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## Love: A Thomistic Analysis

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**C**HRISTIANS ARE ENJOINED to love God above all things and their neighbors as themselves. The faithful of every generation must determine what it means for them to be bound by a law of love. To begin with, Christians need a good idea of *what love is*. They need a conception that is informed by the tradition and by the best and worst of their own experiences, which they reflect upon in light of broader humanistic and scientific inquiry. Without an adequate conception of love, one cannot meaningfully say that one is acting from obedience to the love command, choosing to act in light of love as an end, acting from love as a motive, or seeking to become a more loving person.

### CHRISTIAN ETHICS OF LOVE

The language of love appears frequently in the history of Christian thought, but prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century few thinkers sought to define love or specify how it is best conceived by persons who identify as Christians.<sup>1</sup> Over the past century, more attention has been focused on clarifying what love is, sorting out its various forms, and arguing about which form best represents the Christian ideal. A striking feature of this recent literature is that it is oriented by the retrieval of classic philosophical and biblical terms for love, most notably the Greek *eros*, *philia*, and *agape*, and the Latin *caritas*.<sup>2</sup> The use of these

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<sup>1</sup> As Jules Toner writes, "It is a strange and striking fact that even those who write best about love devote very little space to considering what love is... After a few paragraphs on the nature of love, there are long discussions about the kinds of love, the power and effects of love, the stages of growth in love, the moral and psychological norms for love, the relation of love with knowledge, sex, justice, and so on. It is assumed that readers and writer know what love is and agree on what it is." *The Experience of Love* (Washington, D.C.: Corpus Books, 1968), 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> During the 1930's Anders Nygren published *Agape and Eros: The Christian Idea of Love*, trans. Philip S. Watson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). In this

terms can be helpful in distinguishing kinds or dimensions of love. It can also be misleading. It can reify concepts that were not historically as stable as they might now appear, and it can cause us to bend authors' views to fit our expectations. If we bring contemporary debates about Christian love to the work of earlier thinkers in the tradition, we will likely ask questions that we would not otherwise ask, which is good. Yet we might also be limited by the terms of the debate as we consider how these thinkers would respond to our questions. This essay turns to Thomas Aquinas for guidance in thinking about love. The analysis is informed, but not bound, by recent discussions of *agape*, *eros*, *philia*, and *caritas*.

There are good reasons to reconsider Aquinas on love, attending to love in its most inclusive sense, *amor*.<sup>3</sup> For Aquinas, love refers in part to an emotion, and scholars across many disciplines have been investigating the emotions. Many studies now demonstrate what Aquinas (and others) knew long ago, which is that emotions can make critical contributions to practical intelligence and to ethical decision-making.<sup>4</sup> Yet these studies, some of which are cross-cultural, and others of which consider nonhuman animals, raise questions about how to define the object of our investigation. What *are* emotions? Thoughts, value judgments, ways of construing the significance of events? Changes in the brain and other parts of the body, the feeling of these changes, the meaning people attach to such feelings? How can we know that someone is feeling an emotion and which emotion he is feeling? Can a person be mistaken about his own emotional state? If we cannot answer such questions reasonably well, we cannot successfully make emotions an object of shared inquiry. We cannot be confident that, when we use the term "emotion," other people will bring to mind the same thing we have in mind.

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influential text, Nygren drove a wedge between *agape* and *eros* to ensure the breakup of the "*caritas* synthesis" and return Christians to an original and pure form of Christian love. Many recent discussions of love in Christian ethics have Nygren's work in view as they define normative Christian love with reference to *agape*, *eros*, *philia*, *caritas*, and related concepts. See, e.g., Josef Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997); M.C. D'Arcy, *The Mind and Heart of Love, Lion and Unicorn: A Study in Eros and Agape* (London: Faber and Faber, 1953); Gene Outka, *Agape: An Ethical Analysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972); Barbara Hilbert Andolsen, "Agape in Feminist Ethics," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 9, no. 1 (1981): 69-83; Edward Collins Vacek, *Love, Human and Divine: The Heart of Christian Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1994); Timothy Jackson, *Love Disconsolated: Meditations on Christian Charity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Colin Grant, "For the Love of God: Agape," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 24, no. 1 (1996): 3-21; Edward Collins Vacek, "Love, Christian and Diverse: A Response to Colin Grant," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 24, no. 1 (1996): 29-34.

<sup>3</sup> The relationship between *amor* and *caritas* will be discussed subsequently.

<sup>4</sup> See J.-P. Changeux, A.R. Damasio, W. Singer, and Y. Christen, eds., *Neurobiology of Human Values* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2005).

Partly in an effort to define emotions, some scholars of religious studies, theology, ethics, philosophy, and moral psychology have been studying Aquinas.<sup>5</sup> His account of the passions or emotions, presented in its fullest form in the *Summa theologiae*, is stunning in its scope, theological depth, explanatory power, and psychological usefulness.<sup>6</sup> His analysis of the structure of emotion, and of the relationship between emotion, thought, and choice, encourages the study of the morality of emotion.<sup>7</sup> The latter area of inquiry is important because it is not just any emotion that contributes to the effective exercise of moral agency. Only certain emotions, felt in certain ways, allow persons to discern and respond to what is really important. When we consider Aquinas's theory of the emotions in light of his reflections on the Christian moral life, we are enabled to return, with

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<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., Diana Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions: A Religious-Ethical Inquiry* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009); Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Nicholas E. Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2011); Peter King, "Aquinas on the Passions," *Aquinas's Moral Theory: Essays in Honor of Norman Kretzmann*, eds. Scott MacDonald and Eleonore Stump (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Marcel Sarot, "God, Emotion, and Corporeality: A Thomistic Perspective," *The Thomist* 58 (January 1994): 61-92; Daniel Westberg, "Emotion and God: A Reply to Marcel Sarot," *The Thomist* 60 (January 1996): 109-121; Shawn D. Floyd, "Aquinas on Emotion: A Response to Some Recent Interpretations," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (April 1998): 161-175; Kevin White, "The Passions of the Soul," *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 103-115.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, ed. Petri Caramello (Rome: Marietti, 1950), hereafter *ST*, cited in the body of the text. In this essay I adhere, with only minor changes, to the translation of the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981). I use the term "emotion" to refer to Thomistic *passio*, with the understanding that the latter is ordinarily influenced by the intellect and the will in a human being. One can refer to an intellectual affection (*affectus*) or to a simple act of the will (*simplex actus voluntatis*) also as an emotion, but it is best to do so only if the affection or the act of the will is coordinated with an emotion proper, which involves a noticeable (if only subtle) bodily change. Otherwise, one projects an emotional quality into an intellectual realm where "feelings" are thought to occur, but these feelings have no noticeable relationship to a body. When referring to love in God it is best to refer to an affection or to a simple act of the will, rather than to an emotion. For further reflection on terminology, see Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions*, 92-96.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Claudia Eisen Murphy, "Aquinas on Our Responsibility for Our Emotions," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 8 (1999): 163-205; Robert C. Roberts, "Thomas Aquinas on the Morality of Emotions," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (July 1992): 287-305; Servais Pinckaers, "Reappropriating Aquinas's Account of the Passions (1990)," trans. Craig Steven Titus, *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*, eds. John Berkman and Craig Steven Titus (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 273-287; Paul Gondreau, "The Passions and the Moral Life: Appreciating the Originality of Aquinas," *The Thomist* 71 (2007): 419-450.

new resources, to the ethics of love. What, for Aquinas, is the emotion of love? What is it to feel this emotion in an appropriate or virtuous way? What is the relationship between the emotion of love and the love that Christians are to show toward God, self, and neighbor?

Many Christian thinkers have argued, especially since Kant, that Christian love cannot be an emotion or have an emotional dimension because we are passive with respect to our emotions. If our emotions are not subject to our will, we cannot reasonably be commanded by God to feel them, nor can we fairly demand this of ourselves and each other. We can be held responsible for how we move ourselves to act, but not for how we are moved to feel.<sup>8</sup> Many authors have maintained, accordingly, that Christian love is best conceived as an intellectual attitude or an act of the will. For example, Norman Kretzmann interprets Aquinas as saying that Christian love is a “[positive] intellective attitude” that is “rational” and “unemotional.”<sup>9</sup> Gene Outka characterizes neighbor-love as an equal and unconditional regard that one extends “to each neighbor qua human existent,” irrespective of any distinguishing features of the other that might evoke an emotional response.<sup>10</sup> Commonly, neighbor-love is

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<sup>8</sup> See Justin Oakley, *Morality and the Emotions* (London: Routledge, 1992), 122-147, for a discussion of the way in which we can be responsible for things over which we lack certain sorts of “control,” both in the realm of action and in the realm of emotion.

