

Aquinas, Augustine, and the Medieval Scholastic Crisis concerning Charity

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One of the dangers of applying the scholastic method of dialectical questioning to the study of theology is that one may pose a question that one's culture does not yet know how to answer, or at least not answer well. This is precisely what happened when the early scholastics of the twelfth century started to pose questions about Augustine's portrayal of charity.¹ The crisis was perhaps inevitable. The twelfth century witnessed a remarkable blossoming of interest in the nature of love, especially of love as desire.² It was a unique historical moment. With the marriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine to Louis VII of France, troubadour culture from the south, with its theories of courtly love (*fin'amor*), moved to the heart of France and spread through the works of the trouvères.³ At the same time, the twelfth century saw the ascendance of new

1. Robert Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour d'Anselme de Laon à Pierre Lombard d'après les imprimés et les inédits" (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of Louvain, 1981), xx–xxii.

2. Denis de Rougemont famously and controversially affirmed that the modern conception of love as a passion emerges in the twelfth century. *Love in the Western World* (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett, 1969).

3. Eleanor of Aquitaine would later marry Henry II of England and bring troubadour culture to the British Isles. For Eleanor of Aquitaine's influence on the spread of troubadour culture, see Rita Lejeune, "Rôle littéraire d'Aliénor d'Aquitaine et de sa famille," *Cultura Neolatina* 14 (1954): 5–53; Marcus Bull and Catherine Léglu, eds., *The World of Eleanor of Aquitaine: Literature and Society in Southern France Between the Eleventh and Thirteenth Centuries* (New York: Boydell Press, 2005); John Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler, eds., *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

monastic orders (the Cistercians and the Carthusians)—peopled by adult vocations schooled in the ways of secular love—whose members were in the process of producing an abundant monastic love literature.⁴ A feature common to the literature both of the monks and of the court troubadours and trouvères was the focus on love as desire.⁵

It was also during the twelfth century that schools of theology, distinct from the monastic schools, began to emerge and to apply the dialectical tools of logic and argument to the scriptural and patristic heritage they had received. Although by century's end Paris was the primary center of this theological reflection, during the first half of the twelfth century the cathedral school in the fortified city of Laon still predominated.⁶ Scholars are currently unable to determine the influence of secular and monastic love literature on the schoolmen at Laon. One thing, however, is certain. At the very moment that this literature was blossoming, an anonymous scholastic writer penned a treatise (titled *De caritate*) that attacked the very thing these literary traditions

4. Jean Leclercq, *Monks and Love in Twelfth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 8–26, 109–36. Leclercq contrasts the traditional medieval Benedictine communities, whose members were mostly drawn from the ranks of their child oblates, and the Cistercians and Carthusians (as well as the various communities of canons regular), whose communities were principally composed of adult vocations. See *ibid.*, 9–12.

5. On love as desire in the writings of the troubadours, see Michel Zink, *Littérature française du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), 102–4; Moshé Lazar, *Amour courtois et "fin'amors" dans la littérature du XIIe siècle* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1964); and Lazar, "Fin'amour," in *A Handbook of the Troubadours*, eds. F. R. P. Akehurst and Judith M. Davis (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 61–101. On love as desire in monastic literature, see Jean Leclercq, *Love of Learning and the Desire for God* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), and *Monks and Love*, 99–108. The twelfth century also saw the growing presence of the Cathars, who likewise were confronting the nature of true love. Scholars have attempted to establish direct links between the troubadour and Cathar conceptions of love. Denis de Rougemont early affirmed this link, while Roger Boase has asserted that "Courtly Love and the Cathar Heresy were both inspired by Eros: the soul's nostalgic and insatiable desire to dissolve itself in the Unity whence it sprang" (*The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977], 78). The Cathars' understanding of love, however, remains obscure. The Cathars famously viewed sexual desire as an evil placed in humans by an external evil principle. Yet what were the Cathars' views on true love? Was it a purified desire or did they view it as free of all desire? The Cathars' notion of the spiritual marriage between the soul and Spirit seems to point to the latter view, but existing evidence does not allow scholars to offer a definitive judgment on this issue. For more on the Cathars, see Michel Roquebert, *La religion cathare: le Bien, le Mal et le Salut dans l'hérésie médiévale* (Paris: Perrin, 2001); Jean Duvernoy, *Le catharisme: la religion des cathares* (Paris: Privat, 1976). For a study that notes the focus on desire by both the literature of courtly love and the "theologians" of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, see Charles Baladier, *Éros au Moyen Âge: amour, désir, et "delectatio morosa"* (Paris: Cerf, 1999).

6. Richard Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*, vol. 1, *Foundations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 198–204.

shared in common. It attacked the view that charity entails desire. This little work seems to have provoked a crisis in the medieval scholastic understanding of charity. The issue was this: to what extent does charity consist in the desire for God as our beatitude? At stake was the danger of defining charity in terms of self-love, and thus reducing God to a means toward our own fulfillment. Moreover, if charity is desire for God, in what sense can God be said to love us from charity, and how are we able to love our neighbor from charity? As we shall see, questions such as these led Aquinas, a century later, to develop a psychology of love that integrated desire more successfully into the dynamics of love and thereby offered an account of charity more faithful to the biblical witness. To understand Aquinas's achievement we must first consider the definition of charity Augustine offers in *On Christian Doctrine*, because the controversy was shaped by Augustine's portrayal. Indeed, in some respects the controversy was a dispute over how to interpret Augustine. From this perspective, Aquinas can be viewed as saving Augustine's insights from the distortions of later interpreters, friend and foe alike.⁷

Augustine's Definition of Charity

Augustine states in the early chapters of *On Christian Doctrine* that "some things are to be enjoyed, others to be used, and there are others which are to be enjoyed and used."⁸ He then explains, "Those things which are to be enjoyed

7. Scholarship on the medieval conceptions of love has been deeply influenced by the studies of Pierre Rousselot and Anders Nygren. These studies, however, present the medieval literature from within dichotomous frameworks that are foreign to it. Rousselot portrays the medievals as developing two mutually opposed conceptions of love: a physical conception and an ecstatic conception (Pierre Rousselot, "Pour l'histoire du problème de l'amour au Moyen Age," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters, Texte, und Untersuchungen* 6 [1908]: 1–104; for a revised English edition, see Pierre Rousselot, *The Problem of Love in the Middle Ages: A Historical Contribution* [Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001]). Nygren presents the medieval literature from within a larger dichotomy between pagan and Christian conceptions of love (*eros* and *agape*, respectively) and the influence of what Nygren sees as Augustine's attempt to offer a "*caritas*-synthesis" (Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson [New York: Macmillan, 1939]). The discomfort caused by the binary vision of these two works has been enormously productive, provoking a number of scholars to read Augustine, the medievals, and even the Scriptures with greater care. An aspect of this more careful reading is to present the medieval discussions from within the context of their own questions. As Robert Wielockx has shown, the scholastics at Laon were asking their questions about charity from within the context of their reading of Augustine's definition of it.

8. *De doctrina christiana*, 1.3 [3]: "Res ergo aliae sunt, quibus fruendum est, aliae quibus utendum, aliae quae fruuntur et utuntur."

make us blessed. Those things which are to be used help and, as it were, sustain us as we move toward blessedness in order that we may gain and cling to those things which make us blessed.”⁹ Augustine then defines what he means by enjoyment and use. “To enjoy something is to cling to it with love for its own sake. To use something, however, is to employ it in obtaining that which you love, provided that it is worthy of love.”¹⁰ He next informs the reader that God alone is to be enjoyed, while all other things are to be used. This is true, he explains, even with regard to the love of self and of our neighbor. In both cases our love should have the character of use: we should use ourselves and our neighbor by ordering our love for each toward the enjoyment of God.¹¹

Augustine does not wish to imply that we should treat others in a purely utilitarian or exploitative fashion. The Latin verb “to use” (*uti*) was richer than this. It was a standard way to describe friendly human relations.¹² Nevertheless, as Oliver O’Donovan has observed, Augustine himself seemed uncomfortable with the term and settles instead upon the notion that we should “enjoy one another in him.”¹³ This revision is reflected in the definition of charity Augustine subsequently offers in a later section of *On Christian Doctrine*, a definition that was to become popular among medieval authors. Augustine affirms: “I call ‘charity’ the soul’s motion toward enjoying God for his own sake, and enjoying one’s self and one’s neighbor for the sake of God.”¹⁴

9. *Ibid.*, 1.3 [3]: “Illae quibus fruendum est, nos beatos faciunt. Istis quibus utendum est, tendentis ad beatitudinem adiuvamur et quasi adminiculumur, ut ad illas, quae nos beatos faciunt, pervenire atque his inhaerere possimus.”

