

LOVE AND CHARITY IN AQUINAS: *A SELECTIVE SKETCH*

The strategy of this inquiry into Thomistic charity will be as follows. Since Charity is a species of love, examining Aquinas's doctrine of love will immerse us into his Aristotelian anthropology and help set the stage to attain better clarity on his doctrine of charity. It only makes sense to understand the answer to the question "*What is love?*" before understanding "*What kind of love is charity?*" After looking at several ways Aquinas defines love, we will begin to grasp a much larger picture of his overall anthropology that assigns an interdependent relationship between the intellect and will. Exploring the dynamics of love will underscore how central love is to human nature in Thomistic anthropology—it is in fact the very principle of human life and, in a certain sense, the very essence of the human soul. Next, when the role of reason in love is considered we will see that *reasoned* love is the basis of free will in Aquinas. Particular attention will be given to highlighting the tension between Aquinas's apparent acceptance of certain kinds of natural necessities and human freedom.

Cashing in on these anthropological insights from the first section, I will illumine several corresponding aspects of Aquinas's doctrine of charity. First, I will show that Aquinas's maxim that *grace perfects nature* is exemplified vividly in his doctrine of charity, since in loving God our natural desire for happiness is fulfilled in such a way that happiness and God become the subjective and objective ways of defining our last end. Second, I will explain how charity is the mother of all virtues by being their efficient cause. Third, I will argue that in spite of the fact that love is a passion, charity is ultimately a participation in divine charity. When Aquinas argues that the *imago Dei* consists chiefly in the acts of knowing *and* loving, he is following his

anthropological insight that the intellect and the will operate as one principle. Finally, just as love as the proper act of the intelligent will is in a certain way the essence of the soul for Aquinas, so in many ways we can see an almost dualistic priority given to the soul in charity.

Love as the Proper Act of the Intellective Will

Defining Love and Distinguishing Its Effects

It is difficult to aggregate together Aquinas's insights about the nature of love in one concise definition. Before attempting this, Aquinas's different ways of describing the reality of love should be explored individually. Vocabulary that is essential to understanding key aspects of Aquinas's doctrine of love (e.g. the good, the last end, the means, passion, apprehension, etc.) will become progressively clear. For Aquinas love is an all-pervasive phenomenon so mysterious and broad as to be the cause of everything a person does, says, thinks, or feels.

First, Aquinas believes love is a *principle* of volitional movement and rest, thus distinguishing it from *desire* or *delight*, which he considers its effects.¹ When the object of love is not possessed, this causes the will's locomotion towards the object (or towards *union* with the object) with the intent of obtaining the object (or being *united* with it). This he calls *desire*. The only reason for the will's loving and therefore desiring some object is if the human intellect perceives it as "good." Aquinas's definition of "the good" is correlative with desire: "For since the good is what all seek, the notion of good is that which calms the desire. ... *good* means that

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the *Summa* are taken from the English translation, *Summa Theologica*, trans. by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 5 vols., rev. ed. (1948; repr., Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1981), 113-114 [henceforth cited in the standard manner *ST I.20.1.resp.*]. To be as specific as possible, I have distinguished between Aquinas's "On the Contrary" (the *sed contra*, herein abbreviated as *sed*), his "I answer that" (the *respondeo*, herein abbreviated as *resp*), and his answers to objections (the *adversus*, herein abbreviated as *ad*).

which simply pleases the appetite.”² When the object of love is possessed, the will (which Aquinas defines as an appetite) is at rest and reposes in the good, and this he calls *joy* or *delight*.

Although when the younger Aquinas wrote the *Scriptum*, he tended to define love as delight,³ the mature Aquinas does not want to reduce love to either desire or delight, but maintains that love is a preceding principle that causes both, depending on whether the lover *is* or *is not* united with the object loved. Although he allows for a certain linguistic flexibility in speech, allowing for desire or delight to still be called “love,”⁴ they are only love considered under a particular circumstance: love in pursuit of its object is desire (*love pursuing*) and love at rest in its object is delight (*love resting*). These terms (desire and delight) are therefore still understood as signifying love by capturing love’s acts or effects. But when it comes to proper definitions, he defines love as “the first movement of the will and of every appetitive faculty” regarding good apprehended universally by the intellect, *whether this good is considered as possessed or not*.⁵

Aquinas allows that evil can in some sense be an object of the will, but it can only be so indirectly as a consequence of the will’s appetite for the good.

Love is naturally the first act of the will and appetite; for which reason all the other appetite movements presuppose love, as their root and origin. For nobody desires anything nor rejoices in anything, except as a good that is loved: nor is anything an object of hate except as opposed to the object of love. Similarly, it is clear that sorrow, and other things like to it, must be referred to love as to their first principle.⁶

² *ST I-II.27.1.ad.3*. Aquinas also considers “the beautiful” as another way of talking about “the good.” “The notion of the beautiful is that which calms the desire, by being seen or known.”

³ Christopher J. Malloy, “Thomas on the Order of Love and Desire: A Development of Doctrine,” *The Thomist* 71 no. 1 (2007): 65-87. Malloy attributes this weakness to Aquinas’s interpretation of Augustine whom he interpreted as saying “Love is of what is already possessed.” *Ibid.* 65. Malloy points out that this exact quote cannot be found in Augustine, and that defining love this way changes love and desire’s order of generation, making desire the cause of love rather than *vice versa*. He further argues that Aquinas’s mature doctrine of love is nevertheless anticipated in the *Scriptum*.

⁴ For example, he allows for Augustine to define love as “*movement towards the object loved*,” which Aquinas technically considers *desire*. *ST I-II.27.4.resp.*

⁵ *ST I.20.1.resp.* Italics added.

⁶ *ST I.20.1.resp.*

Any negative stance the will takes toward something (e.g. sorrowing or hating) thus depends on the will's first act of love for the good. While evil is the object of the will only in this indirect sense, the good is "essentially and especially the object of the will and the appetite," and the two chief *effects* of love are circumstantial and necessarily presuppose love as their principle: *joy* or *delight* which apprehend good under the special condition of being present or possessed, and *desire* or *hope* which apprehend good as being absent or not possessed.⁷

Second, as appears from Aquinas's way of defining love, apprehension of any particular good or goods *as good* depends logically upon a universal notion or apprehension of the good in a similar way that all truth depends logically upon the law of non-contradiction. Although the human has the habit of theoretical reasoning about propositions as true or false which Aquinas calls the speculative intellect,⁸ the part of the intellect that apprehends good as good Aquinas calls the practical intellect, and the *habitus* of the intellect whereby it apprehends the good as good is called *synderesis*.⁹ Although one's judgment can often be mistaken, one only needs to *apprehend* something as a good in some way for it to become an object of love. "In order that the will tend to anything, it is requisite not that this be good in very truth, but that it be apprehended as good."¹⁰ Apprehension of the intellect thus logically precedes love.

Third, love is a complacency (*complacentia*) or "pleasing assent" in "the good" and is therefore also a passion because it consists in a certain *change* in the human appetite brought

⁷ *ST I.20.1.resp.* These categories (apprehension, love, desire, delight, etc.) are fundamental to Aquinas's entire theology, and they will correspond to the theological virtues. The basic ontology at work in the phenomenon of love (often called Thomas's "psychology of love") is what gets transformed by grace in justification.

⁸ *ST I-II.57.2.resp.*

⁹ *ST I.79.12..resp.*

¹⁰ *ST I-II.8.1.resp.*

about by love's object.¹¹ Complacency in the good should not be confused with the calming of desire (*joy* or *delight*), however, for it is rather the cause of both desire and delight.

The first change wrought in the appetite by the appetible object is called love, *and is nothing else than complacency in that object* and from this complacency results a movement towards that same object, and this movement is *desire*; and lastly, there is rest which is *joy*. Since, therefore, love consists in a change wrought in the appetite by the appetible object, it is evident that love is a passion.¹²

In this sense, the human will is *passive* in love (and love is therefore a *passion*) inasmuch as the proper objects of the will in a certain way *act upon* and *cause a change in* the human appetite known as the will. The change (called "love") brought about by the appetible object is here called complacency. It is important to recognize that Aquinas does not reserve the word passion only for peculiarly intense movements of the soul, but any movement whatsoever brought about when a power's "object" becomes its "active principle" by being the reason or cause of its movement.¹³ In the case of love, the power in consideration is the human will, which is an appetite vulnerable to being moved by an object that the intellect apprehends as able to satisfy the will's appetite.¹⁴ This is why Aquinas will elsewhere also define love as "a certain adapting of the appetitive power to some good" that is "suitable to it."¹⁵ Crucial also to understanding

¹¹ Michael Sherwin, O.P., *By Knowledge and By Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 78. The phrase "pleasant affective affinity" is also used by Sherwin (46). Sherwin traces the development of Aquinas's way of explaining the reality of love. At first he defined it as a "transformation" of affection when it receives the "form" of its object. Over time, however, Aquinas's way of explaining this became more and more sophisticated, transcending the limitations of his earlier ways of defining love in his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* (the *Scriptum*).

¹² *ST I-II.26.2.resp.* Italics added.

¹³ *ST I-II.41.1.resp.* Aquinas divides all movements into two categories: 1) action and 2) passion. He gives the example of a heating. The "act" of heating is to cause heat, but the "passion" of heating is a movement towards heat. Aquinas admits that one and the same thing (such as heating) can be considered both an action and a passion, seen in different ways. "And either way, human acts, whether they be considered as actions, or as passions, receive their species from the end. For human acts can be considered in both ways, since man moves himself, and is moved by himself." *ST I-II.3.resp.* Here Aquinas appears to explain this difference as one between *moving* and *being moved*.

¹⁴ Since objects also act upon the human understanding, "both *to feel* and *to understand* are passions." *ST I-II.41.1.resp.*

¹⁵ *ST I-II.28.5.resp.*

Aquinas's view of the passions is his distinction between the formal and material aspects of a passion—the formal aspect is the immaterial movement of the soul in response to an object, and the material aspect is the bodily effect that accompanies the immaterial movement.¹⁶ When Aquinas says that passions belong to the “sensitive appetite,” he does not mean their specified objects are sensual in nature¹⁷ but simply has in mind their material element as the corporeal counterpart to the spiritual element.¹⁸

Fourth, since the will is the principle of movement for all other human powers, love as the proper act of the will can be seen as the cause of all interior and exterior human acts.¹⁹ Aquinas distinguished between interior acts and exterior acts as between cause and effect, with the exception of internal bodily acts such as the beating of the heart that pumps blood throughout the body, which he considered wholly involuntary.²⁰ Apart from certain interior acts of the bodily organs, however, all human acts (both interior and exterior) are in some way voluntary—

¹⁶ *ST* I-II.41.1.*resp.*

¹⁷ “Now the sensitive appetite does not consider the common notion of good, because neither do the senses apprehend the universal. . . . But the will regards good according to the common notion of good, and therefore in the will, which is the intellectual appetite, there is no differentiation of appetitive powers. . . . The will itself may be said to be irascible, as far as it wills to repel evil, not from any sudden movement of a passion, but from a judgment of the reason. And in the same way the will may be said to be concupiscible on account of its desire for good. And thus in the irascible and concupiscible are charity and hope—that is, in the will as ordered to such acts. And in this way, too, we may understand the words quoted (*De Spiritu et Anima*); that the irascible and concupiscible powers are in the soul before it is united to the body (as long as we understand priority of nature, and not of time).” *ST* I.82.5.

