

## Thomas Aquinas on Self-Love as the Basis for Love of Others

DAVID M. GALLAGHER\*

Sommario: 1. *Self-love as natural and as the source of all willing.* 2. *Love of self as the basis for loving other (created) persons.* 3. *Self-love as the basis for loving God.* 4. *The Forms of Self-love.*



What is the relationship between self-love and love for other persons? The answer to this question will clearly depend upon the view one has of human beings. If they are naturally and necessarily egotistic such that they cannot love anything except as ordered to their own individual well-being—the “Hobbesian” man—then the relationship will always be one of ends and means. Others will be loved solely as means to one’s own well-being. But if we take a more sanguine view of human nature and grant that persons can and do love other persons and do indeed seek the good of others for the others’ sake, then the issue is less straightforward. It may be that the love of others is simply opposed to one’s self-love, so that to love another person for his own sake necessarily means curbing or negating one’s self-love. It may be that the two loves are not opposed but simply exist side by side, in which case any opposition would be accidental, arising from the contingent limitations on one’s time or resources. Or it may be, finally, that the very love of self inclines one to the love of others, that rather than being opposed they are essentially complementary, with the love of self finding its fulfillment precisely in the love of others.

It is the contention of this paper that Thomas Aquinas taught this latter view. In a number of texts, Thomas refers to Aristotle’s statement, appearing in Book Nine of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, to the effect that one person’s love for another person is based on and derived from the love the lover has for himself<sup>1</sup>. Thomas does not

\* The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. 20064, USA

<sup>1</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1166a 1-2. For typical citations of this text: *Summa theologiae* (ST) II-II, q. 25, a. 4, c.; *Summa contra gentiles* (SCG) III, 153; *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, Bk. III (*In III Sent.*), d. 29, a. 3, ad 3.

understand this text, moreover, in a means-end fashion such that one starts with love of self and then loves others merely as contributing to one's own individual well-being. Rather, he understands the principle in the sense that self-love is a principle of a love that seeks the good of the other for the other's sake, i.e., a love of friendship or benevolence. As Aquinas states in reply to an objection based on Aristotle's text, «The friendliness one has toward another comes from the friendliness one has toward oneself, not as if from a final cause, but rather as from that which is prior in the process of generation»<sup>2</sup>. To clarify just how Thomas understands this process of generation, just how one moves from love of self to the love of others, is the goal of this paper.

That such a move is even possible is by no means unanimously accepted. Take, for example, Anders Nygren. In his well known study of the Christian idea of love, *Agape and Eros*, Nygren summarizes Aquinas's teaching on the status of love within Christianity in two simple propositions: «(1) everything in Christianity can be traced back to love, and (2) everything in love can be traced back to self-love»<sup>3</sup>. Nygren then points out that Thomas tries to soften this position by introducing an Aristotelian love of friendship by which one loves others for their sake. But Nygren thinks that Thomas's efforts in this direction, while noble, are a failure: «Apart from the hopelessness of trying to express the meaning of Agape by the alien idea of 'amicitia,' it is obvious that this external corrective is unable to neutralize the egocentricity that is bound up with the very first premise of the Thomistic doctrine of love»<sup>4</sup>. Even a solid Thomist like L.-B. Geiger is hesitant to derive the love of others from one's love of self. In his treatment of the Thomistic understanding of love, he clearly rejects as a misinterpretation the view that all love is an extension of self-love, and prefers instead to see the love for others for their own sake to be simply the consequence of the will's capacity, as *intellectual* appetite, to respond to the objective goodness of the objects it encounters<sup>5</sup>. In a more recent study of self-love in Aquinas, Avital Wohlman goes even further than Geiger in this direction<sup>6</sup>. Wohlman thinks it completely mistaken to see the love for others, especially for God, as arising from or being derived from self-love. On her view, if we begin with self-love, we shall remain permanently locked into that love<sup>7</sup>. To pass from love of self to love of others for their sake—what she refers to as a “Copernican revolution”—is impossible, and consequently her whole effort is to show how Thomas can arrive at a love of God for his own sake without passing through a stage of self-love<sup>8</sup>. So it seems that

<sup>2</sup> *In III Sent.*, d. 29, a. 3, ad 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Agape and Eros*, trans. P. S. Watson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), p. 643.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 645.

<sup>5</sup> L.-B. GEIGER, *Le problème de l'amour chez saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Montreal: Institut d'Études Médiévales-Paris: J. Vrin, 1952). For Geiger's view of the will's objectivity, see especially pp. 56-92. The view rejected by Geiger is that of P. ROUSSELOT, *Pour l'histoire du problème de l'amour au moyen âge*, in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, VI, 6 (Münster: 1908). For Geiger's critique of Roussetot, see *Le problème*, pp. 17-38.

<sup>6</sup> A. WOHLMAN, *Amour du bien propre et amour de soi dans la doctrine thomiste de l'amour*, «Revue Thomiste», 81 (1981), pp. 204-34.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

all these commentators share a very basic assumption, viz. that it is illegitimate or simply impossible to move from self-love to a love of friendship for others: a love for others for their own sake and not just as a means to one's own fulfillment. Nygren thinks Aquinas makes this move and faults him for it, while someone like Wohlman, wishing to defend Aquinas, simply denies that he makes such a move.

It is not my intention in what follows to analyze the above interpretations of Thomas's theory of love. Rather, I wish to outline 1) how, for Thomas, all love for others is based on a natural love of self, 2) how self-love leads to love of others, and 3) how there are different kinds of self-love that appear in Thomas's works and which of these serves as the basis for the love of others. Throughout, the goal is to see that there is in principle no reason to deny that a person can pass from self-love to a love of friendship for others.

## 1. Self-love as natural and as the source of all willing

Our first task is to see how Thomas considers self-love to be natural to the will and to be the source of all other acts of willing. As we shall see, what Thomas normally refers to as the will's natural inclination to happiness or beatitude is actually self-love. What is more, this natural inclination gives rise to all other acts of will, including the loves one has for other persons.

Anyone familiar with Aquinas's theory of the will knows that he finds in the will a natural inclination that arises from the very nature of the will and is not the result of any deliberate choice on the part of the willer. His usual argument for this natural inclination parallels his argument for the first principles in the order of speculative reason. Just as one cannot go back indefinitely in proving the premises of demonstrations but must start with some propositions which are grasped immediately (without the mediation of a middle term) and to which one assents naturally, so too one cannot go back indefinitely in the chain of ends for the sake of which one makes choices. There must be some end or good that is willed naturally without having been deliberately chosen, in view of which all choices are made<sup>9</sup>.

Thomas maintains that the object of the natural inclination in the will is happiness or beatitude (*felicitas/beatitudo*). And, corresponding to the fact that the will is an appetitive power by which a being tends toward its good, the beatitude in question is the willer's own beatitude. Every rational being, Thomas holds, spontaneously desires to be happy or fulfilled and cannot not want that. At times Aquinas refers to the object of the will's natural inclination as the good in general or universal good (*bonum in communi* or *bonum universale*). This, I believe, is the same as beatitude, for by saying that the will is ordered to the good in general or universal good, he means to say that the will naturally tends not to any one particular good of the per-

<sup>9</sup> See for example, ST I-II, q. 1, a. 5, c.: «...sicut in processu rationis principium est id quod naturaliter cognoscitur, ita in processu rationalis appetitus, qui est voluntas, oportet esse principium id quod naturaliter desideratur». Cf. *De veritate* (DV), q. 22, a. 5, c. & ad 11; ST I, q. 82, aa. 1-2; I-II, q. 13, a. 3, c.; *De malo* (DM), q. 16, a. 5, c.

son or even to any one kind of good (e.g. sensible pleasures) but to any and all goods of the person; it will tend toward whatever presents itself as good for that person. At times Thomas also speaks of the object of the natural inclination as the perfect good (*bonum perfectum*). This expression nicely combines the two other modes of referring to this object. On the one hand, the perfect good as such lacks no goodness (perfection taken as completion); it is the good which, when possessed, totally perfects the one possessing it. Obviously, only the perfect good could be the good that beatifies—beatitude implying the total satisfaction of all inclination. On the other hand, if in saying that the will’s object is the good in general or universal good we mean that the will is not limited to any particular kind of good but can be directed to any and to all the goods of the person, then we are implying that the object of the will is the perfect good, lacking in no way<sup>10</sup>.

