

## AUGUSTINE AND AQUINAS ON CHARITY'S DESIRE

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“God is love” (1 Jn 4.16). This affirmation was the starting point of Medieval considerations of charity. It was linked to another: “The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who is given to us” (Rom 5.5). These twin mysteries surround and envelop the New Testament commandments to love God and neighbor. We are commanded to love; but what does it mean to love, especially in light of the exalted affirmations that God is love and that his love has been poured into our hearts? Are the biblical authors employing the term love in the same way in both of these passages? The first references to the common Hebrew word for love (*ahav*) in the Old Testament point to the complexity of the problem. The very first reference describes a father’s love for his son: “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you” (Gn 22.2).<sup>1</sup> The second describes a man’s love for a woman: “Isaac brought her into the tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her” (Gn 24.67). We then have two uses of the word in reference to parents’ love for their sons: Isaac’s love for Esau and Rebekah’s love for Joseph (Gn 25.28). Immediately following this, however, we have a description of a man’s love for his favorite meal: “take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field, and hunt game for me, and prepare for me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat” (Gn 27.4). A father’s love for his son, a husband’s love for his wife, a man’s love for food. In each of these cases the word employed is “*ahav*,” whether in its verbal or substantive forms. Are all these loves the same, and if so, what is their proper act? If, however, they are each different types of love, how do they relate to each other? Moreover, how do all these ways of referring to love relate to God’s love and to the love we are meant to have for God? In short, although the Old and New

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the theology of love revealed in this passage, see Michael S. Sherwin, “Il battesimo e la fede di Abramo,” in *La rivelazione dell’amore e la risposta della libertà: Il profilo di un’etica della fede (DV 5)*, edited by Juan José Pérez-Soba and Pawel Galuszka (Siena: Cantagalli, forthcoming).

testaments have much to say about love, they do not provide a psychology of love. This is the task of the theologian. In the pages that follow, we shall briefly consider two influential attempts to develop just such a psychology of love: those of Augustine of Hippo and of Thomas Aquinas. The goal is not to indicate how they answered the above questions, but merely to sketch the salient features of their theologies of charity. In the process, I hope to show how Aquinas expresses more adequately insights that were central to Augustine's own theology.

### 1. Benevolent Desire: Augustine's Theology of Charity

In the Latin West, Augustine's psychology of love will become the most influential. In fact, as we shall see, he made several attempts to articulate the dynamics of love. Most influentially, there is the description of charity provided in *On Christian Doctrine*. In a theology deeply influenced by neo-Platonic thought, Augustine states that "some things are to be enjoyed, others to be used, and others are to be enjoyed and used."<sup>2</sup> He explains that, "those things that are to be enjoyed make us blessed. Those things that are to be used help and, as it were, sustain us as we move toward blessedness in order that we may attain and cling to those things that make us blessed."<sup>3</sup> Augustine defines enjoyment and use in the following terms. "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."<sup>4</sup> Augustine affirms that we are to enjoy God alone, while we are to use all other things as ordered toward the enjoyment of God. This is even true with regard to both self-love and neighbor-love. In both cases, Augustine explains, our love should be a use: we should use ourselves and our neighbor by ordering our love for them toward the enjoyment of God—both for ourselves and for our neighbor. Augustine is not affirming that we should treat others in a utilitarian or exploitative fashion. The Latin verb "to use" (*uti*) has a broader meaning than simple

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<sup>2</sup> *De Doctrina Christiana* 1.3 [3]: "Res ergo aliae sunt, quibus fruendum est, aliae quibus utendum, aliae quae fruuntur et utuntur."

<sup>3</sup> *De Doctrina Christiana*, 1.3 [3]: "Illae quibus fruendum est, nos beatos faciunt. Istis quibus utendum est, tendentes ad beatitudinem adiuvamur et quasi adminiculamur, ut ad illas, quae nos beatos faciunt, pervenire atque his inhaerere possimus."

<sup>4</sup> *De Doctrina Christiana*, 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."

utility, being one of the standard ways to describe friendship.<sup>5</sup> Augustine himself nevertheless seems to recognize the limitations of this formulation, and softens it by affirming that we should “enjoy one another in him.”<sup>6</sup> This revision is reflected in the definition of charity Augustine subsequently offers: “I call ‘charity’ the spirit’s motion toward enjoying God for himself, and enjoying one’s self and one’s neighbor for God.”<sup>7</sup>

How should we interpret Augustine’s affirmation that charity is a motion of the spirit toward the enjoyment of God? In a work written shortly before *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine describes love (*amor*) as a type of desire or appetite (*appetitus*).<sup>8</sup> “To love,” he explains, “is nothing other than to desire something for the thing itself.”<sup>9</sup> This would imply that for Augustine the motion of charity is a type of desire. It is the desire for God; more exactly, it is the desire to enjoy God for himself. Much depends here on the meaning of the phrase “for himself” (*propter ipsum*). At a minimum, the expression conveys that in charity our desire for happiness finds its final rest and fulfillment only in God, while we love other things only as ordered to our desire for God. The

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<sup>5</sup> See Raymond Canning, *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbour in St. Augustine* (Heverlee-Leuven: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1993), pp. 79-115, Oliver O’Donovan, “*Usus and Fruitio in Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana I*,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 33 (1982), p. 365, and Ragnar Holte, *Béatitude et sagesse; saint Augustin et le problème de la fin de l’homme dans la philosophie ancienne* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1962), pp. 275-281. Lewis and Short explain that *uti* can mean “to enjoy the friendship of any one; to be familiar or intimate with, to associate with a person” (*A Latin Dictionary Founded on Andrews’ Edition of Freund’s Latin Dictionary*, revised, enlarged, and in great part rewritten by Charlton Lewis [and Charles Short] [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991], p. 1947). Cicero, for example, describes a man as someone “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).

<sup>6</sup> *De Doctrina Christiana* 1.32 [35]: “nobis etiam invicem in ipso perfruamur.” The phrase appears to be influenced by the Vulgate of *Philemon*, where Paul 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), p. 165.

<sup>7</sup> *De Doctrina Christiana* 3.10 [16]: “caritatem voco motum animi ad fruendum deo propter ipsum et se atque proximo propter deum.” Note that Augustine describes charity here not as a motion of the soul (*anima*), but of the mind or spirit (*animus*).