¹⁸ As we will see later, this distinction becomes half the reason why Aquinas argues passions cannot exist in God who has no body, the other half lies in God's perfection which cannot allow for passions that imply that any goodness outside of God “acts upon” his will in such a way as to move him to possess it, which would be impossible since God possess all goodness perfectly in himself.

¹⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil*, trans. Richard Regan, ed. Brian Davies (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 257 [henceforth cited in the standard manner: *De malo* 6.1]. cf. Thomas Aquinas, *On Love and Charity: Readings from the “Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard,”* trans. Peter A. Kwasniewski, Thomas Bolin, O.S.B., and Joseph Bolin (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 143 [henceforth cited in the standard manner with page numbers in brackets: *In II Sent.*, 27.1.4.*ad.*12 [143]]. cf. *ST* I-II.9.3.*resp.* Even though Aquinas believes that humans can act out of instinctive love, he focuses on actions that are uniquely human. “Of actions done by man those alone are properly called *human*, which are proper to man as man. . . . Now man is the master of his actions through his reason and will; whence, too, the free-will is defined as *the faculty and will of reason*. Therefore those actions are properly called human which proceed from a deliberate will. And if any other actions are found in man, they can be called actions *of a man*, but not properly *human* actions.” *ST* I-II.1.1.*resp.*

²⁰ *ST* I-II.17.9.*resp.*

that is, they are moved or commanded by the human will.²¹ Concerning human actions that rise above the level of mere instinct, “exterior action is the object of the will, inasmuch as [the action] is proposed to the will by the reason, as a good apprehended” and the act’s execution “is an effect of the will.”²² Inasmuch as potential actions (or courses of action) are proposed to the will by the reason, they can themselves be objects of the will.²³ The will must first *desire* the act’s execution before it is executed, which presupposes love as the principle of all action.

In this sense, when Aquinas says the human will is the “efficient cause” of all exterior acts,²⁴ this is only because exterior actions are an object of love in some way. When Aquinas takes for granted that the will is *the mover* and the human body is *the thing moved*,²⁵ he understands the movement as presupposing the proper act of the will—namely, love.²⁶ In other words, all human action is motivated by the will in some way that presupposes a *desired* goal, object or end (even if it is as trite as getting out of bed, or as weighty as getting married). In the moment of decision (where a human settles on a course of action) this object (the action) is perceived as a good not yet attained, which moves the will to command action.²⁷ But the actions themselves are not the *ultimate* goal. Human actions are always *a means to or for the sake of*

²¹ This distinction can be seen very clearly at work in his answer of the question of whether sin consists chiefly in the acts of the will. He concludes “if we should understand the sinful acts as regards carrying out the deeds, then moral wrong is primarily and fundamentally in the will.” *De Malo* 2.4.*resp.*

²² *ST* I-II.20.1.*ad.1*

²³ They are never proposed to the will as “naked” or mechanical actions, but are always proposed to the will as taking their meaning from how they are understood by the agent as related to some end. In this sense, actions are proposed to the will as already interpreted as to their meaning, and hence as to their value or worth.

²⁴ *ST* I-II.20.1.*ad.3*

²⁵ *ST* I-II.17.4.*ad.1*.

²⁶ This is why harmony (or “unity”) exists between an exterior act and the will, its interior cause. *ST* I-II.4

²⁷ In this sense, we can still see all human actions as being caused ultimately by the end, which *acts upon* the will (which is why the will’s proper act is a *passion*). **This is why Aquinas defends the thesis that “the end is the principle in human operations, as the Philosopher states (*Phys.* ii. 9).** Therefore it belongs to man to do everything for an end.” *ST* I.1.1.*sed.*

some end.²⁸ But within such a teleological framework, first the object (in this case, action) acts upon the will causing complacency; second the will desires the object as a good not obtained; and third the will moves the human to action as a means for obtaining the end.

Once we understand this chain of causation in human action, we can make sense of Aquinas's often repeated temporal distinction—"the end [is] last in the order of execution, yet it is first in the order of the agent's intention. And it is in this way that it is a cause" of human action.²⁹ In other words, intention is temporally first while union is temporally last. First we desire the object, then we are moved to obtain the object, last we obtain the object (union) and we cease from desiring it. In this way, the desired object that acts upon the will and causes human action is first *intended* to be obtained before it is obtained. Intention precedes and causes union just as desire precedes and causes possession. Intention (caused by apprehension of a good) and desire both "move" the agent to seek the loved object, and so can be considered *motive*.³⁰ Motive specifies the nature of an act and determines its species. "We call moral acts generically good or evil by reason of their object. . . . And because an end is the first object of the will, the internal act acquires its species from its end." In other words: *Motive defines action by causing it*. Without intention, there can be no *motive* for the *motions* of soul and body and no direction towards which they move. Aquinas's ubiquitous claim that all agents act for the sake of some end simply makes human action intelligible.

Love not only causes all exterior action, but also all interior acts (excluding the acts of certain bodily organs that are involuntary). The will "moves the intellect, and all the powers of

²⁸ "Now it is clear that whatever actions proceed from a power, are caused by that power in accordance with the nature of its object. But the object of the will is the end and the good. Therefore all human actions must be for an end." *ST I-II.1.1.resp.*

²⁹ *ST I-II.1.1.ad.1.*

³⁰ *De malo 7.4.*

the soul.”³¹ But the will’s proper act is love, so “there is no other passion of the soul that does not presuppose love of some kind.”³²

The reason [all passions presuppose love] is that every other passion of the soul implies either movement towards something, or rest in something. . . . It is not possible for any other passion of the soul to be universally the cause of every love.³³

[Even] when a man loves a thing for the pleasure it affords, his love is indeed caused by pleasure; but that very pleasure is caused, in its turn, by another preceding love; for none takes pleasure save in that which is loved in some way.³⁴

Desire, sadness and pleasure, and consequently all the other passions of the soul, result from love. Wherefore every act that proceeds from any passion, proceeds also from love as from a first cause.³⁵

All the passions of the soul arise from one source, viz., love, wherein they are connected with one another.³⁶

Love causes all the deepest inner dynamics of a human being—*desire, hope, fear, hatred, jealousy, zeal, sadness or joy*.³⁷ Love “is the root and cause of every emotion,”³⁸ for each emotion is generated only in its relation to some good apprehended by the intellect.³⁹

It might seem counterintuitive that hatred would be caused by love, its contrary. To understand how Aquinas explains this we must first recall that a loved object acts upon the will.

³¹ *ST I.82.4.resp.*

³² *ST I-II.27.4.resp.*

³³ *ST I-II.27.4.resp.*

³⁴ *ST I-II.27.4.ad.1.*

³⁵ *ST I-II.28.6.ad.2.*

³⁶ *ST I-II.41.1.ad.1.*

³⁷ *ST I-II.25.3; ST I-II.28.4.resp.*

³⁸ *ST I-II.62.2.ad.3.*

³⁹ This means the recent shift in empirical science, cognitive theory, philosophy, theology, and biblical interpretation to recognize emotions as value laden judgments, cognitive in nature, intelligent, or thereby essential to godliness in some way is nothing new, but was understood by Augustine and Aquinas before modern science or Jonathan Edwards reaffirmed it against certain popular Enlightenment prejudices. Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes’ Error: Emotion Reason and the Human Brain* (New York, NY: Avon Books, 1994); Robert C. Solomon, *The Passions* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976) and “On Emotions and Judgments,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 25 (1998): 183-191; Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Robert C. Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions: A Psychology of Christian Virtues* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007); Brian S. Borgman, *Feelings and Faith: Cultivating Godly Emotions in the Christian Life* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2009); Matthew A. Elliott, *Faithful Feelings: Rethinking Emotion in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Academic, 2006).

A prerequisite for an object's ability to act upon the will in this way is for the object to have (or appear to have) a certain "kinship or aptness to that thing."⁴⁰ The loved object must be perceived not just as a good, but also a good "fitting" (*conveniens*) to the lover in particular (fitting to her nature as a human, fitting to her character, fitting to her circumstances, etc.).⁴¹ One's reason for hating something is the same as one's seeing that something as "unfitting," or in some way in "disagreement" with what one loves. To say it yet another way "it amounts to the same that one love a certain thing, or that one hate its contrary," and what is hated is only hated by reason of what is loved.⁴² "Consequently love must needs precede hatred; and nothing is hated, save through being contrary to a suitable thing which is loved."⁴³ In terms of the will's motion, its turning away from one term is caused by reason of its turning toward some other term.⁴⁴

A similar explanation is used to describe all the other movements of the soul. They all presuppose love as their cause.⁴⁵ The intellect apprehends according to love and is directed to its acts by the will's love (we will examine this aspect of love more deeply in the next section). Hope arises from love of a possible future good; fear arises from love of a good when its attainment or possession is threatened in some way; anger arises from love of justice when it is violated, etc.⁴⁶ Since the interior acts of the soul are the cause of exterior human action, Aquinas

⁴⁰ *ST I-II.27.4.resp.*

⁴¹ Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 73.

⁴² *ST I-II.29.2.ad.2.*

⁴³ *ST I-II.29.2.resp.*

⁴⁴ *ST I-II.29.2.ad.3.*

⁴⁵ Aquinas's taxonomy of the passions is neatly summarized in *ST I-II.25.3.resp.*

⁴⁶ *ST I-II.41.1-2.* Aquinas's way of explaining the human phenomenon of emotions and passions demonstrates their ability to be evaluated morally—that is, their ability to be either praiseworthy or blameworthy. William Mattison, relying on Thomistic moral theology, uses his treatment of the emotion of anger to demonstrate how this aspect of emotion is so often overlooked to the detriment of moral theology. His article is an example of how focusing on this aspect of emotions can be constructive for the development of virtue inasmuch as one can cultivate the habituation of virtuous emotions. He argues, for example, that emotional propensity can be shaped by deliberate choices that shape how one will be aroused emotionally in the future, that virtuous emotions effect a certain promptness in virtuous actions (thereby making them easier to perform), and that without harnessing the great power of emotions for the sake of virtue we neglect to reckon with the way we are built as humans. William

concedes that love is the cause of all the lover does, as “Dionysius says (Div. Nom. iv.) ... *all things, whatever they do they do for the love of good.*”⁴⁷ This point can also be seen from Aquinas’s ubiquitous maxim that “every agent, of necessity, acts for an end,” since acting for the sake of an end is the same as acting for the sake of an object of love.⁴⁸ Acting for the sake of end implies desire for that end, which presupposes love.

