

FROM RIVULETS TO THE FOUNTAIN'S SOURCE: IMAGE AND LOVE IN
AQUINAS' CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

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In his descriptions of the divine love which communicates its goodness through creation, infusing its presence through the range of all levels of life and sources of action (especially in the human faculties, acts, and virtues), Aquinas uses the Platonic and Neoplatonic metaphors of light and water to mark the self-diffusive, dynamic character of God's love for creatures. Aquinas typically uses the metaphysical language of "light" to describe grace, its radiance refracted through the theological virtues and gifts,¹ while using the language of "water" to explore the relation of the extension of divine goodness and the *reditus* of creatures back to God. In the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Thomas speaks of rivers of goodness which God pours into natures and beings, streams drawn back towards the unity of their source,² while God is often described as a living fountain not diminished in spite of its continuous flow outwards.³ In a gloss on *Sirach* 1.7, Thomas notes that the rivers are being, life, and intelligence, the natural goods with which God has filled his creation. The source of these rivers is the Incarnation, wherein all natural goods are reunited as they are united to a lesser degree in *man*, the horizon where corporeal and spiritual being meets.⁴

¹ Thomas O'Meara uses this analogy in his work *Thomas Aquinas: Theologian* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), p.121.

² C.G. II.2: "...If, therefore, the goodness, beauty, and delightfulness of creatures are so alluring to the minds of men, the fountainhead of God's own goodness, compared with the rivulets of goodness found in creatures, will draw the enkindled minds of men wholly to Itself." Cf. C.G. II.21.

³ *Super Evangelium Ioannis Lectura* I.4 (Turin, 1952), l. 3 p. 20; cf. *In 10 Ethic.* L. 13 on God as "fons omnium bonorum."

⁴ The gloss on *Sirach* is found in *In III Sent.* Prol. Cf. C.G. IV, 55 (#3937).

The Dionysian⁵ and Biblical motif underlies the context of the second part of the *Summa Theologiae*, whose Prologue speaks of the attraction which God exercises on the human person made in the image of God.⁶ Aquinas' Christian anthropology thus flows from the twofold movement of *descent* from the divine plenitude into human reality and the movement of *ascent*, which is man's answer to that which he has received. The metaphysics of creation and participation in being form the natural side of the analogy, while its supernatural dimension culminates in the life of contemplation, where one draws from the well of divine friendship and is united to the fountainhead of goodness.⁷

We will examine the ontology of "image" and "love" as participations in divine life, explaining the link between the notions of "image," "contemplation," and love as *amor*, *amicitia* and *caritas* in Aquinas. We will track love as both passion (*amor*) and as virtue (*caritas*), as it propels the soul towards beatitude and conditions human liberty. Both the nature of love as gift and bond, ecstatic and natural, and some effects of love applicable to the spiritual life will be treated. A study of Aquinas' uses of *amor* through the lens of *amicitia* will reveal within Aquinas' works "an Aristotelianism of grace within human activities,"⁸ but when love becomes *caritas*, Aquinas' development of and departure from the Aristotelian concept of friendship (*philia*)

⁵ It is found originally in Pseudo-Dionysius' *De div. Nom.* c. 4 #2. Aquinas uses the motif in his discussions of creation and participation in being: S.T. I-II 2.8 ad 1; 3.3 ad 2; 4.7 ad 2; 5.4; C.G. I 93; II 3. For an ethical context, see *In 10 Ethic.* L. 13.

⁶ S.T. I-II Prol.: "Since, as Damascene states (*De fide orthodoxa* ii.12), man is said to be made to God's image, insofar as the image implies an intelligent being endowed with free-will and self-movement: now that we have treated of the exemplar, i.e., God, and of those things which came forth from the power of God in accordance with His will; it remains for us to treat of His image; i.e. man, inasmuch as he too is the principle of his actions, as having free-will and control of his actions."

⁷ The reference to contemplation: "Ille autem est felicissimus qui maxime amatur a Deo qui est fons omnium bonorum" (*In 10 Ethic.* L. 13).

⁸ Thomas O'Meara, *Thomas Aquinas: Theologian*, p. 112.

through Dionysius' influence becomes evident. These twin influences, I will show, rescue Aquinas from the charge that *caritas* is a sort of disinterested and impersonal form of love in relation to God and men which involves no basis in true love of self.

The "Imago Dei" Doctrine⁹

Taking its inspiration from Scripture¹⁰ and from Augustine's *De Trinitate*, the context for Aquinas' doctrine of the human being as "*imago Dei*" is an examination of the powers and actions which relate the human to his ultimate *telos* of beatitude. The notion of "image" is a subdivision of that of "likeness" or similitude, with the addition that an image has the mimetic function of imitating that from which it is expressed.¹¹ In this way, the human soul on the level of nature, grace and glory exhibits formal similarity to the processions of divine persons in the Trinity. In addition to the mimetic function of 'image,' there is its 'participatory' function, through which the image is said to conform or enter into that on which it is modeled, viz. the divine life itself.¹² The metaphysical context for the doctrine of "image" is threefold: (a) the network of causes (and distinction of effects) involved in the procession and return of creatures to their source (the *exitus/reditus* theme that governs the *Summa*), (b) the distinction between "univocal" and "analogous" images, and (c) the levels within

⁹ This section was originally published as part of an article: Heather McAdam Erb, "Metaphysical Aspects of Aquinas' Doctrine of the Spiritual Life," in: "Atti del Congresso Internazionale su L'umanesimo Cristiano nel III Millennio: La Prospettiva di Tommaso d'Aquino, 21-25 Settembre 2003" (Vatican City: Pontificia Academia Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, 2005), Vol. II pp. 409-412.

¹⁰ The main text here is Genesis 1.26: "ad imaginem et similitudinem faciamus."

¹¹ S.T. I 93.1: An image must be a thing that is "expressed from another, for it is called an 'image' because it is made for the imitation of the other thing."

¹² The distinction between the "mimetic" and "participatory" functions of "image" has been suggested by Denys Turner, in his book *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 95-100.

the rational creature by which “image” participates in the divine model, culminating in the transformation of the person through glory.

Turning to the first consideration (a), the network of causes and effects involved in the motif of circulation, Aquinas establishes both the origin and return of creatures to God from the diffusive character of the divine goodness,¹³ since creation flows from love. Through His wisdom and love God pours forth goodness into things¹⁴ and directs everything towards its goal of gaining a similarity to His divine goodness.¹⁵ This Neoplatonic doctrine of “circulation” is characterized by the identity of beginning and end, dovetailing formal into final causes, in that every effect is directed to its cause, as desiring its natural good.¹⁶ Goodness is thus both origin and end, for it is the source of being and order, and the goal towards which all things strive.

If the teleology of nature involves the perfection, goodness and fulfillment of a thing’s form,¹⁷ then what does this say about the doctrine of “image” as applied to human persons? To answer this

¹³ The self-diffusive character of goodness (*bonum est diffusivum sui esse*) is a theme he borrowed and adapted from Pseudo-Dionysius to include every being, and Aquinas understands this self-communication of goodness in terms of a final cause (S.T. I 5.4 ad 2; 44.4; *In 1 Sent.* 43.2.1 ad 4; *De Ver.* 21.1 ad 4).

¹⁴ S.T. I 20.2.

¹⁵ C.G. III 97; *In 1 Sent.* 14.2.2: “In the outpouring of creatures coming forth from their first principle, there is a sort of rotation or circulation from the fact that all beings moving toward their ultimate goal return to the source from which they came forth.... [T]he production of creatures has as its final purpose the movement of persons back into divine Life....”

¹⁶ *In de div. Nomin.* c.1 l.3 #94: “...every effect reverts upon the cause whence it came forth, as the Platonists say. The reason for this is that every thing reverts upon its good by desiring it. Now, the good of the effect derives from its cause. Therefore every effect reverts upon its cause by desiring it. Therefore Dionysius, having said that all is deduced from the Godhead, goes on to add that all things revert upon Him through desire.”