10. *Ibid.*, 1.4 [4]: “Frui est enim amore inhaerere alicui rei propter se ipsam. Uti autem, quod in usum venerit, ad id, quod amas obtinendum referre, si tamen amandum est.”

11. See *ibid.*, 1.22 [20–21].

12. Oliver O’Donovan, “*Usus and Fructio in Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana I*,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 33 (1982): 365. See, for example, Lewis and Short, who tell us that *uti* can mean “to enjoy the friendship of anyone; to be familiar or intimate with, to associate with a person” (*A Latin Dictionary Founded on Andrews’s Edition of Freund’s Latin Dictionary*, rev. Charlton Lewis [and Charles Short] [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991], 1947). Hence, Cicero can describe the man he introduces to the pro-consul of Cilicia as “quo multos annos utor valde familiariter,” which the Loeb translation renders, “who has for many years been a very intimate friend of mine.” Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Letters to His Friends* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972–1979), 1.3.1.

13. *De doctrina christiana*, 1.32 [35]: “nobis etiam invicem in ipso perfruamur.” The phrase appears to be influenced by the Vulgate of Paul’s letter to Philemon, where he states his desire to “enjoy you in the Lord” (*te fruar in Domino*). See John Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 165. See also Raymond Canning’s treatment of this question in *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbour in St. Augustine* (Heverlee-Leuven: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1993), 79–115.

14. *De doctrina christiana*, 3.10 [16]: “caritatem voco motum animi ad fruendum deo propter ipsum et se atque proximo propter deum.”

Any analysis of this definition hinges on how one interprets the phrase “for his own sake” (*propter ipsum*). One way of interpreting it would be that charity’s desire finds its final fulfillment only in God. In other words, the emphasis is on desire, with the *propter ipsum* signifying that nothing else is the final object of desire. We desire God and do not refer that desire to anything else. This interpretation does capture an aspect of the passage. Augustine elsewhere affirms that “the whole life of a good Christian is a holy desire.”¹⁵ Moreover, Augustine defines love (*amor*) as an appetite or desire (*appetitus*) and holds that this love is charity when it is directed to God.¹⁶ These passages give the impression that Augustine reduces charity merely to a love of desire. As we shall see, however, what Augustine says elsewhere about charity reveals a richer view. It suggests that while desire is an aspect of charity, it is not the whole of charity. It suggests that for Augustine the *rhetor*, expressions such as *propter deum* or *propter ipsum* are meant to cover a range of meanings. The problem, however, is that this richness is not easily apparent to the reader of *On Christian Doctrine*, especially if he is only reading snippets of it as contained in a collection of sentences. However this may be, a number of twelfth-century authors, among both Augustine’s defenders and detractors, read Augustine as portraying charity simply as desire for God.

Twelfth-Century Critics and Defenders of Augustinian Charity

Robert Wielockx in his masterful study of the scholastic love literature of this period shows that the author of the *De caritate* begins his critique of Augustine by modifying the Augustinian definition of charity in a seemingly innocuous fashion.¹⁷ For the *De caritate*, “Charity is the soul’s motion toward lov-

15. *Tractatus in epistolam Joannis*, 4.6: “Tota vita Christiani boni, sanctum desiderium est.”

16. *De diversis quaestionibus* 83, 35.1: “Nihil enim aliud est amare quam propter se ipsam rem aliquam appetere.” *Ibid.*: “Deinde cum amor motus quidam sit, neque ullus sit motus nisi ad aliquid; cum quaerimus quid amandum sit, quid sit illud ad quod moveri oporteat quaerimus.” *Ibid.*, 35.2: “Amor appetitus quidam est.”

17. Wielockx, “La discussion scolastique sur l’amour,” 179. The authorship of the *De caritate* cannot be determined with certainty. The *De caritate* appears in a manuscript collection attributed to Anselm of Laon and in a collection attributed to William of Champeaux. Odon Lottin, who edited several versions of the *De caritate*, was uncertain whether it was a work of Anselm’s or of William’s (Odon Lottin, *Psychologie et morale aux 12 et 13 siècles*, vol. 5 [Gembloux, Belgique: Duculot, 1959], 62). Wielockx employs internal evidence to show that neither author could have penned it. Instead, he suggests that the most likely author of the *De caritate* was Gauthier de Mortagne. See Wielockx, “La discussion scolastique sur l’amour,” 142–58.

ing God for God's own sake and loving oneself and one's neighbor for the sake of God."¹⁸ As Wielockx notes, the author has removed "enjoying" (*fruendum*) from the definition and replaced it with the more generic term "loving" (*diligendum*).¹⁹ The *De caritate* then explains that to love God for God's own sake means serving him without desiring any recompense or reward for doing so. "We should love God, not for the sake of any reward we might expect from Him, but for his own sake alone, that we might serve Him."²⁰ The author interprets self-love and neighbor love in the same way: "That we should love ourselves for God's sake means this alone: that we should love God and serve him."²¹ Thus, the injunction to love our neighbor as ourselves means only this: "just as we love ourselves that God may be served, likewise should we love our neighbor that God may be served."²² This phrase parallels closely the famous text from *On Christian Doctrine* where Augustine states that God "has mercy on us that we may enjoy Him, and we have mercy on our neighbor so that we many enjoy Him."²³ Here again, however, the *De caritate* has replaced the notion of enjoyment with that of service. In all these passages the author of the *De caritate* asserts that the goal of charity is not enjoyment, but service.²⁴

The author subsequently portrays those who seek enjoyment as mercenaries. "Some serve God from fear, and these are called servants; others serve him because of rewards, and these are called mercenaries; while others serve him from love, and these are called sons."²⁵ While he grants that some mercenaries are at least seeking eternal rewards, he nonetheless affirms that "those who

18. *De caritate*, 1: "Caritas est motus animi ad diligendum Deum propter Deum et se et proximum propter Deum." Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour," 56. Imperfect but more accessible editions of the *De caritate* can be found in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, vol. 5, 61–64.

19. Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour," 179.

20. *De caritate*, 3: "Deum enim debemus diligere, non propter aliquod praemium quod ab eo expectemus, sed propter ipsum solum, cui ut serviamus." Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour," 56.

21. *De caritate*, 8–9: "Seipsum quoque debet unusquisque diligere propter Deum, id est: ad hoc tantum, ut Deum diligit et ei serviat." Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour," 56.

22. *De caritate*, 18–19: "Ut sicut se diligit ad serviendum Deo, ad idem diligit proximum." Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour," 57.

23. *De doctrina christiana*, 1.30 [33]: "Ille nostri miseretur, ut se perfruamur, nos vero invicem nostri miseremur, ut illo perfruamur."

24. Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour," 180–81.