Fifth, the previous analysis shows that Aquinas’s understanding of love as the proper act of the will makes human life thoroughly *teleological*. All actions are intended to accomplish something. We cannot, however, stop our inquiry into the intelligibility of human acts merely at *proximate* ends, but must inquire about why a certain set of proximate ends are themselves desired. If a human is involved in a number of actions that have their own ends (e.g. going to school *in order* get a degree, while raising children *in order* for them to be well mannered, while working *in order to* provide for his family, etc.), we must ask why this group of penultimate ends are desired (for what reason is the degree, well mannered children, and consistent provision for the family desired?). If this group of penultimate goals (as opposed to some other group) has no overarching purpose or order, the goals would be arbitrary and ultimately unintelligible, since there is no *reason* for them. Whatever reason someone has for their particular set of goals in life, it will indirectly reveal their apprehension of *the point* of their life.

For Aquinas, as for Aristotle, humans do not have the privilege of choosing their ultimate end any more than they have the privilege of choosing their nature—their ultimate end is given to them by God. This ultimate end is happiness. Although all people seek happiness as a part of their human nature, different people seek to obtain it through different *means*. In this

Mattison, “Virtuous Anger? From Questions of *Vindictio* to the Habituation of Emotion,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 24 no. 1 (2004): 159-179.

⁴⁷ *ST* I-II.28.6.*sed.*

⁴⁸ *ST* I-II.1.2.*resp.*

teleological schema, no human acts are intelligible apart from an understanding of their ultimate *intention*, which is found in the will's proper act, which is love.

Sixth, love is also defined as a certain "aptitude or proportion" to an end. Recall that Aquinas used this language of "aptness" in his explanation of why hatred is caused by its opposite, love. But Aquinas also uses this language to define love itself by arguing that love implies a certain fittingness or proportion between the lover and the object loved.

In the order of execution, the first place belongs to that which takes place first in the thing that tends to the end. Now it is evident that whatever tends to an end, has, in the first place, 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. *And this very aptitude or proportion of the appetite to good is love, which is complacency in good.*⁴⁹

This leads nicely into the seventh point, which is Aquinas's definition of love as a unitive principle. Aquinas adapts Dionysius's maxim that love is a "*uniting and binding force*," but distinguishes between the sort of union implied once the loved object is possessed (joy) and the sort of union that precedes possession.⁵⁰ The former he calls *real union* which is implied in joy or delight, the latter he calls *affective union*, and consists in "an aptitude or proportion" to the end that causes desire. But as we have seen, this aptitude or proportion is love. Sherwin calls this "affective proportion."⁵¹ Before the object is desired, the agent apprehends it as belonging to her well-being, which is a kind of "apprehension of the oneness of the thing loved with the lover."⁵² The lover thereby "partakes" of the loved object by receiving its form in the apprehension and finding complacency in it. The object thus indwells the lover's affections. This seems to imply that the very apprehension of the loved object causes pleasure in the one who apprehends *before* it is possessed *or* desired, but Aquinas will not call it pleasure since he

⁴⁹ *ST I-II.25.2.resp.* Italics added.

⁵⁰ *ST I-II.28.resp.*

⁵¹ Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 71.

⁵² *ST I-II.28.1.resp.*

argues that “desire precedes pleasure.”⁵³ Nevertheless, this complacency (although we cannot call it pleasure) is also called affective union (“according to a bond of affection”) and is “essentially love.”⁵⁴ This affective bond, if not the indwelling itself, causes the indwelling of a loved object through the affections.⁵⁵

As the appetitive power, *the object loved is said to be in the lover, inasmuch as it is in his affections*, by a kind of complacency; causing him either to take pleasure in it, or in its good, when present; or, in the absence of the object loved, by his longing . . . Complacency in the beloved is rooted in the lover’s heart. For this reason we speak of love as being *intimate*; and of *the bowels of charity*.⁵⁶

Therefore, affective union (which Aquinas calls love) and the will’s complacency in the good (which is also love), in addition to causing desire, also cause the object of affection to dwell in the person *via* apprehension. In summary: love is the compatibility between an agent’s appetite and the object of that appetite; this could also be called “affective union” which causes the indwelling of the loved object in the lover; this complacency precedes and causes desire which moves the agent toward possession of the object loved; it is therefore a unitive principle. Once the object is possessed, the desire calms, the will reposes, and the soul delights—and this is the perfection of love.

Love as The Principle of Human Life and Essence of the Soul

This summary of Aquinas’s doctrine of love demonstrates Aquinas’s Aristotelian anthropology: he thinks of human nature largely in terms of a dialectic between the intellect and the will. If a person’s will can only have as its proper object something it apprehends with the intellect as a good, it would seem that the human will is structurally dependent upon the

⁵³ *ST I-II.25.2.resp.*

⁵⁴ *ST I-II.28.1.ad.2.*

⁵⁵ *ST I-II.28.2.resp.*

⁵⁶ *ST I-II.28.2.resp.* Italics added. Whenever two agents have each other indwelling in their affections, this is called friendship. “Mutual indwelling in the love of friendship can be understood in regard to reciprocal love.”

intellect's apprehension. Likewise it would seem that if love—*which is the proper act of the human will*—is the principle of all uniquely human acts—*whether these acts be considered as interior acts or exterior acts*—then even the acts of the intellect (reflection, deliberation, speculation, focus, contemplation) must necessarily be executed only at the command of the will (what to reflect upon on, what to deliberate about, what is worth speculating about, what to turn its attention to as a focus, which objects to contemplate and for how long and for what reason, etc.). This might be considered as an anthropological irreducible complexity. By this I mean no more than that the will and the intellect are mutually dependent and do not operate autonomously, but rely on one another for their proper acts; one does not make sense without the other.

Michael Sherwin has referred to this irreducible complexity in terms of *priority*: the intellect has a structural priority over the will but the will has priority over the intellect in terms of how it is exercised.⁵⁷ As Sherwin notes, “the first innovation that St. Thomas introduces into his [mature] account is to describe intellect and will as a single principle of action.”⁵⁸ It must be admitted, however, that Aquinas gleans this insight from Aristotle.⁵⁹ Following Aristotle's maxim that “the will is in the reason,” the mature Aquinas defends the irreducible complexity of human nature against those who would want to separate (rather than merely distinguish) the acts of will and intellect:

⁵⁷ Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 46. The point of Sherwin's book is to defend the Augustinian insight in Aquinas that *one cannot love what one does not know* against Josef Fuchs and James Keenan who have developed the Rahnerian doctrine of transcendental freedom in a way that views the will's motion in transcendental freedom as antecedent to, or independent of, practical reasoning and objects of choice. They interpreted the mature Aquinas in a way that lends support to this doctrine. Sherwin argues that although there was indeed development in Aquinas's mature thought, nevertheless there remained in Aquinas a basic continuity on the point in question: *knowledge always has a structural priority over the will*. See also Jean Porter, “Recent Studies in Aquinas's Virtue Ethic: A Review Essay,” *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 26, no. 1 (1998): 197-202.

⁵⁸ Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 39.

⁵⁹ In response to an objection that cites Aristotle where he seems to make the human intellect higher than love, Aquinas disputes the interpretation: “... for the Philosopher the term ‘intellect’ embraces both intellect and the will corresponding to it, as also the term ‘reason’ at times embraces both reason and will.” *In II Sent.* 27.1.4.ad.1 [141].

... they mutually include each other: intellect knows the will, and the will has appetite for or loves what pertains to intellect.⁶⁰

... they are distinct powers; ... But as both are rooted in the same substance of the soul, and since one is in a certain way the principle of the other, consequently what is in the will is, in a certain way, also in the intellect.⁶¹

... the objects of the will fall under the intellect, and those of the intellect can fall under the will.⁶²

The affections of the soul are in the intellect... as the thing caused is in its principle.⁶³

It is by virtue of the will that all action has intentionality, or to put it Aquinas's way, all actions have an end (or goal) in view. By the nature of the case, however, with any action we can ask why the will is inclined to a particular goal such as taking a walk, graduating from college, becoming a husband, or striving to be healthy. Whatever that goal is, we might likewise ask why the will desires this goal as a goal, and so on indefinitely. Here Aquinas borrows again from Aristotle, who argued that this chain of intentionality stops at happiness because once we arrive at happiness as the end, it does not make sense to expect an answer for why we desire to be happy, as if happiness were chosen for the sake of something else.⁶⁴ So strongly does Aquinas believe this, he calls it a "natural necessity" that the will should adhere to happiness, which he then calls "the last end" after Aristotle.⁶⁵

If the intellect's act is caused by the will, but the will could only execute such an act with the intention of obtaining an apprehended good, we have the circularity problem of the chicken and the egg: *which comes first logically?* Aquinas will not allow for circularity here, insisting instead (as did Aristotle) between the acts of the intellect and the intellect's "first act," which is

⁶⁰ *In II Sent.* 27.1.4 [140].

⁶¹ *ST* 1.87.4.*ad.*1.

⁶² *ST* 1.87.4.*ad.*2.

⁶³ *ST* 1.87.4.*ad.*3.

⁶⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., trans. by Terence Irwin (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1999), I.7.4-8 (1097a31-1097b21).

⁶⁵ *ST* 1.82.1.*resp.*

caused by human nature itself. He makes the same distinction with the human will's "first act" which is owing to the "instigation of nature," which, as Sherwin notes, is ultimately a way of viewing God as the "higher cause" and creator of human nature.⁶⁶

Now that we have established that the will and the intellect are two faculties acting as a single principle of action, we might ask whether Aquinas thinks that the human soul is the same as this principle, since he says these are "rooted in the same substance of the soul." Aquinas refused to separate the human soul from corporeality, viewing the latter instead as the "mode" of the former by which it exists (**he gets this too from Aristotle**). Aquinas's account of creation culminates in his treatment of the human as a *composite*, for he starts by considering the creation of spiritual and corporeal realities (e.g. the angelic realm and the cosmos), concluding that man is a microcosm of all creation containing both realities (spiritual and corporeal) in one composite.

A standard praise of Aquinas's anthropology regards his viewing the human person as a composite of the spiritual and the corporeal (rather than "essentially" a soul or "essentially" a body).⁶⁷ Aquinas's view avoids two extremes: thinking of the human body as merely accidental to the soul (the Cartesian error of Dualism) or reducing the human to mere physical processes (the materialist error known as Physicalism).⁶⁸ This point should not obscure the fact, however, that Aquinas did not thereby refrain from critically distinguishing these two aspects of the human person. On the contrary, they are related in Aquinas as cause and effect. Furthermore, Aquinas is not actually interested in an account of human nature generically, but as Pasnau points out,

⁶⁶ Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 57-58.