The next point is to see that this natural inclination to fulfillment or beatitude is self-love. For this it is necessary first to describe Thomas’s notion of love as it is found at the rational level. Thomas employs a general term for love which is *amor*, and what he says about *amor* generally applies at both the sensible level—love as a passion—and at the rational level. But he uses a special term for love at the rational level, i.e., “dilection” (*dilectio*). Dilection, for Thomas, is not just one sort of rational love among several; rather, every rational love is dilection, including the love which God has. Whenever a person, a rational being, loves, that love has the form of dilection<sup>11</sup>. Let us then see just how Thomas understands this dilection.

Dilection or rational love has a very definite structure, a structure to which Aquinas constantly refers. He expresses this structure in terms of a distinction between love of friendship (*amor amicitiae*) and love of concupiscence (*amor concupiscentiae*), a distinction he derives from Aristotle. We should note immediately that Thomas gives to these terms, “love of friendship” and “love of concupiscence”, his own, very determinate meanings, meanings that must be taken from his own texts. To this end, the best locus is *Prima secundae*, q. 26, a. 4, which asks whether love is suitably distinguished into *amor amicitiae* and *amor concupiscentiae*.

I answer that as the philosopher says in *Rhetoric* Bk. II, “to love is to will the good for someone (*amare est velle alicui bonum*)”. In this way, then, the motion of love tends toward two things: namely, toward some good which one wills for someone, either for one’s self or for another; and toward that for which one wills this good. Thus one loves the good that is willed for the other with love of concupiscence, and that for which the good is willed with a love of friendship<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> See DV q. 22, a. 7, c.; ST I-II, q. 1, aa. 5-6; q. 2, aa. 7-8; q. 5, a. 8, c. & ad 3; q. 10, a. 2, c.; q. 13, a. 2, c.; DM q. 6, a. un., c.

<sup>11</sup> ST I-II, q. 26, a. 3, c.; also ad 3: «In parte tamen intellectiva idem est amor et dilectio».

<sup>12</sup> «Respondeo dicendum quod, sicut Philosophus dicit in II *Rhetoric*, *amare est velle alicui bonum*. Sic ergo motus amoris in duo tendit: scilicet in bonum quod quis vult alicui, vel sibi vel alii; et in illud cui vult bonum. Ad illud ergo bonum quod quis vult alteri, habetur amor concupiscentiae: ad illud autem cui aliquis vult bonum, habetur amor amicitiae». ST I-II, q. 26, a. 4, c. Cf. *In librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio* (*De. Div. Nom.*), Ch. 4, lect. 9, nn. 404-5. For Aristotle’s text see *Rhetoric*, II, 4, 1380b 35. Thomas does not believe that this Aristotelian “definition” of *dilectio* is complete; for this see ST II-II, q. 27, a. 2, c.

According to this text dilection has, we might say, two prongs. In any act of love, there is a person who is loved—a love of friendship—and at the same time some good willed for that person—a love of concupiscence. These two loves constitute one act<sup>13</sup>. If one's friend is thirsty and one wants the friend to have water, then there would be a love of friendship for the friend and a love of concupiscence for the water which is willed for the friend. So too if a person rejoiced in the good health of a friend, there would be a love of friendship for the friend and a love of concupiscence for the health. The distinction between the two loves, then, should not be taken as one between acts which could exist alone, but rather between two inseparable aspects or elements of one single act. We do not love a person without wanting that the person should have what is good for him, nor do we love what is not a person except as good for a person. Thomas give the examples of horses and wine; they are loved not as that for which we will good, but rather as good for ourselves or for others<sup>14</sup>. So what we have is a single act directed to two objects, a person and that person's good. Hence we might say that the distinction between *amor amicitiae* and *amor concupiscentiae* is a formal distinction between just these two aspects of love. Despite the somewhat misleading connotations of the terms, it is not an evaluative distinction between "good" love and "bad" love, or even a distinction between two kinds of love, e.g., self-centered love and other-directed love. In fact, as the above text clearly states, the person loved with love of friendship can be either oneself or another person.

The important distinction, then, between the two loves is the distinction between loving a person as that for which goods are willed and loving some good (even at times a person) as good for a person. Thomas sometimes expresses this by saying that what is loved with the love of concupiscence is loved as that by which a thing is well off. In this vein, he relates these two loves to two fundamental kinds of goods: those goods which are subsisting beings, viz., persons, and those goods which are goods inhering in subsisting beings as accidents which perfect them<sup>15</sup>. Thus we should note—again, to dispel any negative connotations—that the objects of the love of concupiscence include not only things like food and drink, but also perfections such as virtue, knowledge, and health; all these are loved as things by which persons are better off<sup>16</sup>.

The object which is most loved with a love of concupiscence is *beatitudo*, for

<sup>13</sup> For an explicit statement concerning the unity of the two loves, see for example, ST I, q. 20, a. 1, ad 3: «Dicendum quod actus amoris semper tendit in duo, scilicet, in bonum quod quis vult alicui; et in eum cui vult bonum». Also SCG I, ch. 91: «Sciendum itaque quod, cum aliae operationes animae sint circa unum solum obiectum, solus amor ad duo obiecta ferri videtur». Cf. *De perfectione spiritualis vitae*, ch. 14.

<sup>14</sup> *In III Sent.*, d. 28, a. 2, c.; ST II-II, q. 23, a. 1, c.; q. 25, a. 3, c.; *De perfectione spiritualis vitae*, ch. 14; *De Div. Nom.*, ch. 4, lect. 10, nn. 428-29.

<sup>15</sup> *De Div. Nom.*, ch. 4, lect. 9, nn. 404-5; lect. 10, nn. 428-29. It is important to note the point made at n. 429, viz., that we actually do love many subsisting things with love of concupiscence, but that when we do so, we love primarily some accidental quality and do not truly love the objects for themselves (*secundum se*).

<sup>16</sup> See ST I, q. 60, a. 3, c.; *In III Sent.*, d. 29, a. 4, c.

beatitudo as we have already seen contains in its very notion every possible good for a person. Thomas explicitly refers to beatitudo as that which is most loved as a desired good (*bonum concupitum*)<sup>17</sup>. Hence it is easy to see how we can take the will's natural desire for beatitudo as a self-love. The person loved with love of friendship is oneself and the good willed for that person with a love of concupiscentia is precisely beatitudo.

The most important text wherein Thomas explicitly identifies the will's natural inclination with self-love is his treatment of the love of the angels in the *Prima pars*, q. 60. Throughout this question Thomas draws a distinction between natural dilection (*dilectio naturalis*) and chosen or elective dilection (*dilectio electiva*). What he here calls natural dilection is clearly the same as what he elsewhere calls the will's natural inclination. Moreover, in this question Thomas explicitly uses the distinction between *amor amicitiae* and *amor concupiscentiae* (a. 3). The result is that he clearly describes the will's natural inclination as *natural dilection* and describes it in terms of the distinction between *amor amicitiae* and *amor concupiscentiae*<sup>18</sup>. Thus he can say the following about natural dilection: «Whence [like beings without cognition] the angel and man naturally desire their own good and their own perfection. And this is to love oneself. Hence both the angel and man naturally love themselves insofar as each desires some good for himself by a natural appetite»<sup>19</sup>.

In addition, Thomas states just as clearly that this natural self-love is the source of all other acts of will. Of course, the argument Thomas used to justify the existence of a natural inclination in the will, i.e., the fact that every deliberate, chosen act of

<sup>17</sup> ST I-II, q. 2, a. 7, ad 2. See also *III Sent.*, d. 28, a. 1; d. 29, a. 4, c.; ST I, q. 60, a. 4, ad 3; II-II, q. 25, a. 2, c.