<sup>9</sup> Norman Kretzmann, “Aquinas on God’s Joy, Love, and Liberty,” *The Modern Schoolman* 72, no. 1 (Nov. 1994): 129-130. Kretzmann’s concern is mainly with God’s love, but he suggests that Christian love will ideally imitate God’s love. Kretzmann rightly notes that, for Aquinas, God as first principle does not undergo *passiones*. God does not have a body, and emotions are motions of the sensory appetite that are mediated by bodily organs. Yet God in Christ experienced *passiones* (*Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* 26.8 [Fundación Tomás de Aquino, 2011, <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/qdv25.html>], hereafter *DV*, cited in the body of the text). Presumably Christ experienced love not only as an intellectual attitude or a universal good will, but also as a body-resonant emotion. Given that humans are beings who engage the world of value partly via our sensory powers, Christians might reasonably cultivate virtuous love by seeking to imitate Christ in his passible human nature (*ST* III q. 15, a. 4; q. 46, a. 12). For a discussion of the affectivity of Christ that could complicate this suggestion, however, see Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire*, chapter 6. See also my review of the latter in *Modern Theology* 28, no. 2 (April 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Outka, *Agape*, 12-13. Outka draws on Kierkegaard who argues that Christian love and the emotion of love are different things that ought not to be confused. Christian love has its basis in duty (“you SHALL love”), while the emotion of love has its basis in personal preference (*Kierkegaard’s Writings, XVI: Works of Love*, eds. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong [Princeton: Princeton University, 1998], 24-25). Kierkegaard does not disparage the emotion of love or the value of personal relationships as such. He simply holds that for Christians the ethical priority is the unconditional wishing of all persons well and the practice of assisting them in becoming authentic selves (62, 106-114). Emotional love for those who are near and dear can be appropriate, and even strangers may be loved in personal ways. One has the duty to love

represented as a form of benevolence or well-wishing that a person can and ought, in principle, to extend (it is misleading, without further discussion, to say “feel”) toward everyone who crosses her path.<sup>11</sup>

Edward Vacek bemoans the abstract and impersonal quality of much that goes by the name of love in Christian ethics. He argues that Christian love includes “an *emotional* appreciation and concern for the good of the beloved.”<sup>12</sup> On Vacek’s view, “emotions are [cognitive] acts by which we perceive values in reality, and they are acts in which we are enlivened by reality’s goodness or repulsed by its evil.”<sup>13</sup> Neighbor-love includes respect for a person’s dignity, but respect is more than a hands-off attitude or an absence of ill-will; it is “an actual experience of the preciousness of that person.”<sup>14</sup> My own related concern is that neighbor-love can be dissociated, in the minds of Christians, from the experience of ordinary, embodied emotion. When this happens, Christians can say and believe that of course they love their neighbors as themselves—they would not deliberately cause other people harm, and they generally wish others well as human beings—but they do not like certain people very much, on an emotional level. Indeed, there are some people they detest. What does neighbor-love require when it comes to people whom we find emotionally disturbing? Does it require that we exercise virtuous emotion in their regard? Does it require that we *feel* any love for them?

Aquinas does not address exactly these questions, but he defines the emotion of love, he defines Christian love, and he suggests that both modes of loving can and ought to be determined by virtue. He recognizes that there are natural limits to the love and service that we can extend to others, but he argues that virtuous love will ideally inform all that a person is and does. Just as significantly, he articulates a moral psychology that distinguishes several ways in which a person

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the person one sees (160-161), and attending to a stranger in his particularity can inspire affection. However, all emotional love must be permeated and transformed by conscience (135). That is, all persons must be regarded first and foremost as fellow humans who, like the self, have a unique relationship to God and have destinies that can be realized only in the context of that relationship. Moreover, the Christian must not disregard the humanity of anyone for whom she happens not to feel affection or whom she dislikes. She has the duty to close her eyes to another’s particularity if the latter keeps her from obeying God’s command (68).

<sup>11</sup> Conceiving of Christian love as extensive benevolence does not *require* neglecting the emotional dimension of such love. John P. Reeder, Jr., argues convincingly that extensive benevolence builds on emotional capabilities that are developed in the context of special relations. “Extensive Benevolence,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 26, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 47-70.

<sup>12</sup> Vacek, *Love, Human and Divine*, 160.

<sup>13</sup> Vacek, *Love, Human and Divine*, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Vacek, *Love, Human and Divine*, 162.

can love God, self, and others. He delineates closely-related phenomena, such as emotions, desires of various kinds, judgments of various kinds, and motions of the will. When we become familiar with his moral psychology, we acquire powerful tools that allow us, if we so desire, to tease apart and sort out aspects of our interior lives that are often jumbled together, not only in experience but also in reflective thought. These tools can help us to target specific features of our character on which we would like to work. They can help us to uncover subtle forms of self-deception, especially if we use the tools with modern critical theory in mind. Aquinas's thought invites Christians, in particular, to consider more honestly what it means to be loving persons.

Interpreting Aquinas on love poses challenges. Scholars have noted many puzzles that he left to posterity—puzzles concerning how the many things that he said about love fit together.<sup>15</sup> We will not examine the vast secondary scholarship on this topic or analyze Aquinas's texts in a level of detail that would allow us definitively to resolve important difficulties in Aquinas studies. Instead, in a more constructive vein and in the service of a broadly Thomistic moral theology and psychology, this essay distinguishes and relates several forms of love that are operative in Aquinas's thought—forms that persons would do well to be able to distinguish and relate for themselves, in times of reflection, if they aspire to a life of love within the context of Christian faith. A subordinate aim of the essay is to show how this multi-faceted conception of love allows Christians to address some neglected questions about Christian love and emotion.

This essay uses some categories that Aquinas does not use, but categories that highlight features of his thought that might otherwise be neglected. It also holds fast to distinctions he makes but sometimes sets aside as he engages thinkers who have different ways of talking about love. Finally, this essay focuses on the Christian tradition, but readers are invited to consider whether the way love is laid out here might be transposable into terms that are congenial to other traditions or paths.

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<sup>15</sup> To begin considering these puzzles, consider Frederick E. Crowe, "Complacency and Concern in the Thought of St. Thomas," *Theological Studies* 20, nos. 1, 2, and 3 (March, June, and Sept., 1959): 1-39, 198-230, 343-395; Patrick A. Messina, "Love Lost and Found: The Ambiguities of *Amor*, *Caritas* and *Concupiscentia* in St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*," *Confessions of Love: The Ambiguities of Greek Eros and Latin Caritas*, eds. Craig J. N. de Paulo et al. (New York: Peter Lang), 55-73; Guy Mansini, "Duplex Amor and the Structure of Love in Aquinas," *Thomistica* (1995): 127-196.

## APPETITE

What, then, is love? In Thomistic perspective, all forms of love have something in common. They are functions of appetite (*appetitus*). They are modes of tending in relation to an end. If we want to understand love and how various forms of love relate to each other, and if we want also to relate love to other modes of tending, such as desiring, well-wishing, and enjoying, it is best to begin with the concept of appetite.<sup>16</sup> Generally speaking, appetite is the power by which everything tends (*tendit*), in accordance with principles that are inherent in its being, to be what it is and to resist being destroyed or reduced to something else (*DV* q. 25, a. 2). It is the power by which everything is oriented to realize its potential in relation to other things. This potential includes the power to assist other things in being what they are and realizing *their* potential (*DV* q. 22, a. 1).

We can think of appetite, in its broadest connotation, as a binding force.<sup>17</sup> It is a force that holds a given object together, as something in particular, and allows it to hold its course as it relates to other objects. It is a force that also holds various objects together as parts of larger wholes, which have their own tendencies. The universe as a whole has an appetite to attain what is suitable for it. It has a tendency to attain the end for which God created it. There is much in the universe and especially in the human world that is destructive. There is much evil, including moral evil. Yet Christians trust that creation is oriented toward the self-manifestation of divine goodness, and there is nothing, finally, that can defeat God's purposes (*DV* q. 22, a. 2).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> For Aquinas, there are two main things that we do as beings who relate to a world: we exercise powers of apprehension (we take in and process information) and we exercise powers of appetite (we are moved by, and we move ourselves in relation to, much that we apprehend). For further discussion of why, in Thomistic perspective, we cannot do without something like a concept of appetite see Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions*, ch. 3.

<sup>17</sup> A binding force must include elements of attraction and repulsion, for each of these exists only in relation to the other.