<sup>8</sup> *De diversis quaestionibus* 83, 35.2: “amor appetitus quidam est.”

<sup>9</sup> *De diversis quaestionibus* 83, 35.1: “Nihil enim aliud est amare quam propter se ipsam rem aliquam appetere.”

emphasis here would thus be on desire, with the *propter ipsum* signifying that nothing else is the final object of our desire. Augustine does indeed seem to have this in mind, for elsewhere he famously affirms that “the whole life of a good Christian is a holy desire.”<sup>10</sup> This minimalist account of *propter ipsum*, however, does not do full justice to Augustine’s view. For Augustine, as for his Neo-Platonic sources, love’s desire is ecstatic: it leads us out of ourselves toward union with God. This ecstatic enjoyment is so profound that it leads to a type of self-forgetfulness: God’s plans become our plans, God’s concerns, our concerns, God’s will, our will.<sup>11</sup> Augustine understands charity’s ecstatic motion by analogy with natural motion, but with this difference: while a stone’s weight naturally leads it downward to its natural place, charity’s lightness is a gift of grace, given to us by the Holy Spirit.

A body by its own weight advances towards its own place. Weight is not downward only, but to its own place. Fire goes up, a stone goes down. They are propelled by their own weights, they pursue their own places [...] My weight is my love; by it am I carried, wherever I am carried. By your gift we are inflamed, and are carried upwards; we are enkindled and fly.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Tractatus in Epistolam Joannis*, 4.6: “Tota vita Christiani boni, sanctum desiderium est.” In the *De trinitate*, written during the same period as the *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine offers the following definition of self-love: “What is it to love oneself, but to will to be present to oneself, in order to enjoy oneself?” (*De trinitate* 9.2.2: “Quid est autem amare se, nisi praesto sibi esse velle ad fruendum se?”).

<sup>11</sup> See, John Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 148-168. See also Michael S. Sherwin, “Aquinas, Augustine and the Medieval Scholastic Crisis concerning Charity,” in *Aquinas the Augustinian*, edited by Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), pp. 189-192.

<sup>12</sup> *Confessiones* 13.9: “Corpus pondere suo nititur ad locum suum. Pondus non ad ima tantum est, sed ad locum suum. Ignis sursum tendit, deorsum lapis. Ponderibus suis aguntur, loca sua petunt [...] Pondus meum amor meus; eo feror, quocumque feror. Dono tuo accendimur et sursum ferimur; inardescimus et imus.” See also *De civitate dei* 11.28: “If we were stones, or waves, or wind, or flame, or anything of that kind, although we would indeed lack both sensation and life, we would not lack a certain kind desire for our proper place and natural order. For the loves proper to bodies are the momentums of their gravity, whether they are carried downward by their weight or upward by their levity. For just as a body is carried by gravity, so too the spirit by love, wherever it is carried” (“Si essemus lapides aut fluctus aut ventus aut flamma vel quid huiusmodi, sine ullo quidem sensu atque vita, non tamen nobis deesset quasi quidam nostrorum locorum atque ordinis appetitus. Nam velut amores corporum momenta sunt ponderum, sive deorsum gravitate sive sursum levitate nitantur. Ita enim corpus pondere, sicut animus amore fertur, quocumque fertur.”). Augustine elsewhere speaks of charity as being given to us the Holy

This motion is a liturgical and communal ascent. Just as the pilgrims ascended Mount Zion singing the psalms of the Lord, charity's love makes us ascend the "ways of the heart" that lead to Zion (Ps 84.5): "We ascend the ways of the heart and sing a song of pilgrimage. By your fire, by your good fire we are enkindled and fly, because we fly upwards to the peace of Jerusalem."<sup>13</sup> All of this, however, is only implied by Augustine's definition of charity as the spirit's motion toward enjoying God "for himself." The prepositional phrase only dimly conveys this other-regarding character of charity. Augustine seems to recognize this, for he subsequently develops a richer account of charity's act.

In book fourteen of the *City of God*, Augustine presents what could be described as the rudiments of a psychology of love. One of the goals of book fourteen is to show that two loves have built two cities, the earthly and the heavenly. To establish this contrast, Augustine observes that love is a generic term that we employ to signify either a positive or a negative reality. He illustrates this by means of a series of quotations from the Scriptures that employ the same terms for love (*amor* or *dilectio* in his Latin translation) to signify both evil loves and good loves. He further notes that when these terms signify a good love, they are interchangeable with *caritas*. He then offers the following clarification.

A right will (*recta voluntas*), then, is a good love; and a perverted will (*voluntas peruersa*) 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.<sup>14</sup>

There are three things to note here. First, Augustine introduces the notion of *voluntas* as signifying a good or evil love depending on

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Spirit: *Exp. q. p. ep. ad Romanos*: 20. [26.] "caritatem dicit nos habere per donum Spiritus, monstrat illa omnia, quae possemus nobis tribuere, Deo esse tribuenda, qui per Spiritum Sanctum gratiam dare dignatus est." See also *ibid.* 52 [60] and 53 [61].

<sup>13</sup> *Confessiones* 13.9: "Ascendimus ascensiones in corde et cantamus canticum graduum. Igne tuo, igne tuo bono inardescimus et imus, quoniam sursum imus ad pacem Hierusalem."

<sup>14</sup> *De civitate dei* 14.7: "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."

whether the will is “*recta*” or “*perversa*.”<sup>15</sup> Second, he asserts that desire and joy are two distinct types of love. Lastly, he holds that desire and joy are good or bad depending on the love that underlies them. This concise psychology of love establishes the following progression in the dynamics of love: will, desire, joy. Moreover, although Augustine styles both desire and joy as types of love – as “love desiring” and as “love enjoying” – he seems to reserve love properly so called to *voluntas*. Good love is *voluntas recta*, evil love is *voluntas perversa*. Augustine had already closely associated *voluntas* with love when he portrayed *voluntas* itself as a “motion of the spirit.”<sup>16</sup> What, however, are the characteristics of this loving *voluntas*? There is no scholarly consensus on this point.<sup>17</sup> A detailed account of the multiple meanings of *voluntas* in Augustine, and of the multiple scholarly opinions about them, is beyond the scope of this essay. For our purposes, it is sufficient to recognize that, although Augustine uses the term in a number of different ways, in relation to love, *voluntas* most often signifies a perduring affective choice that underlies both desire and joy.<sup>18</sup>

But if *voluntas* is an accepting love that underlies our desires and joys, what is the character of this acceptance? In his *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, Augustine portrays love’s *voluntas* as well-wishing (*benevolentia*): “All love (*dilectio*) presupposes a certain

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<sup>15</sup> Augustine had already introduced this distinction during his treatment of the good and bad angels in book eleven of the *De civitate dei* (11.33), and then subsequently identifies *voluntas perversa* with *cupiditas* in book twelve (*De civitate dei* 12.1). See *Perception, Sensibility, and Moral Motivation in Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 218-220.