25. *De caritate* (*Tria sunt genera*, 1–4): "Alii enim Deo serviunt pro quocumque timore et hi dicuntur servi; alii pro mercede et hi dicuntur mercenarii; alii pro amore et hi dicuntur filii." Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour," 63. On the *Tria sunt genera* as the original introduction to the *De caritate*, see Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour," 61–79.

seek eternal rewards desire to see Christ and to be in heaven for the sake of their own enjoyment.”²⁶ He thus concludes cuttingly that “those who seek what is their own [namely their own enjoyment] do not seek what is Christ’s, and consequently neither will they attain Christ.”²⁷

Wielockx convincingly traces the effect of the *De caritate* on the schoolmen at Laon by presenting an impressive collection of scholastic texts from the period that react directly against it. This collection shows that many of the defenders went far beyond the letter of Augustine’s texts to affirm unabashedly that charity is the desire to enjoy God. Several examples from Wielockx’s collection suffice to reveal the character of these reactions. First, there is a collection of sentences titled *Principium et causa*. When the author of this work defines charity, he affirms that the definition comes from Augustine. He too, however, modifies the text, changing two key phrases: “Charity is the soul’s desire to have God for his own sake; it is the love of God for his own sake and the love of neighbor for the sake of God.”²⁸ The author of a similar work, the *De conditione*, offers an analogous reformulation: “Augustine defines charity in *On Christian Doctrine* as follows: ‘charity is the soul’s desire to enjoy God and to love oneself and one’s neighbor for the sake of God.’”²⁹ Both these texts have replaced Augustine’s neutral “*motus animi*” with “*appetitus animi*.” Also, the first text refers to charity as a desire “to have God,” not just enjoy Him, while the later portrays it as a desire to enjoy God without the modifying clause “for his own sake” (*propter ipsum*). Another contemporary author takes the bolder step of redefining service (the heart of the *De caritate*’s view of charity) in terms of enjoyment as our reward (the very thing the *De caritate* denies): “Divine service is to place God before everything else, to love Him more than everything else and for Himself, that we might have Him as our

26. *De caritate* (*Tria sunt genera*, 6–8): “Qui vero quaerunt aeternum, hi sunt qui propter propriam delectationem Christum videre desiderant et in paradiso esse optant.” Wielockx, “La discussion scolastique sur l’amour,” 63.

27. *De caritate* (*Tria sunt genera*, 8–9): “Hi ergo quaerunt quae sua sunt, non quae Jesu Christi. Propterea nec illud habebunt.” Wielockx, “La discussion scolastique sur l’amour,” 63.

28. *Principium et causa*: “Caritas est appetitus animi ad habendum Deum propter seipsum, id est amor Dei propter ipsum, et amor est proximi propter Deum”; Franz Bliemetzrieder, *Anselms von Laon systematische Sentenzen*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters 18 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1919), 81. Wielockx, “La discussion scolastique sur l’amour,” 185.

29. *De Conditione*: “Caritatem vero definit Augustinus in libro De doctrina christiana dicens: ‘Caritas est appetitus animae ad fruendum Deo et se diligendum et proximum propter Deum’” (Y. Lefèvre, “Le *De conditione angelica et humana* et les *Sententiae Anselmi*,” *Archives d’Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 26 [1959]: 273). Wielockx, “La discussion scolastique sur l’amour,” 186.

reward.”³⁰ Perhaps most radically, one florilegia collection contains the assertion that our love for God is based on self-love: “There is a love about which no precept is made, namely, the love of self, and it is the cause of our love for God and neighbor.”³¹ This author then describes love for God and neighbor as analogous to the way we love our hands or any other body part. We love our members because we do not want to lose them. We are similarly attached to God and neighbor, not wanting to lose them either.³²

If we move from Laon to Paris, we find a similar reaction in the work of Hugh of Saint-Victor. He defines love in the following terms: “what does it mean to love except to desire and to will to have and possess and enjoy?”³³ Elsewhere, he states this more succinctly: “what is it to love except to will to have?”³⁴ Without hesitation Hugh applies this definition to charity’s love for God: “What is it to love God? It is to will to have Him. What does it mean to love God for his own sake? It is to love so that you might have Him.”³⁵ Hugh also attacks directly the views expressed in the *De caritate*:

Certain fools say: ‘we love God and serve Him, but we do not seek any reward. We are not mercenaries. Nor do we seek Him. . . . We cast out of hand any payment so that we don’t seek the one we love. For we love with a pure, gratuitous and filial love, not seeking anything. We love Him without seeking anything, not even seeking the one we love.’ Those who say these things do not understand the character of love.³⁶

30. *Deus est sine principio*: “Divina servitus est Deum cunctis rebus praeponere, plus omnibus diligere, et hoc propter ipsum, ut ipse habeatur in praemio”; Klagenfurt Universitätsbibliothek (Studienbibliothek) Parchment 34, folio 20r. Wielockx, “La discussion scolastique sur l’amour,” 186.

31. *Florilegium* (Lottin, no. 216): “Est una dilectio de qua non fit preceptio, scilicet dilectio sui, et ipsa est causa dilectionis Dei et proximi”; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MSS Latin 12999, folio 56va. Wielockx, “La discussion scolastique sur l’amour,” 188. Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, vol. 5, 138.

32. *Florilegium* (Lottin, no. 216): “Diligit item se homo qui non vult amittere manum vel pedem vel aliquid aliorum membrorum. Quia ita vero se diligit, diligit et ipsum creatorem qui ei tam pulchra membra que non vult perdere dedit”; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MSS Latin 12999, folio 56va. Wielockx, “La discussion scolastique sur l’amour,” 188. Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, vol. 5, 138.

33. Hugh of Saint-Victor, *De sacramentis* (PL 176: 534): “Quid est diligere nisi concupiscere, et habere velle et possidere et frui?” Wielockx, “La discussion scolastique sur l’amour,” 190.

34. Hugh of Saint-Victor, *De sacramentis* (PL 176: 534): “Quid est enim diligere nisi ipsum velle habere?” Wielockx, “La discussion scolastique sur l’amour,” 190.

35. Hugh of Saint-Victor, *De sacramentis* (PL 176: 528–529): “Quid est Deum diligere? Habere velle. Quid est Deum diligere propter seipsum? Ideo diligere, ut habeas ipsum.” Wielockx, “La discussion scolastique sur l’amour,” 191.

36. Hugh of Saint-Victor, *De sacramentis* (PL 176: 534): “Dicunt . . . stulti quidam . . . : Diligimus Deum et servimus illi, sed non quaerimus praemium, ne mercenarii simus: etiam ipsum non quaerimus. . . . In tantum enim excutimus manus ab omni munere, ut etiam ipsum non quaeramus quem diligimus. Pura enim et gratuita et filiali dilectione diligimus, nihil quaerimus. . . . Diligimus ipsum sed non quaerimus aliquid, etiam ipsum non quaerimus quem diligimus. . . . Qui hoc dicunt virtutem dilectionis non intelligent.” Wielockx, “La discussion scolastique sur l’amour,” 194–95.

With Hugh of Saint-Victor the battle lines are clearly drawn. One side portrays charity as service of God without involving the desire to attain or enjoy Him as our fulfillment. The other side pictures charity simply as the desire to possess and enjoy God. While on the surface the defenders of desire might appear closer to Augustine, their exclusive emphasis on desire distorts Augustine's fuller view. Medieval readers of Augustine, however, are not alone in interpreting Augustine in this way. The twentieth century saw a venerable line of critics who read Augustine in a similar manner, but who did so to critique him. They saw Augustine as forging an unholy alliance with desire in his portrayal of charity. One need only think of Anders Nygren's classic study.³⁷

Augustine's Richer View

A number of scholars have responded to Nygren and his colleagues by showing that Augustine has a fuller account of charity.³⁸ An extended exploration of the many facets of Augustine's theology of charity is beyond the scope of this brief essay. Several features of it, however, deserve to be noted. First, Augustine's theology of charity as enjoyment becomes intelligible only within the context of Augustine's confrontation with Platonism. Second, Augustine portrays the enjoyment proper to charity as drawing the Christian into the dynamics of God's love for his creatures and ultimately into the dynamics of the Trinity's love for itself. Thus, the motion of the soul toward enjoying God for Himself is not ultimately self-regarding but other-regarding. In other words, the self finds its desired fulfillment in an other-regarding love. As we shall see, for Augustine, the delight proper to charity is rooted in the worship of God and the service of our neighbor. Third, Augustine sketches a psychology of love that portrays love's act as entailing more than simply desire.