<sup>18</sup> This is a crucial point for the approach of Wohlman («Amour du bien propre et amour de soi...»). She wishes to find in Thomas's thought a distinction between a love of self (*amour de soi*) and a love of one's own good (*amour du bien propre*). The love of self, she maintains, occurs only at the level of rational deliberation and choice, not at the level of nature, and is structured according to the distinction between *amor amicitiae* and *amor concupiscentiae* (pp. 211-12). The love of one's own good, on the other hand, would be the love that takes its start in the will's natural love, paralleling the natural love of all beings for their own good. Wohlman's basic argument is that the natural love of God which Thomas speaks of arises not from the love of self, but rather from this natural love of one's own good. For this reason she thinks it mistaken to see the natural love of God as originating in love of self (p. 218). Her interpretation, then, hinges on her reading of the distinction between natural love and elective love as described here in q. 60. Wohlman's view, however, that the distinction between love of friendship and love of concupiscentia is not to be found at the level of natural dilection and that consequently at that level one cannot properly speak of self-love does not seem to be borne out by the texts. Rather it seems clear that for Thomas the distinction between love of friendship and love of concupiscentia obtains in both natural and elective dilection (see especially a. 3). That is to say, Thomas accepts that there is a *natural* self-love. Hence Wohlman's distinction between self-love and love of one's own good does not seem to be one Thomas himself makes (she herself concedes that he never makes it explicitly: p. 208). As we have seen, for Thomas self-love *includes* love of one's own good; these are not two distinct loves but rather two aspects of a single love.

<sup>19</sup> ST I, q. 60, a. 3: «Unde et angelus et homo naturaliter appetunt suum bonum et suam perfectionem. Et hoc est amare seipsum. Unde naturaliter tam angelus quam homo diligit seipsum, in quantum aliquod bonum naturali appetitu sibi desiderat».

the will requires as its principle some natural act, already makes it clear that this natural inclination underlies and gives rise to all subsequent acts. But in the second article of this question the point is made explicitly in the language of natural dilection:

I answer that in the angels there is a natural dilection and an elective dilection. And in them natural dilection is the principle of elective dilection, because that which belongs to what is prior always has the character of a principle; hence, since nature is what is first in anything, it must be that, in any given thing, what pertains to nature is a principle. And this appears in man both with respect to intellect and with respect to will... Similarly, as is said in Book II of the *Physics*, the end plays that role for the will which the first principle plays for the intellect. And so the will naturally tends toward its own last end, for every man naturally wills beatitude. And from this natural willing are caused all other willings, since whatever a man wills, he wills on account of the end. Thus the dilection for the good which a man wills naturally is natural dilection, while the dilection derived from that, dilection for the good loved on account of the end, is elective dilection<sup>20</sup>.

It is clear, then, that Thomas holds self-love to be natural. Every person naturally loves himself with a love of friendship and wants or wills for himself, with a love of concupiscence, all the good(s) that are required for his fulfillment. That is to say, each person naturally loves beatitude for himself with a love of concupiscence. From this natural self-love arise all further acts of willing. Hence, if a person is to love another person by an act of the will, the origin of that second love will have to be explained in terms of the first and more basic love. In this sense Nygren was quite right in his claim; all love is traced back to self-love. But as we shall see, the reduction to self-love does not necessarily imply that all the further loves will be simply loves of concupiscence by which all objects are loved as good for the lover alone. The question is how precisely this self-love can generate a love of friendship for another person.

## 2. Love of self as the basis for loving other (created) persons

For Aquinas it does not seem possible for a person to love another person—seek that person's good—without the good of the person loved being in one way or another.

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<sup>20</sup>ST I, q. 60, a. 2: «Respondeo dicendum quod in angelis est quaedam dilectio naturalis, et quaedam electiva. Et naturalis dilectio in eis est principium electivae; quia semper id quod pertinet ad prius, habet rationem principii; unde, cum natura sit primum quod est in unoquoque, oportet quod id quod ad naturam pertinet, sit principium in quolibet. Et hoc apparet in homine quantum ad intellectum, et quantum ad voluntatem... Similiter in voluntate finis hoc modo se habet, sicut principium in intellectu, ut dicitur in II *Phys*. Unde voluntas naturaliter tendit in suum finem ultimum: omnis enim homo naturaliter vult beatitudinem. Et ex hac naturali voluntate causantur omnes aliae voluntates: cum quidquid homo vult, velit propter finem. Dilectio igitur boni quod homo naturaliter vult sicut finem, est dilectio naturalis: dilectio autem ab hac derivata, quae est boni quod diligitur propter finem, est dilectio electiva».

er the good of the lover. There seems to be no place for the “altruism” of the modern sort by which one pursues the interests of another person that are in no way one’s own<sup>21</sup>. Rather, for Thomas, one loves and seeks the good of another person only when that other person’s good becomes his own<sup>22</sup>. And that good becomes his own precisely when he loves the other person, especially with a love of friendship. Let us look briefly at three examples where this view is clearly evident.

In his treatise on the virtue of hope, Thomas asks whether one can hope for eternal beatitude for a person other than oneself. He replies that, strictly speaking, one only hopes for goods for oneself. Hope (and desire) is like motion and motion is always toward the proper terminus proportionate to what moves (like a stone falling to the center of earth). This terminus is the thing’s own good (*proprium bonum*) and not the good of something else. Nevertheless, Thomas continues, «if we presuppose a union of love with the other person, then it is possible for one to desire and hope for something for someone else as if for oneself. And accordingly someone can hope for eternal life for another person insofar as that person is united to him by love»<sup>23</sup>. Again, while discussing pleasure, Aquinas argues that the actions of other people can be a source of pleasure for us in three distinct ways. His argument assumes that pleasure involves both that one possess one’s own good (*bonum proprium*) and that one be aware of that possession. In the first place, then, the action of the other might yield us some new good (e.g. to be given a gift). Second the action of the other may make us more aware of some good we already possessed (e.g., to be praised or honored). Third, the actions can cause us pleasure «insofar as the actions themselves of the other persons, if they are good, are taken as one’s own good by virtue of love which makes one consider one’s friend to be, as it were, the same as oneself»<sup>24</sup>. Finally, in explaining why benefiting another person can bring one pleasure, Thomas says that it may be that one expects some return in the future from the other, but it may also be simply the good achieved in the other that is the source of pleasure: «...insofar as the good of another person is taken, as it were, to be our own good (*bonum proprium*), on account of the union of love, we delight in

<sup>21</sup> For a description of this modern altruism along with its usual contrast term, “egoism”, see *Egoism and Altruism*, by Alisdair MACINTYRE in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

<sup>22</sup> Some statements of this view, by way of illustration, are the following (emphases added): «Ex hoc igitur aliquid dicitur amari, quod appetitus amantis se habet ad illud *sicut ad suum bonum*» (*De Div. Nom.*, ch. 4, lect. 9, n. 401); «Et quia unumquodque amamus *inquantum est bonum nostrum...*» (*Ibid.*, n. 406); *In III Sent.*, dist. 29, a. 3, c.: «Bonum autem illud unusquisque maxime vult salvari quod est sibi magis placens; quia hoc est appetitui informato per amorem magis conforme; *hoc autem est suum bonum*. Unde secundum quod bonum alicujus rei est vel aestimatur magis bonum ipsius amantis, hoc amans magis salvari vult in ipsa re amata».

<sup>23</sup> ST II-II, q. 17, a. 3, c.: «Motus autem semper est ad proprium terminum proportionatum mobili: et ideo spes directe respicit proprium bonum, non autem id quod ad alium pertinet. Sed praesupposita unione amoris ad alterum, iam aliquis potest desiderare et sperare aliquid alteri sicut sibi. Et secundum hoc aliquis potest sperare alteri vitam aeternam, inquantum est ei unitus per amorem».

<sup>24</sup> ST I-II, q. 32, a. 5, c.: «Tertio modo, inquantum ipsae operationes aliorum, si sint bonae, aestimantur ut bonum proprium, propter vim amoris, qui facit aestimare amicum quasi eundem sibi».



the good which is done by us for others, especially for friends, as we would in our own good»<sup>25</sup>.

From these texts it seems clear that a person always seeks and rejoices in his own good, but that it is possible for the good of another person to become his good, if he is united to that other person by love<sup>26</sup>. In these cases the person is loving the other's good as his own with a love of concupiscence but is loving that good as good for the other person. In other words, the person is taking as his own good a good that inheres or belongs to another person precisely *as belonging to that other person*. What occurs here is that the lover takes the loved as somehow one with himself—as another self (*alterum se/alter ipse*) to use the phrase Thomas takes over from Aristotle—and thus loves the goods of that person as if they were his own. Again to quote Thomas: «The angel and man naturally love themselves. That, however, which is one with something is the thing itself, whence each loves that which is one with itself»<sup>27</sup>. Since each person naturally loves his own good, he will naturally love the good of anyone he takes to be one with him<sup>28</sup>. This, then, is the application to the love of concupiscence of Aristotle's dictum about self-love being the basis of love for others. Since a person naturally loves his own good with a love of concupiscence, he will also loves the good of another person with a love of concupiscence if he somehow takes that other person to be one with himself.