<sup>16</sup> In a work written more than twenty years before book fourteen of the *City of God*, Augustine defines *voluntas* as “a motion of the spirit, without restriction, toward something, either to attain it or not to lose it” (*De Duabus Animabus*, 10.14: “Definitur itaque isto modo: Voluntas est animi motus, cogente nullo, ad aliquid vel non amittendum, vel adipiscendum.”)

<sup>17</sup> For an overview of the debate, see Ragnar Holte, *Béatitude et sagesse*, pp. 283-294 and Byers, *Perception, Sensibility, and Moral Motivation in Augustine*, pp. 217-228.

<sup>18</sup> John Rist, for example, affirms that “*voluntas* is a love which has been accepted or consented to,” conveying its relationship to desire and joy by adding that will’s consent is also “the conscious acceptance of a set of loves and desires and a determination to ‘stick with them’” (Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*, p. 177). More recently, Sarah Catherine Byers holds that “Augustine uses the term *voluntas* for dispositional and occurrent forms of *hormē* of a rational being, *hormē* being the Stoic concept of ‘impulse’ toward action” (Byers, *Perception, Sensibility, and Moral Motivation in Augustine*, p. 217).

benevolence (*benevolentiam*) for those whom we love.”<sup>19</sup> He distinguishes this well-wishing from simple desire. Earlier in his life he had described all love as a form of desire. Now, however, he sees a problem with that earlier account, offering an arresting analogy by which to illustrate it: love of neighbor is not like the glutton's love of roast pigeons.

We should not love men the way we hear gluttons say, “I love squab.” What is it you want for them? Only to kill and eat them. He says he loves, but his love for the birds leads to their disappearance. His love amounts to this, destruction. Everything we love as a meal, we thus love in order that it be consumed and we renewed. Should we love men this way, as if they were for our consumption?<sup>20</sup>

Augustine firmly asserts that we should not. Augustine distinguishes this consumptive desire from authentic love, which he describes as a type of friendship: “there is a certain friendship of benevolence (*amicitia benevolentiae*) which leads us on occasion to render service to those whom we love.”<sup>21</sup> The focus here is not so much on desire as on goodwill that passes into visible action.<sup>22</sup> Augustine explains that even when there is nothing you can do for your beloved, the goodwill itself suffices.<sup>23</sup> The underlying issue here is our love for God, who lacks nothing. When we love God from charity, our benevolent love simply affirms his goodness: the fire of charity grows from this and becomes purer.<sup>24</sup> As Augustine got older, therefore, he saw human love as more than just desire: it also entails a benevolent disposition in the will: a

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<sup>19</sup> *In epistolam Ioannis*, tr. 8.5: “omnis dilectio [...] utique benevolentiam quamdam habet erga eos qui diliguntur.”

<sup>20</sup> *In epistolam Ioannis*, tr. 8.5: “non sic debemus amare homines, quomodo audimus gulosos dicere: Amo turdos. Quaeris quare? Ut occidat, et consumat. Et amare se dicit, et ad hoc illos amat ut non sint, ad hoc amat ut perimat. Et quidquid ad cibandum amamus, ad hoc amamus, ut illud consumatur, et nos reficiamur. Numquid sic amandi sunt homines, tamquam consumendi?”

<sup>21</sup> *In epistolam Ioannis*, tr. 8.5: “amicitia quaedam benevolentiae est, ut aliquando praestemus eis quos amamus.”

<sup>22</sup> This is how most translators interpret Augustine's use of “*praestare*” in the above passage. As the context suggests, it signifies the act of “exhibiting” by outward action one's inner *benevolentiae*.

<sup>23</sup> *In epistolam Ioannis*, tr. 8.5: “Quid, si non sit quod praestemus? Sola benevolentia sufficit amanti.”

<sup>24</sup> See, *In epistolam Ioannis*, tr. 8.5: “Tolle miseros; cessabunt opera misericordiae. Opera misericordiae cessabunt; numquid ardor caritatis exstinguetur? Germanius amas felicem hominem, cui non habes quod praestes; purior ille amor erit, multoque sincerior.”



*voluntas* that is a *benevolentia* resulting from our choices. It was primarily, however, Augustine's earlier conception of love as desire that would influence monastic authors and the early scholastics.

## 2. Scholastic Interpretations of Augustinian Charity

Robert Wielockx masterfully reconstructs the debates on the nature of charity that arose at Laon and Paris in the twelfth century.<sup>25</sup> These debates were almost exclusively debates concerning how to interpret Augustine, and especially about the role of desire. A full account of these controversies would take us too far afield.<sup>26</sup> For our purposes, it will suffice to present the two extreme positions. There is the anonymous *De caritate* that transforms Augustine's definition of charity as follows: "Charity is the soul's motion toward loving God for God's own sake, and loving oneself and one's neighbor for the sake of God."<sup>27</sup> Wielockx notes that the author has removed "enjoying" (*fruendum*) from Augustine's definition and replaced it with the more generic term "loving" (*diligendum*).<sup>28</sup> 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

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<sup>25</sup> 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), much of which was revised and reprinted in Wielockx, "La sentence *De caritate* et la discussion scolastique sur l'amour," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 58 (1982): pp. 50-86, 334-356; 59 (1983): pp. 26-45. For more on the scholastic context in Laon, see Richard Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe, Volume I: Foundations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 198-204.

<sup>26</sup> For more on the controversies at Laon and their implications for theology, see Sherwin, "Aquinas, Augustine and the Medieval Scholastic Crisis concerning Charity," pp. 181-204.

<sup>27</sup> *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," p. 56. Accessible but imperfect editions of the *De Caritate* can be found in Odin Lottin, *Psychologie et morale aux 12 et 13 siècles* volume 5 (Gembloux, Belgique: Duculot, 1959), pp. 61-64. Wielockx argues that the most likely author of the *De Caritate* was Gauthier de Mortagne. See Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour," pp. 142-158.