⁶⁷ I choose the word "essentially" here because although Aquinas believes the human person is not essentially body or essentially soul, he does believe (as we will see) the human person is primarily soul and not primarily body.

⁶⁸ e.g. Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), 208; John Inglis, *On Aquinas*, Wadsworth Philosophers Series (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2002), 208; Peter S. Eardley and Carl N. Still, *Aquinas: A Guide to the Perplexed* (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 35-38. Although it is right to appropriate Aquinas against modern materialist science, Aquinas's arguments were intended more against pre-Socratic materialist philosophy. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 129.

“the nature of human beings *with reference to the soul.*”⁶⁹ Aquinas’s account of human nature is unintelligible apart from a crucial distinction between the body and soul. Not only this, but Aquinas gives primacy to the human soul in his account of human nature, going as far as to say that although human beings are a composite, they are *primarily* soul.⁷⁰

Given the complexity of our human nature and the limitations of human knowing, however, Aquinas hesitates to reduce the human soul to intellect and will. He thinks we cannot fully know the essence of a human soul (or essences in general for that matter). The best we can do is take note of its capacities. We frequently make use of something’s “leading capacities” as our best shot at understanding its “essence.”⁷¹ The unique capacity of the human is reason, and reason and will have a certain functional dependence upon one another, as we have seen. However, thinking of the human soul as this principle is the closest we can come to grasping the essence of the human soul.

Although Aquinas will not equate the human intellective will with the human soul, we should take note of just how close Aquinas comes to doing this, for he considers all souls as principles of movement and, life as the principle of self-movement. Speaking of life, Aquinas says:

The name [life] is given from a certain external appearance, namely, self-movement, yet not precisely to signify this, but rather a substance to which self-movement and the application of itself to any kind of operation, belong naturally. To live, accordingly, is nothing else than to exist in this or that nature; and life signifies this, though in the abstract, just as the word *running* denotes *to run* in the abstract.⁷²

⁶⁹ Italics added. Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 166. cf. *ST* I.75.

⁷⁰ *ST* II-II.26.5.ad.1.

⁷¹ Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 165.

⁷² *ST* I.18.2.resp.

To live, then, means to exist in this or that nature so as to have self-movement “so far as it operates of itself and not as moved by another.”⁷³ Now movement can result from natural instinct, which is found in both animals and humans, or from reason, which is unique to humans. In either case, however, love is the cause of all actions. In the case of instinct, we are moved by our nature in the first act of the intellect and will—*which naturally desires to be happy and naturally tends toward objects as apprehended under the notion of the good*—and this is caused by the creator of our nature, namely, God.⁷⁴ In the case of uniquely human movement that results from reason, however, our actions flow not from the first acts of intellect and will, but from the irreducible dialectic between these two faculties. In this sense we might speak of an *instinctive love* pre-wired in humans on the one hand, and a *reasoned love* that results from the dialectic between the faculties of intellect and will. Therefore, we are not far off to say that for Aquinas, in being the principle of human self-movement love is the principle of life, and in being the proper act of the intellective will (which term fuses the human soul’s two leading capacities) love is the closest thing to the essence of the human soul.

Reasoned Love as the Basis of Human *Liberum Arbitrium*

If our foregoing analysis is sound, it can be said further that Aquinas’s *reasoned love* provides the basis for his argument that humans possess *liberum arbitrium* (free will). Although love is so inclusive as to be the cause of all human acts and emotions, Aquinas’s *liberum arbitrium* (free will) is only inclusive of all human motions or acts that flow from reason. As Eleonore Stump recognizes, *liberum arbitrium* in Aquinas cannot be reduced to the property of

⁷³ *ST I.18.3.resp.*

⁷⁴ Aquinas still would consider instinctive self-movement as signifying life, but to a lesser degree. “Since a thing is said to live in so far as it operates of itself and not as moved by another, the more perfectly this power is found in anything, the more perfect is the life of that thing.” *ST I.18.3.resp.* Thus instinctive movement of humans is less perfect life, and movement resulting from reason is more perfect life or life “in a higher degree.” Both however, signify life.

the will only, but is an exercise of will *and* reason, putting them together with Aristotle's term "intellective appetite."⁷⁵

We have free-will with respect to what we will not of necessity, nor by natural instinct. For our will to be happy does not appertain to free-will, but to natural instinct. Hence other animals, that are moved to act by natural instinct, are not said to be moved by free-will.⁷⁶

Some things act without judgment; as a stone moves downwards; and in like manner all things which lack knowledge. And some act from judgment, but not a free judgment; as brute animals. ... But man acts from judgment, because by his apprehensive power he judges that something should be avoided or sought. But because this judgment, in the case of some particular act is not from a natural instinct, but from some act of comparison in the reason, therefore he acts from free judgment and retains the power of being inclined to various things. ... And forasmuch as man is rational is it necessary that man have a free will.⁷⁷

Human nature has been predetermined to desire happiness instinctively, and inasmuch as this desire is caused by the intellects apprehension it presupposes love as the principle of movement; yet it is also part of the very fabric of uniquely human nature to have the capacity to judge for itself (before choosing) the merits of two opposite courses of action based on how they fit more or less fully with the universal concept of "the good." In this paradoxical way, human beings are predetermined to be *self*-determined by their very nature. Ironically, they have no choice but to be free.

But this raises the problem of interior determinism.⁷⁸ Since the will is naturally inclined toward the good, does it not seem that "when reason presents a good the will would seem constrained to will it?"⁷⁹ Aquinas grants that the will necessarily wills certain things, and calls this "the necessity of natural inclination" owing to nature, distinguishing this from the "necessity

⁷⁵ Eleonore Stump, "Aquinas's Account of Freedom," in *Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Brian Davies (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 285-86.

⁷⁶ *ST* I.19.10.*resp.*

⁷⁷ *ST* I.83.1.*resp.*

⁷⁸ Here I borrow liberally from Michael Sherwin's helpful account of Aquinas's responses to this objection in *By Knowledge and By Love*, 24-53.

⁷⁹ David Gallagher, "Thomas Aquinas on the Causes of Human Choice" (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1988), 2. Quoted by Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 24.

of force” owing to external constraints that cause something to act contrary to its natural inclination.⁸⁰ This admission does not amount to a concession that all people choose whatever they choose of necessity, for this necessary inclination is for two things only: the last end (happiness) and all that is perceived as a necessary means to that end. Happiness can be called the ultimate end, and all other ends are proximate. These two necessary inclinations, however, are only the foundations of human free choice, and of themselves do not necessitate any choice of a *particular* good whatsoever; they simply spell out the necessary preconditions of any particular choice given human nature.

“The will always naturally wills good in general, but not necessarily this or that particular good.”⁸¹ Choice does not regard the last end, which is good absolutely and willed by natural necessity, but the means, which can always be considered under the aspect of both good and evil and are therefore not apprehended as good *absolutely* (i.e. potentially not good in some respect). In other words, with respect to any particular good—which is a means to the absolute and perfect good of happiness—it is possible to *not will* or *not choose* this good by considering some way in which it is not *absolutely* good, for only “the perfect good, which is Happiness” cannot be apprehended by the reason as evil, or as lacking in any way.”⁸² Unlike the conclusions of deductive reasoning which follow of necessity so long as the premises are sound, because choice regards objects which can potentially be considered good in some respect but also bad in some other respect, they do not follow of absolute necessity. Even objects that are necessary means to the end (e.g. *to be* and *to know*) can potentially not be seen or apprehended as such.⁸³

⁸⁰ Sherwin, *By Knowledge & By Love*, 27.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁸² *ST I-II.13.6.resp.*

⁸³ *ST I-II.13.6.ad.1.*

Thomas still entertains one last objection to his understanding of freedom. If whatever appears to the intellect as holding “first place” between competing goods in such a way that the intellect cannot find any reason for considering the others as better, it would appear “impossible to choose any of the others,” in which case it would seem that all such choices are necessary and not free.⁸⁴ Aquinas virtually grants this objection by stating that it is only a *conditional* necessity and not an absolute necessity. Here Aquinas is building on his many distinctions of necessity in which a conditional necessity is only necessary by adding some supposition from which a certain conclusion follows logically, such as “a grain of millet would [necessarily] be everywhere, *supposing that no other body existed.*”⁸⁵ Admitting to this kind of necessity does not bother Thomas. It works something like this: supposing that a man trying to visit his next-door neighbor two blocks to the west is given two choices—1) find the nearest airport to the east with the longest possible flight eastward where he can then catch another plane east again (and so on) until he arrives at the closest airport to his neighbor’s house (having gone virtually all the way around the world) where he can rent a car and drive to his neighbor’s house or 2) walk west two blocks. Aquinas would have no difficulty in conceding that, given the nature of the human intellect (and no other practically relevant suppositions being allowed), it would be impossible for the human who has weighed these two options *and* perceives the latter as more advantageous to his goal to then choose otherwise. Such a concession does not establish that humans are not free, but that humans are *human*.⁸⁶ This is important for understanding how Aquinas can believe

⁸⁴ *ST I-II.13.6.ad.3.*

⁸⁵ *ST I.8.4.resp.* Italics added. This humorous example may suggest that Aquinas would find the “conditional necessity” objection to human freedom as a laughable mistake of logic.

⁸⁶ As Stump points out, this is different from libertarian notions of human freedom that require that “the agent could have performed a different act of will in exactly the same set of circumstances with exactly the same set of beliefs and desires. ... On this way of thinking about free will, to be free, the will needs to be unconstrained not only by causal influences outside the agent; it needs to be unconstrained even by the agent’s intellect. On Aquinas’s view, however, it isn’t possible for the will to be unconstrained by the intellect.” Stump, “Aquinas’s Account of

that once we possess the beatific vision of God, we cannot *not* habitually love him above all else.⁸⁷ God is “irresistibly attractive,” yet we choose him freely out of reasoned love.⁸⁸

This conception of human freedom leads Aquinas to give a complex account of the interplay between the intellect and the will that is anything but mechanical.⁸⁹ First, he locates free will in human choice (*electio*), which refers to an act of the will “ordered to reason.”⁹⁰ The will’s choice is always based on reason’s role of discerning which is the greater good among goods, which depends logically upon which good is apprehended as more useful to the last end. Second, “the will has a role in shaping the judgment of reason.”⁹¹ The intellect naturally apprehends the universal good but its act of identifying any *particular* good as good Sherwin calls the act of “specification.”⁹² Also crucial to understanding this last point is the reflexive ability belonging to reason. Reason can reflect on itself and judge about its own judgments. Likewise, because reason is in the will, it is important to also remember that for Aquinas the will can also perceive its own willing through the intellects apprehension. Thus the intelligent will can scrutinize itself and specify its own improvement an object of love—in other words, the reason can present the will’s act as itself a good (e.g. “It is a greater good that I should will *x* than *y*” or “It is a greater good that my reason should always take divine things into account *in such and such a way* before making a decision”).