¹⁷ Formal and final causality coincide inasmuch as the form’s actuality and perfect operation represent a thing’s end, and as such, is desirable (C.G. III 20; S.T. I 19.1).

query, Aquinas distinguishes 'imaging' and 'non-imaging' resemblances. 'Image' is a subset of 'likeness' or similitude, but it adds the note of "being copied" from an original. Something is called an "image" because it is produced as an imitation of another thing, approximating the perfection of the model.¹⁸ Thus, within the hierarchy of beings that exist, live and have understanding,¹⁹ there exist many beings which resemble God without properly 'imaging' His perfection. The distinction between "imaging" and "non-imaging" resemblances is expressed through an analysis of rational versus non-rational forms: Even irrational and inanimate creatures possess a natural desire or love for God,²⁰ in that they are intrinsically directed towards the realization of their forms.²¹ "Natural" love does not imply a conscious, positive desire for an object here, but only the tendency towards the good of a thing's complete actuality (the tree grows, the flower blooms, etc.). Although a *rational* creature's desire for the fulfillment of its capacities is *also* the tendency towards self-perfection, it is better characterized as a kind of love for a completely satisfying good,²² an openness to an infinite and perfect goodness through the rational indeterminacy of the mind and will.²³ Natural bodies are called "*vestigis*" in that they bear a likeness from causality with respect to God, without being true images or representations.²⁴ *Vestigis* fail to represent the *form* of their cause, but merely point to it, as in the case

¹⁸ S.T. I 93.1.

¹⁹ S.T. I 93.2.

²⁰ S.T. I 6.1; I-II 26.2; 109.3.

²¹ Aquinas' favorite image here is that of the arrow which is directed by the archer to its target: S.T. I 103.1 ad 3, 8. Thus, God is said to direct all creatures to their proper ends (S.T. I 22.2; 103.1; I-II 93.5).

²² S.T. I-II 5.7; 2.8.

²³ S.T. I-II 5.1; cf. I 93.4. Whereas the desires and acts of irrational creatures are determined to particular objects (S.T. I-II 13.2), the proper object of the will is the universal good, not any finite object, since no particular good is good without qualification (S.T. I-II 10.2; I-II 13.6). The will is, however, directed necessarily to the final end of happiness (S.T. I 82.1; I-II 1.7).

²⁴ The distinction between "image" and "vestige" is treated in S.T. I 93.6, *In 1 Sent.* 3.2.2 and *De Pot.* 9.9.

of footprints of an animal or smoke from fire.²⁵ Only *rational* beings represent God as Trinity by way of *image*, however, because it is only through the rational powers of intellect and will that the mimetic and participatory functions of “image” come into play,²⁶ as from our mind proceed wisdom and love in an imperfect way.²⁷

The second notion involved in the ontology of “image” (b) is Aquinas’ distinction between “univocal” and “analogous” images, which signals the imperfect mode of human resemblance to God. A *univocal* image shares the same species as the model (as a king’s image appears in his son); whereas, an *analogous* image differs in nature or species (as the image of a king appears on a coin).²⁸ In this way, Christ is the perfect and univocal image of the Father; whereas, man is an imperfect, analogous image tending towards the perfection of the divine model. This is why he is not the image of God *simpliciter*, but rather made *to the image* (*ad imaginem*), a being capable of its final actualization but still a pilgrim and always a creature.

The partial and gradual ascent of “image” towards the perfection of the model characterizes the third element in Aquinas’ doctrine of “image,” namely, (c) the human journey through the three levels of “image” – nature, grace and glory.²⁹ For Aquinas, the relation between formal and final causes with respect to the notion of “image” means that human nature fulfils its destiny of becoming like God through the dual path of nature and grace. On the level of nature – called the image of creation– all people possess the natural power of knowing and loving God by virtue of possessing a spiritual soul. Although this presence of God in man surpasses the more “common” mode of divine presence through creative causality, it lies *below* the “special” presence of God to rational creatures through *grace*, by which people know and love God

²⁵ S.T. I 93.6. But even nonrational creatures represent the Trinity in their vestigial mode, in that they have a beginning, a form and an order to other realities (S.T. I 45.7).

²⁶ S.T. I 3.1 ad 2; 93.2, 6.

²⁷ S.T. I 93.6.

²⁸ S.T. I 35.2 ad 3; 93.6 ad 1.

²⁹ S.T. I 93.4 is a text summarizing this doctrine.

“actually or habitually.” In *S.T. I*, 43.3, God is said to be present to rational creatures not merely through extrinsic causality and conservation (through His “essence, presence and power”), but also through a mutual indwelling of knowledge and love, to live in him as in His temple. Through the grace flowing from the Trinitarian missions, our powers of reaching God in thought and desire are spurred into action, and our souls are instructed in the savory, affective wisdom of the things of God.³⁰ The third and highest level of the image surpasses this second image – of the *new creation* – and occurs in the transformation of the human at the level of *glory*, whereby man is said to love God “actually and perfectly” and to enjoy the possession of Him without intermediary³¹ – the image of *resemblance*. Man is qualified as an “image of God,” therefore, first in the possession, second, in the dynamic actualization, and finally, in the perfection of his powers as directed towards the highest object, viz., God.³² The three images of nature, grace and glory thus represent three stages of conformity towards perfect resemblance and divine indwelling, and exhibit the

³⁰ *S.T. I* 93.7; 43.5 ad 2. In the former text, the Trinitarian missions of the Son and Spirit are likened to the human intellect’s knowledge of God and consequent love proceeding from that inner word; in the latter text, the Word that “breathes forth Love” (*Verbum spirans Amorem*) grounds the experiential wisdom that is the gift of the Spirit in the graced soul.

³¹ *S.T. I* 93.8 and ad 1 on the “image in glory.” Here, the transitional, evolutionary character of “image” is revealed as complete only in conformity to glory, where image reaches the level of “representation.”

³² *S.T. I* 93.8 establishes the restricted character of object sufficient to establish the image of the Trinity in man’s soul (namely, God): “[T]he divine image is noted in man according to the word conceived from the knowledge of God and the love springing forth from it.” In his magisterial study of the issue, J. Merriell traces the evolution in Aquinas’ thought: “In the *Scriptum* Thomas stressed the permanence of the image of God in the natural faculties of man’s mind, while in the *De Veritate* he takes greater notice of the assimilation to God that is necessary for the actualisation of the image.” (J. Merriell, *To the Image of the Trinity: A Study in the Development of Aquinas’ Teaching* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990), pp. 132-33. Merriell follows de Beaurecueil’s thesis that Thomas adds the “participatory” aspect of “image” (man’s conforming to God through a participation in God’s knowledge and love) in the *Summa Theologiae* (Merriell, p. 221).

motif of *exitus* and *reditus* in the creature. As J.P. Torrell summarizes the issue:

... [T]he image of creation, is the term of the 'going out'... . [T]he image of re-creation or according to grace, is that [term] by which the 'return' begins, inaugurating the movement that will be completed in heaven along with ... the image of glory, that is finally perfect resemblance....³³

The familiar paradox emerges then, that on his own man is not fitted for a supernatural destiny,³⁴ but nonetheless has a soul created in the image of God as *capax Dei*,³⁵ open to fulfillment through participation in the life of God.

Contemplation as *Reditus*

The contemplation proper to the interior life is not a metaphysical meditation on the first cause of being, but rather the connatural knowledge of God penetrated by love that is experienced in the context of the infused virtues, the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit.³⁶ It is the "contemplation of God under the impetus of divine love" that makes

³³ J.P. Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 2: Spiritual Master*, translated by Robert Royal (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), p. 90.

³⁴ S.T. I-II 114.2: "... [M]an cannot merit eternal life without grace, by his purely natural endowments.... [E]verlasting life is a good exceeding the proportion created nature...."

³⁵ C. O'Neill notes that Thomas' terminology in this regard denotes the finalization or actualization of man's nature. Aquinas' more frequent terms to describe this state of things is *capax summum boni*; *capax perfecti boni*; *capax visionis divinae essentiae*; *capax vitae aeternae*, etc. For references, see: C. O'Neill, "L'homme ouvert à Dieu (*capax Dei*)" in *L'anthropologie de saint Thomas*, ed. N. Luyten (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1969), pp. 70; 74.

