirole 2017, p. 5). Therefore, according to Tirole, “economics, like other human and social sciences, does not seek to usurp society’s role in defining the common good”, but “works toward the common good” because “its goal is to make the world a better place” (Tirole 2017, p. 5).

Tirole emphasizes the importance of reconciling individual interests with the general interest in the pursuit of the common good. He asserts that while the common interest permits the private use of goods for individual well-being, it does not allow their abuse at the expense of others. In Tirole’s perspective, economics is a science that incorporates both individual and collective dimensions, analyzing situations where individual interest can be compatible with the quest for collective well-being and those where it can hinder that quest (Tirole 2017, p. 4).

In summary, Tirole sees the common good as a form of the well-being of the community chosen by society. Thus, the common good, as understood by Tirole, in contrast to Sen’s idea, is not directly the good of the members of the community but, first and foremost, the good of the community itself.

It is noteworthy that the concept of the common good was of interest not only to political philosophers but also to early economists such as Genovesi and Smith, a classical economist who is often regarded as the father of political economy. Despite their differing assumptions about human nature, which may have been influenced by distinct Christian traditions, they

arrived at varying understandings of the common good. Genovesi believed that the common good arose from the cultivation of virtues among the members of society, while Smith viewed it as the aggregate of individual values attained (Bruni and Zamagni 2017).

A noteworthy critic of classical economics was Sismondi (de Sismondi 1819), who was the first economist explicitly recognized as a founder of social and humanistic political economy. This school of economics places significant emphasis on the concept of the common good, which aims to connect the common good and individual good, drawing on the original ancient and medieval attempts. The humanistic version of the economics of the common good, promoted by Sismondi, fits into the concept of “civil economy” developed by economists such as Genovesi (1769), Dragonetti (1788), Ruskin (1901), Loria (1910), Fuà (1993), among others, who also referred to the ancient meaning of the common good (Bruni and Zamagni 2017).

Sismondi is referred to by Lutz (1999) in a volume with the same title as the above-mentioned book by Tirole but also with a distinctive and revealing subtitle: *Two Centuries of Economic Thought in the Humanist Tradition*. Lutz (1999, p. 125) has a completely different approach to defining the common good than Tirole, arguing that it “cannot be distilled from the actual preferences of members of society.” Lutz further observes that the existence of diverse tastes and beliefs does not imply the absence of a common good, nor does it render its definition impossible. The solution, according to Lutz, is to find norms, values, or principles acceptable to every rationally thinking person to define the common good. Such principles would provide an objective criterion for determining the different meanings of particular types of “functionings” and “capabilities” required to lead a good life, overcoming the weaknesses of Sen’s concept (cf. Anderson 1995; Nussbaum 1988).

Lutz (1999, pp. 128, 130, 135–36) posits two “principles of normative economics” as objective measures within his concept of “human welfare economics”:

- “material sufficiency”—implying that subsistence and physical health are fundamental human values and that every member of society has an equal right to these goods by virtue of their humanity;
- “respect for human dignity”—asserting that every member of society has an equal and rightful claim to human dignity and being treated accordingly.

Lutz (1999, p. 137) elaborates on the values and moral laws associated with these principles and defines the common good as “good that is equally shared or equally belonging to each and every member of society.” This includes the right to personal freedom, basic well-being, and respect for human dignity. As an economist, Lutz (1999, p. 139) outlines the concept of “economics of the common good” as the translation of these principles and moral laws into economic rights, social policies, and institutions. The economic rights that follow from these principles are the right to the necessities of life (referring to material sufficiency), the right to “economic democracy” (i.e., treating workers with dignity based on respect for human dignity), and the right of future generations to material sufficiency and respect for human dignity (Lutz 1999, p. 139). These rights are implementable within a specific social vision of a market economy, which prioritizes, firstly, a “humanistic enterprise system”, giving human and social capital a special emphasis in the organization of the economy and considers free capital markets as merely instrumental to social welfare (Lutz 1999, p. 141).

Secondly, Lutz emphasizes the necessity for the economy to be integrated with society rather than the reverse to prevent social decisions from being subordinated to impersonal economic competition. He asserts that the achievement of the common good under such a framework can be facilitated by a proactive and protective role played by the government (Lutz 1999, p. 141). Accordingly, Lutz’s concept posits the common good as the amalgamation of the same good for each member of the community rather than as being directly correlated with the welfare of the community as a whole.