Freedom,” 290-291. It seems Aquinas’s account of human freedom is the fruit of his careful analysis of human nature that takes into account the very boundaries of human capacities.

⁸⁷ Nicholas E. Lombardo, O.P., *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 81.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Sherwin notes: “In Aquinas’ view, human action has more the character of a free artistic expression than of a necessary scientific deduction.” Sherwin, *By Knowledge & By Love*, 61. He gives an extensive account of how Aquinas’s mature thought distinguishes between the priority of the intellect as a formal cause (a priority of specification) and the will as an efficient cause (a priority of exercise). Ibid., 40ff.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 33.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 40.

The will is not deterministically mechanical, then, passively following the intellect's first apprehension or reason's first judgment, but has the ability to direct reason's consideration further in unpredictable directions before finally committing to some particular good. *This is an incredible influence the will has over reason's final judgment.* Aquinas even goes so far as to say that while happiness cannot *not* be willed as an end, at a particular time the will can so direct the intellect's considerations as to cease from considering happiness.⁹³ Aquinas attributes three causes that determine whether the intellect perceives a particular good as good in its act of specification: 1) the objective goodness of the object itself, 2) the reason's fixation on one particular aspect over another owing to the will's ability to direct the intellect's consideration, and 3) a person's character (as shaped by a their dispositions to habitually perceive something in one way rather than another).⁹⁴ The will functions to its highest capacity when it capitalizes on its ability to move the intellect to "consider all the relevant features" of some good; this is the will's ability to act "according to *right* reason."⁹⁵

From this it is easy to see how a perverse will might decisively control how one apprehends and judges among particular goods. The tendencies of reason's considerations can decisively effect which good is chosen, but these tendencies are established by the will's execution. This is why Aquinas does not locate the *liberum arbitrium* in reason, but in the will. Nevertheless, it is precisely the participation of the will in reason that makes human will free to choose between contraries. Without abandoning his understanding of reason being "in the will" and the two operating as one principle, he continues to distinguish between their roles. Only when the will commands the reason to cease from its consideration and settle on a particular

⁹³ Ibid., 45.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 47-49.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 49. Italics added. The third reason given is captured in Aquinas's often quoted authority Aristotle, who said: "*such as a man is, so does the end appear to him.*" *ST II-II.24.11.resp.*

good does the person arrive at some choice. This ceasing from deliberation is itself a judgment that a particular action “has nothing further of practical importance.”⁹⁶ He defines choice as “the final acceptance of something to be carried out,” which goes beyond the human conscience (that knows right and wrong) and applies all relevant apprehended knowledge to the command of the human’s peculiar affections.⁹⁷

Aquinas affirms that humans have the ability to make free choices, but still believes in certain kinds of necessity given human nature, and the compatibility between these kinds of necessity, free choice, and human culpability. Eleonore Stump argues that Aquinas does not believe *liberum arbitrium* to be identical or even essential to human freedom, for he still holds morally responsible agents who are “unable to do otherwise” on a given occasion because of some passion that prevents a person from the conscious deliberation of *electio*.⁹⁸ Furthermore, the intellect by its very nature always chooses whatever it apprehends as a superior good with respect to all other options. Thus, on the supposition that the intellect sees no alternative capable of competing with the superior good (whether this be a course of action or an object of contemplation), the person will always choose whatever is apprehended as the superior good *and cannot do otherwise*. The point, as Stump points out, is not that Aquinas wants us to see that we are not ultimately free; the point is that our freedom is compatible with this sort of necessity, a position Aquinas has received from St. Augustine. Such necessity touches at the very heart of

⁹⁶ Seven J. Jensen, “The Error of the Passions,” *The Thomist* 73, no. 3 (2009): 369. Jensen gives a decisive critique of Donald Davidson’s criticism of Aquinas which argues that his understanding of human choice as dominated by reason silences the passions from joining the inner dialectic so that “the passions have nothing to say worth listening to; only the dictates of reason have any worth” (351). As Jensen shows, this criticism of Aquinas does not do justice to Aquinas’s moral psychology and, in addition to its logical gaps, is based on a misunderstanding of Aquinas. In particular, Jensen argues that the error of the passions in Aquinas lies not in the major premises such as “Adultery is to be avoided” (reason) and “Pleasure is to be pursued” (passions), but in the minor premise such as “Adultery is pleasurable *and practically nothing else*” which makes the major premise false if considered in this way by stifling the intellect’s consideration of all things relevant.

⁹⁷ Sherwin, *By Knowledge & By Love*, 34, 37. As Sherwin puts it, “Aquinas’ description in the *De veritate* implies that unlike the judgment of conscience, the judgment of choice is shaped by one’s affections.”

⁹⁸ Stump, “Aquinas’s Account of Freedom” in *Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*, 287.

freedom itself—our decisions are not determined from some exterior cause as in coercion, but have their determination within, which is to be self-determinative. In this way, determination and human freedom are compatible. Whether someone can do otherwise is not the point for Aquinas, but merely an “associated accident” or non-essential property that often accompanies human freedom.⁹⁹

Stump’s conclusions about how to categorize Aquinas’s view of human freedom are stated with a degree of humble uncertainty. She admits her own difficulty in categorizing his views: “What exactly to call Aquinas’s position is not clear.”¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, since Aquinas did not believe in the compatibility between *total* causal determinism and human freedom, she concludes that he held an “incompatibilist theory of free will” which was “a species of libertarianism.”¹⁰¹ Yet if compatibilism in theology (as opposed to philosophy) has to do precisely with the happy compatibility between free will and God’s providence or sovereignty, this categorization may obscure more than it reveals. Because God authored our human nature by his providence, Aquinas wants to show that internal determination (whether this be understood in purely natural terms or in view of God’s efficacious grace) and human freedom are compatible. Perhaps Stump’s categorization fails to understand Aquinas chiefly in terms of his theological project rather than his anthropological philosophy.¹⁰² His compatibilism is shaped most ultimately by his theology, namely, to justify culpability in light of certain forms of necessity or determination, especially considering the hopelessness of humanity apart from

⁹⁹ Ibid., 289.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 291.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² As Jean-Pierre Torrell argues, this is a pervasive mistake of perspective in the history of the *Summa*’s reception: “It seems that the most common and damaging error was to have considered Thomas first of all as a philosopher and to have believed it possible to isolate certain parts of the *Summa* as ‘philosophical.’ This is a glaring error of perspective. The *Summa* is theological from beginning to end and its author is first and foremost a theologian who uses philosophical categories as he has need, but grants them a ‘foreign and only probably authority’ (Ia q. a 8 ad 2) in his synthesis.” Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Aquinas’s Summa: Background, Structure, & Reception*, trans. Benedict M. Guevin, O.S.B. (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 133.

grace,¹⁰³ the necessity of grace for salvation, and the infallibility and efficacy of grace for the predestined. Aquinas's view of freedom is "compatible" with forms of natural necessity owing to God's creation of our nature,¹⁰⁴ but also with supernatural necessity owing to God's new creation.

For those are led [by the Holy Spirit] are moved by a higher instinct. Hence we say that animals do not act but are led, because they are moved to perform their actions by nature and not from their own impulse. Similarly, the spiritual man is inclined to do something not as though by a movement of his own will chiefly, but by the prompting of the Holy Spirit ... However, this does not mean that spiritual men do not act through will and free choice, because the Holy Spirit causes the very movement of the will and of free choice in them, as it says in Phil (2:13): "God is at work in you both to will and to work."¹⁰⁵

Reasoned love is the basis of human freedom because all decisions are made between two or more options with respect to which is most useful to the end of happiness. Yet ultimately for Aquinas, even if a person's love fails to participate fully in human reason (i.e. fails to deliberate over options in order to make a decision sufficiently informed by reason), human culpability is not thereby nullified. Humans have the ability to use their reason (whether they choose to or not), and thus make decisions freely rather than acting on pure instinct.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, freedom of decision is also compatible with self-determination which involves a certain necessity owing to nature: by nature we always will to be happy as our last end and will always freely choose only what we apprehend as the greatest good at any particular time given the particular circumstances. *Nature is the context of freedom.* Underlying human freedom and human acts as

¹⁰³ Thomas Aquinas, *Lectures on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Fabian Larcher, ed. Jeremy Holmes (unpublished), §277. Aquinas considers a person incapable *in and of themselves* (i.e. apart from justifying grace) of doing anything that might make them righteous.

¹⁰⁴ In certain places, we even find Aquinas happily denying human freedom, if by "freedom" he understands total escape from any kind of determinism. E.g. "Hence, to the extent that it is determined by a natural inclination implanted by God, *in a way it does not have freedom*, but is as it were, compelled by this natural inclination—as with respect to happiness, which no one is able not to will." *In III Sent.* 27.1.4.ad.12 [143]. Italics added [except for the word "not"].

¹⁰⁵ Aquinas, *Lecture on the Letter to the Romans*, §635.

¹⁰⁶ Reason can be more or less reflective, and in situations where one has not time to be reflective (e.g. jumping out of the way of a moving bus), she relies on her reflexes. However, the will even has the ability to refine and reshape our reflexive actions (e.g. standing still and resisting the natural instinct to jump away from a moving bus *via* the will's desire to commit suicide).

the very principle of human life is the will's proper act of love, which can be both instinctive and also reasoned, the latter decisively executing the direction of the intellect's considerations *of* and *among* options as among means to an end. When a human is moved by love to make a free decision, it is the result of human judgment made in "the comparison of reason."¹⁰⁷ As can be seen with Aquinas's psychology of human love, human movement is in fact determined, sometimes from human nature alone (natural love) but more characteristically from interior principles unique to the human (reasoned love), but never ultimately from mere coercion or compulsion (even if one's options are severely limited by external constraint).

Charity as a Kind of Love

Charity as Grace Perfecting Nature

So far we have only been considering Aquinas's anthropology, which carefully considers human nature apart from grace. When we make the shift to understanding his teaching of charity, we do not leave his anthropology behind; we "elevate" it. Inasmuch as charity *elevates* human love, it goes beyond man's natural capacities apart from grace. Inasmuch as charity elevates *human* love, charity remains a species of human love. One of the great maxims of Aquinas's theology is that "Grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it,"¹⁰⁸ and when it comes to Aquinas's doctrine of charity, grace fulfills, heals, elevates, and perfects human love. For this reason we have already come a long way in understanding Aquinas's doctrine of charity, since charity is a species of human love. Grace elevates that principle from which all a person's

¹⁰⁷ *ST I.83.1.resp.*

¹⁰⁸ *ST I.1.8.ad.2.* Aquinas utilizes Aristotelian anthropology to "provide a frame of reference" and "expose the groundwork of this surpassing virtue" of charity. "Grace enters into nature, and charity, as the following pages will show, goes to the depths of our innate capacity for loving ... This continuity between grace and nature is essential to the notion of Christian theology, or *sacra doctrina*, as he conceives it." Thomas Gilby O.P., "Introduction," in R. J. Batten, O.P., *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation, Introductions, Notes, Appendices and Glossaries*, vol. 34 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1974), xvi.

interior and exterior acts flow; that proper act of the will that results (at least in this life) in desire inasmuch as the object of love is absent, and in delight inasmuch as the object of love is present.