³⁶ For an examination of the different senses of "contemplation" in Aquinas and a detailed study of his notion of mystical contemplation, see: Heather M. Erb, "Pati Divina: Mystical Union in Aquinas," in A. Ramos, M. George, eds., *Faith, Scholarship and Culture in the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2002).

this sort of wisdom surpass every human activity in perfection and delight, Aquinas says,³⁷ and which constitutes our ultimate happiness.³⁸

There are at least four central characteristics of the contemplation proper to Christian beatitude for Aquinas. *First*, wisdom in its perfect form is neither philosophy nor even theology, but Christ Himself.³⁹ *Second*, consonant with the plan of the Trinitarian missions, this contemplation reflects the "Word breathing forth Love" (*Verbum Spirans Amore*⁴⁰) in its own "knowledge from which love springs," a contemplation rooted in what Thomas calls the human *intellect's* "desire and love of the knowledge of divine things, as well as delight in it."⁴¹ From our natural acts of knowledge and love to our grace-infused acts and habits, then, our rationality is stamped with a mimetic and participatory likeness of Trinitarian life. The *third* quality of contemplation proper to Christian beatitude for Thomas is that it is both *act*, as the full realization and immanent perfection of the agent,⁴²

³⁷ S.T. II-II 180.7: "The contemplative life consists principally in the contemplation of God under the impetus of divine love; hence there is a delight in the contemplative life by reason of the act of contemplating and by reason of that divine love. In both respects the delight of contemplation surpasses every human delight."

³⁸ C.G. III 37.

³⁹ *In 1 Sent.* Prologue: "Inter multas sententias quae a diversis prodierunt, quid scilicet esset vera sapientia, unam singulariter firmam et veram Apostolus protulit dicens Christum Dei virtutem et Dei sapientiam, qui etiam factus est nobis sapientia a Deo." (The reference to St. Paul: *I Corinthians* I.26; 30). This is the Patristic and Pauline idea of truth.

⁴⁰ S.T. I 43.5 ad 2: "Now the Son is the Word – not any word of any kind, but the Word breathing forth Love (*Verbum spirans Amore*): hence Augustine says... 'The Word we mean to speak of is Knowledge with Love.' Therefore the Son is not sent [to us] in any and every kind of knowledge we acquire but [only] in that kind of intellectual instruction whereby we burst forth with affections of love, as is said...in Ps. 38 (39).4: 'In my meditation a fire is enkindled'."

⁴¹ C.G. III 25.

⁴² S.T. I-II 3.2: "Insofar as man's beatitude is something created which has existence in himself, it must necessarily be said that man's beatitude is an

and divine communication or *gift*, as both a prelude to eternal life and as an emission of God's love generating within us a love resembling His own.⁴³ *Fourth*, this contemplation is born of wonder and ends in both *amazement* (due to the soul's inability to grasp the "whole" within its gaze⁴⁴) and in the *peaceful repose* proper to the intellect's mode of possession or presence.

From these characteristics we can see that Aquinas' notion of contemplation dovetails into the notions of "image" and "love" in the following way: As the desire for God is the principle of all movement and activity in the cosmos (cf. Aristotle⁴⁵), our noblest activity, the love of wisdom or contemplation⁴⁶ images and participates in the divine life to the *highest* degree.⁴⁷ Aristotle's "natural desire" inscribed in man's nature, however, now finds its culmination not only in knowledge but also in love, for which knowledge, whether it be "faith" or "vision," now proposes the object.

A central paradox involved in the spiritual life as Thomas conceived of it revolves around the issue of contemplation. Thomas' concept of beatitude combines Aristotle's emphasis on the application of our highest power on the most intelligible object, with Augustine's emphasis on affectivity and *caritas* in the soul's search for immutability.⁴⁸ Beatitude is for him ultimately an *intellectual* operation, but for the wayfarer *love* is more perfect than knowledge of God. Given these two seemingly opposed facts, how is man to anticipate his destiny

activity." (Cf. *De Ver.* 29.1 on the necessity that God's being is also active, in knowing and loving.)

⁴³ S.T. II-II 26.3. Cf. *In de Div. Nom.* IV, xi, #444.

⁴⁴ S.T. II-II 180.3 ad 3. Cf. C.G. IV.33. On this point, see: Josef Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*, p. 75.

⁴⁵ *Meta.* 5.7 #1072b3-16.

⁴⁶ *In 3 Sent.* D. 23, q. 1 a.4; S.T. I-II 57.1c. Gilson considers these arguments in his lecture *Wisdom and Love*, pp. 42-44 #3.

⁴⁷ *In 7 Ethic.* L. 13.

⁴⁸ These two influences on Aquinas' thought on beatitude are presented in the study by Marie-Anne Vannier, "Du bonheur à la béatitude d'après S. Augustin et S. Thomas" *La vie spirituelle* 698 (1992), 45-58.

of supernatural beatitude in this life? In this life we can more perfectly love God than know Him, because in *knowing* a good higher than itself, the mind assimilates an object to its own less noble state; whereas, a good that is higher than the soul draws the will towards it and opens the dynamism of love towards the horizon of spiritual realities.⁴⁹ Thus, the *viator's* existential perfection lies in being an entity "open to God" (*capax Dei*).⁵⁰ Man attains the summit of his perfection only through the practice of contemplation, through that type which is enflamed by the exercise of charity and its accompanying Gift of wisdom, a manner of judging all things in their relationship to God by way of inclination.⁵¹ Thus is Aquinas' Aristotelian psychology of virtues, powers, and activities animated and directed by the motions of grace, which both deepen and elevate the operations of human nature.

Love and Charity in Aquinas' Spiritual Doctrine

A review of Aquinas' notion of "love" in its significations as *amor*, *amicitia* and *caritas* reveals both his dependence upon and departure from Aristotle's theory of friendship. Scrutiny of some key *effects* of love will show Aquinas' debt to Dionysius as both deliberate and fortuitous. Aquinas' understanding of the "love of friendship" (vs. the "love of concupiscence") precludes him, it will be shown, from identifying *caritas* with extreme altruism, a love lauded as pure, disinterested or "holy" by later spiritual writers, such as Fénelon.⁵² In this regard, three issues will be treated. First, "love" as a virtue will be

⁴⁹ The situation is reversed in the case of a good known or loved that is *lower* than the human soul: here, it is better to know than to love it. S.T. I 82.3; II-II 23.6 ad 1.

⁵⁰ Cf. J.-P. Torrell, *Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 2: Spiritual Master*, p. 86: "Man is fully himself only when he is under cultivation; similarly, the image of God in him will be fully itself only in the perfected stage of its spiritual activity."

⁵¹ S.T. I-II 3.2 ad 4; II-II 180; 182.

⁵² The critical edition of Fénelon's work: *Explication des maxims des saints sur la vie intérieure*, Edition critique publiée d'après des documents inédits par Albert Cherel (Paris: Bloud et Cle, 1911). R. Merrihew Adams' treatment of Fénelon's views is found in: R. Merrihew Adams, "Pure Love;" in R. Merrihew Adams, *The Virtue of Faith and Other Essays in Philosophical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp.174-92.

distinguished from “love” as a passion through distinguishing *amor*, *amicitia*, and *caritas*. Second, some effects of love, such as “mutual indwelling,” “melting,” “joy” and “ecstasy” will be noted and applied to the graced personality. Third, I will analyze and evaluate Robert Merrihew Adams’ rejection of Fénelon’s identification of *caritas* with the notion of “pure, altruistic love” and offer Aquinas’ solution to the problem of the relation of *agape* (connoted by the “love of friendship”) and *eros* (connoted by the “love of desire or concupiscence”).

a) Amor, Amicitia and Caritas

Turning to the first issue, we have seen that it is the effusive and gratuitous character of divine love that grounds the return of creatures to God, the “living fountain” which pours rivers of goodness into the variety of beings.⁵³ Grace is the new life principle which gives the soul a share in the divine nature and enables persons to be secondary causes in the supernatural order,⁵⁴ and so the divine initiative is the source of human virtues and loves. A cluster of terms surrounds the notion of “love” for Aquinas, including *amor*, *amicitia*, and *caritas*. An analysis of these terms reveals that love as passion (*amor*) is related to love as virtue (*caritas*) through the mediation of *amicitia* (friendship), and that in transposing Aristotelian elements of friendship into his theory of charity, Aquinas replaced the Stagirite’s concept of friendship as an aristocratic exchange among equals with the Christian concept of self-gift and communion, based on the gratuity of creation, or superabundant outpouring of the goodness of God.⁵⁵

⁵³ C.G. II.2. In *Super Evangelium Ioannis Lectura*, ch.1, 3. “God is a living fountain that is not diminished in spite of its continuous flow outwards.”