In book 8 of *The City of God*, Augustine depicts classical moral philosophy as seeking the "highest good," which he describes as the good that makes us

37. Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson (New York: Macmillan, 1939); see also Karl Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, vol. 3 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1928–1932), 54–116. For studies of Protestant and Catholic reactions and appropriations of Nygren's thesis, see Gene Outka, *Agape: An Ethical Analysis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972). See also Timothy P. Jackson, *The Priority of Love: Christian Charity and Social Justice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), and *Love Disconsoled: Meditations on Christian Charity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

38. See especially Raymond Canning, *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbour in St. Augustine* (Heverlee-Leuven: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1993); and Oliver O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982).

blessed when we seek it “for itself and not for anything else.”³⁹ He then praises the Platonists for discovering that we become blessed not by enjoying the body or the mind, but by enjoying God. Augustine even credits them with discerning something of the character of this enjoyment. We become blessed not by enjoying God “as the soul does the body or itself, or as one friend enjoys another, but as the eye enjoys light.”⁴⁰ Augustine subsequently reveals that this depiction of enjoyment of God comes from Plotinus, who discovered that the source of both human and angelic happiness is “a certain intelligible light.”⁴¹ This light “illumines them that they may be penetrated with light and enjoy perfect happiness in the participation of God.”⁴² The context of the Plotinian teaching to which Augustine alludes here is significant. Plotinus prefaces his portrayal of this mystical vision by considering the relationship between enjoyment and the good. Would we still pursue the good even if it was not enjoyable?⁴³ The question leads Plotinus to depict enjoyment as something that accompanies the good. We desire the good because of its objective character. Even though a soul that is united to the good cannot help but enjoy it, the soul desires the good because of what the good objectively is.⁴⁴ The analogy with the eye’s enjoyment of light is apt precisely because sight focuses on the object seen and not on itself. Aristotle, therefore, in a passage to which Plotinus seems to allude, describes sight as one of the activities that we would engage in even if it did not bring us pleasure.⁴⁵ Far from being an egocentric possession of the good, therefore, Plotinus’s mystical union with the divine light draws the soul out of itself into the reality that underlies

39. *De civitate Dei*, 8.8: “Ubi quaeritur de summo bono, quo referentes omnia quae agimus, et quod non propter aliud, sed propter se ipsum adpetentes idque adipiscentes nihil, quo beati simus, ulterius requiramus.”

40. *Ibid.*: “Non sicut corpore vel se ipso animus aut sicut amico amicus, sed sicut luce oculus.”

41. *Ibid.*, 10.2: “Quodam lumine intelligibili.”

42. *Ibid.*: “A quo inlustrantur, ut clareant atque eius [Dei] participatione perfecti beatique subsistant.”

43. Plotinus, *Enneads* VI, 7 [38] 24.5–18: “Does the good hold that nature and name because some outside thing finds it desirable? May we put it that a thing desirable to one is good to that one and that what is desirable to all is to be recognized as the good? . . . The question comes to this: Is goodness in the appropriate or in something apart, and is the good good as regards itself also or good only as possessed?” See also *Enneads* VI, 7 [38] 27.28 and 29.1.

44. Plotinus, *Enneads* VI, 7 [38] 25.16: “The good must, no doubt, be a thing pursued, not, however, good because it is pursued, but pursued because it is good.” *Enneads* VI 7, [38] 30.9, 24–25: “It would follow merely that intellect is the good and that we feel happy in possession of that good. . . . This state produces the most enjoyment and should be chosen above all: for lack of an accurate expression, we hear it described as ‘intellect in conjunction with enjoyment.’”

45. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 10.3 (1174a4–10). See Pierre Hadot, introduction, in *Les écrits de Plotin: traité 38 (VI, 7)* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1999), 64–66.

all good.⁴⁶ This contemplative union is so absorbing that “the self is put out of mind in the contemplation of the supreme.”⁴⁷ Moreover, Plotinus affirms that this “commerce” with God inclines the soul toward “justice” and “moral good,” because “the soul is pregnant with these when it has been filled with God.”⁴⁸ Indeed, the enjoyment of God can push the soul to “report to others this communion.” Plotinus offers the example of Minos, whose “contact with the divine inspired him to legislate.” Being a “friend of Zeus,” he shared with others the pattern of this divine communion by crafting laws that were “the image of it.”⁴⁹

Plotinus, however, views generosity toward others as only an optional consequence of one’s love for God.⁵⁰ It is at this point that Augustine begins his critique of the Plotinian perspective. The Platonists discovered something of the nature of God, but did not love Him as He deserved. The love of God, Augustine explains, entails the true service that is worship (*latreia*).⁵¹ He describes this worship as a sacrifice of humility and praise offered to God by the fire of our charity.⁵² This love moves us to consecrate and offer ourselves to God.⁵³ Moreover, by clinging to God in this way, we are purified from sin⁵⁴ and receive the virtues that move us to work for our neighbor’s salvation.

It is by spiritually embracing Him that the intellectual soul is filled and impregnated with true virtues. We are enjoined to love this good with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength. To this good we ought to be led by those who love us, and to lead those we love.⁵⁵

46. Plotinus, *Enneads* VI, 9 [9] 11: “It was a going forth from the self, a simplifying, a renunciation, a reach toward contact and at the same time a repose, a meditation toward adjustment. This is the only seeing of what lies within the holies.” John Rist describes this aspect of Platonic desire as pertaining to what he calls an “ethics of inspiration” where the morally beautiful (*kalos*) leads to a self-forgetful love of God and service of others that nonetheless fulfills us. See Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*, 153.

47. Plotinus, *Enneads* VI, 9 [9] 7.

48. *Ibid.*, 9.

49. *Ibid.*, 7.17–28.

50. *Ibid.*, 7.28. See Dominic O’Meara, *Plotinus: An Introduction to the “Enneads”* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 109.

51. *De civitate Dei*, 10.3: “Huic nos servitutem, quae latreia Graecae dicitur, sive in quibusque sacramentis sive in nobis ipsis debemus . . . eum suavissimo adolemus incenso, cum in eius conspectu pio sanctoque amore flagramus.”

52. *Ibid.*: “Ei sacrificamus hostiam humilitatis et laudis in ara cordis igne fervidam caritatis.”

53. *Ibid.*: “Ei dona eius in nobis nosque ipsos uouemus et reddimus.”

54. *Ibid.*: “Ad hunc videndum, sicut videri poterit, eique cohaerendum ab omni peccatorum et cupiditatum malarum labe mundamur et eius nomine consecramur. Ipse enim fons nostrae beatitudinis, ipse omnis appetitionis est finis.”

55. *Ibid.*: “Illi cohaerere, cuius unius anima intellectualis incorporeo, si dici potest, amplexu veris impletur fecundaturque virtutibus. Hoc bonum diligere in toto corde, in tota anima et in tota virtute praecipimur; ad hoc bonum debemus et a quibus diligimur duci, et quos diligimus ducere.”

Augustine further reveals the character of charity's enjoyment of God by describing what it would mean for an angel to love us: "he must will for us to become blessed by submitting ourselves to Him, in submission to whom he himself is blessed."⁵⁶ Enjoyment of God, therefore, entails a pious submission of our hearts and minds to God.

Augustine further criticizes the Platonists for thinking that they can attain happiness by their own unaided efforts.⁵⁷ For our purposes, however, the interesting aspect of Augustine's account is that he accepts Plotinus's portrayal of enjoyment as an attainment that leads us out of ourselves toward the contemplation of God. The soul is perfected in an enjoyment that is a type of self-forgetfulness. Ultimately, this love is a participation in the Trinity's own love for itself, which implies neither need nor unfulfilled desire.⁵⁸ In this life, our participation in God's Trinitarian love also implies imitating Christ's love, even to the point of dying on the cross for love of the Father and of our neighbor.⁵⁹

In several places, Augustine also offers the rudiments of a psychology of love. For example, in book 14 of the *City of God*, Augustine prefaces his argument that two loves have built two cities (the earthly and the heavenly), by showing that the Scriptures employ *amor* and *dilectio* in both positive and negative senses. When these terms signify a good love, they are interchangeable with *caritas*, which he describes as the love by which "a man seeks to love God not according to man but according to God, and to love his neighbor as himself."⁶⁰ Augustine is attempting to establish a generic notion of love so that he can subsequently present the specific contrast between the good and evil loves that build the two cities: there is well-ordered love that loves all things as ordered to the love of God, and there is disordered love that loves all things toward the love of self. He then offers a further clarification.

56. *Ibid.*: "Ei uult esse subditos, ut beati simus, cui et ipsa subdita beata est."

57. See Gerard O'Daly, *Augustine's "City of God": A Reader's Guide* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 199.