<sup>28</sup> Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour," p. 179.



alone, that we might serve him.”<sup>29</sup> 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.”<sup>30</sup> 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.”<sup>31</sup> In stark contrast to this is Hugh of St. Victor’s extraordinary celebration of possessive desire. Writing from Paris, Hugh counters the *De caritate* by defining love in the following terms: “what does it mean to love (*diligere*) except to desire (*concupiscere*) and to will to have and possess and enjoy?”<sup>32</sup> Elsewhere, he states this more succinctly: “what is it to love except to will to have (*velle habere*)?”<sup>33</sup> Hugh does not hesitate to apply this to our 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 may have him (*diligere, ut habeas ipsum*).”<sup>34</sup> Hugh and the earlier scholastics who reacted against the *De caritate* and its definition of charity as service understood themselves to be defending Augustine’s account. Clearly, however, something has gone awry.

Although Augustine never renounced his early insights into our desire for God, he supplemented them, as we have seen, with a psychology of love that saw *voluntas recta* and *benevolentia* as underlying all our holy desires and joys. The desire for God is a

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<sup>29</sup> *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,” p. 56.

<sup>30</sup> *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,” p. 56.

<sup>31</sup> *De caritate* 18-19: “ut sicut se diligit ad serviendum Deo, ad idem diligit proximum.” Wielockx, “La discussion scolastique sur l’amour,” p. 57. 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 may enjoy Him” (*De Doctrina Christiana* 1.30 [33]: “ille nostri miseretur, ut se perfruamur, nos vero invicem nostri miseremur, ut illo perfruamur.”).

<sup>32</sup> 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,” p. 190.

<sup>33</sup> Hugh of Saint-Victor, *De sacramentis* (PL 176: 534): “Quid est enim diligere nisi ipsum velle habere?” Wielockx, “La discussion scolastique sur l’amour,” p. 190.

<sup>34</sup> 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,” p. 191.

universal Christian experience. Generations of monks and mystics have expressed this desire compellingly.<sup>35</sup> The Psalmist's cry that his soul longs for God as a deer longs for flowing streams (Ps 42.1) remains as true today when sung in Christian prayer as when it was sung in the Temple in Jerusalem. Our souls are indeed restless, and they will not find peace until they rest in God. Yet is this the whole story? By focusing on the desire for God, are we not focusing on God's absence, on what we still need to attain on our journey toward full union with him? It would seem that monastic and early scholastic thinkers follow Augustine in primarily describing the charity of the wayfarer: what they articulate is not so much charity, as hope animated by charity.<sup>36</sup> When, however, theologians focus more on the presence of God, a different aspect of charity emerges. The focus shifts to reflection on the union of wills and communion of life. It was precisely these affirmative and volitional aspects of charity's act that Augustine started to articulate in his later work.

### 3. An Abelardian Interlude

Already in the Twelfth Century at least one theologian tried to develop an understanding of charity that had features in common with Augustine's later insights: Peter Abelard. Like Augustine, Abelard wanted to develop a theology that contrasted two different loves: charity verses cupidity. As with Augustine, this required Abelard to offer a general definition of love, which he would then specify according to their objects and motivations.<sup>37</sup> In his mature work, Abelard defines love in the following terms: "Love is good will towards the other for himself, by which we wish that things go with him as we believe it is well for them to go, and we desire this more for him than for ourselves."<sup>38</sup> There are several things to notice in this definition. First,

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<sup>35</sup> See Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: a Study of Monastic Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961).

<sup>36</sup> This perhaps explains why Augustine's explicit theology of hope is so underdeveloped. His theology of charity is his theology of hope. From the Thomistic perspective, Augustine's entire theology of divine love is an account of hope animated by charity.

<sup>37</sup> See Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour," p. 198.

<sup>38</sup> *Theologia scholarium* PL 178.982: "Amor vero est bona erga alterum propter ipsum voluntas, qua videlicet optamus ut eo modo se habeat quo se habere bonum ei esse credimus, et hoc eius potius quam nostri causa desideramus." Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour," p. 199.

love is primarily an act of benevolence toward the other: "*bona voluntas*."<sup>39</sup> Second, Abelard does not deny that love entails pleasure or desire; nor does he condemn them. Rather, he simply insists that they be secondary: we desire the good of the beloved *more* for his sake than for our own sakes. Third, this general definition of love applies to all forms of natural human affection: the love of spouses for each other, of parents for their children, and of friends for each other.<sup>40</sup> In each case, one's affection for the other has the character of love, when it is benevolence toward the other that is desired more for them than for ourselves. In this context, *cupiditas* is the perversion of love properly so called. Love becomes cupidity when we love the other primarily for our own gain and pleasure.<sup>41</sup> Abelard explains that cupidity loves the other not for who he is, but for something he has that is useful to us.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, if cupidity is the corruption of love, charity, for Abelard, is the supernatural elevation of love offered to us in the gift of grace.<sup>43</sup>

Abelard's theology of charity enables him to recognize our desire for God as legitimate, but secondary. As Robert Wielockx has shown, this enables Abelard to offer an account of charity that retains the Augustinian desire for God, but subordinates it to the primary act of

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<sup>39</sup> Wielockx argues convincingly that at this stage in Abelard's thought "*voluntas*" signifies both a tendency and a willing ("à la fois la 'tendance' et le 'vouloir'") (Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour," pp. 200-201). For our purposes, the essential feature is that in the definition of love *voluntas* signifies a tendency and a willing toward benevolent action. In essence, it signifies benevolence.

<sup>40</sup> See Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour," p. 222.

<sup>41</sup> *Theologia scholarium* PL 178.983: "Sunt enim qui alios amare dicuntur, quacumque intentione bene alii esse desiderent. Qui cum id causa sui potius quam illorum agant, non tam hominem diligunt quam fortunam ejus sequuntur, nec tam commoda ipsius quam sua in illo venantur, nec tale desiderium tam caritas, id est amor honestus, ut dictum est, quam cupiditas, id est amor inhonestus ac turpis est dicendum." Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour," p. 219.