⁵⁴ S.T. I-II 112.1, e.g. In *De Ver.* 27.1 ad 3, he says that “God, without any mediating agent, bestows upon us a gratuitous spiritual being, but nevertheless there is the mediation of a created form which is grace.” As O’Meara notes (“Virtues in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas,” *Theological Studies* 58 [1997], p. 263): “This ‘spiritual being’ is not the transitory actual graces of the later Baroque but a source of life.”

⁵⁵ I am indebted to the insights of J. McEvoy (“Amitié, attirance et amour chez S. Thomas d’Aquin”, *Révue philosophique de Louvain* 91 [1993]: 383-408) for drawing the connection between *amor* and *caritas* through the virtue of friendship. In his article “Thomas’s Authority for Identifying Charity as

The analogous term *amor* is described by Thomas as a weighting of the will's tendency towards an apprehended good.⁵⁶ As the "first movement" of the will that is the change in the appetite produced by the appetible object, *amor* precedes the movement of the will towards the object, which is called "desire," and the repose of the will in its possession, which is called "joy."⁵⁷ The primary affection of both the sensory and rational powers, he notes, is love (*amor*), denoting the suitability or proportion of a being to that which constitutes its good,⁵⁸ indeed, "every agent, whatever it may be, carries out its action from some love."⁵⁹ As a passion, love is a motion resulting in a "complacency" whereby the beloved is said to be "rooted" in the lover's heart, causing either pleasure in its presence or longing in its

Friendship: Aristotle or *John 15*?" (*Thomist* 62 [1998]: 581-601), A. Keaty argues against certain modern interpreters that Aquinas is using Aristotelian categories of 'friendship' but is stressing the Gospel's notion of *caritas* in his development of the theme of union with God. In this emphasis on the Biblical origins of Aquinas' theory of friendship, Keaty is arguing against L. Gregory Jones ("The Theological Transformation of Aristotelian friendship in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas" [*New Scholasticism* 61 (1987): 373-99]) and Paul Wadell (*Friends of God: Virtues and Gifts in Aquinas* [New York: Peter Lang, 1991]), who argue for an exclusively Aristotelian basis of Aquinas' theory of friendship. Keaty's view is in accord with the more recent emphasis on Thomas as a biblical commentator.

⁵⁶ In *S.T. I-II 28.1 ad 2*, Aquinas differentiates between three kinds or stages of union involved in love, as found in man's second act of will, which is voluntary and explicitly rational: 1) the union that gives rise to love (consisting in *knowledge* of the beloved, making it attractive to the will; 2) the union that love desires ("caused by love effectively, since it moves the lover to desire and see the presence of the beloved as fitting and pertaining to himself"), and 3) the union of desiring love itself ("caused by love *formally*, since love itself is such a union or connection"). Cf. #67 below on the analogous senses of the term "love" (*amor*).

⁵⁷ *S.T. I-II 26.2*. Desire and joy are thus two secondary affections in the appetite: desire (*desiderium*), when the loved good is as yet not possessed; joy (*delectatio/gaudium*), if the good is possessed. All appetitive motions proceed from desire, which in turn derives from love (see *S.T. I-II 25.1-2*).

⁵⁸ *S.T. I-II 26.2*.

⁵⁹ *S.T. I-II 25.2; ad 2; cf. S.T. I 20.1*.

absence.⁶⁰ The love exhibited by natural or irrational appetite found in animals and inanimate creatures differs from human love in that it is directed unknowingly to its target through the principles proper to their own natures.⁶¹ Because the human will adapts itself to its object as it exists in itself (versus the intellect, which assimilates it to its own mode),⁶² the appetitive union also differs from the cognitive union: the will can love the total existent reality of the object in a perfect way, without that same object being perfectly known,⁶³ such that a higher object betters and perfects the will. *Amicitia* “friendship,” denotes a fixed habit based on similarity and choice requiring mutual love, common knowledge about this love and free choice of each party.⁶⁴ Following Aristotle, Thomas says that only a certain type of love has the character of friendship, namely that which has three specific qualities: benevolence, mutuality, and a shared good.⁶⁵ Departing from Aristotle, he notes that the shared good that forms the basis of friendship with God is God’s own beatitude, given gratuitously to men, making them “equals” not through merit but by *fiat*.⁶⁶ Whereas for

⁶⁰ S.T. I-II 28.2. Cf. I-II 27.2: “... But that kind of love which is in the intellectual appetite also differs from goodwill, because it denotes a certain union of the lover’s heart with the beloved, in as much as the lover deems the beloved as somehow one with him, or belonging to him, and so tends towards him....” The union which love is primarily occurs in the heart (*unio affectus/unio affectiva*), where a mutual presence of beloved and lover occur: “The beloved is contained in the lover insofar as he is impressed on the lover’s heart by a kind of complacency” (S.T. I-II 28.2).

⁶¹ The arrow/archer imagery is found in several places in Aquinas: S.T. I 103.1 ad 3, and I 103, 8. In S.T. I-II 26.1, he outlines the three levels of *amor*, as found in natural, sensitive and rational appetites (“... in each of these appetites, the name *love* [*amor*] is given to the principle of movement towards the end loved...”).

⁶² S.T. I 82.3.

⁶³ S.T. I-II 27.2 ad 2.

⁶⁴ *In 3 Sent.* 27.2.1.

⁶⁵ S.T. II-II 23.1.

⁶⁶ On the shared good of God’s happiness, see S.T. II-II 23.1: “Accordingly, since there is a communication between man and God, insofar as He communicates His happiness to us, there must be some kind of friendship

Aristotle, friendship is an *instrumental means* for personal, earthly beatitude, in its best form, an aristocratic exchange between equals,⁶⁷ for Aquinas, friendship is now possible with God, whose unmerited love is displayed in the act of creation and in the redemption of sinners through the Incarnation. *Amor*, then, is related to *caritas* through *amicitia*, namely, through the higher type of friendship, now denoting the *perfection* of love valuing God as the highest good in and for itself,⁶⁸ and unlike the other virtues, flowing from an imperfectly possessed object (viz., God).⁶⁹ It is this interior end of already possessed union with God that acts as a principle in action and appetite, and orders the will towards beatitude.⁷⁰

b) The Effects of Love and the Life of Grace

The second aspect of Aquinas' teachings on love concerns some key *effects* of love, namely, the "mutual indwelling" of lover and beloved, the "ecstasy" of the will, the "melting" of the heart in love, and the passion of "joy" that ensues on the possession of the beloved. In comparison to the love of concupiscence, which loves another for a

based on this same communication.... The love which is based on this communication is charity."

⁶⁷ As Eberhard Schockenhoff summarizes the Stagirite's teaching, "the Aristotelian ideal of friendship acknowledges no overcoming of distance and differences in rank; it is neither desire (*eros*) nor *agape*, but 'friendship' (*philia*): love of like for like and exchange among equal partners" (E. Schockenhoff, "The Theological Virtue of Charity [II-II qq. 23-46]" in: Stephen Pope, ed. *The Ethics of Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), p. 247. Aristotle's theory of friendship is found in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books 8-9.

⁶⁸ As such, charity is a form of the love of friendship, as opposed to the love of concupiscence, which loves the beloved for the sake of something other than itself (S.T. I-II 26.4).

⁶⁹ S.T. I-II 66.6. Here, he says that charity is the greatest virtue because "the love of charity is about that which is already possessed (i.e., God): for the beloved is in a certain way in the lover and the lover is also drawn through affection to union with the beloved...."

⁷⁰ S.T. II-II 26.1 and ad 1; II-II 25 on references for the term "*ex caritate*"; cf. II-II 23.3 ad 3; 27.4.

reason other than itself, the love of friendship aims primarily at *union* of the lover with the beloved.⁷¹ Thus, the love of friendship consists in the bond of affection between the lover and beloved, which union is the love itself,⁷² and carries the additional note of the mutual indwelling (*mutual inhaesio*) of these two.⁷³ This mutual interpenetration is perfected in the virtue of charity by which “we achieve a spiritual union with God, and are in a certain way transformed into our (supernatural) end (God).”⁷⁴ This characteristic of friendship, mutual indwelling, involves considering the beloved’s good as one’s own, and is described as ecstatic (self-forgetful), zealous, and the cause of all the lover does, feels and expresses.⁷⁵ As the result of the virtue of charity, mutual indwelling is an objective existential reality grounded in the Spirit of Love, whose first gift is Himself,⁷⁶ and is not merely a spontaneous passion. As such, the effect of mutual indwelling is an extension of the loving affection by which the Father and Son love one another, in the act of subsisting love called the Holy Spirit.⁷⁷

As Aquinas moves from a treatment of the *nature* and *causes* of love in the *Prima Secundae*, questions 26-27, to an analysis of the *effects* of love in question 28, the influence of Aristotle recedes and that of Dionysius becomes more evident. Love is conceived in Dionysian fashion as a “unitive force” which is the bond of affection leading to “real union” (28.1), whose effects include “ecstasy” and “zeal.” In the former, the will is transported beyond itself in an act of generous benevolence, willing the good for another without a concern for the

⁷¹ The distinction between these two types of love will be examined below in the analysis of the question of the possibility of the natural love of God above all else.