Obviously in these texts Thomas presupposes the possibility of a relationship between persons of such a sort that one person takes the other to be one with himself (another self) and consequently the other's good (well-being) to be his own. This is precisely what he understands by having a love of friendship for another person. *Amor amicitiae*, says Thomas, formally just is this kind of union: to be united to another person in this way, i.e., as one for whom the lover seeks goods in the same way he would for himself<sup>29</sup>. In this kind of union the lover desires that the beloved acquire the goods that he (the beloved) lacks or retain the goods that he already has (benevolence), and the lover acts to procure or protect those goods (beneficence). There is also a union of wills such that the lover desires what the beloved desires and is saddened by what saddens the beloved. That is to say, it is proper to this union that both the lover and the beloved will the same goods<sup>30</sup>. In all this the lover wants the good of the beloved simply as being the good of the beloved; in fact, the good of the beloved is the good of the lover precisely by being the good of the beloved. It does

<sup>25</sup> ST I-II, q. 32, a. 6, c.: «Et secundum hoc, in quantum bonum alterius reputamus quasi nostrum bonum, propter unionem amoris, delectamur in bono quod per nos fit aliis, praecipue amicis, sicut in bono proprio».

<sup>26</sup> *Desiderium* (desire/seeking) and *delectatio* or *gaudium* (delight/joy) are the two affections that follow from *amor*, desire when the loved good is absent and delight when the good is present. For this point see ST I-II, q. 25, a. 2, c.

<sup>27</sup> ST I, q. 60, a. 4, c.: «...angelus et homo naturaliter seipsum diligit. Illud autem quod est unum cum aliquo, est ipsummet: unde unumquodque diligit id quod est unum sibi».

<sup>28</sup> ST I, q. 60, a. 4, ad 3; II-II, q. 27, a. 2, c.

<sup>29</sup> ST I-II, q. 28, a. 1, c. & ad 2.

<sup>30</sup> This doctrine is developed in Thomas's discussion of mutual inherence (*inhaesio mutua*) as an effect of love of friendship (ST I-II, q. 28, a. 2).

not become the lover's good only by somehow "returning" to the lover as would be the case if the lover loved the beloved with a love of concupiscence. Thomas expresses this point under the rubric of *extasis*, saying that in love of concupiscence the love of the lover goes out to the beloved, but returns to itself, while in the case of love of friendship, the love goes out to the beloved and remains there<sup>31</sup>.

We should note here that the unity effected by love of friendship is not an ontological unity such that either the lover or the beloved ceases to have his own individual existence. Rather it is a unity at the level of affections or will by which one person *affectively* takes the other to be part of himself and the goods of the other to be his own goods. As Thomas says, commenting on Aristotle, the unity of affections (*unitas affectus*) is not the same as natural unity (*unitas naturalis*)<sup>32</sup>. Thus to say that the lover is united by love to the one he loves does not dissolve or destroy the otherness of the two persons. Also, to say that the union is one of affections does not mean that one merely desires or rejoices in the goods of the other; we are speaking here primarily of affections of the will, and so the consequence of the affective union is that the lover *effectively* seeks the good of the beloved (i.e., beneficence).

Granted this possibility of a love of friendship for other persons, we need to see how such a love arises from one's self-love. In general, the basis for the affective extension of one's self to include another person such that the other person is treated as another self is, for Thomas, *unity*. In some mode the other person must be taken as one with the lover. One way that this occurs, Thomas maintains, is that one person sees another as "belonging" to him (*ut aliquid sui existens*) or as being a part of him (*utpote pars existens*). This is the sort of love parents have for their children<sup>33</sup>. This, in broader terms, is like a relationship between a whole and its parts. Since any good of a part will be a good for the whole, the whole wants what is good for any of its parts. In this way parents will generally want their children to have the goods they (i.e., the children) lack and rejoice when their children possess goods<sup>34</sup>.

If we turn, however, to what we more normally think of as friendship, a relationship between (more or less) equals who come to love each other upon meeting and getting to know each other, then the basis for the extension of one's self to the other

<sup>31</sup> ST I-II, q. 28, a. 3; *De div. nom.*, ch. 4, lect. 10, nn. 430-33. For a general description of Aquinas's understanding of *amor amicitiae*, see D. GALLAGHER, *Desire for Beatitude and Love of Friendship in Thomas Aquinas*, «*Mediaeval Studies*», 58 (1996), pp. 1-47. See also, P. KWASNIEWSKI, *St. Thomas, Extasis, and Union with the Beloved*, «*The Thomist*», 61 (1997), pp. 587-603.

<sup>32</sup> See *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, Bk. IX, lect. 11: «Deinde cum dicit: *Ut autem ad se ipsum* etc., ostendit ex praemissis quid sit virtuoso et felici eligibile et delectabile respectu amici. Et dicit quod virtuosus ita se habet ad amicum sicut ad se ipsum, quia amicus quodam modo est alter ipse; sicut igitur unicuique virtuoso est eligibile et delectabile quod ipse sit, sic est ei eligibile et delectabile quod amicus sit, et si non aequaliter, tamen propinque; maior est enim unitas naturalis quae est alicuius ad se ipsum quam unitas affectus quae est ad amicum» (Leonine, 47.2, p. 540, ll. 114-23). Cf. *In III Sent.*, d. 29, a. 3, ad 1: «...mor non est unio ipsarum rerum essentialiter, sed affectuum».

<sup>33</sup> ST II-II, q. 26, a. 9, c.

<sup>34</sup> *De div. nom.*, ch. 4, lect. 9, nn. 406-7.

is *similitudo* or *likeness* (*similitudo*)<sup>35</sup>. We see this in the question Thomas explicitly directs to the causes of love (ST I-II, q. 27). In this text he first names the good as the cause of love, something quite obvious since love is an affection of an appetitive power whose object is precisely the good (a. 1). Next he names cognition, once again an obvious point, since the motions of the appetitive powers depend upon cognition of the good (a. 2). But then, after the good and cognition, Thomas points to *similitudo* as the cause of love. To be similar or like another thing implies having some formal sameness; both things must share in a greater or lesser degree in some one form, or better, in some one formal perfection. This, however, constitutes a kind of unity, which, when perceived, is the basis for benevolence and even beneficence.

The first kind of *similitudo* causes love of friendship or benevolence. For from the fact that two things are alike, having as it were one form, they are in a certain manner one in that form, as two men are one in the species of humanity and two white persons in whiteness. And therefore the affection of the one inclines toward the other as toward what is one with himself: he wills the good for him as he does for himself<sup>36</sup>.

For Thomas, then, to share in any formal perfection with another person is to be, to that extent, one with that other person. Love, as appetitive, is based on the good and so it is the *shared good* that is the basis for loving others. Consequently we love only those who share some good with us and who, consequently, are similar to us. At the widest level, for example, all human beings share in the form or species of humanity, and on that basis there arises the basic love that each person should have for all others, even strangers<sup>37</sup>. Of course persons can share many other things of varying importance (e.g. shared parentage for siblings) and also share them in varying degrees. Consequently there are a variety of special loves of varying intensity and varying in terms of the goods which are the basis for the love. We can speak of specifically different loves and friendships such as those between citizens, colleagues, or spouses. Thus the unity of affections that constitutes love of friendship arises on the basis of the perception of a preexisting unity, the ontological unity of sharing in some one form. As a result of this perception a person is moved to take the other person at the level of affection as another self and so to desire and seek that

<sup>35</sup> Some statements about *similitudo* as a cause of love are the following: «*amoris radix, per se loquendo, est similitudo amati ad amantem*» (*In III Sent.*, d. 27, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3); «*amor ex similitudine causatur*» (*Ibid.*, q. 2, a. 2, ad 4); «*similitudo est principium amandi*» (ST I, q. 27, a. 4, ad 2); «*similitudo, proprie loquendo, est causa amoris*» (ST I-II, q. 27, a. 3, c.). On this point see H. D. SIMONIN, *Autour de la solution thomiste du problème de l'amour*, «Archives d'Histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age», 6 (1931), pp. 257-62.