<sup>42</sup> *Commentaria ad romanos*: "Tales profecto homines fortunae potius dicendi sunt amici quam hominis, et per avaritiam magis quam per gratiam subiecti" (*Commentaria in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos*, in *Petri Abaelardi Opera theologica*, edited by E. M. Buytaert (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), vol. 1, p. 201. Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour," p. 228. One loves with true love, when one "ipsum videlicet propter se, non propter sua diligit" (*Commentaria ad romanos*, p. 202). Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour," p. 231.

<sup>43</sup> See Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour," p. 213; Jean Leclercq, "Notes abélardiennes, 8/9 *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale* (1966-1967), p. 59; Jean Leclercq, "*Adipsam sophiam Christum*: Le témoignage monastique d'Abélard," *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 46 (1970), p. 167.

good will toward God.<sup>44</sup> Thus, Abelard cautions that, “we are not talking about charity if we love God more for ourselves, in other words, for our own utility and for the happiness of his kingdom which we hope to receive from him, than for himself: in such a case we are placing our end in ourselves and not in him.”<sup>45</sup> Instead, charity loves God as a voluntary sacrifice of praise, “voluntary, because I love freely what I praise: let our love and our praise be gratuitous. What does gratuitous mean? It means for itself and not for something else.”<sup>46</sup> Charity thus wills and celebrates God’s goodness, and secondarily desires the joy of this goodness for itself. Abelard’s portrayal of charity here is heavily influenced by Cicero’s account of friendship.<sup>47</sup> As Constant Mews notes, this use of Ciceronian friendship is a true innovation. “Abelard draws on Cicero to define *amor* as a good will toward another that wishes that person’s good. Abelard’s definition of *caritas* as *amor honestus*, an attempt to use Cicero to explain a central theological virtue, has no precedent in classical or patristic literature.”<sup>48</sup> Moreover, his solution foreshadows the one that Aquinas will provide.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> See Wielockx, “La discussion scolastique sur l’amour,” pp. 229-233.

<sup>45</sup> *Commentaria ad romanos*, p. 201: “Nec iam etiam caritas dicenda si propter nos eum, id est pro nostra utilitate et pro regni eius felicitate quam ab eo speramus, diligemus potius quam propter ipsum, in nobis videlicet nostrae intentionis finem, non in ipso constituentes.” Wielockx, “La discussion scolastique sur l’amour,” p.227.

<sup>46</sup> *Commentaria ad romanos*, p. 201-202: “Quare voluntarie? Quia gratis amo quo laudo: gratuitum sit quod amatur et quo laudatur. Quid est gratuitum? Ipse propter se, non propter aliud. Si enim laudas Deum quod det tibi aliquid, iam non gratis amas Deum.” Wielockx, “La discussion scolastique sur l’amour,” pp. 230-231.

<sup>47</sup> See Wielockx, “La discussion scolastique sur l’amour,” pp. 216-219.

<sup>48</sup> Constant Mews, *Abelard and Heloise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) p. 206. Mews also argues that Abelard’s mature theology of charity was influenced by Heloise’s views expressed in her letters to him, an argument that partially depends on accepting his view that the letters contained in the *Epistolae duorum amantium* are indeed the lost letters that Abelard and Heloise exchanged in the early part of their relationship. See *ibid.* pp. 204-225 as well as Constant Mews, *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard: Perceptions of Dialogue in Twelfth-Century France* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), and Constant Mews, “Discussing Love: the *Epistolae duorum amantium* and Abelard’s *Sic et Non*,” *Journal of Medieval Latin* 19 (2009): pp. 130-147. If Mews is correct in his interpretation of Heloise’s influence on Abelard’s thought, this would imply that it was Abelard’s confrontation with the concrete demands of loving a particular human being that led him to develop a theology of charity based on the presence, and not the absence, of God.

<sup>49</sup> Wielockx notes with admiration that Abelard develops his friendship based theology of charity without access to books eight and nine of the *Nicomachean*

#### 4. Friendship, Emotion and Choice: Aquinas's Theology of Charity

How much contact Thomas Aquinas had with the earlier scholastic debates concerning charity is difficult to ascertain. Like the earlier scholastics, however, he too was confronted with the challenges posed by Augustine's definition of charity in *De Doctrina Christiana*. In responding to these challenges, Aquinas had several advantages over his predecessors. He had access to Aristotle's scientific works and a complete edition (including books eight and nine on friendship) of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, as well as good translations of the works of Pseudo-Dionysius.<sup>50</sup> A full presentation of St. Thomas' theology of charity is beyond the scope of this essay. In what follows, we shall focus on those elements of his psychology of love that bear directly on the issues addressed above: specifically, on the relationship between the desire for God as our happiness and the goodwill toward God proper to divine friendship. Aquinas' innovations can be broken into three categories. He offers a physics of love's motion, discerns an analogical hierarchy in love's affections, and provides an account of the acts proper to charity's friendship.

##### 4.1 *The Physics of Love's Motion*

St. Thomas tried to understand love's complexity by placing it within a larger study of natural motion. He begins with the assumption that all motion in creation – even the movement of a falling stone or of a growing tree – is somehow caused by love.<sup>51</sup> Aquinas is not affirming a naive anthropomorphism, as if falling stones or growing trees consciously and passionately desire the goals of their motion. The analogy is in the other direction: human action shares something in common with the motion of other natural things. Since human love is at the source of human action, this implies that human love also analogously shares something in common with the source of these other

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*Ethics*, which were not yet accessible to the Latin West. See Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour," p. 203, n. 90.

<sup>50</sup> Fernand Van Steenberghen, *Aristotle in the West: The Origins of Latin Aristotelianism*, translated by Leonard Johnston (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1970); Paul Moraux et al., *Aristote et saint Thomas d'Aquin: journées d'études internationales* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1957); Jean LeClercq, "Influence and noninfluence of Dionysius in the Western Middle Ages" in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, translated by Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), pp. 25-33.

<sup>51</sup> See *STh* I, q.20 a.2 and *In Divinis nominibus* 4.9.

actions. Aquinas' philosophy of participation and analogy enables him to describe the element that these principles of action generically share in common as types of love. Whether it was wise to describe these other natural principles as forms of love is a legitimate question.<sup>52</sup> It should not, however, distract us from Aquinas' insight: human love has something in common with the principles underlying the actions of other natural things.