⁷² S.T. I-II 28.1.

⁷³ S.T. I-II 28.2.

⁷⁴ S.T. I-II 62.3.

⁷⁵ S.T. I-II 28.3-6.

⁷⁶ C.G. IV.21.

⁷⁷ S.T. I 37.2 makes it clear that this is the love that extends itself to all creation. In S.T. I 37.1, the Spirit is called “the link (*nexus*) between the Father and the Son, insofar as He is Love.”

self's own gain (28.3); whereas the latter causes one to oppose any force that could hinder the friend's good (28.4).

Another effect of love that finds its perfection in the virtue of charity as an image of the divine missions is that of the "melting" (*liquefactio*) of the heart. The heart or will "melts" under the influence of love when it shows itself to be ready for the entrance of the beloved, for the appetite is fitted to receive the good which is loved inasmuch as the object loved is in the lover.⁷⁸ In the context of charity, this "melting" occurs when one's heart is moved by the Holy Spirit to believe and love God and repent over one's sins,⁷⁹ so that the soul which was wrapped up in itself now tends to another.⁸⁰ Although a reflection of the divine mission of the Spirit that upholds our existence at each moment through love, "melting" is also a result of the Son being sent to us, enlightening our intellect through a knowledge bursting forth with love. Just as the Son is the Word breathing forth Love (*Verbum spirans Amorem*), so is the soul conformed to God through the imaging of the divine processions through the infused virtues and gifts.

A final effect of love that signals Aquinas' development of Aristotle's concept of *philia* is that of "joy" (*gaudium; laetitia*). Joy occurs as a result of the alteration in the appetite called "love" and the movement of the will towards the loved object, called "desire," and it is signaled by the will's rest in the possession of its object.⁸¹ "Delight" (*laetitia*) expresses interior joy and "dilation," enlargement or exultation of the heart, Thomas says,⁸² and is perfected in the virtue of charity. As the perfect exercise of a habit, a virtuous action well performed brings joy.⁸³

⁷⁸ S.T. I-II 28.5.

⁷⁹ S.T. III 66.11.

⁸⁰ *In Ps. 21 [22]: 14.* 14.221. This reference is found in W. Principe, "Affectivity and the Heart in Thomas Aquinas' Spirituality," in A. Callahan, ed., *Spiritualities of the Heart: Approaches to Personal Wholeness in Christian Tradition* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), p. 47.

⁸¹ S.T. I-II 26.2.

⁸² *In Ps. 34[35]: 27* 14.276, in commenting on Psalm 118 (119): "You have enlarged my heart." This reference is found in W. Principe, "Affectivity and the Heart in Thomas Aquinas' Spirituality," p.46.

⁸³ *In 3 Sent. 23.1.1 ad 4.*

Although all virtuous actions must be performed with joy,⁸⁴ acts done out of charity are directed towards that perfect joy of selfless dissolution in Christ, which enjoyment is to be preferred even to the soul's union with the body.⁸⁵ Thus, joy is the lover rejoicing in being united to the beloved, or in the fact that the one we love is in secure possession of his own good,⁸⁶ and the necessary consequence of charity is joy since it involves abiding with God.⁸⁷ Far from being subjective, introverted psychological phenomena, the experiences of mutual indwelling, melting and joy signal the existential union through love by which one is co-natured with the beloved. Through the gift of wisdom, these effects are united in the mystical experience of the indwelling Persons of the Trinity.⁸⁸

Through our analysis of love in its range of meanings and characteristics, we have discerned a theocentric and Trinitarian focus permeating Aquinas' spiritual doctrine, pointing to an existential union and fulfillment vitalized by grace. The movement of love towards its final achievement in charity is seen to involve the presence of God's activity at the root and centre of the interior life, as a principle and term of appetite, perfecting the effects of mutual indwelling, ecstasy, melting and joy, and drawing forth the core of our being as images of Himself.

⁸⁴ "Actions virtuously performed are naturally delightful.... We are neither good nor virtuous if we do not find joy in acting well": *In 1 Eth.* L. 13 (1099a17).

⁸⁵ *De caritate* 11 ad 8: "... [T]he Apostle clearly, unhesitatingly, and even boldly said, 'I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ' (*Philippians* 1.23); this is perfect charity. It is from the necessity of charity that the soul prefers in any way, even imperceptibly, the enjoyment of God to the union with the body."

⁸⁶ Cf. *S.T.* II-II 28.2.

⁸⁷ *S.T.* I-II 70.3.

⁸⁸ *In 1 Sent.* 16.1.2c ("When the Holy Spirit is sent to us invisibly, grace pours into our minds from the fullness of divine love ; through this effect of grace we receive an experiential knowledge of that divine person") *S.T.* I 43.3 ad 1 links the gift of wisdom with the language of "fruition" or enjoyment of God.

c) The Problem of Pure Love

The third and final issue regarding love is the relation of self-love to *caritas* or *agape*, and how Aquinas' virtue of charity transcends the "egoism/altruism" opposition posited by later spiritual writers such as Fénelon, and theologians such as Anders Nygren, who juxtapose the natural drive for self-fulfillment in self-love with supernatural virtue.⁸⁹ In this regard, we will outline the position of Fénelon and analyze the solution of Robert Merrihew Adams. Then we will turn to Aquinas' position on the possibility of pure, disinterested love of God, and the relation of self-love to *caritas*.

Writing in the thirties of this past century, Anders Nygren echoed the sentiment of Fénelon, a seventeenth century spiritual writer, in proposing that the Catholic "*caritas* synthesis," that is, the marriage of the "incompatible notions" of *eros* and *agape*, reached its apex in the thought of Aquinas. According to Nygren, Aquinas reduced all of Christianity to a form of self-love through the mechanism of Aristotelian fulfillment of a form's potentialities.⁹⁰ In contrast, Fénelon opted for an altruism in which the pure state of charity is untainted by other motives, a state which Fénelon calls, following Francis de Sales, "holy indifference."⁹¹ According to this theory, the will's "indifference" is its purity or singleness of motive in the act of loving God, an indifference which included the absolute or unconditional sacrifice of the soul's own self-interest for eternity.⁹² This "neutralizing of the specialness of one's own self," as one commentator has called it,⁹³

⁸⁹ Nygren, *Eros und Agape. Gestaltwandlungen der christlichen Liebe*. (Gutersloh, 1930, 1937), Vol. II, p. 110.

⁹⁰ Nygren, pp. 255; 465. A good treatment of Nygren's position can be found in Josef Pieper, *About Love*, tr. Richard and Clara Winston (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974), pp. 60-66.

⁹¹ Francois Fénelon, *Explication des maxims des saints sur la vie intérieure* (1697), as quoted in R. Merrihew Adams, "Pure Love," p. 175. Fénelon's idea is echoed by Nygren's notion of the will's quality of "spontaneity" or "creative character" in agapeistic love, by being "indifferent" to predetermined values. On Nygren on this point, see Pieper, *About Love*, p. 61.

⁹² Adams, p. 176.

⁹³ Adams, p. 177.

follows from Fénelon's fear that God will be loved by the soul with the inferior love of concupiscence, such that the love of God becomes an instrument of human happiness, and God is not loved in and for Himself.

In his treatment of Fénelon's concept of "pure love," Robert Merrihew Adams argues *against* the exclusion of self-love as an element in *caritas*. Fénelon's concern that one might love one's own *love for God* more than loving *God Himself* involved a disjunction between self-love, a type of *eros*, and pure love, or *agape/caritas*.⁹⁴ Adams makes the case that one's love of God can *never* be completely disinterested, for it entails at the very least the desire that *I* be the one loving God, which signifies a desire for relationship itself as a good.⁹⁵ Without this element of need-love or *eros*, he argues, the feature of "benevolence" in *agape* love would be impersonal and distant. Thus, Christian *caritas* must incorporate some positive aspects of *eros*, namely, the desire for personal relationship for its own sake.