<sup>36</sup> ST I-II, q. 27, a. 3, c.: «*Primus ergo similitudinis modus causat amorem amicitiae, seu benevolentiae. Ex hoc enim quod aliqui duo sunt similes, quasi habentes unam formam, sunt quodammodo unum in forma illa, sicut duo homines sunt unum in specie humanitatis, et duo albi in albedine. Et ideo affectus unius tendit in alterum, sicut in unum sibi: et vult ei bonum sicut et sibi*».

<sup>37</sup> ST I, q. 60, a. 4, c.; I-II, q. 27, a. 3, c.

person's good<sup>38</sup>. This seems to be Thomas's theory for explaining the origin of the love of friendship for other (created) persons.

In terms of this theory we can now see how one's self-love is prior to the love of others. I love the others on the basis of their possessing goods that I first love for myself. In his *Sentence* commentary, Thomas makes the observation that similitude alone is not enough to cause love; if I do not love in myself the thing that I share with the other, then I will not love the other on that basis<sup>39</sup>. For example, if I do not take being from my hometown as good, then I will not, as is normally the case, love others who also come from it. The import of this observation is that I will love others only on the basis of sharing goods *that I first love for myself*. And, as we have seen, to the extent that I want these goods for myself, I can be said to love myself. So here again we encounter Aristotle's dictum, that self-love is the basis of love for others. The extension of one's self, so to speak, to include others, occurs when one perceives that others share goods that one first loves in oneself. One wishes to promote in the other what he already finds good in himself. If a person found himself in no way good, in no way lovable, he would not be able to love others.

This priority of self-love shows up in Thomas's doctrine concerning the order of love (*ordo amoris*). With respect to other creatures, he says, it is proper that each person love himself more than any other. The basis for this seems to be the following. I love others to the extent that I find in them the same good that I want for myself. We form, by virtue of our shared good, a kind of community, and I love the others as being one with me in that community. But it is only because I first love that good that I love those that also have it; my possession of the good, my pertinence to this community is prior to and the basis for my loving the others who are one with me in it. Wanting the good more intensely for myself than I do for the others, I love myself more intensely than I love them. Thomas summarizes this argument by saying that the relationship we have to ourselves is unity while the relationship we have to others who possess that good is union; unity is stronger than union, however, and so it follows that we love ourselves more than those with whom we share the good<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas distinguishes three kinds of unity that are found in love: 1) an underlying unity based on a shared form (or on the part-whole relationship as we shall see); 2) the unity of affections that love causes in a formal way precisely by being that unity; 3) the actual or real presence of the beloved to the lover in whatever form that takes. For these three, see I-II, q. 28, a. 1, ad 1.

<sup>39</sup> *In III Sent.*, d. 27, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3.

<sup>40</sup> ST II-II, q. 25, a. 4, c.: «...unicuique autem ad seipsum est unitas, quae est potior unione. Unde sicut unitas est principium unionis, ita amor quo quis diligit seipsum, est forma et radix amicitiae: in hoc enim amicitiam habemus ad alios, quod ad eos nos habemus sicut ad nosipsos». Cf. q. 26, a. 4., c. where this principle is applied to *caritas*: «Deus diligitur ut principium boni super quo fundatur dilectio caritatis: homo autem seipsum diligit ex caritate secundum rationem qua est particeps praedicti boni; proximus autem diligitur secundum rationem societatis in isto bono. Consociatio autem est ratio dilectionis secundum quandam unionem in ordine ad Deum. Unde sicut unitas potior est quam unio, ita quod homo ipse participet bonum divinum est potior ratio diligendi quam quod alius associetur sibi in hac participatione. Et ideo homo ex caritate debet magis seipsum diligere quam proximum». This relationship of one's self-love as prior to the love of others repeats itself in the many specifically different loves; see q. 26, aa. 6-8 for Thomas's discussion of the many different loves a person has based on the many different goods that are shared with others.

Before leaving the topic of similitude, it is worth pointing out that this teaching provides an account of why persons are not inclined to love and form friendships with just anybody, but rather tend to exhibit preferences in this regard. Nor is it simply that one person sees good in another and so loves him on that basis (as described by Geiger); unless that good is somehow a *shared* good and so able to be my good, it will not provide the basis for love and friendship<sup>41</sup>. We can also note that in this understanding of self-love as the basis for love of friendship for other persons, Thomas does not seem to fall prey to the charges of Nygren and (especially) of Wollman. Their reasoning seems to be that self-love is constituted by a love of friendship for the self and a love of concupiscence for all things other than the self, which are loved for the self. It then seems to follow that if self-love is to be the basis for loving others, these others, being something other than the self, will be loved with a love of concupiscence for the self. But Thomas's theory provides for an extension of the self to include others, such that a person can be willing his own good in willing that good for the other and willing it precisely as being in the other. Without this possibility, Thomas's whole ethics and anthropology would become simple egoism<sup>42</sup>.

### 3. Self-love as the basis for loving God

Thomas holds that a rational creature can have a love of friendship for God, a love which has the same basic elements as the love of friendship for others. God is loved for his own sake and not simply as a means to one's individual fulfillment. That is to say, we want that God have his goodness, especially in terms of rejoicing in that goodness precisely as found in God<sup>43</sup>. There is the unity of wills characteristic of friendship which is expressed in obedience to the divine law and an acceptance of divine providence<sup>44</sup>. Thomas explicitly treats the love of friendship for God in his treatise on supernatural charity in the *Secunda secundae*, but he also teaches that there is natural love of friendship, and even says that the command to love God is the first of the precepts of the natural law<sup>45</sup>. Indeed, love

<sup>41</sup> On this point see R.O. JOHANN, *The Meaning of Love: An Essay towards the Metaphysics of Intersubjectivity* (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1959), pp. 21-24.

<sup>42</sup> On the importance of love of friendship for Thomistic ethics see, S. PINCKAERS, *Der Sinn für die Freundschaftslove als Urtatsache der thomistischen Ethik*, in *Sein und Ethos: Untersuchungen zur Grundlegung der Ethik*, ed. P. Engelhardt (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1963), pp. 228-35.

<sup>43</sup> It is possible to rejoice in God's goodness insofar as it is participated in by us. This is to love God with a love of concupiscence, the love which, according to Thomas, animates the virtue of hope. See ST II-II, q. 17, aa. 6, 8; q. 26, a. 3, ad 3.

<sup>44</sup> See e.g., ST I-II, q. 19, aa. 9-10; q. 91, a. 1.

<sup>45</sup> For the treatments of the natural love of God see *In III Sent.*, dist. 29, a. 3; *De perfectione spiritualis vitae*, c. 14; *De div. nom.*, ch. 4, lect. 9-10; ST I, q. 60, a. 5; ST I-II, q. 109, a. 3; ST II-II, q. 26, a. 3. For a comprehensive and careful study of Thomas's doctrine, see G. STEVENS, *The Disinterested Love of God according to St. Thomas and Some of his Modern Interpreters*, «The Thomist», 16 (1953), pp. 307-33, 497-541. For the precepts of the natural law, see ST I-II, q. 100, aa. 3, 6. In this paper I do not sharply distinguish between the natural and the supernatural

of friendship for God constitutes the heart of Thomas's ethics. Moral goodness for him is first and foremost rectitude of will, and the will is rectified only when it loves God with a love of friendship and wills everything in a way consistent with that love<sup>46</sup>.

When, however, we consider the basis for the love of friendship one has for God, then the structure is different from what we saw earlier. Here the ontological basis is not similitude, but rather the relationship of part and whole. Nor are we dealing here with it the relation of whole to part, as in the parent-child relationship, but rather with that of part to whole. In any whole, says Thomas, the part is ordered to the whole such that the good which it primarily seeks is the good of the whole. Persons can be parts of wholes, the most obvious instances being communities made up of several persons. Here a good member of a community, as such, seeks the good of the whole community and not just his own individual good. In fact, he should, as a virtuous member, seek the good of the whole more than his own individual good. So just as a person can recognize the good of other persons to be his own by means of similitude, so too he can take the good of other persons to be his own by being part of a larger whole, i.e., a part of a community. The common good is his good and at the same time the good of others<sup>47</sup>.