58. *De Trinitate*, 15.31–32: "Sanctus itaque spiritus de quo dedit nobis facit nos in deo manere et ipsum in nobis. Hoc autem facit dilectio. Ipse est igitur deus dilectio. . . . Ipse ergo significatur ubi legitur: 'Deus dilectio est.' Deus igitur spiritus sanctus qui procedit ex deo cum datus fuerit homini accendit eum in dilectionem dei et proximi, et ipse dilectio est. Non enim habet homo unde deum diligat nisi ex deo. . . . Dilectio igitur quae ex deo est et deus est proprie spiritus sanctus est per quem diffunditur in cordibus nostris dei caritas per quam nos tota inhabitet trinitas."

59. *Tractatus in evangelium Ioannis*, 64.4 (*PL* 35.1807); 81.4 (*PL* 35.1846–1847); 84.2 (*PL* 35.1848). See Raymond Canning, *Unity of Love for God and Neighbour in St. Augustine*, 72–73.

60. *De civitate Dei*, 14.7: "Nam cuius propositum est amare Deum et non secundum hominem, sed secundum Deum amare proximum, sicut etiam se ipsum."

A righteous will, then, is a good love; and a perverted will is an evil love. Therefore, love yearning to possess what it loves is desire; love possessing and enjoying what it loves is joy; love fleeing what is adverse to it is fear; and love undergoing such adversity when it occurs is grief. Accordingly, these reactions are bad if the love is bad, and good if it is good.⁶¹

There are three things to notice in this passage. First, Augustine introduces the notion of *voluntas* as signifying a good or bad love depending on whether the will is “*recta*” or “*perversa*.” Second, he asserts that desire and joy (*laetitia*) are two different forms of love. Lastly, he holds that desire and joy are good or bad depending on the love that underlies them. This mini-psychology of love establishes the following progression in the motion of love: will, desire, joy. Moreover, although Augustine styles both desire and joy as forms of love, as “love desiring” and as “love enjoying,” he seems to reserve love properly so called to *voluntas*.⁶² Good love is *voluntas recta*, evil love is *voluntas perversa*. What are the characteristics of love as *voluntas*? Does Augustine wish to affirm that *voluntas* has two acts: desire and enjoyment, or does he see *voluntas* as something more general, as, for example, the principle that underlies both desire and enjoyment?

The nature of will in Augustine is a large and controversial question that cannot be pursued in these pages. I wish only to suggest that for Augustine, although desire and enjoyment are both forms of *voluntas*, *voluntas* is not reducible to them. In fact, Augustine, in several works, attempts to explain the will’s love by appealing not to desire but to good will (*benevolentia*). For example, in his commentary on 1 John, Augustine asserts that “all love contains an element of good will toward those who are its object.”⁶³ He distinguishes the love we have for things such as food or clothing from the love proper to persons by grounding the latter in the experience of friendship: “friendship entails a certain good will, as when we do things for those whom we love.

61. Ibid.: “*Recta itaque voluntas est bonus amor et voluntas perversa malus amor. Amor ergo inhians habere quod amatur, cupiditas est, id autem habens eoque fruens laetitia; fugiens quod ei aduersatur, timor est, idque si acciderit sentiens tristitia est. Proinde mala sunt ista, si malus amor est; bona, si bonus.*”

62. See, for example, the following quotation from the *De Trinitate*, where he equates *voluntas* with *amor* and *dilectio*. *De Trinitate* 15.41: “*De spiritu autem sancto nihil in hoc aenigmate quod ei simile videretur ostendi nisi voluntatem nostram, vel amorem seu dilectionem quae valentior est voluntas, quoniam voluntas nostra quae nobis naturaliter inest sicut ei res adiacuerint vel occurrerint quibus allicimur aut offendimur ita varias affectiones habet.*”

63. *In epistolam Ioannis*, tr. 8.5 (PL 35.2038): “*Omnis dilectio, fraters charissimi, utique benevolentiam quamdam habet erga eos qui diliguntur.*”

Even if we cannot do things for them, the good will alone suffices for the lover.⁶⁴ In one of his later sermons, Augustine explicitly considers what this implies in relation to God.

Let your charity principally be displayed as a love of friendship, which should be gratuitous. You should not have or love a friend in order to receive something from him. If you love him because he gives you money or some other temporal commodity, you love not him, but the goods he gives you. A friend should be loved gratuitously, for himself, and not for anything else. If the rule of friendship encourages you to love man gratuitously, how much more gratuitously should you love God, who commands that man be loved? Nothing is more delightful than God. . . . You do not worship him gratuitously if you do so in order to receive something from him. Worship him gratuitously and you will receive him.⁶⁵

It would seem, therefore, that when Augustine defines charity as the soul's motion toward enjoying God "for his own sake [*propter ipsum*],"⁶⁶ the "*propter ipsum*" is meant to convey that this enjoyment loves God gratuitously. Our enjoyment of God consists in loving Him for Himself and not for any reward we might receive from Him, not even for the enjoyment that comes from loving Him in this way. In other words, in *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine attempts to express through the rich Plotinian notion of enjoyment the same truth he will preach in a sermon by means of the more prosaic Aristotelian understanding of friendship: charity loves God for Himself.⁶⁷

When we read these passages from Augustine in light of the twelfth-century scholastic controversies on love, they all suggest that Augustine's definition of charity was meant to convey a richer conception of charity than either his twelfth-century defenders or detractors were able to grasp. As we have seen, the issue centered on the role of desire in charity. The extreme positions

64. Ibid.: "Amicitia quaedam benevolentiae est, ut aliquando praestemus eis quos amamus. Quid, si non sit quod praestemus? Sola benevolentia sufficit amanti."

65. *Sermo* 385.3.4 (*PL* 39.1692): "Videat enim caritas vestra primum amicitiae amor qualiter debeat esse gratuitus. non enim propterea debes habere amicum vel amare ut aliquid tibi praestet. si propterea illum amas ut praestet tibi vel pecuniam vel aliquod commodum temporale non illum amas sed illud quod praestat. amicus gratis amandus est propter sese non propter aliud. si hominem te hortatur amicitiae regula ut gratis diligas, quam gratis amandus est deus qui jubet ut hominem diligas? Nihil delectabilis Deo . . . colis non gratis, ut aliquid ab ipso accipias. gratis cole, et ipsum accipies."

66. *De doctrina christiana*, 3.10 [16].

67. Gerald Schlabach, in reviewing Raymond Canning's study of Augustine's theory of love, has noted the importance of the different contexts in which Augustine considers charity. See Gerald W. Schlabach, review of *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbour in St. Augustine*, by Raymond Canning, *Augustinian Studies* 26 (1995): 157.

advanced during this twelfth-century debate failed to see 1) that Augustine's charity was meant to shift the focus from the self (and one's own fulfillment) to God; 2) that it contained an element of affective appreciation that did not imply desire; and 3) that it also had an aspect of benevolence, whereby we wish good to the beloved, even though Augustine was not exactly sure what this could mean in relation to our love for God. As we shall see, Aquinas's mature conception of charity enables him to preserve Augustine's insights by grounding them in a more adequate psychology of love.

Aquinas's Solution

The present state of scholarship does not permit us to identify with certitude the influence of twelfth-century controversies on St. Thomas's theology of love. To what extent were the authors at Laon known to Aquinas? To what extent did he know the work of Hugh of Saint-Victor? Nothing in the texts of Aquinas enables us to establish that he knew any of these authors. Aquinas, however, was confronted with an analogous challenge. He was confronted with the task of offering a coherent conception of charity in light of the biblical and Augustinian heritage he had received. When we study Aquinas's theology of charity from the context of the twelfth-century controversies concerning the nature of charity, we discover that Aquinas introduces five innovations that ground charity in a more adequate psychology of love. First, he portrays love properly so called as the principle of every appetitive power, underlying both desire and enjoyment. In other words, although desire presupposes love, love is not reducible to desire. Second, he presents this principle as an affective affinity for the loved object: a *complacentia*. Third, he presents this *complacentia* as having a twofold tendency: toward the beloved (*amor amicitiae*) and toward the good we will for the beloved (*amor concupiscentiae*). To love, he explains, is always to will some good for the beloved from a union of affections. Thomas then explains how charity elevates this psychology. Charity's *complacentia* has the character of friendship (*amicitia*). God communicates his life to us and upon this *communicatio* a union of affections and a mutual well-wishing, which are essential to friendship, are established. This is his fourth innovation: he portrays the virtue of charity as a type of friendship. Lastly, Aquinas holds that properly speaking the desire for God belongs to the theological virtue of hope, whereby we desire God's eternal beatitude as our fulfillment. In other words, while hope's act is a concupiscible love (*amor*

concupiscentiae), charity's act is a love proper to friendship (*amor amicitiae*). When we love God from charity we will his good in the sense that we celebrate his goodness. In the remaining sections of this essay, we shall consider each of these features.