⁹⁴As Adams notes, Fénelon distinguishes three types of love for God, namely, "servile love" (which is love for the gifts of God, and not for God Himself); "concupiscential love" (whereby God is loved only as the only means and instrument of happiness) and "charity," or love of God for Himself ("Adams," p. 175). This last type of love for God is called "holy indifference" by Fénelon and involves the soul's indifference to all created goods, specifically her own good: "In sum, the good pleasure of God is the supreme object of the indifferent soul. Wherever she sees it she runs 'to the fragrance of 'its 'perfumes,' and always seeks the place where there is more of it, without consideration of any other thing.... [The indifferent person] would rather have hell with the will of God than Paradise without the will of God - yes indeed, he would prefer hell to Paradise if he knew that there were a little more of the divine good pleasure in the former than in the latter; so that if (to imagine something impossible) he knew that his damnation were a little more agreeable to God than his salvation, he would leave his salvation, and run to his damnation" (Fénelon, [*Explications...* 1697:56, as quoting Francis de Sales, in Adams, p. 176).

⁹⁵ Adams, p. 182: "But if part of what I am to desire for its own sake is not only that God's will be done, but also that *I* love and obey God, then it seems that my love for him is not to be completely disinterested: There is to be an element of self-concern in it. Thus Fénelon seems forced to admit an element of self-concern even in perfect love of God."

Having outlined the positions of Fénelon and Nygren, and having indicated Adams' objections, we turn to Aquinas' distinction between the "love of friendship" and the "love of concupiscence," as found in his treatments of love as a passion and as *caritas*, to determine his position on the possibility of a "pure" or "disinterested" love of God.⁹⁶ In his treatise on charity, Aquinas notes that, according to Aristotle, to love is to will the good for someone.⁹⁷ When the will's direction is towards the *person* who is loved, the "love of friendship" exists (*amor amicitiae*), and when the will is directed towards the *good willed for that person*, the "love of concupiscence" exists (*amor concupiscentiae*).⁹⁸ The two motions of the will coexist in the sense that in no case can one love a person without also wishing him a *good*, and in no case can one wish a good without extending that good to a *person*.⁹⁹ As well, the "love of friendship" is more basic than and inclusive of the "love of concupiscence," since wanting a good for a person involves some love for that person. Indeed, the love of persons (vs. things) constitutes the most basic direction of the human will,¹⁰⁰ whether this love is directed towards another or towards oneself.¹⁰¹

Many commentators on Aquinas, as well as spiritual writers, have juxtaposed these two movements of the will, seeing in them a distinction between a "disinterested love" and a "self-centered love," and framing their theories around the question of whether a non-egoistic love is possible.¹⁰² Perhaps a better formulation of the issue¹⁰³ is

⁹⁶ His doctrine is found in several places, including: S.T. I 60.3; II-II 23.1; 25.2; *In de div. Nom.* Ch.4, L. 10 #405.

⁹⁷ S.T. II-II 23.1.

⁹⁸ By the 'love of friendship,' a *person* is loved as a good; by the 'love of concupiscence,' some *thing* is loved as a good: S.T. I-II 26.4.

⁹⁹ (In this sense, Aquinas follows Aristotle's view that friendship exists between persons only.)

¹⁰⁰ *In de div. Nom.* Ch.4, L. 10 #404-405.

¹⁰¹ S.T. I-II 26.4.

¹⁰² This is certainly Rousselot's interpretation of the distinction (Pierre Rousselot, *Pour l'histoire du problème de l'amour au moyen âge, Beitrage zur Geschichte de Philosophie des Mittelalters* 6 [Munster, 1908]1-2; tr. Alan Vincelette, *The Problem of Love in the Middle Ages: A Historical Contribution*

expressed by Garrigou-Lagrange, who located the problem within Thomas' own more metaphysical perspective, asking whether the love of one's own proper good or the love of God is more primordial to our nature.¹⁰⁴ In Thomas' treatise on the passions,¹⁰⁵ the two motions of the will do not denote a distinction between selfish and disinterested love. Instead, they reveal an ordered relationship grounding all love in its primary form, viz., the love of friendship. In *S.T. I-II 26.4*, the love of friendship stands to the love of concupiscence as substance stands to accident, since the object loved with the love of friendship is loved simply and for itself (a person); whereas that which is loved with the love of concupiscence is loved not *simpliciter et per se*, but for the sake of something else (*alteri*), as good for something or someone else.¹⁰⁶ The well-wishing or benevolence that is extended to a person in the primary type of friendship need not conflict with concupiscent love,

(Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002). Nygren's similar construct based on the *eros/agape* distinction (see #96 above); Descoqs (*Institutiones Metaphysicae Generales* [Paris, 1925]) offers a nonmetaphysical and strictly "moral" theory of pure love; d'Arcy (*The Mind and the Heart of Love* [New York, 1947]) aligns *agape* or selfless, "ecstatic" love with the existential self (vs. the intellectualist 'essentialist' self). L-B. Gillon's view is similar to that of Rousselot (Gillon, "Génèse de la théorie thomiste de l'amour" [*Révue thomiste* 46 (1946) 322-29]). Cf. Paul Wadell's work (# 55 above).

¹⁰³ A. Keaty, "Thomas's Authority for Identifying #55 Charity as Friendship...", p. 587 #15. In that same article (p. 588 #16), Keaty discusses various interpretations of the two aspects of love, including the views of Simonin, Louis Geiger, Servais Pinckaers, and Albert Ilien.

¹⁰⁴ Garrigou-Lagrange, "Le problème de l'amour pur et la solution de saint Thomas" (*Angelicum* 6 [1929]: 83-124).

¹⁰⁵ *S.T. I-II 26.4*.

¹⁰⁶ The relation of the two aspects of love is compared to that between substance and accident since the substance possesses being simply, while the accident only possesses relative and dependent being: thus, the love of concupiscence depends on that of friendship for its being. This issue is treated again in terms of the object's degree of similitude to the person, in *S.T. I-II 27.3*. In the love of concupiscence, the will is directed to an accidental good desired as a perfection for a person; but in the love of friendship, the object has an actual, not merely a potential and accidental, similitude in relation to the person.

since in the latter the thing loved stands in an accidental relationship to the person loved.¹⁰⁷ The direction of natural inclinations to the common good, in combination with the fact that the divine good is greater than our share of good in enjoying that good, also establishes the fact that God ought to be loved chiefly and before all out of charity, in II-II 26.3. *Caritas* is a love in which the self is fulfilled and yet subordinated to its divine object.

From the above outline of Aquinas' position on the two aspects of love, we can conclude that the position of thinkers such as Fénelon (and Rousselot), which identifies the 'love of friendship' with a pure or disinterested love and the 'love of concupiscence' with a love motivated by personal gain (thus, a 'selfish' love), is ungrounded, as are the similar views of Nygren and other commentators.¹⁰⁸ We have seen that Aquinas' distinction between the two objects of the will does not involve a disjunction between the alternatives of egocentrism and altruism. On the contrary, the primary tendency of the will towards the love of friendship is foundational and inclusive of the love of concupiscence, although disordered, acquisitive love is possible.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, the love of self is included *within* "friendship love," since the primary direction of the will is towards persons, not things.

If the initial distinction between types of love is ungrounded, then it follows that Fénelon's, Nygren's and Rousselot's formulation of the problem of love is also in error. Thomas' analogy of the love of friendship and concupiscence with the relationship of substance and accident shows the impossibility of loving something with a love of concupiscence as an ultimate or final good, and since the love of friendship obtains in the natural state of self-love, the latter is not

¹⁰⁷ However, when the object (whether it be pleasurable or useful) is desired for oneself, then the case of a *disordered* type of concupiscence love exists.

¹⁰⁸ Descoqs, d'Arcy, Gillon, Wadell, etc.: see # 102 above.