But what is this common element? The most visible form of motion is local motion. An archer shoots an arrow to a target. We see the movement (the arrow flies toward the target), and its end (the arrow lodges in the target). Both features presuppose a third: that the materials employed in this activity are suitable.<sup>53</sup> The arrow, for example, must be aerodynamic. One cannot shoot a block of lead or a yard of string from a normal bow to the traditional distance of a bowshot. Local motion, therefore, presupposes a certain capacity or potency for the motion in question.<sup>54</sup> People can walk across a room; they cannot walk across the ceiling. The element of human love that is common to the motion of other things, however, implies more than a mere potency. For, although someone may have the capacity to be someplace, this does not imply that he would love to be there. The ability to be in a hospital does not

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<sup>52</sup> There is, however, among poets, philosophers and scientists a growing desire to underline the features common to all motion in nature, and even a willingness to describe the principles of this motions in terms of love. As Octavio Paz observed several years before his death, "Today, as modernity comes to an end, we are rediscovering that we are part of nature. The earth is a system of relationships, or as the Stoics put it, a 'conspiracy of elements' all moved by universal sympathy. We are parts, living pieces of that system. The idea of humanity's kinship with the universe appears at the very origin of the idea of love" (Octavio Paz, *The Double Flame, Love and Eroticism*, translated by Helen Lane [New York: Harcourt, 1995], pp. 269-270).

<sup>53</sup> Aquinas employs the analogy of the archer to explain natural motions inscribed in natural things by God. *In Physic.* 1.15.10 "omne quod appetit aliquid, vel cognoscit ipsum et se ordinat in illud; vel tendit in ipsum ex ordinatione et directione alicuius cognoscentis, sicut sagitta tendit in determinatum signum ex directione et ordinatione sagittantis." Indeed, the archer is one of Aquinas' favorite analogies for describing God's governance (*STh* I, q.2 a.3; q.19 a.4; q.23 a.1; q.59 a.3; q.103 a.1 ad 1; q.103 a.8) as well as the human person's rational and free participation in this governance (*STh* I-II, q.1 a.2; q.4 a.4 ad 2).

<sup>54</sup> See *In Physic.* 3.2.5: "antequam aliquid moveatur, est in potentia ad duos actus, scilicet ad actum perfectum, qui est terminus motus, et ad actum imperfectum, qui est motus: sicut aqua antequam incipiat calefieri est in potentia ad calefieri et ad calidum esse; cum autem calefit, reducitur in actum imperfectum, qui est motus; nondum autem in actum perfectum, qui est terminus motus, sed adhuc respectu ipsius remanet in potentia."

imply a love for hospitals. The element of love that is common to other things would seem to be reserved to natural motions: a stone falling to the earth, an acorn becoming an oak, or the deer longing for flowing streams. What these cases add to the general notion of capacity is *affinity* or inclination. The deer has an affinity for water; the acorn has an inclination toward becoming an oak; and according to the Aristotelian physics that Aquinas embraces, the stone has a certain inclination toward the earth to which it falls.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, the goal toward which these natural motions move has the character of a good, which for Thomas conveys the general notion of fullness or perfection of being.<sup>56</sup> It is the perfection of an acorn to become an oak; clean water promotes the full health of a deer. Natural motions occur because things have a natural affinity (a natural love) for their own good.

In the Latin translation of Aristotle's *Physics* that Aquinas employed, the verb used to translate a thing's "striving" for its natural good was "*appetere*," while the substantive form was "*appetitus*." For the Latin Aristotle, each thing has an "appetite" for its natural good.<sup>57</sup> Aquinas grounds his philosophy of love on Aristotle's philosophy of nature by affirming that every appetite has a corresponding love as its principle. "Love is something pertaining to appetite; since good is the object of both. Love, therefore, differs according to the difference of appetites."<sup>58</sup> Aquinas establishes a hierarchy among these appetites according to each motion's relationship to knowledge. Inanimate things and non-sensate living things, such as plants, strive toward their natural goals not from knowledge arising in them, but from the wisdom of their creator who inscribed these goals in their natures, "and this is called natural appetite."<sup>59</sup> Animals, however, pursue their goals when they cognitively apprehend them. Non-rational animals do this through sense cognition,

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<sup>55</sup> The argument can be made that, although according to Newtonian mechanics it would be nonsensical to describe a stone as having an affinity for the earth, General Relativity and Field Theory portray the relationships between things in motion in a way that could intelligibly be described as "affinities." Thus, although Aristotelian physics is outmoded in many ways, it is not as outmoded as has traditionally been affirmed.

<sup>56</sup> *STh* I, q.5 a.1 and *STh* I-II, q.18 a.1.

<sup>57</sup> See *Physics* 1.9 (192a15-20) in *Aristoteles latinus: Physica, Translatio Vetus*, edited by F. Bossier et J. Brams (Leiden: Brill, 1990), vol. 7.2, p. 39; see also *In Physic.* 1.15.10: "Nihil est igitur aliud appetitus naturalis quam ordinatio aliorum secundum propriam naturam in suum finem."

<sup>58</sup> *STh* I-II, q.26 a.1: "amor est aliquid ad appetitum pertinens, cum utriusque obiectum sit bonum. Unde secundum differentiam appetitus est differentia amoris."

<sup>59</sup> *STh* I-II, q.26 a.1: "et huiusmodi dicitur appetitus naturalis."



but from the necessities of instinct and “without free judgment.”<sup>60</sup> (The deer goes to the stream when she perceives it and naturally views the water as a good.) “Such is, in irrational animals, the sensitive appetite, which in man participates somewhat in freedom, in so far as it obeys reason.”<sup>61</sup> Lastly, rational animals, we humans, have an appetite that arises from goods we apprehend through the free judgments of our intellects, “and this is the rational or intellectual appetite, which is called the will.”<sup>62</sup> Aquinas describes the loves that underlie these appetites in the following terms.

In each of these appetites, love is the name given to the principle of movement towards the end loved. In the natural appetite the principle of this movement is the connaturality of a thing for that toward which it tends, and can be called natural love: such as the very connaturality of a heavy body for the center is from its weight and can be called its natural love. Similarly, the aptitude of the sensitive appetite or of the will to some good, that is to say, its very complacency in good is called sensitive love, or intellectual or rational love. For sensitive love is in the sensitive appetite, just as intellectual love is in the intellectual appetite.<sup>63</sup>

After having established a love that corresponds to each appetite, Aquinas is then able to consider the motions that flow from these loves. As we saw in the example of the archer, motion has a beginning, a middle and an end. It begins with a potency for motion forward the target; then there is the motion itself and the subsequent resting in the target. In natural motion, the relationship between these terms is even more intimate: the acorn has a connaturality toward becoming a mature oak, then it grows to maturity, and finally rests in the full activities of a

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<sup>60</sup> *STh* I-II, q.26 a.1: “non ex iudicio libero.”