Presently, the notion of the common good in economic theory is mainly implicit in the context of the commons and public good issues, which require a distinct approach from market theory. Although Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences winner Ostrom does not explicitly mention the common good, her concept of “the commons” possesses essen-

tial characteristics. While [Hardin \(1968\)](#) underscores the dichotomy between individual and common interests in the situation of jointly owned property or the “tragedy of the commons”, it is [Ostrom \(1990\)](#) who reconciles them, demonstrating how the individual interest can align with the interest of the community, on the condition that the individual adheres to the rules and actions for the common good, which do exist ([Ostrom 1990, 1999](#)). The more effectively governing rules regulate community life, the better the long-term results of individual choices. In other words, the tragedy of Hardin’s pasture need not conclude poorly for either the participants or the community. Rather than state distribution or market forces, it is civil society working for the common good that should govern these resources. Such governance may supersede market-driven rationality and lead to positive outcomes for both the community and individuals, resolving the issue of free but limited resources ([Bruni and Zamagni 2017](#)).

Ostrom is also critical of Hardin’s anthropological assumption, based on the homo oeconomicus model, and favors Aristotle’s homo politicus or homo sociologicus model. This alternative model suggests that humans are capable of respecting community norms and rules and act in accordance with the values prevalent in society. Ostrom’s concept of the commons and the papal concepts of the common good are both rooted in a fundamentally different understanding of human nature compared to the mainstream economic view. Rather than being solely self-interested actors, humans are considered to be socially and culturally embedded individuals (cf. [Polanyi 1977](#)), who pursue not only material utility but also nonmaterial goals and values that exist within the context of their society. The image of individuals as socially and culturally embedded, pursuing aspirations that resonate with their society’s values and fulfilling their visions beyond utility, is characteristic of humanistic economics, within which the primary objective is the comprehensive development (flourishment) of individuals ([Horodecka 2015](#)). This shift in perspective highlights the importance of taking into account the role of cultural norms and values in shaping economic behavior and challenges the traditional economic assumption of individual rationality based solely on self-interest.

4. Discussion

In Sen’s view, the concept of the common good is an important overarching goal and a criterion for evaluating economic policy: to provide people with opportunities to realize their potential and thus to offer them opportunities for development. It is undoubtedly very valuable to emphasize that the individual is ultimately at the center of economic policy. Nevertheless, a weakness of Sen’s approach, when compared to the concepts of the common good in CST, is that it does not explicitly emphasize the communal dimension of the common good. Sen’s liberal approach may stem from his observation that an overemphasis on the common good and the adaptation of individuals to cultural conditions can effectively hinder individual development. Sen gives the example of a woman who accepts violence and lacks the will to pursue education because of the community’s expectations of her. Therefore, the concept of capabilities that unfolds at the individual level becomes a litmus test for community issues, as both the reluctance and inability of some women to pursue education may be the result of the social conditions in which the individual finds herself. Coming from a country where violence and the very low status of women go hand in hand, Sen argues not only that individuals should develop goals but also that these actions should be supported by the state, whose role is to ‘enable’ individuals to achieve their own goals. In such a case, individual development serves the progress of the country but gives the community the impression that it is violating its common good—in terms of the shared values that bind it together. However, this is not the common good in the sense we are writing about if it significantly limits individual development.

Unlike Sen, Tirole recognizes the danger of individuals pursuing their own good at the expense of the common good of which they are a part. However, Tirole’s view of the common good as the “ultimate goal” also differs from CST. According to CST and Christian philosophy, individuals should contribute to the common good while striving

for personal well-being, with the common good supporting them in this endeavor. The potential drawback of overemphasizing the community dimension of the common good is that it overlooks the fact that the common good should facilitate the full development of individuals within the community. This is consistent with Tirole's assertion that the common good is defined by a given society. This relativistic concept of the common good may endorse a community that imposes values that are incompatible with the objective truth about human nature and its eternal vocation with God since certain subjective common goods may not correspond to certain objective goods of individuals.

Elinor Ostrom's approach is closer to Tirole's than to Sen's. She emphasizes the importance of the community for the narrowly defined common good, such as the commons. Within this framework, the community establishes principles and rules that reconcile individual and common interests while allowing for individual autonomy. In contrast to the previous two perspectives, Ostrom's concept is integral, emphasizing both the individual and communal dimensions of the common good. It portrays not only the community as the guarantor of the common good but also individuals who, in pursuing their own interests, contribute to the creation of the common good. However, Ostrom's concept shares the weaknesses of the previously discussed approaches in that the common good is subjective and lacks objective criteria for determining what constitutes the common good.