¹⁰⁹ As A. Keaty puts it, "...the context of friendship love makes intelligible those instances when concupiscence love is disordered.... Concupiscence love in the pleasurable and useful friendship need not undermine these friendships as long as the love for the pleasurable or useful good is subservient to the well-wishing that characterizes love of friendship" (A. Keaty, "Thomas's Authority for Identifying Charity as Friendship..." p. 589).

egocentric. In addition, Aquinas' theories of "image" and "love" preclude the existence of a disinterested or "pure" love divorced from personal happiness. Inspired by both Aristotle and St. Paul, Aquinas knew that we love God for Himself alone precisely because He is the sum of that beatitude.¹¹⁰ And involved in this natural search for fulfillment is the striving for one's own good, which means loving oneself – an impulse found even in the angels, according to Thomas.¹¹¹ Friendship is loving another as an *alter ipse*, "another self," on the basis of some shared good,¹¹² and takes self-love as its starting point standing to it as a copy to the original.¹¹³

Many of the threads of Aquinas' position are found in texts where he develops the discussion of charity within the Aristotelian framework of acts and habits. In II-II 23.2, Aquinas takes up the infamous thesis of Peter Lombard, which anticipates the views of Fénelon. Lombard could be interpreted as identifying the act of charity in the soul with the Holy Spirit itself. Like Fénelon, this view makes the soul a purely passive instrument in the bond of charity, a view Aquinas rejects because it denies creaturely freedom and the possibility of meritorious action. A created principle of action is necessary for the spontaneous and joyful exercise of acts of charity, and Augustine's stress of divine causality can lead to a distorted theory of "participation" in divine wisdom and love by the soul. Moreover, in Lombard and Fénelon we see the influence of Augustine's opposition of love and concupiscence (where the lack of charity is said to divert an action from its course towards the love of God, resulting in sinful self-love). Thomas rejects this tension by

¹¹⁰ S.T.II-II 27.3: "...We do not love God because of anything else, but because of Himself alone. For, being himself the last end of all things, there is no other end to which he is subordinate, nor does he need any other form to make him good...." Here, the causal character of unparticipated goodness, viz. its unique ability to make all other things good, is at work. Cf. C.G. IV 92: "By nature the creature endowed with reason wishes to be happy and therefore cannot wish not to be happy."

¹¹¹ S.T. I 60.3: "Angels like men by nature strive for their own good and their own perfection; and this means loving themselves."

¹¹² S.T. II-II 26.7.

¹¹³ S.T. II-II 26.4.

distinguishing the proper meaning of natural virtues from their ultimate perfection in charity: when ordered to a finite end, we may speak of virtue where there is no charity, providing the good in question is itself ordained to the final end (II-II 23.7). By grounding the natural movement of self-love in a metaphysical analysis of the levels of being, Aquinas preserves both the human integrity of natural virtue and its weight towards perfection in grace, thus avoiding the false dichotomy of the egoism/altruism distinction.

Aquinas interprets Aristotle's self-love of the virtuous man through the lens of St. Paul's distinction of the "inner" (vs. the "outer") man,¹¹⁴ and, borrowing two classical images of friendship from Augustine,¹¹⁵ describes the friend both in Aristotelian fashion as "another self" (*alter ipse*) and in Platonic fashion as "the other half of my soul" (*dimidium animae meae*)¹¹⁶. Nonetheless, Aquinas says that we should love God first in the order of charity, for He is the fount of that good which forms the basis of all love.¹¹⁷ This does not mean Fénelon's sense of loss of self or surrender of fulfillment, but rather the communication and fellowship or "communion" of divine beatitude to man, the divine life shared and made possible by divine immanence itself.¹¹⁸ Thomas uses Dionysius' distinction between "unity" and "union" to illumine the role of self-love within charity: With regard to *himself*, man possesses substantial unity, which causes the instinct for self-preservation and fulfillment. When elevated by *caritas*, this self-love occurs out of a desire for union through friendship with God. As Thomas says, "among other things,

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Augustine, *Conf.* IV, 6, 11.

¹¹⁶ On this point, see: James McEvoy, "Amitié, attirance et amour chez S. Thomas d'Aquin" (*Révue philosophique de Louvain* 91 [1993]): 397: "S. Thomas a explicitement emprunté à S. Augustin les deux images classiques qui ont servi à présenter l'amitié depuis le début de la réflexion sur ce thème. La première image, qui remonte à Aristote (bien qu' elle fut sans aucun doute un proverbe qui était en circulation bien avant lui) est celle de l'*alter ipse*, tandis que la seconde, qui est d'origine platonicienne, est celle de 'la moitié de mon âme', *dimidium animae meae*."

¹¹⁷ S.T. II-II 26.4.

¹¹⁸ S.T. II-II 23.1.

which, as belonging to God, he loves out of charity, man also loves himself."¹¹⁹

In response to Adams' correction of Fénelon, one can clearly see that Aquinas does not envision the inclusion of *eros* in *agape* or *caritas* in the same way. Although Aquinas does admit that both the self and charity, not just God, ought to be loved out of charity,¹²⁰ this is not equivalent to Adams' setting up the ideal of "personal relationship" as an object of love to be included in *agape*. Far from positing a *tertium quid* between the lover and the object of his love, Aquinas is rather pointing to the self-reflexive character of rational acts. In the case of love, the will's object is the universal good, and since the act of loving oneself is a certain good, it too is an object of love. But since charity is *more* than mere love, the act of loving love itself is *not* equivalent to Adams' position. Instead of focusing the self on its own enjoyment (*frui*) of personal relationship, the love of friendship as expressed in *caritas* draws the person outside himself in affirming the objective good of the Other as an end in itself.¹²¹ As one scholar has noted, it is the Biblical background of Thomas' texts on charity that provides this emphasis on grasping and appreciating the value of the end in itself. The words of Christ, "I will not now call you my servants but my friends" (*John* 15.15) cited in *S.T.* II-II 23.1 signal God's communication of His inner life, even

¹¹⁹ *S.T.* II-II 25.4. Cf. *De caritate* 7 ad 11.

¹²⁰ *S.T.* II-II 25.2.

¹²¹ *S.T.* I-II 28.2-3. Gallagher expresses this point well: "According to Thomas, it belongs essentially to the love of friendship to take as one's own good the good of the beloved. Thus, one's own good can be expanded, so to speak, when one has a love of friendship for another person.... If a person loves God with the love of friendship (*caritas*) then the good of God becomes his own good and his beatitude consists in possessing (by the *visio beatifica*) this good (II-II 180.1). The will's natural inclination to beatitude does not lock a person inside himself; rather, it draws him out of himself and into the possession of a larger good..." (David Gallagher, "The Will and Its Acts [I-II 99 6-17], in *S. Pope*," p. 85). L.B. Geiger has referred to the objective pole of willing as the "realism" of the will: Geiger, *Le Problème de l'amour chez Saint Thomas d'Aquin* "Conference Albert-le-Grand, 1952" (Montreal, 1952), pp. 70-73.

secrets, to the friend, who, unlike the servant, both grasps the end and appreciates the end for which the master acts.¹²²

Thus far, our outline of the views of Aquinas on the love of friendship vs. love of concupiscence has revealed the following points. First, the two aspects of love are not juxtaposed (except in the case of a disordered concupiscential love); rather, the love of friendship is primary and foundational, ordering the love of concupiscence to itself, and inclusive of the love of self. Second, only the love of friendship can direct the will towards an ultimate or final good. Third, his Aristotelian theory of natural love and his Biblically inspired theory of 'image' combine to *preclude* the possibility of a 'pure' or disinterested love of God divorced from the pursuit of personal happiness. And fourth, although the act of loving is an object of love through the self-reflexive character of dilection, the supernatural nature of *caritas* elevates the self *beyond* the enjoyment of this natural, reflexive act and propels it towards an infinite, ungraspable objective good.

If Aquinas fails to incorporate the desire for "personal relationship" as an end in itself within *caritas*, how does he absolve himself from a charge similar to the one Adams levels at Fénelon, namely, the criticism that *agape* remains impersonal and unmeritorious if it lacks an element of personal desire within it, and is thus "unchristian" at the very least, if not contradictory? The answer to this question lies in a study of the three specific qualities of friendship (benevolence, mutuality, and a shared good¹²³) against the background of the various effects of love.

In the effect of "union," as well as in those of "mutual indwelling" and "ecstasy," the intimacy of communion (*oikeosis*: fellowship)¹²⁴ is

¹²² A. Keaty has studied this issue within the context of charity, in his article "Charity as Friendship..." While the servant is not entrusted with the master's secrets, and so is a mere instrument with respect to the end, the friend is so entrusted, and is a coagent with respect to realizing that end (*In Joan.*, c. 15, l. 3 #1).