To be more specific, Aquinas's doctrine of love helps clarify how human nature is "fitted" to God in its natural instinct to be happy, for "nothing natural can be vain: everything natural is made to attain its end."¹⁰⁹ As we have already noted, Aquinas believes that all people desire happiness by nature as their end. But this desire for happiness is insufficient for the actual attainment thereof, as Aquinas explains:

Consequently, to desire happiness is nothing else than to desire that one's will be satisfied. And this everyone desires. Secondly we may speak of Happiness according to its specific notion, as to that in which it consists. And thus all do not know Happiness; because they know not in what thing the general notion of happiness is found. And consequently, in this respect, not all desire it.¹¹⁰

Although man by nature seeks happiness, human nature unaided by grace will never attain to the perfect good in which human happiness consists. Cajetan's maxim that desire for God as end "is only *natural to the supernaturalized man*" forces us to see that humanity only desires God implicitly in the natural desire for happiness: explicit desire for God as last end is not natural. Yet neither is it opposed to nature; rather, it is "supernatural."¹¹¹ Thus, for the attainment of the end man needs the supernatural grace of charity—love for God as last end. Because God contains all goodness within himself (including all created goodness), he is the supreme appetible object once acutely apprehended through a breakthrough of illumination.

It must be argued that if the grace of charity (seeking God as last end) causes humans to no longer seek happiness as their last end, it would appear to follow that grace does indeed

¹⁰⁹ Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, vol. 2: Spiritual Master*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press), 83

¹¹⁰ *ST I-II.5.8.resp.*

¹¹¹ Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, vol. 2: Spiritual Master*, 345. This is why Torrell argues against those who understand grace as simply being a "pure non-repugnance to the supernatural," since "man's nature unconsciously aspires to it, such that, when through revelation his Good will be known to him by its true name, this necessary desire of nature will be accompanied with a free desire, comforted by grace that will finally allow him to attain his end." *Ibid.*, 346.

destroy human nature rather than fulfilling it. But it should be clear from Aquinas's words above that this is not the case; these are not two ends, but one.

Our end is twofold. First, there is the thing itself which we desire to attain: thus for the miser, the end is money. Secondly there is the attainment or possession, the use or enjoyment of the thing desired; thus we may say that the end of the miser is the possession of money; and the end of the intemperate man is to enjoy something pleasurable. In the first sense, then, man's last end is the uncreated good, namely God, Who alone by His infinite goodness can perfectly satisfy man's will. But in the second way, man's last end is something created, existing in him, and this is nothing else than the attainment or enjoyment of the last end. Now the last end is called happiness. If, therefore, we consider man's happiness in its cause or object, then it is something uncreated; but if we consider it as to the very essence of happiness, then it is created.¹¹²

Seeking happiness as one's last end is only truly fulfilled when one seeks that in which happiness consists perfectly, which is God. This is why Torrell is so bold as to claim "Thomas proposes a life program under the aegis of self-fulfillment, since the creature finds itself in finding its end."¹¹³ The fact that in the fervor of charity this *self-fulfilling, nature-fulfilling, and happiness-completing* love ultimately leads a person "to expose himself to the danger of martyrdom, or to renounce his possessions, or to undertake any arduous work," should not at all surprise us; nor should we seek to lessen its self-fulfilling nature in order to emphasize its self-sacrificing other-oriented nature.¹¹⁴ If one can find her own ultimate happiness and self-fulfillment only by being *other-oriented* and *self-sacrificing*, these two need not oppose each other, for they are just as complementary as nature and grace.¹¹⁵

Many have argued (and continue to argue) that this Augustinian view of love that Aquinas develops and refines ultimately makes God and love of neighbor a means to our own

¹¹² *ST I-II.3.1.resp.* Italics added. cf. *ST I-II.12.2.sed.*

¹¹³ Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, vol. 2: Spiritual Master*, 83.

¹¹⁴ *ST I.6.ad.2.*

¹¹⁵ Although not immediately inspired by Aristotle or Aquinas, this strand of theological anthropology—that dignifies the human longing for happiness as God-given and only fulfilled in God as the ultimate object that satisfies the human soul—has been popularly vivified in recent Protestant theology by the seminal work of John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2003) whose work was more inspired through the writings of St. Augustine, C.S. Lewis, and especially Jonathan Edwards. The impact of this book in North American conservative evangelicalism is not easily exaggerated.

happiness, and seems to thereby make charity self-serving as if it makes God simply a means to our selfish desire for happiness.¹¹⁶ While it is possible to misunderstand Augustine in this way since he was not as exceptionally perspicuous as Aquinas,¹¹⁷ the *Doctor Angelicus* escapes this criticism in crucial ways. Most important for the accusation to stick, Aquinas would have to view happiness and God as two distinct ends, God as the *penultimate* end and happiness as the *ultimate* end. Aquinas's position does not fit this criterion, since he unites these two—*happiness and God*—as both our last and ultimate end only seen from two different angles. For Aquinas our *one* last end is nevertheless *twofold*; seen from the subjective angle it is something created (i.e. human happiness) and seen from the objective angle¹¹⁸ it is something uncreated (i.e. God).¹¹⁹ Additionally, due attention to Aquinas's understanding of friendship and his definition of "the good" demonstrates that one's happiness in friendship becomes contingent on the

¹¹⁶ Michael Sherwin, "Aquinas, Augustine, and the Medieval Scholastic Crisis concerning Charity," in *Aquinas the Augustinian*, eds. Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007): 181-204. According to Sherwin, Augustine's portrayal of love aroused a momentous controversy in the twelfth century over the nature of love as desire. The rise of new monastic orders created a new influx of ideas about love borrowed from "the ways of secular love" also expressed by the court troubadours. Before Paris dominated the scholastic scene, the city of Laon was the immanent center for theological rigor. Sherwin tells the story: "At the very moment that this literature was blossoming, an anonymous scholastic writer penned a treatise (entitled *De caritate*) that attacked the very thing these literary traditions shared in common ... the view that charity entails desire" (182-83). This is what provoked the theological "crisis" concerning whether the love of charity was a self-interested love that reduced God to a means to our own happiness (183). Sherwin understands the controversy as to some extent a matter of interpreting Augustine and thinks Aquinas's theology provides the solution to the crisis by categorizing desire as more properly belonging the theological virtue of hope.

¹¹⁷ For some of the most relevant passages where Augustine might be interpreted this way see Augustine, "The Spirit and the Letter," in *Augustine: Later Works*, edited and translated by John Burnaby, The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 36 [221]; 51 [235-236]; Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, translated and edited by R.P.H. Green, Oxford World's Classics (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), I.35-37 [25-26]; Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, translated and edited by R.W. Dyson, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 19.4 [919]; 19.4 [924].

¹¹⁸ "Subjective" and "objective" are Aquinas's words borrowed from Aristotle. *ST* I.26.3.ad.2.

¹¹⁹ For this reason Gilby says that charity is "the whole-hearted love of God, but is no more self-denying at the deepest level than the object in the union of knowledge and love spells diminishment for the subject. Thomas Gilby O.P., "Introduction," in *Summa Theologiae*, xviii.

happiness of the other.¹²⁰ Every love (not just charity) involves an *extasis* in which a person goes outside of herself (as it were) toward the object of love.¹²¹

Charity as The Efficient Cause of All Virtues

If human love is a unitive principle,¹²² it is easy to see why Aquinas would argue that charity is the chief virtue, mother of all virtues, “included in the definition of every virtue,” and the “form” of all virtues.¹²³ Virtues already presuppose some end because they are concerned with attaining an end *through means*, but only desire (*caused by love*) moves the human person *through means* toward some end not already possessed. Desire is the effect of love. Therefore, love of the last end is the cause of all human virtues even apart from grace when happiness is the ambiguous last end. In charity, love of God as last end causes all virtues to be commanded by charity as the best means to attaining God as last end. The whole intention of all virtue becomes to do charity’s bidding. Sherwin argues that “charity is the form of the virtues by being the efficient cause.”¹²⁴ This is why all true virtue (as distinguished from imperfect virtue that does not have God as end) presupposes charity as their mother virtue and why “no strictly true virtue is possible without charity.”¹²⁵ “Although virtues have their own elicited acts, they only generate

¹²⁰ We must recall here that Aquinas defines the good as that which pacifies the will or calms desire. “An act of love always tends toward two things; to the good that one wills, and to the person from whom one will it: since *to love a person is to wish that person good.*” *ST I.20.1.ad.3* [Italics added]. Wishing another person good depends on the intellects apprehension of the other person’s good as an object of love. Aquinas seems to make virtuous love of another person something consisting in apprehending their well-being/flourishing/happiness an object of our love. When they flourish, we delight. When they fail to flourish, we sorrow. Hence the good of the other becomes an object of love.

¹²¹ Matthew Levering, *The Betrayal of Charity: The Sins that Sabotage Divine Love* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2011), 6.

¹²² Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen argues persuasively that a union-based soteriology is the most ecumenically promising. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2004).

¹²³ *ST II-II.23.4.ad.1. ST II-II.23.8.resp.*

¹²⁴ Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 184.

¹²⁵ *ST I-II.23.7.resp.*

acts when commanded by charity” and “only exist as commanded by charity.”¹²⁶ Aquinas’s *theological virtues are simply love and love’s effects when God is loved as last end*. Since love is of a good apprehended by the intellect, faith is the theological virtue that apprehends the object of charity (God) with the human intellect and in this way has a structural priority over love. Faith gives birth to desire for God, which is the theological virtue of hope.

Charity as a Participation in God

Charity is a passion, but God is impassible (i.e. has no passions), so how can one opine of a charity (love of God as last end that perfectly fulfills human desire for happiness) that is in any way an *imitation* of God or a *participation* in God? It seems here that a number of Aquinas’s admirers (especially Protestant admirers)¹²⁷ take issue with Aquinas and reject the doctrine of impassibility. How can charity which supposedly makes a person *godly* and gives rise to all manner of *godliness* at the same time not exist in God? This is a mistake, however, for Aquinas does in fact hold that love exists in God, he only claims that since God fully possesses all goodness in himself, he lacks no goodness to desire. There is no object of love outside of God that is able to act upon his will and effect desire. “Will in us belongs to the appetitive part, which, although named from appetite, has not for its only act the seeking what it does not possess; but also the loving and delighting in what it does possess. In this respect will is said to be in God.”¹²⁸ Here is a beautiful example of Aquinas’s analogical approach to theology: he argues that if God knows he has an intellect; if he has intellect he must also have will (remember

¹²⁶ Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 184.