<sup>18</sup> For creative interpretations of Aquinas's metaphysics that are constructed in light of contemporary science, see John F. Haught, *Is Nature Enough? Meaning and Truth in the Age of Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); William E. Carroll, "Creation, Evolution, and Thomas Aquinas," *Revue des Questions Scientifiques* 171, no. 4 (2000): 39-347; and Brendan Purcell, "Reflections on Evolution in the Light of a Philosophical Biology," *Thomas Aquinas: Approaches to Truth*, eds. James McEvoy and Michael Dunne (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002). For further reflection on natural and moral evil in the thought of Aquinas, see Herbert McCabe, *God and Evil in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Continuum, 2010); Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Carlos Steel, "Does Evil Have a Cause? Augustine's Perplexity and Thomas's Answer," *The Review of Metaphysics* 48, no. 2 (December 1994): 251-273; and Gregory M. Reichberg, "Beyond Privation: Moral Evil in Aquinas's 'De Malo,'" *The Review of Metaphysics* 55, no. 4 (June 2002): 751-784.

Aquinas identifies several forms of appetite that orient things in different ways, on different levels of being (*DV* q. 22, a. 1; q. 25, a. 1). Our focus is on humans. Humans are, in part, material entities. We are also living organisms. As such, we—or, more specifically, our bodies—have a *natural appetite* to be alive, for a time, and to perform functions that are typical of living bodies, such as processing nutrients, growing, and reproducing (*ST I* q. 78, a. 2). A living human body, considered apart from the sensory and intellectual powers that supervene bodily operations, has a tendency to function in ways that allow it to keep on being what it is and playing the role it plays in related systems of life (*ST I* q. 80, a. 1).<sup>19</sup>

Humans are living beings. We are also animals that have sensory powers, some of which we share with other animals, and some of which are unique to us because we exercise them under the influence of higher-order intellectual powers (*ST I* q. 78, a. 4; q. 81, a. 3). As sensory beings, we can be aware of objects (things, persons, or situations) outside of ourselves, and we can be aware that some of them have a bearing on our well-being. We have a tendency to feel comfortable with, and to be drawn toward, objects that we judge, on a sensory level, to be helpful for us or for our kin (*ST I* q. 80, a. 2). We have a tendency to feel uncomfortable with, and to be repulsed by, objects that we judge to be hurtful (*ST I* q. 81, a. 2). We have a tendency to become spirited or aggressive in relation to objects that keep us from attaining what is pleasant or avoiding what is painful. On this level of our being, we are characterized by *sensory appetite*. We have the power to be moved by various objects that we apprehend via our exterior and interior senses.<sup>20</sup> We are characterized also by particular sensory appetites. We experience interior motions in relation to particular images and impressions. We have a tendency to be changed and to *feel* changed by objects that strike us as pleasing, displeasing, helpful, hurtful, friendly, threatening, or the like. Undergoing a motion of the sensory appetite involves being changed physically as well as psychologically, for these motions are mediated directly by the body (*ST I-II* q. 22, a. 1; q. 22, a. 1, *ad.* 3).

Humans are also intellectual beings. We have remarkable powers of thought, reasoning, and decision-making. We can conceive of the

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<sup>19</sup> For Aquinas, “natural” can mean many things. For example, it can be constructed in opposition to unnatural, rational or elective, or supernatural. I use “natural appetite” here to refer to the tendency a thing has to attain its end without benefit of sensory or intellectual powers, and also without benefit of divine gifts beyond the gift of having its being in every moment from the first cause of being (*ST I-II* q. 41, a. 3).

<sup>20</sup> The interior senses in Aquinas’s scheme include the common sense (the power to have complex sensory experiences), sensory imagination, the cogitative power (an advanced version of the power that other animals have to make sensory judgments of properties such as usefulness or danger), and sensory memory (*ST I* q. 78, a. 4). See Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions*, 111-120, 171-176; see also Miner, 65-82.

idea of goodness, and we can conceive of an object *as* good, not merely in the sense of being attractive in its particularity, but in the sense of being worthy of our affirmation because it has a degree of perfection (it has actualized some of its potential) and it is capable of perfecting other things (it has the potential to assist other things in actualizing their potential) (*DV* q. 21, a. 1; *ST* I-II q. 1, a. 5; q. 1, a. 6). We can also move ourselves in relation to the idea of goodness or in relation to an object that we conceive to be good (*ST* I-II q. 6, a. 1; q. 10, a. 1). On this level of our being, we are characterized by *intellectual appetite*. We have the power to move ourselves in relation to what we judge to be good or lacking in goodness (*ST* I-II q. 9, a. 1; q. 18, a. 1). We are characterized also by particular intellectual appetites. We experience interior motions in relation to particular things that we regard as good, evil, or a combination of both. We have a tendency to affirm and reach out toward objects that we judge to be good, and we have a tendency to reject and withdraw from objects that we judge to be evil (*DV* q. 22, a. 4). Whereas the sensory appetite is passive in that it allows us to be moved, so to speak, as patients relative to agents of change, the intellectual appetite or the will is active in that it allows us to move ourselves as agents (*DV* q. 22, a. 4).<sup>21</sup> Whereas the sensory powers depend directly on the body for their operation, the intellectual powers do so only indirectly, inasmuch as they depend on the coordinated exercise of our sensory powers (*ST* I q. 77, a. 5; q. 85, a. 1; I-II q. 23, a. 1).

Finally, humans are spiritual beings whose intellectual powers can be extended by gifts from God to which humans freely respond (*ST* II-II q. 24, a. 5). The ability to think about goodness and happiness can be extended by faith. Faith makes it possible to trust certain things that we cannot know to be true on the basis of reason alone—that is, on the basis of empirical observation and philosophical or scientific modes of demonstration that make no appeal to revealed truth. Faith makes it possible to trust that the final end of human life lies in an intimate relationship with the source of all goodness (*ST* II-II q. 1, a. 3; q. 2, a. 1; q. 6, a. 2). Similarly, the ability to move oneself in relation to one's end can be extended by charity and hope. In Thomistic perspective, charity and hope allow us to tend to God as a friend, and to the possibility of eternal happiness with God (*ST* II-II q. 17, a. 6; q. 26, a. 1). On this level of our being, humans are characterized by *spiritual appetite*. We have the power to move ourselves in relation to what we judge to be divine or capable of separating us

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<sup>21</sup> The will is active in the sense that it is our power to move ourselves as agents (*per modum agentis*), but it is passive in the sense that we can move ourselves only in relation to what we first conceive, by the power of our intellect, to be good or evil. The will is thus passive in the sense that what we apprehend as good or evil moves us in the manner of an end (*per modum finis*) (*ST* I q. 82, a. 4).

from the divine (*ST II-II* q. 1, a. 1). We are characterized also by particular spiritual appetites. We experience interior motions in relation to particular objects. We have a tendency, by the grace of God and the responsive power of our will, to affirm and reach out toward what we judge, in a given situation, to be God, in the image of God, or related to God in some other way, and to reject and withdraw from what we judge to be contrary to God or a relationship to God.

Aquinas rarely uses the term spiritual appetite (*appetitus spiritualis*, *appetitus spiritualium bonorum*, or the like). More often, he refers simply to the intellectual appetite. But the idea of spiritual appetite is implicit in his thought. The spiritual appetite is the intellectual appetite in its capacity to operate in the context of a more or less conscious relationship to God. In other words, the spiritual appetite is our capacity to orient ourselves toward that which reveals itself to be the heart of reality and invites us to entrust ourselves to it. The distinction between the intellectual and spiritual appetite is tricky because Aquinas thinks that humans can have a formal idea of what God is by reasoning from experience, apart from special revelation and the growing trust that God is present to us, in a personal way, seeking to transform us from within (*ST I* q. 1, a. 2). Accordingly, we can tend toward God as known by a reasonable intellect alone. But we can encounter and tend toward God more intimately by trusting that God is indeed present to us as a power that can make all things new. The spiritual appetite is the intellectual appetite as it functions in the context of a living faith. In Thomistic perspective, faith does not necessarily involve being sure that what the Bible or one's religious community says is true, or in what sense it is true. The Highest Truth is an enigma.<sup>22</sup> As Paul says, "Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully" (1 Cor 13: 12-13).<sup>23</sup> Above all, faith involves wondering about and searching with others for the truth of life, and accepting that such truth is, in certain respects, beyond logical or scientific demonstration (*ST II-II* q. 1, a. 5; q. 4, a. 1).