An attempt to create such criteria can be found in the work of Lutz, who defines the common good on the basis of these criteria. His approach to the common good is, therefore, universalist. He also gives examples of common goods, including respect for human dignity, thus drawing on the concept of the common good in Christian philosophy and Catholic social teaching. A weakness of his concept, however, is the lack of emphasis on the communal dimension of the common good, which brings his approach to the common good closer to Sen's proposal in this respect. In these concepts, there is no emphasis on the fact that the individual is rooted in the community in which he lives, as emphasized primarily by the communitarians (Sandel, McIntyre, Walzer). For them, the collectively shared concept of the good is the foundation for community and individual development, a perspective that is also indirectly present in representatives of CST. This undoubtedly has implications for understanding the category of the common good.

5. Conclusions and Future Directions

The concept of the common good has ancient roots and has been revitalized by Christianity. Its philosophical foundations were laid by St. Thomas Aquinas, who drew from Aristotle's teachings and incorporated them into Catholic social doctrine. Jaques Maritain and John Paul II made a significant contribution to the development of the common good by linking it with Christian personalism. Pope Francis has since adapted this concept to address contemporary global challenges, such as environmental threats and growing social inequality, in a more practical and secular manner.

The common good, according to Christian philosophy and Catholic social teaching, has two dimensions: personal and communal. This means that the true common good serves both the good of the individual members of the community (a small group, local community, and citizens of the state) and the community itself. There cannot be a contradiction between the dimensions of the common good, so the concept of the common good has an integral character (it is two-dimensional). It is also a universalistic (objectivist) approach because it refers to objective criteria for determining what the common good is.

In reviewing different concepts of the common good as presented in this paper, several dichotomies in the understanding of the common good have become apparent, including the following:

- Universalist (objectivist) and relativistic (subjectivist) approaches;
- Emphasis on the individual (personal) and/or group (community) dimension;
- Integral (two-dimensional or three-dimensional common good, with the third dimension referring to God) and nonintegral (one-dimensional, one-sided common good) approaches;

- The common good as an end and/or a means to an end (or conditions for achieving the end).

Sen argues that the common good (veiled in his capability approach) is the ultimate goal and has a distinctly individual dimension with a nonintegral character. Tirole defines the common good as the goal that is pursued by society and has a nonintegral nature, but the focus is on the community. Ostrom's concept of the commons sheds light on the role of conditions, such as principles and rules, in achieving the common good, which arises through reconciling individual interests with the interests of the community, indicating the integral nature of the common good. Meanwhile, Lutz's concept emphasizes the individual dimension and non-integral nature of the common good with the universality of his approach attempting to establish objective criteria for defining the common good, in contrast to the relativistic approach of Sen, Tirole, and Ostrom.

Economic theories tend to favor one-dimensional and relativistic concepts of the common good. However, proposing multidimensional and universalist ideas within economic theories could be valuable and is worth trying. In particular, given the growing need for practical applications of the concept of the common good, an illustrative example is the concept of "economy for the common good" (Dolderer et al. 2021), which is rooted in both economics and CST. Moreover, the contributions of the great men of prayer (within CST) to the idea of the common good provide inspiration and can enrich economic theories of the common good, e.g., enabling a more comprehensive understanding of how to reconcile individual and societal interests. Undoubtedly, the concept of the common good presents an intriguing area of inquiry for economists as it offers insights into the interdependence between individual development and the attainment of societal objectives. By adopting the lens of the common good, it becomes evident that there is a need for an alternative to the mainstream economic model, which still primarily relies on the utilitarian-based homo oeconomicus paradigm. This alternative is found in the concept of the human nature of homo persona, a person embedded in society rather than a socially alienated individualist, whose development is linked to the values and virtues of a given society while also being a separate and autonomous entity with inherent worth and dignity that can strive towards self-realization through ongoing personal growth.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, A.H. and A.J.Ž.; methodology, A.H. and A.J.Ž.; writing—original draft preparation, A.H. and A.J.Ž.; writing—review and editing, A.H. and A.J.Ž.; Both authors have equal contribution to the article. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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