When Thomas treats the relation of the creature to God as one of part to whole, he does so not in a pantheistic way such that all creatures would be parts of God, but rather in terms of his doctrine of participation, by which each creature has in a partial form perfections that are found in their complete or perfect form only in God<sup>48</sup>. Whatever goodness they have in themselves and find lovable in themselves is to be found in a fuller, more perfect form in God. A passage from Thomas's *Sentence* commentary nicely sums up this teaching:

The good that each person most wishes to be preserved is that which is most pleasing to him, since this is most in conformity with an appetite informed by love. This, however, is one's own good (*suum bonum*). Whence, according as the good of something is or is thought to be a greater good for the lover himself, he wishes the more that the good be preserved in the loved thing. The good of the lover himself, however, is more to be found where it exists more perfectly. And consequently, since any part is imperfect in itself, having its perfection within its whole, it tends accordingly by a natural love more toward the preservation of its whole than toward its own preservation. Thus an animal naturally exposes its limb to defend its head, on which depends the preservation of the whole. So too, even individual men expose themselves to death to preserve the community of which they are parts. Since, then, our good is perfect in God as in the first, uni-

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loves, since it seems to me that for the questions raised here, the distinction is not decisive. At both levels, Thomas thinks that a person should love God as the common good, that he should love God above self, and that he should order all he loves and all he does to God.

<sup>46</sup> «...bonum morale praecipue consistit in conversione ad Deum, malum morale in aversione a Deo». ST II-II, q. 19, 2, ad 2; cf. I-II, q. 19, esp. aa. 4, 9-10; II-II, q. 104, a. 4, ad 2.

<sup>47</sup> ST II-II, q. 47, a. 10, ad 2.

<sup>48</sup> *De div. nom.*, ch. 4, lect. 9, nn. 405-6; lect. 10, nn. 431-32.

versal, and perfect cause of goods, so it is naturally more pleasing that the good exist in him than that it exist in us. Consequently, God is naturally loved by men more than self even with the love of friendship<sup>49</sup>.

As is clear from this text, not only is there a natural love of friendship for God, but also this love is greater than one's self-love. Man should, in accord with this natural inclination, love God above himself. It is proper to the part, as part, to love the good of the whole more than its own private good and to direct itself and its private good to the good of the whole<sup>50</sup>.

Turning now to the question of self-love as the basis for this love of God, there seem to be two ways we can approach the issue. The first is in terms of the good of the whole being one's own good, viz. God's good as one's own good. By his natural self-love, a person naturally loves his own good. Once a person recognizes himself as a part of a whole, he also recognizes the good of the whole as his good. This, as we have seen, belongs to the part-whole structure. Thus once he perceives his good to lie in the common good of the whole, he will be able to love that good as being his good. He will love that good precisely as the good of those persons in which it is found, i.e., as the good of those persons composing the community. In this way, he comes to love the good for those other persons as well as for himself; that is to say, he comes to have a love of friendship for those other persons. In the case of loving God, there is this difference, that the common or universal good is found preeminently in God himself. The person in which this good is found is only one, God, and so it is God and not a whole community of persons which in this case is being loved with the love of friendship. Here, as in love based on similitude, an affective union arises upon the cognition of an ontological union, yet one's love of one's own individual good precedes and is the basis for the extension. This is made clear in the reply we have already seen in which Thomas explains Aristotle's statement that love of others comes from one's self-love:

The friendliness one has toward another comes from the friendliness one has toward oneself, not as if from a final cause, but rather as from that which is prior in the process of generation. For just as each person knows himself before he

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<sup>49</sup> «Bonum autem illud unusquisque maxime vult salvari quod est sibi magis placens; quia hoc est appetitui informato per amorem magis conforme; hoc autem est suum bonum. Unde secundum quod bonum alicujus rei est vel aestimatur magis bonum ipsius amantis, hoc amans magis salvari vult in ipsa re amata. Bonum autem ipsius amantis magis invenitur ubi perfectius est. Et ideo quia pars quaelibet imperfecta est in seipsa, perfectionem autem habet in suo toto, ideo etiam naturali amore pars plus tendit ad conservationem sui totius quam sui ipsius. Unde etiam naturaliter animal opponit brachium ad defensionem capitis ex quo pendet salus totius. Et inde est etiam quod particulares homines seipsos morti exponunt pro conservatione communitatis cujus ipsi sunt pars. Quia ergo bonum nostrum in Deo perfectum est, sicut in causa universali prima et perfecta bonorum, ideo bonum in ipso esse magis naturaliter complacet quam in nobis ipsis. Et ideo etiam amore amicitiae naturaliter Deus ab homine plus seipso diligitur». *In III Sent.*, dist. 29, a. 3, c.

<sup>50</sup> ST II-II, q. 58, a. 5, c.

knows the other—even God—, so too the love which each person has for himself is prior to that which he has for the other, in the process of generation<sup>51</sup>.

It is worth noting here, what we might call the “self-centered” aspect of this love. I seek the common good for everyone in the community, but only of the communities to which I belong. I seek the good of *my* family, *my* university, *my* country, in a way that I do not seek the good of other families, universities or countries. And I do this precisely because they are mine. I do not love them more than I love others simply because I think they are better than others; in other words, my love for them is not based only on the “objective” goodness they contain<sup>52</sup>. Rather I seek the good for these communities (i.e., love them) because, by virtue of my belonging to them, those common goods are my goods. This reasoning would seem to hold for Thomas even at the level of God. That is, I love God with the appropriate degree of love, not just because God is the best thing there is. I love God because he is the source of my goodness and because I find in God my own goodness in the highest degree<sup>53</sup>. If, *per impossibile*, there were two or three Gods each with his own created universe, then it seems that I would love my God, the one who created me but not the other Gods, because the goodness of the other Gods would not be mine. In sum, even in the love for God there is an extension of the natural love of my own good, the natural inclination of the will.

The second way in which self-love gives rise to the love of God concerns not how God’s good is seen as one’s own good, but rather with the choice one must make if he is to direct his love toward God. If a person does come to see that his good is to be found in God more than in himself, he must still make the choice to love his good there more than in himself, i.e., he must still choose to love God and direct himself toward God. A person may consider himself simply as an individual and then ask what is best for himself; he has to look at all the possible goods one can seek and to which one can dedicate oneself. It is Thomas’s view that the best thing a

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<sup>51</sup> *In III Sent.*, dist. 29, a. 3, ad 3: «Ad tertium dicendum quod amabilia quae sunt ad alterum venerunt ex amabilibus quae sunt ad seipsum, non sicut ex causa finali, sed sicut ex eo quod est prius in via generationis. Quia sicut quilibet sibi prius est notus quam alter, etiam quam Deus; ita etiam dilectio quam quisque habet ad seipsum est prior ea dilectione quam habet ad alterum, in via generationis».

<sup>52</sup> This again would be the view of L.B. Geiger who interprets Aquinas as holding that one’s love, at the rational level, is proportionate only to the objective goodness of a thing and not to its relationship to the lover. See *Le problème de l’amour chez saint Thomas d’Aquin*, pp. 58-61. As with all loves of friendship, in loving the common good, a person would rejoice in the good that is present and desire the good that is absent or lacking. Thus one need not be simply content with the good (or lack thereof) one finds in one’s own community.

<sup>53</sup> ST I, q. 60, a. 5, ad 1: «Sed in illis quorum unum est tota ratio existendi, et bonitatis alii, magis diligitur naturaliter tale alterum quam ipsum; sicut dictum est quod unaquaeque pars diligit naturaliter totum plus quam se. Et quodlibet singulare naturaliter diligit plus bonum suae speciei, quam bonum suum singulare. Deus autem non solum est bonum unius speciei, sed est ipsum universale bonum simpliciter. Unde unumquodque suo modo naturaliter diligit Deum plus quam seipsum». This is a reply to an objection based on unity as the ground for loving other persons, viz., that one should love oneself more than one loves God because one’s union with self is greater than one’s union with God.



man can do for himself is to love God above self; in other words, a person can recognize that the best way to love himself is to love God more than himself<sup>54</sup>.

In this vein there is a rather interesting text in which Thomas asks whether a person can commit a venial sin without committing a mortal sin (ST I-II, q. 89, a. 6). His answer, at least for the unbaptized, is “no”. His reasoning here is that a person can sin only when he has reached a certain age, a certain degree of intellectual maturity. At that point, when the person makes his first free, deliberate act, the first thing he considers is himself: to what good is he going to dedicate himself. At this point, Thomas claims, the person either turns to something other than God and in so doing commits a mortal sin, or he turns to God<sup>55</sup>. What is interesting, for our purposes, is that the turning to God, the decision to love God above all else, is taken precisely in view of what will be best for the person himself. In other words, it is precisely on the basis of his self-love that the person chooses to love God more than himself. On the basis of wanting what is best for self—self-love—a person chooses to love God above self.