Love as *Complacentia boni*

Aquinas introduces his mature psychology of love in his study of the passions. This is appropriate because in Aquinas's view we know the spiritual through the physical.⁶⁸ In the case of love, the bodily transmutations proper to the passion of love are more evident to us than the spiritual acts proper to love in the will.⁶⁹ Aquinas thus describes spiritual love by analogy with emotional love.⁷⁰ Aquinas begins his analysis of love by quoting the exact passage from *The City of God* cited earlier: "Augustine says that all the passions are caused by love: since 'love yearning to possess what it loves is desire; love possessing and enjoying what it loves is joy.'"⁷¹ Drawing on the Aristotelian analysis of motion, Aquinas then explains what this means.

Good has the aspect of an end. . . . Now it is evident that whatever tends to an end, first has an aptitude or proportion to that end, for nothing tends to a disproportionate end; second, it is moved to that end; third, it rests in the end, after having attained it. And this very aptitude or proportion of the appetite to good is love, which is complacency in good [*complacentia boni*]; while movement toward good is desire or concupiscentia; and rest in good is joy or pleasure.⁷²

Aquinas subsequently adds that when Augustine describes desire and joy as love, he does so because love is their cause.⁷³ Aquinas thus makes explicit what

68. *ST I*, q. 84, a. 7, ad 3.

69. See *ST I*, q. 85, a. 1; *ST I*, q. 87, aa. 1–3.

70. *ST I*, q. 82, a. 5, ad 1: "Amor, concupiscentia, et huiusmodi, dupliciter accipiuntur. Quodque quidem secundum quod sunt quaedam passiones, cum quadam scilicet concitatione animi provenientes. Et sic communiter accipiuntur, et hoc modo sunt solum in appetitu sensitivo. Alio modo significant simplicem affectum, absque passione vel animi concitatione."

71. *ST I-II*, q. 25, a. 2, s.c.: "Augustinus dicit, in xiv de Civ. Dei, quod omnes passiones ex amore causantur, 'amor enim inhians habere quod amatur, cupiditas est; id autem habens, eoque fruens, laetitia est.'"

72. *ST I-II*, q. 25, a. 2: "Bonum autem habet rationem finis. . . . Manifestum est autem quod omne quod tendit ad finem aliquem, primo quidem habet aptitudinem seu proportionem ad finem, nihil enim tendit in finem non proportionatum; secundo, movetur ad finem; tertio, quiescit in fine post eius consecutionem. Ipsa autem aptitudo sive proportio appetitus ad bonum est amor, qui nihil aliud est quam complacentia boni; motus autem ad bonum est desiderium vel concupiscentia; quies autem in bono est gaudium vel delectatio."

73. *ST I-II*, q. 26, a. 1, ad 2: "Amor dicitur esse timor, gaudium, cupiditas et tristitia, non quidem essentialiter, sed causaliter."

is only implicit in Augustine: love is the first change in the appetite, from which desire and joy spring. For something to be the goal of an agent's action, that agent must somehow already be apt or proportioned for attaining that goal. This aptitude is love.

But why employ the word *complacentia* to describe this aptitude? One possible reason is that the term can connote both affect and approval. Once Aquinas had defined love as the principle underlying desire and enjoyment, he had to find a term that could express the way in which this principle is present in both of them. Moreover, since love is the principle of an appetite, the term had in some way to express the affective element essential to love.⁷⁴ Aquinas apparently judged that *complacentia*, as a word that literally signifies "with pleasing assent" (*cum + placentia*), could convey these meanings. When we desire and enjoy, we do so from an underlying *placentia* that is present throughout.

There is perhaps another reason this term seemed appropriate to Aquinas. In the Vulgate of Matthew's Gospel, God the Father employs the verbal form of *complacentia* to express his attitude toward the Son. Both during Jesus' baptism and his transfiguration, the voice from heaven refers to Jesus as "my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." The term used in each case is *complacui(t)*.⁷⁵ We should also note that *complacentia* is here linked to *dilectio*. The beloved Son (*dilectus*) is pleasing to the Father. Implicit in this account is the affirmation that the Father's love entails a certain *complacentia* in the Father's will. Aquinas, therefore, seems to draw on the biblical account of the Father's love for the Son and on Aristotle's theory of causality to ground Augustine's psychology of love on a firmer foundation.

Love's Act as Willing Good to Another

As we have seen, after describing love as the principle underlying desire and enjoyment, St. Thomas distinguishes intellectual from sensual love. Intellectual love is the love proper to the will. He next offers a further refinement not present in Augustine. He distinguishes *amor*, a general term applicable even to brute animals or inanimate objects, from *dilectio*, which, he explains,

74. On "*affectus*" or "*affectio*" as an essential element of love in the will, see *ST* II-II, q. 27, a. 2: "in dilectione, secundum quod est actus caritatis, includitur quidem benevolentia, sed dilectio sive amor addit unionem affectus"; *De caritate*, 2: "amor est principium omnium voluntariorum affectionum"; *ST* I-II, q. 56, a. 3, ad 1: "Verbum Augustini intelligendum est de virtute simpliciter dicta non quod omnis talis virtus sit simpliciter amor; sed quia dependet aliquantulum ab amore, in quantum dependet a voluntate, cuius prima affectio est amor."

75. "Hic est Filius meus dilectus in quo mihi complacui(t)." Mt 3:17; Mt 17:5; see also 2 Pt 1:17.

is a love proper only to intellectual or rational creatures, and is the result of the agent's free choice: "because *dilectio* implies, in addition to love, a preceding choice [*electionem praecedentem*], as the word itself denotes."⁷⁶

But what is the nature of the acts of will that flow from this freely chosen complacency in the good? In other words, what is the nature of the will's desire? Drawing on Aristotle, Aquinas affirms that "to love is to will good to someone."⁷⁷ As such, "love has a twofold tendency: toward the good that a person wishes to someone (to himself or to another) and toward the one to whom he wishes some good."⁷⁸ Love is essentially love for someone.⁷⁹ To explain this dynamic Aquinas employs a distinction developed earlier in the thirteenth century, during controversies over whether angels naturally love God more than themselves. It is the distinction between *amor concupiscentiae* and *amor amicitiae*, which can best be translated as "the love proper to desire" and "the love proper to friendship," respectively. As Guy Mansini has shown, Aquinas appropriates this distinction to explain the twofold dynamic present in spiritual love.⁸⁰ The love proper to friendship (*amor amicitiae*) is the act of willing good to the beloved. This willing, however, must also be oriented toward the good we will for our friend and, thus, entails as an integral component an *amor concupiscentiae* for the good we will for him. This, in Aquinas's view, is the essence of the love of friendship. When we love a person we are always affirming some good for that person. These are not two separate loves. Rather, human love always has two components, one of which is subordinated to the other.⁸¹ Love of concupiscence is contained within the dynamism of

76. *ST I-II*, q. 26, a. 3: "Addit enim dilectio supra amorem, electionem praecedentem, ut ipsum nomen sonat."

77. *ST I-II*, q. 26, a. 4: "Amare est velle alicui bonum."

78. *Ibid.*: "Sic ergo motus amoris in duo tendit, scilicet in bonum quod quis vult alicui, vel sibi vel alii; et in illud cui vult bonum."

79. *ST I*, q. 20, a. 2, ad 3: "Amicitia non potest haberi nisi ad rationales creaturas, in quibus contingit esse redamationem, et communicationem in operibus vitae, et quibus contingit bene evenire vel male, secundum fortunam et felicitatem, sicut et ad eas proprie benevolentia est."