Spiritual appetites are active; they are forms of self-motion. Although we become capable of them only by what enters our mind as a gift, and by a divine invitation to extend the power of our will, we

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<sup>22</sup> For a probing discussion of the enigma of faith, and the relationship between Christian faith and infused virtue in Aquinas, see William McDonough's essay on the early work of German Catholic theologian Eberhard Schockenhoff in "Caritas as the *Prae-Ambulum* of All Virtue: Eberhard Schockenhoff on the Theological-Anthropological Significance and the Contemporary Interreligious Relevance of Thomas Aquinas's Teaching on the *Virtutes Morales Infusae*," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 27, no. 2 (2007): 111.

<sup>23</sup> *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, Revised Standard Version, eds. Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger (New York: Oxford University Press), 1977.

exercise spiritual appetites by what is nonetheless our own will (*ST* II-II q. 24, a. 2). Like other intellectual appetites, spiritual appetites are not mediated directly by the brain and body. If they were, they (and we) could not survive our physical death. However, they function in coordination with body-mediated sensory powers in this life, and Christians trust that certain of their spiritual appetites will function in relation to an incorruptible body after the resurrection (*ST* Suppl. q. 70, a. 1).

Just as we can speak of natural, sensory, intellectual, and spiritual appetites, we can speak of natural, sensory, intellectual, and spiritual love. In each case, love is a tendency on the part of an object—for our purposes, a human being—to unite with what is *suitable* for its being or is at least *regarded* as suitable. Our main interest lies in sensory love, especially the emotion of love, and in spiritual love or, more specifically, Christian love. But it is good to keep natural love in perspective because tendencies of the body can influence emotions, and emotions, in turn, have an impact on the body. In addition, neither sensory nor spiritual love can be considered apart from intellectual love, for the sensory powers of humans function under the influence of the intellect and the will, and the spiritual appetite is a form of the intellectual appetite.

### SENSORY LOVE

On the sensory level, love is conceived by Aquinas as a tendency to unite with what we apprehend, by means of our sensory powers, to be suitable for us (*ST* I-II q. 23, a. 2; q. 26, a. 2). Sensory love is an orientation that we have because of the way we (and other things) are constituted. It is also an interior motion that occurs within us when we apprehend a particular object as suitable. Sometimes Aquinas characterizes sensory love as a *principle* or cause of interior motion, and he identifies the latter more specifically with desire and the feeling of being attracted to something (*ST* I-II q. 26, a. 2). But the most compelling construction of his account requires that we characterize love, as well as desire, as a kind of motion, albeit a different kind.<sup>24</sup> Sometimes Aquinas speaks of sensory love as a *suitability* that obtains between a subject and an object, such that the subject is capable of being united with the object in a way that is pleasing or helpful to the subject (*ST* I-II q. 25, a. 2 *ad.* 2), but the best construction of his

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<sup>24</sup> One can characterize emotion and sensory desire also as “acts” (*actus*) or operations of the sensory appetite. I favor the term “motions” (*motus*), partly because the English term “emotion” includes the word “motion” and is related etymologically to the Latin *emovere* (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.uiowa.edu/>), and because emotion and sensory desire often find expression in bodily motion (motion in place) and locomotion (motion from place to place), as well as chosen action.

account requires that we characterize love also as an *experience* of such suitability (*ST I-II* q. 26, a. 1; q. 31, a. 1). Finally, Aquinas describes love as the first change wrought in the sensory appetite when we apprehend an object as suitable (*ST I-II* q. 26, a. 2), but we will want to make explicit that it is also the *feeling* of being changed by the object. Too often Thomistic sensory love is interpreted as a change of the sensory appetite that has no relationship to experience.

For the most part, sensory love is characterized by Aquinas as a passion or an emotion. It is the experience of feeling comfortable when we apprehend something that is poised to interact with us in ways that are beneficial for us or for others who are important to us (*ST I-II* q. 32, a. 3 *ad.* 3; q. 32, a. 7). When Aquinas analyzes hatred (*odium*), he describes the emotion of hatred (which differs from hatred as a motion of the will) as a dissonance (*dissonantia*) (*ST I-II* q. 29, a. 1). A dissonance is something that can be felt, and it generally feels uncomfortable. Accordingly we could say that love, which is the contrary of hatred, is partly a consonance (*consonantia*) and more specifically a feeling (*sensus*) of consonance (*ST I-II* q. 29, a. 3). Another word for the emotion of love is *complacentia*. This term is used by Aquinas to refer to love on other levels of our being as well, but it is used paradigmatically to refer to sensory love. It refers to the interior motion of resonating with pleasure at the apprehension of an apt connection (*ST I-II* q. 26, a. 2 *ad.* 3). This experience can be subtle, and we can take it for granted, for it can occur countless times a day. We can fail to be fully aware of the love we feel as beings who are suspended in webs of lively relationships with other beings.

Sensory love is the first of what can become a series of emotions that are elicited by a sensible good—by something whose apparent suitability we can apprehend by means of our exterior and interior senses (*DV* q. 26, a. 4; *ST I-II* q. 26, a. 2). The basic emotion series is love-desire-pleasure. Sensory desire (*desiderium* or *concupiscentia*) arises when we are aware of an object, we are moved by the fact that we stand in a suitable relationship with it (we love it), but we are not as closely related to it as we could be, and we are drawn toward that closer relationship (*ST I-II* q. 30, a. 2). We might be drawn, for example, to unite with the object physically, to enjoy it ourselves, or to use it to benefit another.<sup>25</sup> Unlike love, desire implies a noticeable lack, and it tends toward greater perfection or completeness.

It is important to keep desire in view as a distinct motion of the sensory appetite as we examine the prior motion of love, for Aquinas often refers to love in ways that divert attention to desire. It is easy to

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<sup>25</sup> We must allow that the latter is an example of sensory desire, rather than thinking of desire as only acquisitive, because animals of many kinds desire to do things for the benefit of beings other than themselves.

have our attention diverted. First, we are often separated from what we love. When this happens, we can become more acutely aware of our love. In this awareness, it is easy to identify love with the feeling of being separated and the desire for a closer union. Second, as noted, love is a form of *appetitus*. Scholars often render *appetitus* as “desire,” which is particularly tempting when it comes to verb forms. When *appetere* is translated “to tend,” rather than “to desire,” many readers nonetheless think of tending *as* desiring, and do not realize that love, too, is a mode of tending. The propensity to be diverted from the motion of love to the related motion of desire is accentuated when we turn to the intellectual and spiritual appetites, where love is characterized as a motion of the will. “Willing” (moving ourselves by the power of our will) is easily thought of too narrowly as referring to intellectual or spiritual desiring, when it can refer also to intellectual or spiritual loving and enjoying.

A motion of sensory desire generally begins in sensory love and is completed in sensory pleasure or delight (*delectatio*). Sometimes Aquinas refers to delight and, by implication, to love as forms of being-at-rest, which implies that they are not forms of motion at all (*ST* I-II q. 24, a. 2; q. 25, a. 2). But his theory of emotion requires that we place them under the category of appetitive motion (*ST* I q. 81, a. 1; *DV* q. 26, a. 4). The emotion of love is an object-oriented tending that we find pleasing. It is an interior motion of resonating with something or someone who has come to our sensory awareness (*ST* I-II q. 26, a. 2 *ad.* 3). Delight can be characterized in much the same way (*ST* I-II q. 31, a. 1 *ad.* 2). The difference is that love is the experience of resonating with an object that we are capable of uniting with in a further way, but might not desire to unite with (perhaps because we are satisfied with our current connection or because we are occupied with other things), whereas delight is the experience of resonating with an object that we desired to unite with further and with which we have now united.

### INTELLECTUAL LOVE

When we turn from the sensory to the intellectual, we turn from a power to be moved by an object of sensory perception or judgment to a power to move ourselves in relation to an object of the intellect. It is important to keep in mind that sensory and intellectual powers do not ordinarily operate independently of each other. Much that we find sensible (capable of being sensed) we also find intelligible (capable of being understood), and vice versa. If a situation strikes us as pleasing or useful on a sensory level, we often seek to understand it and evaluate it in light of an idea of goodness or happiness (*ST* I q. 79, a. 8). Sometimes we judge intellectually that the situation contributes to our happiness, and we pursue it as such (*ST* I-II q. 77, a.