If then we now consider the claim made at the beginning that it is not possible to move from self-love to love of God—the “Copernican revolution”—, this claim does not seem to be borne out by Thomas’s texts<sup>56</sup>. Nor does there seem to be any conceptual difficulty. A person need only consider that what is best for himself is to love God more than himself and on this basis move himself to such an act. There is no necessary opposition between self-love and love of God.

#### 4. The Forms of Self-love

As a concluding theme, let us take up the various forms of self-love one finds in Thomas’s thought. This theme is of interest because, as we shall see, the claim that one cannot move from love of self to love of others does hold for a certain self-love but not for others. If one overlooks this variety, one may tend to see all self-love as being of the sort closed to love of others and to conclude consequently that self-love can in no way be the source of love for others and for God. Our goal here is to see which forms of self-love are open to the love of others and which are not.

As we have seen, all dilection has the form of willing (seeking/rejoicing in) goods for a person. Consequently, the different self-loves are to be distinguished primarily in terms of a) what the person takes to be his self and b) what goods the person seeks for himself. This is how Thomas treats the different self-loves, especially in his discussion of whether sinners love themselves (ST II-II, q. 25, a. 7). There, following Aristotle, he distinguishes *bad self-love* in which a person takes as primary within himself the sensitive and bodily side of his nature and accordingly pursues as his chief goods sensible and bodily goods from *good self-love* wherein the rational or

<sup>54</sup> ST I-II, q. 100, a. 5, ad 1 (see n. 61 below).

<sup>55</sup> ST I-II, q. 89, a. 6, c.

<sup>56</sup> Two other texts in which one’s love of self is taken as the basis for willing the love of God are *In III Sent.*, dist. 29, a. 4, c. and ST II-II, q. 25, a. 2, c. (see n. 65 below).

spiritual side of the nature is taken as primary and the corresponding spiritual goods are principally sought. A related yet slightly different treatment of self-love is to be found in Thomas's treatise on the virtue of hope in a question dedicated to the gift of fear (ST II-II, q. 19). There he says that fear is always based on self-love (one fears to lose one's own good), and so when he discusses the various kinds of fear he also discusses the various ways one can love oneself. Consequently, in an article devoted to the question of whether fear is compatible with charity, Thomas distinguishes three different ways of loving oneself and the relation of each to the love of God which is charity (a. 6). While Thomas's chief interest in this text is precisely this, the relationship of self-love to the love of charity, it seems that what he says there can be applied more broadly to a person's self-love within any community of which he is a part. In what follows, we shall describe these three kinds of self-love as they relate to charity and then try to show how they would pertain to a person's relationship to any community in general.

A first self-love is one which is incompatible with the love of God that is charity. By this love the person seeks for himself his own individual goods in such a way as to give priority to them. Here a person would be willing to ignore the demands of charity such as obeying divine law, for the sake of such goods as bodily pleasure, money, or honor. This self-love, which corresponds with what Thomas calls the self-love of sinners (q. 25, a. 7), is incompatible with charity; to love oneself in this way precludes loving God above self. Thomas, speaking about the Fall, says at one point that a consequence of the Fall is precisely a steady tendency toward one's own private good and not toward the common good, especially the highest common good which is God<sup>57</sup>.

In more general terms, this kind of self-love seems to be opposed to and corruptive of friendship and community. It is a selfish or egotistical self-love, one that seeks for oneself precisely those goods which cannot truly be shared. These goods, says Thomas, have so little goodness that they cannot be shared without being diminished<sup>58</sup>. A person who seeks such goods as his primary goods will enter into competition with others over them, since usually one has more only if others have less (e.g. money, honor). Also, not being dedicated to the sorts of common goods that can be shared, they will tend to lack the necessary basis for loving others. Thus this kind of self-love is opposed to loving common goods and hence is always destructive of friendship and community. The more a person is dedicated to such goods, the less able he will be to enter into friendships and to seek goods for others. Let us take a mundane example. If, during a game of football, a running back were to run out of bounds just before making a first down in order to avoid being hit by a

<sup>57</sup> ST I-II, q. 109, a. 3, c.

<sup>58</sup> ST I-II, q. 28, a. 4, ad 2: «Ad secundum dicendum quod bonum amatur in quantum est communicabile amanti. Unde omne illud quod perfectionem huius communicationis impedit, efficitur odiosum. Et sic ex amore boni zelus causatur.—Ex defectu autem bonitatis contingit quod quaedam parva bona non possunt integre simul possideri a multis. Et ex amore talium causatur zelus invidiae. Non autem proprie ex his quae integre possunt a multis possideri: nullus enim invidet alteri de cognitione veritatis, quae a multis integre cognosci potest; sed forte de excellentia circa cognitionem huius».

defensive player, he would be at that moment preferring his own private good (his health, absence of pain) to the common good of the team (victory). He would be, at that moment at least, a bad member of the team, for at that moment he ceases to seek the good of the team.

Thomas gives a second kind of self-love in which the goods wished for are compatible with one's ordination to God<sup>59</sup>. Here a person does seek individual goods for himself, but not any that are directly opposed to charity (i.e., not opposed to the divine law)<sup>60</sup>. A person might will life and health for himself but not be willing to pursue them if that pursuit were contrary to the love of God. Such a self-love is clearly compatible with charity, although not identical with it insofar as the object of the love is one's own good and not the good of God. This love seems to be that which Thomas calls the virtuous or good self-love by which a person wills for himself those goods that are truly best for him, especially the spiritual goods. Among those goods would be included one's ordination to God as to the primary good<sup>61</sup>.

In more general terms, we can say that this is the proper self-love of one who is dedicated to a common good. A person who belongs to a community or has friends does not thereby lose all concern for his own individual good. But his concern for his individual good (e.g., the absence of pain for the football player) will be subordinated to his concern for the common good. What is more, one of the things he will want for himself is precisely his ordination to the common good. Hence this love presupposes a love for the common good, while remaining distinct from it. What the person wants *for himself* is to be a good part of the whole; the focus here is still on the goodness of the individual as such. Again, to return to our mundane example, it is consistent with being a good team player, that a person delight in his own good performance; it would be understandable that a person who played well while the team lost should experience both disappointment and satisfaction: disappointment at the team's loss and satisfaction about his good play (or even that he was not injured). Here the two goods, his own good (which remains precisely an ordination to the good of the whole) and the good of the whole are clearly distinct.

The third kind of self-love that Thomas describes is not really distinct from charity at all. In this case one loves oneself only in terms of one's ordination to God, only as being ordered to the divine goodness. Here Thomas speaks of a person loving himself *propter Deum et in Deo* and also as *ad Deum pertinens*<sup>62</sup>. In this love one rejoices in one's own good, not for oneself but only for God; if one loves one's own good with a love of concupiscence, this good is referred by a love of friendship not to self but to God. Or, to make clear the contrast with the second self-love, we could say that one would want his ordination to God just because God wanted it and only

<sup>59</sup> I am here inverting Thomas's order of treatment of the second and third self-loves in q. 19, a. 6, c.

<sup>60</sup> For this relationship of charity to the divine law, see II-II, q. 24, a. 12, c. «Est igitur de ratione caritatis ut sic diligat Deum quod in omnibus velit se ei subiicere, et praeceptorum eius regulam in omnibus sequi: quidquid enim contrariatur praeceptis eius, manifeste contrariatur caritati».

<sup>61</sup> ST I-II, q. 100, a. 5, ad 1: «...in hoc enim homo vere se diligit, quod se ordinat in Deum».

<sup>62</sup> ST II-II, q. 19, a. 6, c.; q. 25, a. 4, c. Cf. q. 24, a. 12, c.: «... [ratio caritatis] consistit in hoc quod Deus diligitur super omnia, et quod homo totaliter se illi subiiciat, omnia sua referendo in ipsum».

for that reason, not because it is a good for himself. This is like the love that Thomas attributes to charity by which all things other than God are loved just because of their relation to God and not because of their natural relationship to us as family members or colleagues, etc.<sup>63</sup>.