<sup>61</sup> *STh* I-II, q.26 a.1: “Et talis est appetitus sensitivus in brutis, qui tamen in hominibus aliquid libertatis participat, in quantum obedit rationi.”

<sup>62</sup> *STh* I-II, q.26 a.1: “Et talis est appetitus rationalis sive intellectivus, qui dicitur voluntas.”

<sup>63</sup> *STh* I-II, q.26 a.1: “In unoquoque autem horum appetituum, amor dicitur illud quod est principium motus tendentis in finem amatum. In appetitu autem naturali, principium huiusmodi motus est connaturalitas appetentis ad id in quod tendit, quae dici potest amor naturalis, sicut ipsa connaturalitas corporis gravis ad locum medium est per gravitatem, et potest dici amor naturalis. Et similiter coaptatio appetitus sensitivi, vel voluntatis, ad aliquod bonum, idest ipsa complacentia boni, dicitur amor sensitivus, vel intellectivus seu rationalis. Amor igitur sensitivus est in appetitu sensitivo, sicut amor intellectivus in appetitu intellectivo.”

mature oak.<sup>64</sup> Likewise, we love water, desire it when we lack it, and enjoy drinking it when we attain it. This physics of love's motion enables Aquinas to portray love's relationship to desire and joy.

It is evident that whatever tends to an end, has first an aptitude or proportion to that end, for nothing tends to a disproportionate end; secondly, it is moved to that end; thirdly, it rests in the end, after having attained it. Now this very aptitude or proportion of the appetite to good is love, which is complacency in good; while movement towards good is desire or concupiscence; and rest in good is joy or pleasure.<sup>65</sup>

Although Aquinas recognizes that we regularly use the term love to describe both desire and joy, he views love as most properly referring to the principle of these two emotions: love is primarily an aptitude, proportion or connaturality that underlies all our other affections. As we have seen, St. Augustine had already described these dynamics in terms of will, desire and joy. Aquinas replaces Augustine's will with the more general Aristotelian terms such as aptitude, proportion and connaturality. Further, as we shall see, by introducing the Aristotelian distinction between sense appetite and rational appetite, Aquinas is able to offer a more nuanced account of the types of human love, joy and desire.<sup>66</sup>

#### 4.2 *The Analogical Hierarchy in Love's Affections*

Thomas Aquinas' treatise on the passions was a historical innovation that brought together the insights of many centuries.<sup>67</sup> It is from within this treatise that St. Thomas chooses to introduce his account of love, both the passion of love as found in the sense appetite and the spiritual love found in the will. Not only does this enable him to pass from what

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<sup>64</sup> The oak continues to grow throughout its life, but the point here is that the growth proper to the mature oak is not the same as the growth proper to the acorn in the process of becoming the mature oak.

<sup>65</sup> *STh* I-II, q.25 a.2: "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."

<sup>66</sup> For the distinction in Aristotle between sensitive and rational appetites, see *On the Soul* 2.3 (414a28-414b31) and *De Anima* 2.5.10.

<sup>67</sup> See Nicholas Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), pp. 1-3.

is more evident to our experience (the passion of love) to what is less evident (spiritual love), it also enables him to do justice to the affective character of even spiritual love. Drawing extensively on Pseudo-Dionysius's treatment of love in book four of the *Divine Names*, Aquinas describes how love causes deeper union, mutual indwelling, mutual ecstasy, melts the heart and can even be experienced as a wounding.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, it produces zeal and underlies all that the lover subsequently does.<sup>69</sup> Aquinas means all of these effects to apply analogously to both sense love and spiritual love.

But Aquinas introduces an important distinction. He argues that although our passions are not entirely under our control, love in the will is something we choose. We choose whom we wish to place in our spiritual affections and thus guide our actions. This is why, Aquinas explains, the primary Latin term for spiritual love is "*dilectio*" because, "*dilectio* implies, in addition to love, a preceding choice, as the word itself denotes."<sup>70</sup> This feature of spiritual love also seems to have influenced another aspect of Aquinas' terminology. As we have seen, Aquinas employs several different terms to convey love's affinity (*aptitudo*, *connaturalitas*, *proportio*, or *inclinatio*), but in the case of human love, both in the emotions and in the will, Aquinas prefers *complacentia*. The contemporary English word "complacency" does not capture the meaning of the Latin term. For Aquinas, *complacentia* is the Latin equivalent of the Greek *eudokeia*, which literally means satisfaction or approval, and regularly conveys the notion of being well pleasing, of being a pleasing affective affinity for some object judged to be good, whether an action, person or thing.<sup>71</sup> In the Latin Vulgate, the place where *complacentia* and *dilectio* occur together is at the baptism of Jesus, where God the Father's voice is heard from heaven saying: "this is my beloved son (*dilectus*), in whom I am well pleased (*mihi complacui*)."<sup>72</sup> For St. Thomas, therefore, the paradigm for spiritual love would seem to be the Father's love for the Son, a love that is itself the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit pours this love into our hearts, Aquinas' believes that charity itself has the character of friendship. It is friendship with God.

<sup>68</sup> *STh* I-II, q.28 a.1-3 and a.5.

<sup>69</sup> *STh* I-II, q.28 a.4 and a.6.

<sup>70</sup> *STh* I-II, q.26 a.3: "dilectio supra amorem, electionem praecedentem, ut ipsum nomen sonat."

<sup>71</sup> See Ceslas Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, translated and edited by James D. Ernest (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), volume 2, pages 99-106.

<sup>72</sup> Mt 3.17; see also Mt 17.5; Mk 1.11; Lk 3.22.