1). Similarly, when we judge something intellectually to be good, we usually have something sensible in mind. Even when we think abstractly, we think with reference to examples (*ST I q. 84, a. 7*). As cognitive neuroscientist Antonio Damasio says, “thought is made largely of images.”<sup>26</sup> A sensory image, such as the image of a smiling person who is acting in a friendly way, can elicit a motion of the sensory appetite, including sensory love, even if the idea of virtue cannot (*DV q. 26, a. 3 ad. 12*). When we treat sensory love and intellectual love as different motions, we separate in thought what are usually combined in experience. But engaging in this mental exercise is worthwhile. As moral agents we have a different relationship to our sensory loves than we have to our intellectual loves. We will be most successful in shaping our many loves if we understand this difference.

Intellectual love is conceived by Aquinas as a tendency to unite with what we apprehend to be good, in light of an idea of goodness (*ST I-II q. 22, a. 3 ad. 3; I q. 82, a. 3*). Intellectual love refers more specifically to an orientation that we have, as beings with powers of intellect and will, to *consent* to goodness or to objects that we judge to be good.<sup>27</sup> It refers also to the interior motion of consenting to something in particular, in respect of its goodness. We can characterize intellectual love as a form of *complacentia*, but intellectual *complacentia* is not the experience of being passively moved by something that strikes us as pleasing or useful, on a sensory level. Rather, it is the experience of affirming something that we judge intellectually to be good (*ST I q. 82, a. 4; I-II q. 28, a. 2; II-II q. 27, a. 2*).

In a discussion of love that shifts subtly between sensory and intellectual love, Aquinas distinguishes two forms of intellectual love, namely, love of concupiscence (*amor concupiscentiae*) and love of friendship (*amor amicitiae*) (*ST I-II q. 26, a. 3-q. 28, a. 4*).<sup>28</sup> This dis-

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<sup>26</sup> Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Avon, 1994), 106. My understanding of the relation between intellectual concepts and sensory images in Aquinas's thought is informed by Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 267-295.

<sup>27</sup> Admittedly, a problem with this formulation is that Aquinas tends to identify consent (*consensus*) more specifically with a particular moment in a typical decision-making process (*ST I-II q. 15, a. 3*). Yet he acknowledges that the term can also have a broader significance: “because the act of an appetitive power is a kind of inclination to the thing itself, the application of the appetitive power to the thing, in so far as it cleaves to it, gets by a kind of similitude the name of sense [*consentire*] because, as it were, it acquires direct knowledge of the thing to which it cleaves, in so far as it takes complacency in it” (*ST I-II q. 15, a. 1*). For our purposes, consent is a motion of the will that implies real or presumed familiarity with an object and includes an appreciation of its goodness or its potential for goodness (*ST I-II q. 15, a. 1 ad. 3*).

<sup>28</sup> Aquinas inherited the distinction between *amor concupiscentiae* and *amor amicitiae* from other thinkers. Guy Mansini and Thomas Osborne trace the distinction to

inction poses some difficulties. First, it is easy to conflate the love of concupiscence with concupiscence itself, which usually refers to the *desire* for pleasure or for some other benefit. Similarly, it is easy to conflate the love of friendship with the *desire* to be with a friend, to help her, and to see her do well. Aquinas quotes Aristotle as saying that “to love is to wish good to someone” (*amare est velle alicui bonum*) (ST I-II q. 26, a. 4). We could interpret Aquinas as saying that to love is to desire good for someone—for ourselves or for another, for our own sake or for the sake of another. However, interpreting him this way neglects much else that he says about love. He states clearly that, on the intellectual level as well as the sensory, love (*amor* in both cases) is an interior motion that is distinct from and prior to desire, despite the fact that we often go on to desire something in relation to what we love, such that we love it, desire something from it, and desire (or wish) something for it, all at the same time (ST I q. 20, a. 1 *ad.* 3; I-II q. 28, a. 1 *ad.* 1; II-II q. 27, a. 2; q. 27, a. 2 *ad.* 1).

Second, *concupiscentia* (taken by itself) is a term that Aquinas uses often. It refers to a motion of the concupiscible appetite, which is an aspect of the *sensory* appetite (ST I-II q. 23, a. 1; q. 30, a. 1). It usually refers to a *desire* for sensory pleasure (ST I-II q. 30, a. 2). *Amor concupiscentiae* is a phrase that Aquinas uses rarely, but scholars quote frequently. It would appear to refer to a sensory love (*amor*) that makes possible a form of sensory desire (*concupiscentia*). Yet Aquinas uses this phrase to refer primarily to a motion of the will, a form of willing (*velle*) (ST I-II q. 26, a. 3; q. 26, a. 4; q. 27, a. 3). He uses it as a term of contrast with *amor amicitiae*, which also refers primarily to a motion of the will. *Amor concupiscentiae* and *amor amicitiae* are forms of intellectual love that make possible different forms of intellectual desire. Nevertheless, these forms of love and desire are often coordinated with related forms of sensory love and sensory desire. I might, for example, appreciate another’s goodness and wish her well at the same time that I resonate with pleasure at the sight of her and want to draw closer to her.

In the main, intellectual love refers to a motion of the will by which we consent to an object in respect of its goodness. Sometimes the object is a person, and we consent to her as a being of unique and irreducible value. We will get to this form of love shortly. Most of the time we do something a little different. We have an object in mind, and we consent to it in a way that does not stop with the object itself, but refers to some further good. For example, we consent to an object

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earlier literature of the 13<sup>th</sup> century that focused on the natural capacity of angels and humans to love God more than themselves. Mansini, “*Duplex Amor* and the Structure of Love in Aquinas,” 138-151; Thomas Osborne, Jr., *Love of Self and Love of God in Thirteenth-Century Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 32-44.

as a means to an end.<sup>29</sup> Or we consent to an object as contributing to some greater good. Or we consent to it as being a valuable property that inheres in something, but does not constitute the thing itself. Aquinas calls this sort of intellectual love *amor concupiscentiae* or concupiscence-love. He refers to it also as relative love (*ST I-II* q. 26, a. 4). Consider, for example, the love of health, which is a relative love. With regard to persons, we judge health to be good and we consent to it, not for its own sake, but because being healthy is pleasant and because it makes possible other, higher functions, such as thinking, willing, and feeling. Consider also the love of virtue or a person's virtue. By such a love, we consent to the way in which, say, courage is present in a person, perfects her character, and promotes her well-being. This love, too, is a relative love, albeit one that usually accompanies the love of a person as such.<sup>30</sup> It seems strange to separate a person's courage from the person herself, when we consider that courage just is a perfection of the powers by which a person acts as a moral agent. But the point is that we can love a person's courage in a way that falls short of loving the person herself, in the fullness of her being and goodness, which is more than any quality or qualities she currently possesses and could possibly lose (*ST I-II* q. 28, a. 2). If the focus of our love is not on the good of courage per se, but on the goodness of the courageous *person*, then we approach a second form of love, namely, *amor amicitiae*, friendship-love or direct love.<sup>31</sup>

A relative love is not necessarily a love that refers back to the self as the one whose good is foremost in one's intention. It is not necessarily reducible to a form of self-regard. We can consent with a relative love to something *as* good for another person, as the examples of health and courage indicate. Much relative love is ordered to the flourishing of the other for her own sake, such that we love the person in herself, *and therefore* we affirm what we judge to be good for her; or, we love what is good for another, and *in doing so* we are led

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<sup>29</sup> For a discussion of intellectual love in the more specific form of *dilectio*, as it operates within the context of practical reasoning and decision-making, see Michael S. Sherwin, O.P., *By Knowledge and By Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 84-100.

<sup>30</sup> See Mansini, "Duplex Amor and the Structure of Love in Aquinas," 159-163, for a discussion of *amor concupiscentiae*, in Aquinas, considered partly as a relative love of an inhering good that is ordered to a direct love of a subsisting good.

<sup>31</sup> I arrived at the terms "direct love" and "relative love" in reading Robert Johann, who refers more specifically to "direct love," which is oriented toward "absolute value," and "desire," which is oriented toward "relative value." Unfortunately, Johann reduces the love of concupiscence to intellectual *desire*. Robert O. Johann, *The Meaning of Love: An Essay towards a Metaphysics of Intersubjectivity* (Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist, 1966), 25-26.

to a deeper appreciation of who she is as a person. But it is also common for us to consent to something that is good in another person or good for her *as* something that is good for us (*ST* I-II q. 26, a. 4 *ad.* 1, *ad.* 3). The term *amor concupiscentiae*, even though it refers to a motion of the will, calls this self-referentiality to mind because *concupiscentia* usually refers to the desire for our own pleasure. We might consent to a person's health because his being healthy allows him to do enjoyable things with us. We might consent to a person's courage because his being courageous helps us and other people in our community to deal with serious dangers.