This third form of self-love in its more general form is found when a person seeks as his good only the common good of the whole and in so doing loves himself only as a part of the whole. This, we could say, is the love of the part precisely as a part, as opposed to the love of the part as itself an individual whole which we would have in both the first and second self-loves. Here the only good desired and rejoiced in is the good of the whole and the person sees himself as to be loved only because he belongs to and contributes to the whole. His love of himself is an extension of his love for the whole; because he loves the whole he loves all that belongs to the whole including himself<sup>64</sup>. This is “total dedication” to the whole. To turn yet again to our mundane example, if the team lost, in this case the player, no matter how well he played, would experience only disappointment; his source of joy would be the victory of the team and he would not see himself as having any good other than that.

To return now to our question, which of these self-loves is the basis of our love for others and for God? It seems clear that the first self-love is not. If one takes as one’s good what cannot be shared with others, then there is no basis for loving the other person, at least not with a love of friendship. The third sort of self-love seems already to presuppose the love for the other(s). To love oneself as ordered to the common good presupposes a prior act by which one determined oneself to be ordered to the common good; being a member of the team presupposes having joined the team. Hence it seems that it is the second form of self-love that provides the basis for loving others and for loving God. This would certainly seem to be the case for Thomas if we think of his discussion of the person’s first free act. There the person first asks what is best for himself and decides that what is best for himself is to love God more than himself. Thus the misgivings of those who think that self-love can lead to nothing other than self-love apply to the first self-love but not to the second. There is no logical inconsistency nor any psychological impossibility in choosing to love another person for his own sake and even more than oneself as what is best for oneself. In fact, it seems that such love of others must pass through this phase of self-love. If we love others it must be because we think it better for ourselves to do so. As Thomas points out in another place, as free beings we must will to will whatever we will. If we will to seek the good for others, we shall do so because in some way it is better for ourselves. I as an individual must be better off

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<sup>63</sup> ST II-II, q. 19, a. 6, c. Cf. q. 26, a. 7, c.; q. 25, a. 4, c. (see following note).

<sup>64</sup> When Thomas introduces this kind of self-love, he points out that it is really not distinct from charity (ST II-II, q. 19, a. 6, c.); we might say that it is the love of charity applied to oneself. On loving oneself with the love of charity, see, q. 25, a. 4, c.: «Alio modo possumus loqui de caritate secundum propriam rationem ipsius, prout scilicet est amicitia hominis ad Deum principaliter, et ex consequenti ad ea quae sunt Dei. Inter quae etiam est ipse homo qui caritatem habet. Et sic inter cetera quae ex caritate diligit quasi ad Deum pertinentia, etiam seipsum ex caritate diligit».

for entering the friendship (e.g. marriage) or the organization or the community than if I do not do so; otherwise it does not seem that I would do so<sup>65</sup>.

What happens to this second sort of self-love where the third form is to be found? Does one simply cease to love oneself and become wholly absorbed in the common good, or in the case of charity, in God? This does not seem to be Thomas's view. While the third form of self-love, seems more perfect than the second insofar as the person is dedicated to a larger good (the common good and not his own individual good), it nevertheless does not remove the second kind of self-love. For Thomas, one does not, in loving God and loving other creatures in God as ordered to God, cease loving himself or creatures on other bases (i.e. the unity with oneself and the union with others by means of similitude). The natural self-love one has for oneself remains; it is part of one's nature. What does happen, however, is that this love tends to be less and less actual; that is to say, the person adverts less and less to his good in these terms. The love remains as a habitual love, a fixed disposition to rejoice in one's good and the good of others on these other bases, *if one were to advert them*. According to Thomas, as one grows in charity, one adverts less and less to these things, being more and more consumed by the goodness of God<sup>66</sup>. Thus we should not think that the love of charity wholly removes this "self-centered" self-love leaving only the "God-centered" self-love. The two loves co-exist. This would seem to occur as well in any case of dedication to a common good. A person might seem to have "total dedication", to seek nothing for himself as an individual and to expend all his efforts toward some common goal. Yet here we should say that this person has not ceased to love himself as an individual, but rather simply does not advert to his own individual good. If asked whether he thought his dedication to the common good were a good thing for him, he would surely answer affirmatively. But he might also note that he had more important things to worry about. Thus the seeming replacement of love of self focused on self as opposed to love of self focused on the common good, should be seen as an exchange between the habitual and actual states of the two loves.

<sup>65</sup> This "self-reflective" aspect of love finds expression at ST II-II, q. 25, a. 2, c.: «Amor autem ex natura potentiae cuius est actus habet quod possit supra seipsum reflecti. Quia enim voluntatis obiectum est bonum universale, quidquid sub ratione boni continetur potest cadere sub actu voluntatis; et quia ipsum velle est quoddam bonum, potest velle se velle: sicut etiam intellectus, cuius obiectum est verum, intelligit se intelligere, quia hoc etiam est quoddam verum. Sed amor etiam ex ratione propriae speciei habet quod supra se reflectatur: quia est spontaneus motus amantis in amatum; inde ex hoc ipso quod amat aliquis, amat se amare». The key point here is that in order to love a person(s), one must will to do so and if that willing were in no way good for oneself, one would not so will. It is important to note that this requirement occurs only with regard to chosen acts, acts of what Thomas calls *liberum arbitrium* (will taken as a principle of choice). There are also acts of the will which arise spontaneously from the will apart from choice; these are what Thomas calls simple willings or *voluntates* (see ST I-II, q. 8); they arise from the will considered as natural (*voluntas ut natura*) which is contrasted with *liberum arbitrium* (also called *voluntas ut ratio*; for this distinction see ST III, q. 18, aa. 3-6). On the question of how one can take one's loving another as good for oneself without the love for the other becoming a love of concupiscence, see *In III Sent.*, d. 29, a. 4, c.

<sup>66</sup> ST II-II, q. 19, a. 10, c. For the distinction between actual and habitual willing, see ST I-II, q. 1, a. 6, ad 3 and DV q. 22, a. 5, ad 11.

There are two large themes in Thomas's ethical doctrine in which the second self-love looms large. One is his doctrine of hope. The love that animates hope, Thomas holds, is primarily a love of self. In hoping in God, one loves oneself with a love of friendship and God with a love of concupiscence, as being good for oneself. This is contrasted with charity whereby one loves God for God's sake<sup>67</sup>. This same self-love is also present throughout the treatise on the last end (ST I-II, qq. 1-5). The presupposition of those questions is that the agent naturally seeks what is good for himself. Consequently the primary love of friendship in play there is one's self-love, the love by which one wants, with a love of concupiscence, what is best for oneself (beatitude). This "best" then turns out to be God. Thus, when read on its own, that treatise can easily give the appearance that for Thomas one loves God only as that which makes one happy and not for God's own sake. It is chiefly the treatise on charity that shows that such a self-love, while legitimate, is not the highest of loves, because it is not directed to that in which one finds his own good most perfectly<sup>68</sup>.

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**Abstract:** *La tesi di questo articolo è che, per Tommaso d'Aquino, l'amore di sé è la base di ogni amore per gli altri. Si dimostra, innanzitutto, che l'inclinazione naturale alla beatitudine che l'Aquinate trova nella volontà è, di fatto, l'amore di sé, e che di conseguenza l'amore di sé è naturale ed è pure la fonte di tutto ciò che la persona sceglie e fa. In secondo luogo, si manifesta come l'amore di sé dia origine all'amore di amicizia per altre persone, cioè, un amore verso di loro per loro stessi. In virtù di una somiglianza, nel caso di altre persone create, e in virtù di un rapporto parte-tutto nel caso di Dio, una persona può prendere il bene altrui come bene proprio. Finalmente, si distinguono tre forme di amore di sé: "cattivo" amore di sé, con cui uno cerca solo i propri beni non condivisibili, in modo egoista; "buono" amore di sé, con cui uno cerca per se stessi l'ordinamento ai beni comuni che condivide con altri; e in fine l'amore per il bene comune come bene proprio, senza riferimento alcuno al bene individuale. Si ritiene che la seconda forma di amore di sé è necessaria per dare luogo alla terza.*

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<sup>67</sup> ST II-II, q. 17, aa. 6-8.

<sup>68</sup> ST II-II, q. 26, a. 3, ad 3.