

The more I've thought about it, the less adopting "a suitably qualified, intermediate view" of the threefold distinction between "intrinsic," "constitutive," and "instrumental" good strikes me as the thing to do (cf. Notebooks, 22 July 2006).

So far, at least, as metaphysics is concerned, nothing is, properly, (merely) instrumentally good. Anything whatever is at least constitutively good because it is the property of any being to be (or to become) (part-) constitutive of some or all other beings. Be it concrete or abstract, it goes to constitute, in the sense of contributing at least something to, some or all intrinsic goods. This, of course, was the point I made already in my original reflection on what I had learned from Michael Lynch (cf. Notebooks, 7 May 2006: 2, ¶2). If "instrumental good" is to be properly used at all, then, it will need to be in some other, nonmetaphysical context.

As for Genesis 1:31, "very good" still means "more than instrumentally good." For although God Godself is *the* intrinsic as well as *the* constitutive good, everything that God has made—and everything other than God and what "God" necessarily implies, God *has* made!—is at least a constitutive good, and everything *concrete* that God has made is intrinsically good as well. On the other hand, the fact that everything God has made is "very good" in no way implies that this is true of it alone, that what God has *not* made is not also "very good." For all transcendentals, including God Godself *qua* the supreme all-unifying transcendental, are constitutively, although not intrinsically, good.

19 November 2006

Further reflection makes me wonder whether I may not have been too quick and incautious in simply abandoning what I had said earlier about abstracts being “instrumentally,” rather than “intrinsically,” good, in favor of saying that they are “constitutively” good (cf. Notebooks, 7 May 2005).

As apt as this change may be to take account of “abstracts” that, in themselves, were once “concretes,” or even “ordinary” low-level abstracts” (i.e., individualities, species, genera, and categories), how apt is it, really, in the case of “extraordinary” high-level abstracts (i.e., transcendentals—and, *mutatis mutandis*, existentials)? Why isn’t the value of such utter abstractions, at least, properly thought of as precisely “instrumental,” rather than “constitutive”?

Certainly, there appears to be no reason why adopting such a suitably qualified, intermediate view couldn’t appeal just as legitimately to the point made in Genesis 1:31. On it, too, one could say that “everything God has made . . . is at least a constitutive good, part constitutive, indeed, of the all-inclusive good that is God Godself.” At the same time, it would allow one to say that neither God Godself essentially as such, nor the process of creativity, nor the pleroma of pure possibility is anything that God has made, or even could make, all three being strictly necessary conditions of the possibility of any making, and so not themselves so much as capable of being made.

22 July 2006

I have written that, "while a concrete thing and an abstract thing are both good, a concrete thing is good in the sense of being **intrinsically** as well as instrumentally good, while an abstract thing is good in the sense of being **instrumentally** good only" (11 October 1991; rev. 23 November 1993; 22 July 2002). But thanks to my reading of Michael Lynch's *True to Life* (127 f., 157), I now realize that I was mistaken in assuming that, whereas concretes as such are intrinsically good, the good of abstracts can only be instrumental. What I missed is that there is, in fact, a third way of being good that is, as it were, the mean between these two extremes—namely, being **constitutively** good. Something is good in this third way if it is an essential part, and thus is part constitutive, of something else that is intrinsically good. As such, it is distinct not only from the intrinsic good it goes to constitute, but also, and crucially, from everything that is merely a means to it or to that intrinsic good.

Realizing this, I would now say that, while abstracts are not intrinsically good as concretes alone are, they're nonetheless constitutively good as essential parts of concretes. Whether they are other concretes functioning abstractly to co-constitute a new concrete or whether they never function as concretes at all, they are constitutive goods. Thus anything real at all, whether concrete or abstract, is more than instrumentally good, although some things in some of their functions and other things in all of them are constitutively rather than intrinsically good.

One significant gain with this way of putting the matter is that the convertible transcendental "good" can be seen to apply to something more than instrumentally good, more than a means only, in both of its applications with respect to the one fundamental disjunctive transcendental, "concretes/abstracts." Moreover, if the ultimate truth about things is that "the many become one, and are increased by one," the role of the many, abstracts as well as concretes, is quite literally to be part constitutive of the one—"the one which is all" as well as "the one among the many."

As for what I've said about how this same convertible transcendental applies to both of its applications with respect to the other fundamental disjunctive transcendental, "the divine thing/nondivine things," the relevant distinction, as I've at least implied, is not only that between

surpassably and unsurpassably good. For the divine thing is unsurpassably good both as the unsurpassable *intrinsic* good and as the unsurpassable *constitutive* good—just as all nondivine things are but surpassably good both intrinsically and constitutively.

The further implication, however, is that everything I've said about God or anything else being instrumentally good needs to be rethought in the light of this further distinction. I suspect that, when this is carried out at all adequately, it will appear ever more inappropriate to speak of anything simply as such, or metaphysically, whether divine thing or nondivine, as instrumentally good. To be at all, in any of the ways in which this is to be understood metaphysically, is to be more than instrumentally good, whether intrinsically good or constitutively good.

"God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). "Very good" I take to mean more than instrumentally good. Although God Godself is *the* intrinsic good, everything that God has made—and everything other than God God *has* made!—is at least a constitutive good, part constitutive, indeed, of the all-inclusive good that is God Godself.

7 May 2005