As indicated, Aquinas distinguishes a relative love from a direct love. With a direct love we consent to a person as good in himself.<sup>32</sup> We affirm and appreciate all that is good in him (*ST* I-II q. 26, a. 4). Aquinas associates direct love with *amor amicitiae*, and he conceives of friendship in broadly Aristotelian terms, focusing on character-friendship (*ST* I-II q. 28, a. 1).<sup>33</sup> We can consent to the goodness of our friend's being (the fact that he exists). We can consent to the goodness of his humanity (his human dignity). We can consent to the goodness that he has realized as a human being (the quality of his character). We can consent to the goodness that he might yet realize (the person it is possible for him to become). Ordinarily in loving a friend we consent to all of these things. More precisely, we consent to the *person* in light of all these things.

The person whom we love in this way can be our own self, although the relationship we have to ourselves is closer than a friendship (*ST* II-II q. 25, a. 4). We can consent to ourselves as beings of inherent and irreplaceable value, on the basis of a life-long familiarity with our being, our capabilities, and our personal qualities (*ST* I-II q. 25, a. 4 *ad.* 3; q. 25, a. 7). It is the experience of this sort of self-affirmation—which appreciates virtue (achievement), but also delves more deeply to recognize the powers of our being that make virtue possible (the ground of our human dignity)—that becomes a touchstone for the experience of affirming a friend for all the goodness that she is (*ST* I-II q. 28, a. 1 *ad.* 2; II-II q. 25, a. 7). It is partly by learning to love ourselves in the right way that we learn what it is to love another person in the right way. Of course, it is also in being loved well by others that we figure out what it is to love others well.

Aquinas agrees with Aristotle that I regard my friend as *another myself*. On the basis of years of shared activity, a person relates to his

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<sup>32</sup> Direct love is always oriented toward a person. As we will see, in the spiritual realm the person can be either human or divine.

<sup>33</sup> L. Gregory Jones considers notable differences between Aristotelian and Thomistic friendship in "The Theological Transformation of Aristotelian Friendship in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas," *The New Scholasticism* 61, no. 4 (Autumn, 1987): 373-399.

friend as he relates to his own self, such that he “reckons what is good or evil to his friend as being so to himself, and his friend’s will as his own, so that it seems as though he felt the good or suffered the evil in the person of his friend” (ST I-II q. 28, a. 2). Some scholars regard this sort of orientation as hopelessly egoistic.<sup>34</sup> Aquinas regards it as ecstatic (ST I-II q. 28, a. 3). He regards it more specifically as both inclusive and ecstatic, for the love one has for the best of one’s self is not left behind in friendship. Rather, it is extended to affirm what is best in someone else, who is both united to oneself *and separate*.<sup>35</sup> In friendship-love, a person’s will “goes out from itself simply because he wishes and does good to his friend by caring and providing for him, for his sake” (ST I-II q. 28, a. 3). Again, a person who loves his friend “goes out from himself in so far as he wills the good of his friend and works for it” (ST I-II q. 28, a. 3). Consenting to someone as being, like us, a unique and uniquely valuable person, such that we spontaneously become out-going in his regard, is different from consenting to someone as being capable of benefiting us or making contributions to the community (ST I-II q. 28, a. 1 *ad. 2*; q. 28, a. 3). We can and do love people in both ways, at the same time. Indeed, we love them in both ways as we also love them or particular things about them on a sensory level. Both relative and direct intellectual love are valuable, but it is important to discern the difference between them. It is easier and more common to experience a love that refers, by our intention, mainly to our own well-being. It is harder and rarer (and finer) to experience a love that “penetrates into the beloved’s very soul” and allows us to appreciate what is most priceless about him or her (ST I-II q. 28, a. 2).

Intellectual love, whether it be a relative love or a direct love, often becomes the cause of an additional motion of intellectual *desire*. We see here, as on the sensory level, a typical three-fold pattern of love-desire-pleasure. Having consented to an object’s goodness, we can

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<sup>34</sup> Kierkegaard argues in *Works of Love* that the love of the “other I” is a form of self-love: “In the beloved and the friend, it of course is not the neighbor who is loved, but the *other I*, or the *first I* once again, but more intensely. Even though self-love is reprehensible, it frequently seems as if a person does not have the strength to be alone in his self-love; thus it does not really manifest itself until the *other I* is found and the one *I* and the *other I* in this alliance find the strength for the self-esteem of self-love... Whether we speak of the *first I* or of the *other I*, we do not come a step closer to the neighbor, because the neighbor is the *first you*” (57). Note, however, that for Kierkegaard not all forms of self-love are reprehensible (22-23). It is possible to love oneself first and foremost as a neighbor, which is to affirm the fact that one is essentially a self with a God-relationship, called to love others, too, as serves with their own God-relationships.

<sup>35</sup> For further discussion of what it means, for Aristotle and for Aquinas, to love someone as another but separate self, see Diana Fritz Cates, *Choosing to Feel: Virtue, Friendship, and Compassion for Friends* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1997).

reach out interiorly toward the object or toward something valuable in the object with which it would be beneficial to unite in a further way. With an intellectual desire that follows upon *relative* love, we have an awareness of a lack, and we reach out toward something that promises to fill this lack or bring a benefit to someone else whom we value. In such a case, we focus more on the benefit qua good than on the beneficiary qua person. With an intellectual desire that follows upon *direct* love, there is less awareness of a lack, for our focus is on a person in her being and goodness. We can, however, go on from a direct love to wish a person well, for her own sake. We can desire that she continue to be, that she continue to do well in life, and that she realize potential that she has not yet had the opportunity to realize, and we can desire all of these things simply because it is good that the person thrive (ST I q. 20, a. 2).

Wishing someone well for her own sake is basic to friendship.<sup>36</sup> As signaled earlier, Aquinas sometimes seems to conflate the *love* that is ingredient in friendship with the subsequent motion of *desire* or well-wishing. In the final analysis, however, it is clear that benevolence, even when it is mutual and mutually known, is not sufficient for friendship. Also necessary, on the part of each friend, is love or *amor* (ST II-II q. 23, a. 1; q. 27, a. 2 *ad.* 1). In his discussion of friendship Aquinas focuses on intellectual love (*amor intellectivus* or *amor rationalis*), which he characterizes as an affection (*affectus*) (ST I-II q. 26, a. 1; q. 59, a. 2; II-II q. 23, a. 1; q. 27, a. 2). The affection of love is an interior motion of consenting to another's goodness as directly as we consent to our own, on the basis of a likeness and familiarity between us as persons. It is easy to see the word "affection" and call to mind something more than this, namely, an embodied feeling of being pleased by and attracted to our friend. However, Aquinas would associate the latter more specifically with sensory love and desire, respectively. There is nothing wrong with associating affections and emotions, given that they are both appetitive motions, and given that affirming something to be good is often accompanied by sensory complacency, such that these loves blend together in experience. However, we ought not to read an emotional or body-resonant feeling quality into affections per se, for these are "nothing but simple acts of the will" (ST I-II q. 22, a. 3 *ad.* 3). This vigilance allows us to appreciate what emotions can add to an interior motion of love. Most of us do love and want to love our friends on every level of our being, in a way that engages all of our appetitive powers.

Finally, an intellectual love that gives rise to intellectual desire is completed in a motion of intellectual pleasure or joy (*gaudium*). Joy

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<sup>36</sup> As we will see, this wishing is qualified in the spiritual realm when the person is conceived as a friend of God, for then we wish her well ultimately for God's sake.

is much like the consent of intellectual love, but it is a consent to something that we desired and have now gained, maintained, or promoted (*ST I-II* q. 31, a. 3). It is common for joy to be experienced as a kind of expansiveness or an enlargement of capability (*ST I-II* q. 33, a. 1). With a direct love that leads to joy in the well-being of another, we experience the other's well-being as directly as we experience our own (*ST I-II* q. 28, a. 2). If this expansiveness is felt as a pleasure that resonates in the body, as often occurs, the sensory appetite has also become engaged (*ST I-II* q. 24, a. 3 *ad.* 1).

### SPIRITUAL LOVE

Humans can experience love on a spiritual level as well. Because such love is an intellectual love that operates in the context of a more or less conscious relationship with God, it is best to begin with God's love and what it makes possible for humans, from the perspective of Christian faith.

In creating us and sustaining us in being, moment by moment, God communicates God's being to us. God also consents to the goodness of our being, which is a participation of God's goodness, and to the possibility of our happiness in union with God (*ST I* q. 20, a. 2). In loving us, God consents to each of us personally and for our own sake, simply because it is good that we exist. This consent is a function of the act by which God consents to God's own being and goodness. It is a function of the way in which God diffuses this goodness, causing whatever exists to be and to have the goodness it has (*ST I* q. 19, a. 2).