¹²³ S.T. II-II 23.1.

¹²⁴ Communion with God is not only an aspect of friendship but its foundation, in that God, not self, is the principle and measure for all love, and it is God's gratuitous communication of His own beatitude which orders the human

based on the shared good of God's own divine life, which generates a concrete, intimate and profound exchange between God and man. Within the context of an Aristotelian natural drive for existential fulfillment, on the one hand, and the dynamic nature of the Dionysian good, on the other, we are far here from Fénelon's "trials of the indifferent soul."¹²⁵ No human compact can be compared with the intimacy of communication that proceeds from charity, since God opens the fullness of His triune life and raises humans' dignity to that of sons in offering Himself as their destiny.

The analysis of some key effects of love has thus *invalidated* the possible charge that Aquinas' notion of *caritas* is impersonal and unmeritorious. But the question still remains whether Aquinas' teaching on the will's natural inclination to beatitude is egotistical, since it involves obtaining a good for ourselves. For Thomas, the first act of the will is directed necessarily to the final end (beatitude; God), but determines itself only at the rational level of the second act of the will, choice.¹²⁶ The natural inclination of the will towards beatitude involves a love of friendship for oneself, with a love of concupiscence for the good that perfects us. While not the result of deliberate choice, this spontaneous inclination towards beatitude is nonetheless not

soul's towards goodness (S.T. II-II 26. 5; 12; 23.1). This communication which is the basis of supernatural friendship is also the basis of the notion of the "union of ends," such that the end of creation and the end of the creature's actions are the same – God's glory, through the community of life of God and His rational creatures. Thus it is that Aquinas gives a theological context and response to the problem of love. For a further analysis along these lines, cf. A. Wohlmann, "L'élaboration des éléments aristotéliens dans la doctrine thomiste de l'amour" (*Révue thomiste* 82 [1982]: 261. On Aquinas' understanding of the Platonic and Stoic concept of "fellowship" (*oikeiosis*), cf. "Wohlmann," pp. 267-8.

¹²⁵ See Adams, p.180.

¹²⁶ On the necessity of willing beatitude: S.T. I 19.3; 41.2 ad 3; 60.2; C.G. I 80. Thus, the first act of the will towards the ultimate end is a determination which is a part of its nature, and Aquinas notes that even the sinner loves God in this way (*De malo* 16.3 ad 1; *In 2 Sent.* 5.1.2 ad 5). Aquinas refers to this act as *voluntas*, *simplex voluntas*, or simply *velle*: the act called "will" means simply, willing the end (I-II 8.2; cf. IIIa 18.4; 21.4; *De Ver.* 22.13-14).

merely a sensory movement, but rather opens the soul to universal good in a manner similar to the inclinations of the natural law, and to perfection within the context of another person – God.¹²⁷ The possibility of man's love of friendship for God, or the love of God in and for Himself, is grounded both in this natural inclination and in the *rational* character of the will, which directs it to the true order of goods, not fixing its gaze on any finite good, even the actualization of the self. In short, desire for the universal good in and for itself stems from the rational and immaterial character of the will,¹²⁸ which recognizes only an infinite end as maximally lovable. The object of our self-love, as finite, cannot be the resting place of the love of friendship. As a similitude of the creative goodness of God, the creature's love is primarily directed to un-participated goodness, the universal and total good of each creature.

While the natural inclination of the will to its ultimate end establishes the possibility of the natural love of God above self and recognizes the link between happiness and the love of God, this does *not* represent the love of friendship properly speaking between God and man, through *caritas*. Rather, its culmination is merely the wishing of God His own perfection and the referral of our perfection to this ultimate good. For a true, explicit friendship with God to occur, the presence of grace must be present, ensuring the common possession of the eternal beatitude proper to God. Only this supernatural elevation can guarantee the presence of the most proper cause of love, *similitude*, between the soul and God,¹²⁹ since the proper form shared in *caritas* is the very life of God. Moreover, just as the friendship of concupiscence derives from the love of friendship, so the love of friendship with respect to self participates in and is ordered to the love of friendship between the soul and God in *caritas*.

¹²⁷ The main outline of this description of the spontaneous inclinations can be found in Gallagher, p. 81.

¹²⁸ *In 12 Meta.* L. 7 (#2522); C.G. I 44; S.T. I-II 4.2 ad 2. In this respect, Fabro was correct in calling the will a certain "participation" in reason (C. Fabro, *La Nozione Metafisica di Partecipazione secondo S. Tommaso d'Aquino*, 2 ed. [Turin, 1950], pp. 291ff.). Cf. *In 3 Sent.* 35.1.1 sol. 4.

¹²⁹ S.T. I-II 27.3 identifies "similitude" as the most proper cause of love.

Our study of three topics within the general theory of love in Thomas' spiritual doctrine has yielded several conclusions. First, the convergence of Dionysian and Biblical influences on Thomas' thought resulted in his understanding of love as a passion (*amor*) and as a virtue (*caritas*) through the categories of Aristotelian *amicitia*. Second, a study of some key effects of love in the graced personality reinforced these twin influences in his theory of love, directing the natural inclination of love towards its fulfillment in *caritas*. Third, the question of the possibility of a pure, disinterested love of God was posed in the context of Fénelon's and Nygren's theory of *eros/agape* and Robert Adams' critique of the theory, and in light of Aquinas' own metaphysical formulation of the issue. Fénelon's and Nygren's portrait of disinterested, pure *agape* love proved a caricature both of Aquinas' natural, implicit love of God and of the inclusive, expansive character of Christian *caritas*. As the Greek and medieval philosophical heritage of love disappeared, so did the foundations and the heart of Thomas' theory of love. The union of the aspects of love, love's analogous meanings, similitude as the proper cause of love, and love's inseparability from the search for happiness, were forfeited by these thinkers in their suspicion both of nature and of the beneficent will of God.

Conclusion

Aquinas incorporated Biblical, Greek and Neoplatonic resources in his description of the *reditus* of creatures to their Creator through the notions of "image," "contemplation" and "love." The metaphor of a fountainhead infinite and undiminished in its source served well to describe the outpouring of the divine gift, the flowing of the twin streams of creation and grace throughout His works. Our treatment of the *reditus* theme accomplished three aims. First, the ontology of the *imago Dei* doctrine was seen to embed an Aristotelian psychology of natures and habits into the wider Christian context of the human as image of God participating in grace through the virtues and gifts of the Spirit. Through the possession, actualization and ultimate perfection of their powers, humans exhibit the images of nature, grace and glory as ascending stages of conformity towards perfect resemblance and divine indwelling. Second, the link of supernatural "contemplation" in the progression of the soul towards the image in glory was outlined, in terms of four characteristics, and the relation between

“contemplation,” “image” and “love” was illumined. Third, an analysis of the various meanings and effects of “love” revealed Thomas’ transposition of Aristotle’s theory of friendship into the theological virtue of charity partly through the influence of Dionysius, whose concept of the self-diffusive and gratuitous character of the good was grafted onto a Biblical and Patristic structure and provided him with a model for Christian communion in *caritas*. Finally, a study of the distinction between the “love of desire” and the “love of friendship” revealed the gulf between the later concept of pure, self-abandonment to the divine, which is depicted by Robert Adams as impersonal and deficient, and Aquinas’ more robust concept of *caritas* or *agape* as a fulfillment of our existential perfection and as magnetized by a personal, effusive source of love.

For Thomas there is a mutual penetration of the realm of grace, which objectively grounds and illuminates the soul’s ascent, and the realm of being in which activities flow from natures through the development of habits. The organic unity present in his thought between the theories of image, contemplation and love signals his rich and orderly use of the principles of emanation and return within a Christian anthropology and holds in balance the dynamism of human love with the “tranquility of order” that is wisdom.¹³⁰ In this way, he captures well for the minds of men the plenitude of perfection that is the fountain of God’s goodness drawing rivulets of goodness towards itself.

¹³⁰ S.T. II-II 45.6: “Those persons are called peacemakers who bring about peace to a certain extent in themselves and in others. Both occur because those in whom peace is established can be reduced to right order. Peace consists, as Augustine says in Book XIX of *City of God*, precisely in a ‘state of orderly rest’ (*tranquillitas ordinis*). But this order, as the Philosopher indicated in the beginning of his *Metaphysics*, is the task of wisdom. In this manner, readiness for peace is adequately correlated with wisdom.”