80. Guy Mansini, "Duplex amor and the Structure of Love in Aquinas," in *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale*, supplementa, vol. 1, *Thomistica*, ed. E. Manning (Leuven: Peters, 1995), 137–96.

81. *ST I-II*, q. 26, a. 4: "haec autem divisio est secundum prius et posterius. nam id quod amatur amore amicitiae, simpliciter et per se amatur, quod autem amatur amore concupiscentiae, non simpliciter et secundum se amatur, sed amatur alteri. sicut enim ens simpliciter est quod habet esse, ens autem secundum quid quod est in alio; ita bonum, quod convertitur cum ente, simpliciter quidem est quod ipsum habet bonitatem; quod autem est bonum alterius, est bonum secundum quid. et per consequens amor quo amatur aliquid ut ei sit bonum, est amor simpliciter, amor autem quo amatur aliquid ut sit bonum alterius, est amor secundum quid." *ST I-II*, q. 25, a. 3: "Per amicitiam autem

our love of friendship for ourselves or for someone else.⁸² Most fundamentally, the good we will for the beloved is simply the good of existence. “The first thing that one wills for a friend is that he be and live.”⁸³ Only subsequently do we then will particular good things for our beloved and direct our actions accordingly.⁸⁴ In relation to God, charity’s proper act is to love God for Himself, which means to celebrate his existence and goodness.⁸⁵

Aquinas concludes his analysis of love by underlining that love is the principle of all that the agent subsequently does. “Every agent acts for an end, as stated above. Now the end is the good desired and loved by each one. Thus, it is evident that every agent, whatever it be, does every action from some kind of love.”⁸⁶ Our actions, therefore, flow from our freely chosen love: from our love for the goods we affirm and from our love for those to whom we affirm them. In other words, before love is a principle of action, love is a response to goodness. It is a response to God’s goodness, to rational creatures’ fellowship in this goodness, and to the goodness proper to non-rational creatures in their ordered relationship to God and our fellowship with Him.

Charity as *Amicitia hominis ad Deum*

St. Thomas begins his analysis of charity by defining charity as a type of friendship with God. “Charity is a certain friendship [*amicitia*] of the human person toward God.”⁸⁷ Thomas’s definition of charity as an *amicitia* marks the

amatur uno quidem modo, amicus ad quem amicitia habetur; et alio modo, bona quae amico optantur.” See also *ST II-II*, q. 25, a. 2.

82. Since friendship is founded on union, not unity, we do not have friendship (*amicitia*) for ourselves, but something more than friendship (*ST II-II*, q. 25, a. 4). Nevertheless, the love we have for ourselves is the type of love that is proper to friendship (*ST I-II*, q. 28, a. 1, ad 2).

83. *ST II-II*, q. 25, a. 7: “Unusquisque enim amicus primo quidem vult suum amicum esse et vivere.”

84. We see this progression described when we read the above-cited sentence from *ST II-II*, q. 25, a. 7, in its larger context: “unusquisque enim amicus primo quidem vult suum amicum esse et vivere; secundo, vult ei bona; tertio, operatur bona ad ipsum; quarto, convivit ei delectabiliter; quinto, concordat cum ipso, quasi in iisdem delectatus et contristatus.” See also *ST I*, q. 20, a. 2: “Amor noster, quo bonum alicui volumus, non est causa bonitatis ipsius, sed e converso bonitas eius, vel vera vel aestimata, provocat amorem, quo ei volumus et bonum conservari quod habet, et addi quod non habet, et ad hoc operamur.”

85. *ST II-II*, q. 31, a. 1, ad 1: “Nostrum non est deo benefacere, sed eum honorare, nos ei subiicendo, eius autem est ex sua dilectione nobis benefacere.”

86. *ST I-II*, q. 28, a. 6: “Omne agens agit propter finem aliquem, ut supra dictum est. finis autem est bonum desideratum et amatum unicuique. unde manifestum est quod omne agens, quodcumque sit, agit quamcumque actionem ex aliquo amore.”

87. *ST II-II*, q. 23, a. 1: “Caritas amicitia quaedam est hominis ad Deum.”

culmination of over a hundred years of scholastic reflection on the nature of charity.⁸⁸ The Scriptures describe the love existing between God and his people in various ways, among which is the theme of friendship. “I no longer call you servants, but friends” (Jn 15:15).⁸⁹ St. Thomas appears to choose friendship as his preferred description of charity because of the light Aristotle’s analysis of friendship can shed on our relationship with God when this analysis is applied to charity.⁹⁰ In essence, Aquinas seems to intuit that Aristotelian *amicitia* offers a powerful analogy for understanding the unique *complacentia* that is charity. Thomas employs Aristotle’s treatment of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics* to affirm that friendship has the following characteristics. First, friendship entails mutual benevolence. Friendship is more than merely a solitary expression of the love that exists in friendship. Friendship requires at least two who love each other with this love, whereby they will good to each other.⁹¹ Thomas adds that in charity this act also entails a union of affections, for simple well-wishing is not enough for friendship.⁹²

Aquinas emphasizes, however, that the foundation of this mutually benevolent affection is a certain communion in the good (*communicatio in bono*). On the natural human level, *communicatio in bono* signifies for Aquinas both an active sharing of goods and a more basic participation in the same qualities, circumstances, or origins.⁹³ For Aquinas, the first meaning of *communicatio in bono*—the active exchange of goods and services—is rooted in the second more basic meaning. The second meaning refers to some fellowship in goodness. Two people share at least the goodness of their common humanity, but they can also be from the same country or town, have the same

88. See Guy Mansini, “*Similitudo, Communicatio*, and the Friendship of Charity in Aquinas,” in Manning, *Thomistica*, 1–26; Joseph Bobik, “Aquinas on Friendship With God,” *New Scholasticism* 60 (1986): 257–71.

89. *ST II-II*, q. 23, a. 1, s.c.: “Ioan. xv dicitur, ‘iam non dicam vos servos, sed amicos meos.’ sed hoc non dicebatur eis nisi ratione caritatis. ergo caritas est amicitia.”

90. See A. Stévaux, “La Doctrine de la Charité dans les commentaires des *Sentences* de saint Albert, de saint Bonaventure, et de saint Thomas,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 24 (1948): 86–87; Anthony Keaty, “Thomas’s Authority for Identifying Charity as Friendship: Aristotle or John 15?” *Thomist* 62 (1998): 594.

91. *ST II-II*, q. 23, a. 1.: “Sed nec benevolentia sufficit ad rationem amicitiae, sed requiritur quaedam mutua amatio, quia amicus est amico amicus.”

92. *ST II-II*, q. 27, a. 2: “In dilectione, secundum quod est actus caritatis, includitur quidem benevolentia, sed dilectio sive amor addit unionem affectus.”

93. See Joseph Bobik, “Aquinas on *Communicatio*, the Foundation of Friendship, and *Caritas*,” *Modern Schoolman* 64 (1988): 1–18; and Mansini, “*Similitudo, Communicatio*, and the Friendship of Charity in Aquinas,” 1–26.

profession, belong to the same family, or have developed a similarly virtuous character. Each of these shared goods is a *communicatio vitae* or *communicatio in bono* upon which those who share this good can found a friendship: “all friendship is founded on some fellowship in life [*communicatio vitae*].”⁹⁴ Aquinas believes that these characteristics of human friendship are analogously present in charity. The foundation of the analogy rests on Aquinas’s understanding of grace as a type of divine “*communicatio*,” whereby God begins to share (*communicare*) his life with us.

Since there is a *communicatio* between humans and God, inasmuch as God communicates his beatitude to us, some kind of friendship must be based upon this *communicatio*. . . . The love that is based on this *communicatio* is charity. Hence it is clear that charity is the friendship of the human person for God.⁹⁵

After establishing this analogy between charity and human friendship, Aquinas employs Aristotle’s analysis of friendship to illuminate the very aspect of charity that Augustine had struggled to explain: the object and order of its love.⁹⁶ For our purposes, however, the more interesting feature is how Aquinas uses the analogy of friendship to distinguish charity from the theological virtue of hope.