The God of Christianity is in many respects a hidden God, but Christians believe that God is revealed in Christ as one who regards humans (remarkably) as God's friends (*ST II-II* q. 23, a. 1 *sc.*). God is revealed also as one who offers to heal the corruption of our nature and character, and to extend our mental and volitional capabilities in notable ways (*ST I-II* q. 109, a. 3; *II-II* q. 23, a. 2). The offer of God's presence and our acceptance of this offer confirm that we are oriented toward God as our final end. They confirm that, despite the problem of sin, God's love offers the possibility of enjoying a perfectly satisfying union with what is perfectly wonderful—a relationship that we begin to experience in the present life and hope to experience fully in the life to come.

By virtue of God's love, we are free to love God in return, as a friend to whom we open ourselves and with whom we share our lives (*ST II-II* q. 23, a. 1). In loving God, we consent to God, in part, with a direct love. We affirm and appreciate God for the perfect goodness God is, and for the sake of goodness itself. Whereas our consent to a human friend takes us beyond ourselves, such that we affirm the other's being and goodness as directly as we affirm our own, our consent

to God takes us beyond ourselves in such a way that we affirm God's goodness even *more* directly and deeply than we affirm our own (ST II-II q. 26, a. 3). Aquinas uses the image of part and whole to communicate the idea that we are united, by nature and by grace, to a power that is not only the ground of our own goodness and the source of our own fulfillment, but is the goodness and fulfillment of the entire universe (ST II-II q. 26, a. 4 *ad.* 3). When we love God with a spiritual love, we apprehend this power and consent to it as a binding force to which every existing thing belongs (ST I q. 20, a. 1 *ad.* 3).<sup>37</sup>

The love that persons experience toward God is partly a direct love. It can also be a relative love in the sense that it can refer, by our intention, to our own well-being. In Thomistic perspective, it is appropriate to love God not only for God's sake, but also for our sake, given that God is our final end. In addition, it is appropriate to conceive a spiritual desire for a closer union with God than we are enjoying at the moment. This desire often goes by the name of hope (*spes*). Aquinas says that hope is inferior in goodness to the simple love of God (ST II-II q. 23, a. 6). By implication, the love by which we consent to God in God's self, and for God's own sake, is superior to the love by which we consent to God as our highest end, and for the sake of our happiness. Nevertheless, there is nothing wrong with a relative love for God, as long as it is linked to a more direct love for God. Taken together, both loves can be part of the way in which we relate ourselves rightly to God (ST II-II q. 23, a. 5).

By virtue of God's love, humans are empowered and, indeed, expected not only to love God, but also to love everyone whom God loves. "Everyone" includes the self, but I want to focus on the love of others. We are to extend our love for God to every person we encounter, consistent with certain limits of time, the need to care for self, obligations to family, prior commitments, and the like (ST II-II q. 25, a. 8; q. 26, a. 6; q. 26, a. 8).<sup>38</sup> Aquinas applies a transitive principle that we often apply—and expect each other to apply—to our human friends:

Friendship extends to a person in two ways: first in respect of himself, and in this way friendship never extends but to one's friends;

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<sup>37</sup> For further reflection on the meaning of friendship with God see the work of Paul Wadell, including "Growing Together in the Divine Love: The Role of Charity in the Moral Theology of Thomas Aquinas," *Aquinas and Empowerment: Classical Ethics for Ordinary Lives*, ed. G. Simon Harak, S.J. (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996), 134-169.

<sup>38</sup> For analysis of the order of charity in Aquinas see Jean Porter, "De Ordine Caritatis: Charity, Friendship, and Justice in Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*," *The Thomist* 53, no. 2 (April 1989): 197-213, and Stephen J. Pope, *The Evolution of Altruism* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, 1994).

secondly, it extends to someone in respect of another, as, when a man has friendship for a certain person, for his sake he loves (*diligit*) all belonging to him, be they children, servants, or connected with him in any way. Indeed, so much do we love our friends that for their sake we love all who belong to them, even if they hurt or hate us; so that, in this way, the friendship of charity extends even to our enemies, whom we love out of charity in relation to God, to whom the friendship of charity is chiefly directed (*ST II-II q. 23, a. 1 ad. 2*).

I take seriously that Aquinas refers not simply to wishing good things for our neighbors, including our enemies, and doing things to help them. He refers to loving them. Loving our neighbors involves consenting to them, appreciating them in respect of their goodness, even if their goodness appears on the surface to be quite limited (*ST II-II q. 26, a. 3*). This is how we love our own friends: we notice the goodness in them, a goodness that we perceive as deep, as extending to their core, and we consent to it. This is also how our friends love *their* friends. And this is how our friends would have *us* love *their* friends, as much as possible: they would have us appreciate for ourselves what is so special about their friends. In Thomistic perspective, this is also how God would have us love those whom God regards as friends, namely, all human beings (or individual humans as they enter our awareness). What makes such a love possible, even in relation to someone who appears to be our enemy, is an understanding that we acquire in the context of an evolving relationship with God: Every human being is essentially like us, not only in being human, but in being a unique manifestation of the divine goodness.<sup>39</sup> Every person is full of potential that is distinctively her own; she has contributions to make to the common good, which only she can make; and she has a destiny of mind-boggling significance.<sup>40</sup>

If we consent to a neighbor as part of God's creative plan, and we do so *because* God consents to him, then our neighbor-love is a relative love (*ST II-II q. 25, a. 1 ad. 2*). It is not relative in the sense that it refers the neighbor's well-being to our own well-being, but in the sense that it refers the neighbor's well-being to God's glory, to which we consent for God's sake. Yet I take it that the love a Christian extends to a neighbor is not *merely* a relative love in this sense. If we

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<sup>39</sup> Johann, *The Meaning of Love*, ch. 2.

<sup>40</sup> I de-emphasize Aquinas's concern to show that we love persons in light of the goodness they have actualized, such that we love some persons more than others, as being better persons than others (*ST II-II q. 26, a. 6; q. 26, a. 7*). We rightly consent not only to actual goodness, but also to the possibility of goodness. Persons who have the furthest distance to travel to acquire virtue *can* be worth the greatest investment on our part *if* they are open to transformation and we have the resources to support them. In Aquinas's medieval context, the resources for rehabilitating people who had become vicious were obviously limited (*ST II-II q. 25, a. 6 ad. 2*).

love another in a way that is analogous to the way God loves him, as God's friend, then we consent to the other *as* a person, in respect of the goodness and the potential for goodness that are in some ways uniquely his and uniquely him. The neighbor is not simply a cipher for an alien or imputed goodness.<sup>41</sup> He is a subject with his own, created capacities for goodness. If his capacities have been extended by divine gifts, they are nevertheless *his* capacities that he has the responsibility to cultivate (*ST* II-II q. 23, a. 2). On a Thomistic view, our love for the other thus has and ought to have a direct quality. However—and this is a key qualification—every person has his being and goodness *ultimately* from God, and he has his final end in God. When we consent to him, we consent also and more fundamentally to that which makes his life and happiness possible, which is the same power that makes our life and happiness possible. Our consent to the other begins and terminates in the mystery of God (*ST* II-II q. 25, a. 1; q. 26, a. 7).

Neighbor-love is a relative love, then, in at least one sense: it refers the neighbor and her well-being to God, as a part is referred to a whole. As a form of friendship-love, however, it is also a direct love, for it regards a *person* in respect of her being and goodness. As noted in our discussion of intellectual love, it is appropriate to consent not only to a person, but also to things that are good for a person, and to qualities of a person that we rightly regard as valuable. Consent to such things is relative in another sense: it regards objects that are not themselves persons, but are good *for* or *in* persons. Aquinas characterizes this sort of relative love as concupiscence-love, distinguishing it from friendship-love. However, as long as our consent to good things or qualities is tethered to a direct appreciation of a person—someone who is apprehended, moreover, as treasured by God—it is appropriate to think of this consent, too, as part of neighbor-love. For example, we might consent to an enemy *and* to the possibility of greater kindness in her, both out of neighbor-love. However, if we consent to the idea of kindness, and we wish our enemy were kinder, but we cannot or will not consent to her as a person who would benefit from the practice of kindness, then we are not in the domain of neighbor-love.