¹²⁷ See for example, Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 319. Although John R. T. Lamont’s critique of Plantinga is contestable in other regards, unfortunately he is right to point out that part of Plantinga’s critique lies in his misunderstanding that divine impassibility implies that God cannot feel joy or delight. John R. T. Lamont, “Plantinga on Belief,” *The Thomist* 65, no. 4 (2001): 600.

¹²⁸ *ST I.19.1.ad.2*.

these two are irreducibly complex); but love is the proper act of the will—*therefore love exists in God.*¹²⁹

If charity exists in God yet by his essence he already has perfect possession of infinite goodness, beatitude belongs to God especially and “to the highest degree.”¹³⁰ For Aquinas God possess all goodness by his very essence, whereas any goodness possessed by a creature is possessed accidentally (in the Aristotelian sense) and by a certain participation of God’s goodness.¹³¹ Whatever charity or happiness belongs to a creature, then, belongs to the creature only by participation in God’s own charity and happiness. Since the intellect’s apprehension of goodness precedes and causes happiness and God is immaterial, apprehension of God and his supreme goodness depend on divine illumination by grace. God causes his goodness to dwell in the affections through the intellects apprehension of his goodness. “Now this increase of the intellectual powers is called the illumination of the intellect ... By this light the blessed are made *deiform*—that is like to God.”¹³² “To St. Thomas the communication of and sharing in God’s own happiness is the very foundation of charity.”¹³³ The foundation of friendship with God (one of Aquinas’s Aristotelian categories that he thinks captures the dynamics of the mutual love

¹²⁹ *ST I.19.1.resp.* Recall that Aquinas distinguishes between the formal element of a passion and the material element (or bodily change) and accompanies these passions. He allows the formal element of passions to be attributed to God so long as they imply no imperfection. “Those that do not imply imperfection, such as love and joy, can be properly predicated of God.” *ST I.20.1.ad.2.* “Love, therefore, and joy and delight ... in so far as they denote acts of the intellective appetite [the will], they are not passions. It is in this latter sense that they are in God. Hence the Philosopher says (Ethic. vii): *God rejoices by an operation that is one and simple, and for the same reason He loves without passion.*” *ST I.20.1.ad.1.* In a certain sense, then, Aquinas allows for passions that do not imply imperfection to be attributed to God so long as we do not forget that God has no body, and therefore no bodily change accompanies these perfect passions. For a recent defense of the classical doctrine of impassibility see Michael J. Dodds, O.P., *The Unchanging God of Love: Thomas Aquinas and Contemporary Theology on Divine Immutability*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 2008), especially his qualifying remarks in chapter 3, “The Motion of the Motionless God,” 161-203.

¹³⁰ *ST I.26.1.resp.*

¹³¹ *ST I.3.4.resp.*

¹³² *ST I.12.5.resp.*

¹³³ Thomas Gilby O.P., “Introduction,” in *Summa Theologiae*, xvii. Servais Pinckaers makes the same assessment and laments the absence of happiness as a theme central to ethics. Servais Pinckaers, O.P. *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. by Sr. Mary Thomas Noble, O.P. (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 17-22.

between God and humans in charity) is a certain communication of goodness (*communicatio*) that causes a certain likeness (*similitudo*) in the one who has charity and participates in divine charity.¹³⁴

This also explains why happiness is “obtained only through imitation” of God “in whose likeness we are made,” for seeking happiness and God as our singular and ultimate last end is nothing less than an imitation of God whose own goodness is his own end and whose happiness is most complete.¹³⁵ The more complete our own happiness, the more godlike we become and the more we “participate” in God. Seen from this angle, the restoration of the *imago Dei* is in direct proportion to our participation in the divine nature and in particular the divine happiness.¹³⁶ This is why a morality of happiness is at the same time a “morality of divinization” that Aquinas appropriates from the Fathers of the East.¹³⁷ Furthermore, the divine indwelling is explained in Aquinas (as we have already shown) as a phenomenon that occurs when the object loved “dwells” in the apprehensive power in the same way that objects of love dwell in the apprehensive power in general. However, we have already seen that the intellect that apprehends and the will that takes delight operate as one principle. Aquinas therefore argues that “because the Holy Ghost is Love, the soul is assimilated to the Holy Ghost by the gift of charity” not “according to *every and any kind* of intellectual perfection, but according to the intellectual illumination, *which breaks forth into the affection of love.*”¹³⁸ The names given by Aquinas to this knowledge according to which the human is made Godlike are therefore designed to

¹³⁴ Levering, *The Betrayal of Charity*, 7.

¹³⁵ Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, vol. 2: Spiritual Master*, 83.

¹³⁶ For Aquinas, the *imago Dei* consists most specifically in human understanding and love, since the image of the Trinity concerns a Word and Love proceeding, corresponding to human understanding and love. But we must remember here that in God, love never takes the form of desire but only joy and delight since the object loved is always perfectly possessed. *ST I.93.6*. It is worth noting then, that the more man possesses that in which happiness consists (i.e. God) the more he imitates the divine happiness and reflects the *imago Dei*. *ST I.93.4*.

¹³⁷ Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, vol. 2: Spiritual Master*, 83

¹³⁸ *ST I.43.4.ad.2*

underscore its affective component—experiential knowledge, wisdom, or better yet: “sweet knowledge [*sapida scientia*].”¹³⁹

Understanding Aquinas’s anthropology, specifically his emphasis on the interplay between the intellect and will in love, also helps us to see why Aquinas argues on the one hand that eternal life (which he equates with both happiness and knowing God)¹⁴⁰ consists in an act of the intellect, and on the other that it consists in “the repose and perfect pacification of the intelligence and the will.”¹⁴¹

The essence of happiness consists in an act of the intellect: but the delight that results from happiness pertains to the will. In this sense Augustine says (*Conf.* x. 23) that happiness is *joy in truth*, because, to wit, joy itself is the consummation of happiness.¹⁴²

The Priority of the Soul in Charity

Charity unites us with God, but charity is a kind of love that must be distinguished from the human body in Aquinas. Love is an act of the soul that causes all other acts of the soul (interior acts) and the body (exterior acts). Although Aquinas works hard to fully integrate the human body and the human soul since they are inseparable to human nature, at certain places he leaves no question about the importance of the soul in comparison to the importance of the human body. I will mention but a few examples. First, charity is defined as a movement of the soul, as Augustine taught “*By charity I mean the movement of the soul towards the enjoyment of*

¹³⁹ *ST I.43.4.ad.2*. Torrell argues against those who attempted to locate the *imago Dei* chiefly in the human intellect in distinction to human emotion. “We certainly cannot eliminate intellectual knowing, properly speaking, from this experience, but it is impossible for the experience not to have simultaneously a no less firm affective dimension.” Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, vol. 2: Spiritual Master*, 95. Taking it a step further than Torrell, when Aquinas distinguishes between knowledge and love *per se*, he always argues that love is greater than knowing. For a delightful read on wisdom as love see Etienne Gilson, *Wisdom and Love in Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1951).

¹⁴⁰ Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, vol. 2: Spiritual Master*, 347.

¹⁴¹ Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, vol. 2: Spiritual Master*, 346.

¹⁴² *ST I-II.4.resp.* See also *In II Sent.* 27.1.4.ad.1 [141].

*God for His own sake.*¹⁴³ Therefore, Aquinas will often speak of “the affection of charity” and distinguish it from its exterior “effects.”¹⁴⁴ Secondly, as a good not yet obtained we “get nigh to God . . . *not by steps of the body but by the affections of the soul*” generated by charity.¹⁴⁵ Third, Aquinas also defines charity as a “participation of the infinite charity which is the Holy Ghost,” an immaterial reality with no body.¹⁴⁶ Fourth, human bodies are “unable to enjoy God by knowing and loving Him,” but are a means to attaining this knowing and loving.¹⁴⁷

Fifth, the prioritization of charity’s objects relativizes the importance of the corporeal.¹⁴⁸ Recall that for Aquinas humans are *primarily* soul.¹⁴⁹ In his examination of charity, Aquinas considers in what senses a person can love themselves and their neighbor. This triggers him (when pressed by objections) to define the “self” and the “neighbor.” His answers are incredibly revealing about the role of the human soul in his anthropology. He argues that although in substance man is both body and soul, in another sense “the rational soul is the predominant part of man, while the sensitive and corporeal nature takes the second place.”¹⁵⁰ He even distinguishes between the “good man” and “the wicked man” as between the one who understands himself to be primarily soul versus the one who understands himself to be primarily corporeal.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, Aquinas adopts Augustine’s order of charity in which the self and the body have different priorities as objects of love, which implies again that the “self” here does not

¹⁴³ *ST II-II.23.2.sed.*

¹⁴⁴ *ST II-II.6-7.*

¹⁴⁵ *ST II-II.24.4.resp.*

¹⁴⁶ *ST II-II.24.7.resp.*

¹⁴⁷ *ST II-II.25.5.ad.2*

¹⁴⁸ As Selner-Wright points out, divine happiness and participation in divine happiness is the standard that objectively prioritizes charity’s objects. “That which has eternal beatitude through its own essence, God, is primary. That which may have it through participation, myself and all other created rational beings, comes next. And finally, there is that which may have beatitude ‘only through an overflow of glory from the soul to the body’.” Susan C. Selner-Wright, “The Order of Charity in Thomas Aquinas,” *Philosophy and Theology* 9 no. 1-2 (1995): 15.

¹⁴⁹ *ST II-II.26.5*

¹⁵⁰ *ST II-II.25.7.resp.* Translation taken from R. J. Batten, *Summa Theologiae*, 117.

¹⁵¹ *ST II-II.25.7.resp.*

include the human body and is more important than the human body.¹⁵² We are supposed to love “ourselves” (read: our souls) more than our neighbor, but our neighbor more than our own body.¹⁵³ Although these remarks in Aquinas appear *prima facie* to betray his view of the human as a composite, when he explicitly entertains this objection he argues that a view of the human being as a composite does not rule out all dualistic distinctions when the human is considered “according to preeminence [*principalitatem*].”¹⁵⁴

Finally, the *imago Dei* consists primarily in human understanding breaking forth into love in the human soul, and secondarily in other acts of the soul.¹⁵⁵

First and chiefly, the image of the Trinity is to be found in the acts of the soul, that is, inasmuch as from the knowledge which we possess, by actual thought we form an internal word; and thence break forth into love. But, since the principles of acts are the habits and powers, and everything exists virtually in its principle, therefore, secondarily and consequently, the image of the Trinity may be considered as existing in the powers, and still more in the habits, forasmuch as the acts virtually exist therein.¹⁵⁶

God is one in nature and three in persons.¹⁵⁷ The *imago Dei* in humans represents both aspects of God in a way corresponding to Aquinas’s distinction between nature and grace. The divine nature consists in intellect and will.¹⁵⁸ In this sense, the *imago Dei* is in all humans because they possess an aptitude to know and love God by virtue of the intellective will.¹⁵⁹ The divine Trinity consist in the three persons which are only distinguished in terms of relationships of origin—from the Father proceeds understanding in the Word and mutual Love proceeds from both, which

¹⁵² *ST* II-II.25.12.*sed.*

¹⁵³ *ST* II-II.26.6

¹⁵⁴ Selner-Wright, “The Order of Charity in Thomas Aquinas,” 20.