Charity and Hope

In relation to hope, St. Thomas first employs the analogy of friendship to explain charity’s dependence on both faith and hope. Since communion with God in the good is a prerequisite for friendship with Him, unless we believe that such a communion is possible and unless we hope for this good as something attainable by us through God’s assistance, we could never live the friendship that is charity.⁹⁷ Thus, charity depends for its existence on faith in

94. *ST II-II*, q. 25, a. 3: “Omnis amicitia fundatur super aliqua communicatione vitae.” See also *De Regno*, 1.11: “Omnis autem amicitia super aliqua communione firmatur. eos enim qui conveniunt, vel per naturae originem, vel per morum similitudinem, vel per cuiuscumque societatis communionem, videmus amicitia coniungi.”

95. *ST II-II*, q. 23, a. 1: “Cum igitur sit aliqua communicatio hominis ad deum secundum quod nobis suam beatitudinem communicat, super hac communicatione oportet aliquam amicitiam fundari. . . . Amor autem super hac communicatione fundatus est caritas. unde manifestum est quod caritas amicitia quaedam est hominis ad deum.”

96. *ST II-II*, qq. 25 and 26. See Stephen J. Pope, *The Evolution of Altruism and the Ordering of Love* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1994).

97. *ST I-II*, q. 65, a. 5: “Caritas non solum significat amorem dei, sed etiam amicitiam quandam ad ipsum; quae quidem super amorem addit mutuam redamationem cum quadam mutua communicatione, ut dicitur in VIII *Ethic*. Et quod hoc ad caritatem pertineat, patet per id quod dicitur 1 Ioan.

the intellect and hope in the will. Charity, however, is more perfect than hope because charity responds to God as a friend who is present, while hope responds to Him as an arduous absent good.

Love and hope differ in this way: love implies a certain union between lover and beloved, while hope implies a certain motion or tending of the appetite toward an arduous good. Union, however, is with something distinct, and therefore love is directly able to consider the other, with whom we are united by love, regarding him as we regard ourselves. Motion, however, is always toward a terminus properly proportioned to the moved object, and thus hope directly considers one's own good, and not that which pertains to another.⁹⁸

Aquinas subsequently appeals to the distinction between *amor amicitiae* and *amor concupiscentiae* to explain how charity both animates but differs from hope. "Hope presupposes love of him whom one hopes to attain, which love is a love of concupiscence, by which one more loves oneself, desiring a good, than willing a good to another. Charity, however, entails a love of friendship, toward which hope flows."⁹⁹ In charity we say to the beloved, "It's good that you exist."¹⁰⁰ As noted above, when we love God, we are merely affirming or celebrating the goodness that is in Him. On the other hand, in Aquinas's view, the desire for God as our fulfillment is not properly an act of charity, but of hope. Aquinas recognizes that we can desire this fulfillment from charity, because it is according to God's love for us: God also desires that we be

IV, qui manet in caritate, in deo manet, et deus in eo. Et ad 1 Cor. I dicitur, fidelis deus, per quem vocati estis in societatem filii eius. Haec autem societas hominis ad deum, quae est quaedam familiaris conversatio cum ipso, inchoatur quidem hic in praesenti per gratiam, perficietur autem in futuro per gloriam, quorum utrumque fide et spe tenetur. Unde sicut aliquis non posset cum aliquo amicitiam habere, si discredere vel desperare se posse habere aliquam societatem vel familiarem conversationem cum ipso; ita aliquis non potest habere amicitiam ad deum, quae est caritas, nisi fidem habeat, per quam credat huiusmodi societatem et conversationem hominis cum deo, et speret se ad hanc societatem pertinere. Et sic caritas sine fide et spe nullo modo esse potest."

98. *ST II-II*, q. 17, a. 3: "Amor et spes in hoc differunt quod amor importat quandam unionem amantis ad amatum; spes autem importat quandam motum sive protensionem appetitus in aliquod bonum arduum. Unio autem est aliquorum distinctorum, et ideo amor directe potest respicere alium, quem sibi aliquis unit per amorem, habens eum sicut seipsum. Motus autem semper est ad proprium terminum proportionatum mobili, et ideo spes directe respicit proprium bonum, non autem id quod ad alium pertinet."

99. *ST II-II*, q. 66, a. 6, ad 2: "Spes praesupponit amorem eius quod quis adipisci se sperat, qui est amor concupiscentiae, quo quidem amore magis se amat qui concupiscit bonum, quam aliquid aliud. Caritas autem importat amorem amicitiae, ad quam pervenitur spe, ut supra dictum est."

100. Josef Pieper, *About Love*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972), 22.

united to Him as our fulfillment.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, strictly speaking, the love of desire by which we desire to enjoy God is the love proper to hope. Aquinas further describes this contrast in terms of perfect and imperfect love.

Perfect love is that by which someone is loved for himself, as when one wills him good, the way a man loves his friend. Imperfect love is that by which one loves something not for itself, but because of the good that comes to the lover from it, as when a man loves something he desires. The first love of God pertains to charity, by which we cling to God for Himself, while hope pertains to the second love, because one who hopes intends to obtain something for himself.¹⁰²

The love by which we desire God as our perfection, therefore, properly belongs to hope. Although charity both animates this desire and enables it to attain the desired end, properly speaking charity loves God for Himself, willing and celebrating God's goodness.

These quotations from Aquinas place Augustine's texts in a new light. They suggest that Augustine's theology of love is primarily a theology of hope. This might seem paradoxical since Augustine himself says little about hope and what he does say often merely paraphrases the Scriptures.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, when Augustine in *On Christian Doctrine* defines charity as a *motion toward* enjoying God instead of as simply the enjoyment of God, he underlines an aspect of charity that exists only in this life. He is defining charity in terms of the imperfect and temporal act of loving God as an absent good. In other words, from the perspective of Aquinas, Augustine's theology of love emphasizes the component of temporal charity that properly belongs to hope.¹⁰⁴ This is understandable in light of Augustine's concern to show that perfect happiness (and thus also the perfect enjoyment of God) is possible only in heaven. As a consequence, however, Augustine underemphasizes charity's other aspects, especially its proper act of benevolent well-wishing. However this may be, one implication of Aquinas's psychology of love is that Augustine's

101. See *ST II-II*, q. 25, a. 4.

102. *ST II-II*, q. 17, a. 8: "Perfectus quidem amor est quo aliquis secundum se amatur, ut puta cui aliquis vult bonum, sicut homo amat amicum. Imperfectus amor est quo quis amat aliquid non secundum ipsum, sed ut illud bonum sibi ipsi proveniat, sicut homo amat rem quam concupiscit. Primus autem amor dei pertinet ad caritatem, quae inhaeret deo secundum seipsum, sed spes pertinet ad secundum amorem, quia ille qui sperat aliquid sibi obtinere intendit."

103. For a brief presentation of Augustine's theology of hope that notes the influence of Augustine's conception of charity on his theology of hope, see Francesco Russo, "Espérance," in *Encyclopédie saint Augustin*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2005), 538–41.

104. See *ST II-II*, q. 28, a. 1, ad 3.

confrontation with classical culture can be fruitfully reinterpreted from within a theology of hope. The deepest desires of the human heart and of human societies are not necessarily in vain. When healed and elevated in the grace of conversion they can attain their goal. Nevertheless, even when these desires are well directed, they are lived in hope.¹⁰⁵ The desires of the human heart find perfect fulfillment only in heaven in the eternal kingdom. In this life, therefore, an aspect of charity's love will always be lived in hope.

Conclusion

Early in the twelfth century, scholastic authors at both Laon and Paris began to question the biblical and patristic heritage they had received. They began especially to question the Augustinian account of charity. Although the extent to which Thomas Aquinas was aware of this questioning remains uncertain, he was clearly aware of the difficulties posed by the Augustinian heritage. Employing tools drawn from Aristotle and his reading of the Scriptures, Aquinas developed a psychology of love and a definition of charity that enabled him both to preserve Augustine's deepest insights and to remain more faithful to the biblical witness. In this way, Aquinas was able to save Augustine from the extreme views of some twelfth-century Augustinians.

105. *De civitate Dei* 19.20: "Quam tamen quicumque sic habet, ut eius usum referat ad illius finem, quam diligit ardentissime ac fidelissime sperat, non absurde dici etiam nunc beatus potest, spe illa potius quam re ista." See also *De civitate Dei* 19.4.