### 4.3 *The Acts Proper to Charity's Friendship*

As we have seen, both the later Augustine and the mature Abelard attempted to develop a notion of charity that gave primacy to benevolence in the will. Aquinas draws on Aristotle to give this theology of divine friendship a fuller foundation. First, there is the unique character of the will's love even on the natural level. Just as the passion of love produces desire for an absent good and enjoyment in a present good, so too love in the will. With this difference, however: Aquinas maintains (as did Abelard) that the will's desire and enjoyment are grounded in an act of benevolence. Aquinas draws on Aristotle to assert that "to love is to will good to someone."<sup>73</sup> Aquinas articulates more fully than Abelard or Augustine how willing the good of the beloved also entails a true desire for the good: "love has a twofold tendency: towards the good that a person wishes to someone (to himself or to another) and towards the one to whom he wishes some good."<sup>74</sup> Love is essentially love for someone.<sup>75</sup> 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.<sup>76</sup> 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

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<sup>73</sup> *STh* I-II, q.26 a.4: "amare est velle alicui bonum." See Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.4 (1380b35-1381a1): "To love (filein) signifies to will to another all that you hold to be good, and to do so for the other and not for yourself" (τὴν φιλίαν καὶ τὸ φιλεῖν ὀριστάμενοι λέγωμεν) ἔστω δὴ τὸ φιλεῖν τὸ βούλεσθαι τινὶ ἃ οἴεται ἀγαθὰ, (ἐκείνου ἕνεκα ἀλλὰ μὴ αὐτοῦ). See also: "amicitiam et amare diffinientes dicamus. Sit itaque amare velle alicui que putat bona, illius gratia, sed non sui" (*Aristoteles latinus: Rhetorica. Translatio Anonyma sive Vetus et Translatio Guillelmi de Moerbeke*, edited by B. Schneider [Leiden: Brill, 1978], vol. 31.1-2, p. 228).

<sup>74</sup> *STh* I-II, q.26 a.4: "sic ergo motus amoris in duo tendit, scilicet in bonum quod quis vult alicui, vel sibi vel alii; et in illud cui vult bonum."

<sup>75</sup> *STh* 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."

<sup>76</sup> Guy Mansini, "Duplex amor and the Structure of Love in Aquinas," in *Thomistica*, edited by E. Manning (Leuven: Peters, 1995): 137-196.

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.<sup>77</sup> Love of concupiscence is contained within the dynamism of our love of friendship for ourselves or for someone else.<sup>78</sup> 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."<sup>79</sup> Only subsequently do we then will particular good things for our beloved and direct our actions accordingly.<sup>80</sup>

All of this applies to divine friendship, however, only as elevated by divine grace in the virtue of charity. Indeed, Aquinas makes the astounding claim that charity itself is a form of friendship: "Charity is a certain friendship of man toward God."<sup>81</sup> Aristotle had explicitly denied that friendship with God was possible, because the distance between God and creatures was too great. Aquinas employs Aristotle's own understanding of friendship, however, to show that in the gift of

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<sup>77</sup> *STh* 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." *STh* II-II, q.25 a.3: "per amicitiam autem amatur uno quidem modo, amicus ad quem amicitia habetur; et alio modo, bona quae amico optantur." See also *STh* II-II, q.25 a.2.

<sup>78</sup> Since friendship is founded on union, not unity, we do not have friendship (*amicitia*) for ourselves, but something more than friendship (*STh* II-II, q.25 a.4). Nevertheless, the love we have for ourselves is the type of love that is proper to friendship (*STh* I-II, q.28 a.1 ad 2).

<sup>79</sup> *STh* II-II, q.25 a.7: "*unusquisque enim amicus primo quidem vult suum amicum esse et vivere.*" See Joseph Pieper's beautiful account of this in *About Love*, Translated by Richard and Clara Winston (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972), pp. 18-25 and reprinted in *Faith, Hope, Love* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), pp. 163-172.

<sup>80</sup> We see this progression described when we read the above cited sentence from *STh* 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 *STh* 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."

<sup>81</sup> *STh* II-II, q.23 a.1: "caritas amicitia quaedam est hominis ad Deum."

sanctifying grace God makes possible for us what would naturally be impossible. Aristotle had maintained that all friendship is based on a certain *koinonia*: communion of life, which is translated as “*communicatio*.” Aquinas draws on this to explain what grace effects within 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.<sup>82</sup>

For our purposes, the crucial feature of this account is that charity is founded on union with God, upon the reality of God's presence. This is why, in Aquinas' view, charity's act is more than merely benevolence: it also implies a union of affection.<sup>83</sup>

But Aquinas also recognizes that the deep and burning desire for God as our happiness and beatitude is at the foundation of the Christian life. In Aquinas's view, however, this love of desire is proper to hope. Aquinas appeals to the distinction between *amor amicitiae* and *amor concupiscentiae* to explain how charity both animates but differs from hope. Hope is “a love of concupiscence, by which one more loves oneself, desiring a good, than willing a good to another,” while charity “entails a love of friendship.”<sup>84</sup> Charity animates hope's desire for God because it is according to God's love for us: God also desires that we be united to him as our fulfillment.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, strictly speaking, the love of desire by which we desire to enjoy God is 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

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<sup>82</sup> *STh* 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.”

<sup>83</sup> *STh* II, q.27 a.2: “in dilectione, secundum quod est actus caritatis, includitur quidem benevolentia, sed dilectio sive amor addit unionem affectus.”

<sup>84</sup> The full text reads: “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” (*STh* II-II, q.66 a.6 ad 2).

<sup>85</sup> See *STh* II-II, q.25 a.4.

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.<sup>86</sup>

Hope is an imperfect love that loves God as our future fulfillment in heaven, while charity already participates in the perfection of heaven, because charity is already a union with him. By identifying the desire for God with hope, Aquinas effectively transcends Twelfth Century controversies concerning charity. Aquinas recognizes squarely that desiring to enjoy God is primarily to love oneself. This love is legitimate, however, because God wants this good for us. Nevertheless, this love is temporal and passing away, belonging to a virtue that exists only for the wayfarer. Charity, however, abides forever. St. Thomas Aquinas, therefore, drawing on the works of Aristotle and the Neo-Platonic writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius, was able to develop Augustine's deepest insights into the love of God and leave future generations a more adequate psychology of love.

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<sup>86</sup> *STh* 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."



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HARM GORIS, LAMBERT HENDRIKS, HENK SCHOOT (eds.)

# FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE

Thomas Aquinas on Living by the Theological Virtues

A collection of studies presented at the fourth conference of the  
*Thomas Instituut te Utrecht*, December 11-14, 2013

With contributions of

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