¹⁵⁵ “Aquinas’s reading of Augustine helps him to see that the image of God in human expresses their dynamic orientation toward knowing and love in God, an orientation only perfected in the vision of God in the next life. . . . The comparison of the processions of the intellect and will in the human creature to the eternal processions within the Godhead does not relegate Trinitarian theology to abstraction. Instead, Aquinas elaborates the human relation to God in terms of the characteristically human activity of knowing and loving.” Michael A. Dauphinais, “Loving the Lord Your God: The *Imago Dei* in Saint Thomas Aquinas,” *The Thomist* 63, no. 2 (1999): 267.

¹⁵⁶ *ST* I.93.7.*resp.*

¹⁵⁷ *ST* I.93.5.*resp.*

¹⁵⁸ *ST* I.19.4.*ad.2.*

¹⁵⁹ *ST* I.93.4.*resp.*

is the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁰ That which approaches most near to the representation of the divine Trinity is the actual knowledge and love of God; the more perfect this knowledge and love, the more perfect representation of the *imago Dei* shines forth.¹⁶¹ It is clear that Aquinas does not say the image consists in love only, but in knowledge and love, because he is staying consistent with his understanding of charity as love—that is, he is keeping in harmony the two aspects of the human soul that operate in an irreducible complexity, the intellect and the will which operate as one principle.¹⁶² Yet the most perfect representation of the *imago Dei* is found only when the soul attains to the perfect vision of God and the will is thereby perfectly satisfied.¹⁶³ This is glorification and deification at its apex: beatitude; happiness; charity made perfect by the soul's cleaving to God perfectly. In these ways and more, we see how the soul is central to Aquinas's

¹⁶⁰ *ST I.37.1.resp.*

¹⁶¹ *ST I.93.4.resp.*

¹⁶² *In II Sent. 27.1.4.ad.1* [141].

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* After one understands just how entangled the acts of the intellect and the will are in Aquinas's doctrine of God and also his anthropology, the standard reading of Aquinas's *imago Dei* as something merely consisting in intelligence (as if he did not also have in mind emotions, passions, or affections such as love, joy, and happiness) can only be seen as gross oversimplifications. Anthony Hoekema (who has written a classic textbook used in Reformed Protestant circles on the *imago Dei*) criticizes Aquinas for placing the *imago Dei* "solely in man's intellectual nature" and replies: "The Bible says that God is love; nowhere does it say that God is intellect." Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 39. This criticism betrays a lack of familiarity with Aquinas's larger theological anthropology and in particular his doctrine of charity and view of the human soul. Similar caricatures of Aquinas can be found in the most popular contemporary Protestant systematic textbooks. E.g. Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006), 521-522; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2002), 443. Furthermore, this is why when Paul J. Wadell, C.P. published *The Primacy of Love: An Introduction to the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1994) arguing that Aquinas's real moral theology is mostly obscured and by being "presented as ... overly rationalistic" and that virtues in Aquinas are best considered "not as acts of reason, but as strategies of love" (which is a passion), reviewers did not dispute the accuracy of his portrayal of Aquinas's theology but welcomed it as a needed corrective. The criticism was simply that it was incomplete in some way (e.g. that his treatment of the virtues was weak, that he failed to talk about Aquinas's teaching about moral law, that he does not consider adequately questions of objective norms, etc.). Steven J. Pope, Review of *The Primacy of Love: An Introduction to the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas*, by Paul J. Wadell, *Theological Studies* 54, no. 1 (1993): 202. James P. Hanigan, Review of *The Primacy of Love: An Introduction to the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas*, by Paul J. Wadell, *Horizons* 20, no. 1 (1993): 178-179.

understanding of charity, godliness, virtue, goodness, and therefore his overall anthropology and theology.¹⁶⁴

Conclusion

We have come full circle in Aquinas's thought from love as being the proper act of the human will that nevertheless presumes the apprehension of the intellect of some good, to the perfect pacification of *both* human faculties in our finite attainment of God's infinite goodness through grace infused charity. There is a certain symmetry in Aquinas's anthropology and theology here, since it only makes sense that if the will and the intellect which operate as one principle are the essence of the human soul (in which human nature consists *primarily*), the human end would somehow consist in the perfection of the intellectual appetite by obtaining the object that most satisfies it *as an appetite*. It is also most appropriate to Aquinas's anthropology that as creatures made in the *imago Dei* humans imitate God most fully in that immaterial part of their nature (the human soul), since participation in the divine nature is participation in something immaterial.

Furthermore, we must consider that for Aquinas love is the greatest commandment and all virtue and obedience consist in charity. Pursuit of happiness is often mistaken as something fundamentally selfish and wholly distinct from obedience. But in Aquinas's doctrine of charity, it only makes sense that humans most imitate God by imitating his intelligent love, yet Aquinas considers God's own happiness as *love delighting*. Therefore, imitating and participating in the divine happiness of eternal joy and delight is what human love does when it is perfected. This is why charity cannot be understood apart from happiness, for perfect happiness, delight, and joy

¹⁶⁴ Another fascinating and pregnant ontological claim Aquinas makes is that the body should not be thought of as containing the soul; on the contrary, "the soul contains the body," for "spiritual things contain those thing in which they are." *ST* I.8.1.*ad*.2.

are Aquinas's words for perfected charity in humans, a finite participation in God's perfect charity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aquinas, Thomas. *Lectures on the Letter to the Romans*. Translated by Fabian Larcher, edited by Jeremy Holmes (unpublished).
- _____. *On Evil*. Translated by Richard Regan, edited by Brian Davies. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- _____. *On Love and Charity: Readings from the "Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard."* Translated by Peter A. Kwasniewski, Thomas Bolin, O.S.B., and Joseph Bolin. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008.
- _____. *Summa Theologica*. Translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. 5 vols., revised edition. New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc. 1948; reprint, Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1981.
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., trans. by Terence Irwin (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1999), I.7.4-8 (1097a31-1097b21).
- Augustine. *Later Works*. Edited and translated by John Burnaby, The Library of Christian Classics. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.
- _____. *On Christian Teaching*. Translated and edited by Green, R.P.H. Oxford World's Classics. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- _____. *The City of God against the Pagans*. Translated and edited by R.W. Dyson. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Borgman, Brian S. *Feelings and Faith: Cultivating Godly Emotions in the Christian Life*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2009.
- Damasio, Antonio R. *Descartes' Error: Emotion Reason and the Human Brain*. New York: Avon Books, 1994.
- Dauphinais, Michael A., Barry David, and Matthew Levering, eds. *Aquinas the Augustinian*. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007.
- Dauphinais, Michael A. "Loving the Lord Your God: The *Imago Dei* in Saint Thomas Aquinas." *The Thomist* 63, no. 2 (1999): 241-267.
- Davies, Brian. *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

- Davies, Brian, ed. *Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Dodds, Michael J., O.P. *The Unchanging God of Love: Thomas Aquinas and Contemporary Theology on Divine Immutability*. 2nd ed. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 2008.
- Eardley, Peter S. and Carl N. Still. *Aquinas: A Guide to the Perplexed*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010.
- Elliott, Matthew A. *Faithful Feelings: Rethinking Emotion in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Academic, 2006.
- Erickson, Millard. *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.
- Gilby, Thomas, O.P., gen. ed. *Summa Theologiæ: Latin Text and English Translation, Introductions, Notes, Appendices and Glossaries*. 61 Vols. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1974. Vol. 34, *Charity*, edited by R. J. Batten, O.P., introduction by Thomas Gilby.
- Gilson, Etienne. *Wisdom and Love in Saint Thomas Aquinas*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1951.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2002.
- Hanigan, James P. Review of *The Primacy of Love: An Introduction to the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas*, by Paul J. Wadell, *Horizons* 20, no. 1 (1993): 178-179.
- Hoekema, Anthony A. *Created in God's Image*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994.
- Inglis, John. *On Aquinas*. Wadsworth Philosophers Series. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2002.
- Jensen, Seven J. "The Error of the Passions." *The Thomist* 73, no. 3 (2009): 349-379.
- Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti. *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2004.
- Kretzmann, Norman and Eleonore Stump, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Lamont, John R. T. "Plantinga on Belief." *The Thomist* 65, no. 4 (2001): 593-611.
- Levering, Matthew. *The Betrayal of Charity: The Sins that Sabotage Divine Love*. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2011.

- Lombardo, Nicholas E., O.P. *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion*. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011.
- Malloy, Christopher J. "Thomas on the Order of Love and Desire: A Development of Doctrine." *The Thomist* 71 no. 1 (2007): 65-87.
- Mattison, William. "Virtuous Anger? From Questions of *Vindicatio* to the Habituation of Emotion." *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 24, no. 1 (2004): 159-179.
- Nussbaum, Martha C. *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Pasnau, Robert. *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Pinckaers, Servais, O.P. *The Sources of Christian Ethics*. Translated by Sr. Mary Thomas Noble, O.P. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995.
- Piper, John. *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*. Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2003.
- Plantinga, Alvin. *Warrented Christian Belief*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Pope, Steven J. Review of *The Primacy of Love: An Introduction to the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas*, by Paul J. Wadell. *Theological Studies* 54, no. 1 (1993): 202.
- Porter, Jean. "Recent Studies in Aquinas's Virtue Ethic: A Review Essay." *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 26, no. 1 (1998): 189-215.
- Roberts, Robert C. *Spiritual Emotions: A Psychology of Christian Virtues*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007.
- Selner-Wright, Susan C. "The Order of Charity in Thomas Aquinas." *Philosophy and Theology* 9 no. 1-2 (1995): 13-27.
- Sherwin, Michael O.P. *By Knowledge and By Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005.
- Solomon, Robert C. "On Emotions and Judgments." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 25 (1998): 183-191.
- _____. *The Passions*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976.

Torrell, Jean-Pierre, O.P. *Aquinas's Summa: Background, Structure, & Reception*. Translated by Benedict M. Guevin, O.S.B. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005.

_____. *Saint Thomas Aquinas*. 2 vols. Translated by Robert Royal. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003.

Wadell, Paul J., C.P. *The Primacy of Love: An Introduction to the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1994.