Neighbor-love can be relative in yet another sense: it can refer the neighbor's well-being to our own well-being. For example, we might consent to a person and to the possibility of greater kindness in her partly because we think that in doing so we will please God, and in pleasing God we will receive a benefit (*ST* II-II q. 26, a. 3 *ad.* 3). Espe-

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<sup>41</sup> Compare Nygren: "All that a Christian possesses he has received from God, from the Divine love; and all that he possesses he passes on in love to his neighbor. He has nothing of his own to give. He is merely the tube, the channel, through which God's love flows" (735).

cially when it comes to a person whom we regard as terribly hurtful, the thought of pleasing God and improving our relationship to God might be the only thing that motivates us to overcome our animosity. Doing things that we expect to be of benefit to ourselves, and doing them partly for the sake of this benefit, can reflect a sinful self-preoccupation, but it need not. A certain amount of self-concern is natural to us as beings who are created by God to consent, by the power of our will, to objects that we judge capable of benefiting us and other beings whom we value. Grace does not destroy this orientation; it perfects it (*ST* I q. 8, a. 8 *ad.* 1). The idea, however, is that we are to keep our self-concern tied to a proper understanding of the sorts of beings we are and the conditions under which we do well (*ST* II-II q. 25, a. 4 *ad.* 3). Excelling as humans requires focusing to a significant extent on ends other than our own excellence and happiness (albeit not in a way that injures our excellence), and doing so ultimately for the sake of God (*ST* II-II q. 26, a. 4 *ad.* 2, *ad.* 3).

A spiritual love of a neighbor can and often does give rise to a spiritual *desire* to unite with him in a further way. One form this desire can take is wishing the other well, particularly as a fellow friend of God. Another form it can take is wishing to cultivate with the other a spiritual connection that benefits both of us and is good in itself, for it constitutes a shared participation in the Trinitarian life of God (*ST* II-II q. 24, a. 2).<sup>42</sup> Spiritual love plus benevolence equals what Aquinas calls *caritas* or charity (*ST* II-II q. 23, a. 1). Where possible and appropriate, charity is expressed in acts of beneficence—in helping others to flourish (*ST* II-II q. 31, a. 1). Aquinas sometimes speaks of charity as a *virtue* or a habit of the will that is made possible by the indwelling spirit of God (*ST* II-II q. 23, a. 3; q. 23, a. 3 *ad.* 3; I-II q. 62, a. 1). He speaks of charity also as a *relationship* between a person and God, and by extension as a relationship between persons who share a love for God and find it possible, in their love for God, to love each other in new ways (*ST* I-II q. 66, a. 5). Here we are focusing on interior motions and related expressions of the will, to which a person is disposed if he has the virtue of charity and enjoys a friendship with God. We are focusing, that is, on love and forms of well-wishing and benefiting that are rooted in love.

Notice that, in this construction, spiritual love or more specifically Christian love is not identical with charity. It is one aspect of charity. If we want to highlight the form this love takes when there is an awareness of lack, separation, need, or opportunity, then we can include the aspect of spiritual desire or benevolence. If we want to

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<sup>42</sup> Vacek argues in *Love, Human and Divine*, that by a friendship-love (*philia*) we love the other, not for the sake of the other (which Vacek associates with *agape*), but for the sake of a mutual relation with the other (chs. 8-9).

highlight the form this love takes when it is expressed in action, then we can include the aspect of beneficence. We can think of Christian love partly as a matter of charity in the sense of a donation intended to be of benefit to someone. If we want to follow a now-familiar pattern and complete the circle, we can include in Christian love the spiritual pleasure or joy that attends genuine benevolence and successful acts of beneficence. Yet we ought not to forget that love proper or *consent* is what makes the best forms of well-wishing, giving, and rejoicing possible.

Notice also that, for many Christians, much of the intellectual realm will be subsumed by the spiritual. In consenting to what is good in themselves and in others, many Christians will consent also and reflectively to what they regard as the ground of that goodness. Why, then, distinguish between intellectual and spiritual love? This distinction allows us to acknowledge that not everyone who loves goodness does so in the context of an explicit awareness of God. It allows us to reflect on the extent to which a consciousness of God affects a person's perceptions, most notably his perception of the goodness of which he and other persons are capable. The distinction allows us to ponder what it means to love a person as an end in herself and for her own sake, while appreciating that she has the source and goal of her being in God, such that our regard for her opens up to include a regard for this source and goal. It challenges us to think about what is rational with respect to love, and whether we wish to remain within the bounds of what is rational. And so on.

### THE EMOTION OF LOVE AND CHRISTIAN LOVE

According to a Thomistic moral theology and psychology our central ethical task is to develop a range of our capabilities and contribute in the process to the common good, such that we fully appreciate the divine principle that holds the universe together, namely, love.<sup>43</sup> Our task is to love what is good in ourselves, in others, and in all other things.<sup>44</sup> We are to cultivate good habits of love with respect to every aspect of our being that is responsive to reasoned reflection, imagination, self-direction, choice, and inspiration. We are to cultivate virtuous sensory love (in relation to goods that we register

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<sup>43</sup> Many disabilities and personal challenges, treated properly by a loving society, open up new capabilities, including moral and spiritual capabilities, and should not be thought of as features of a life that necessarily diminish its quality. See Mary Jo Iozzio, *Radical Dependence: A Theo-Anthropological Ethic in the Key of Disability* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, forthcoming).

<sup>44</sup> When Aquinas quotes Aristotle and says that the first principle of ethics is the appetite (*appetitus*) for goodness (*ST I-II q. 94, a. 2; DV q. 22, a. 1*), we should think twice before interpreting this as referring simply to the desire for goodness or the seeking of goodness, and not also to the love of goodness. Desire and seeking imply absence, whereas we can love what is either absent or present (*ST I-II q. 28, a. 1*).

through our senses), virtuous intellectual love (in relation to goods that we register by the power of our intellect), and virtuous spiritual love (in relation to goods that we register also by the power of religious faith, trust, or wonder).

In the end, we can refer simply to virtuous love or, in the context of Christian faith, to Christian love, but what our conceptual analysis allows us to do is to distinguish some different forms or aspects of love and consider which of them ought to be included in Christian love. Aided by a definition of the emotion of love (a simple, pleasing resonance felt toward what we apprehend on a sensory level to be suitable) and a related definition of spiritual love (a consent to what we judge intellectually and in the light of faith to be good and connected to an unfathomable source of goodness), we can consider anew what it means for a Christian to *love* her neighbor as herself.<sup>45</sup>

In Thomistic perspective, Christian love involves consenting to a person in light of what one takes to be most valuable in him, where one trusts that what lies within him is a connection to the ground of being and goodness itself. When we consent to a person in this way, we are naturally pleased, to some extent, by the thought of him. More precisely, our thoughts about him and his relationship to the source of goodness are linked to sensory images—perhaps to the image of a radiant face, a hidden treasure, or “a quiet lake [that] originates deep down in hidden springs no eye has seen.”<sup>46</sup> Inasmuch as such images strike us as pleasing, we feel an emotion of love in relation to them. In Aquinas’s view, we do not feel the emotion of love in relation to a person as such, for the latter is an object of the intellect or the intellect as informed by faith. We can resonate emotionally only with a person’s sensible properties, or images that represent but cannot fully capture the heart of him. Yet when we consent to a person spiritually *and* we are pleased with related images of him, we have the *experience* of being pleased with *him*. Having understood this, it is fine to talk about loving a person emotionally.

When we consent to a person, we naturally undergo a related emotion of love. This emotion might not dominate our sensory awareness or our consciousness. It might be so subtle that we hardly notice it. It might also be overwhelmed by other emotions. We can feel more than one emotion at a time, especially in situations that bear on our well-being in complex ways. We tend to feel painful emotions, and other interior motions such as desire, more keenly

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<sup>45</sup> In what follows I focus only in the impact that spiritual love can have on emotional love; it would be worthwhile to consider also the impact that emotional love can have on spiritual love. Recall the dual direction of influence between the intellectual and sensory powers (discussed in the first paragraph of the section “Intellectual Love”).

<sup>46</sup> Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 9.

than we feel love (*ST I-II q. 29, a. 3*). The point is simply that, inasmuch as we attend to a person by the power of our intellect, in respect of his goodness, and we do so with reference to sensory images, we generally experience a motion of consent *and* a body-resonant emotion of love. If we do not feel both of these at the same time—especially if we cannot, by our intention, bring the emotion of love to our explicit awareness—then there is reason to think that something is amiss.

Aquinas says that “it belongs to the perfection of moral good that a person should be moved to good not only in respect of his will, but also in respect of his sensory appetite, according to Ps. Lxxxiii.3: *My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God*, where by *heart* we are to understand the intellectual appetite, and by *flesh* the sensory appetite” (*ST I-II q. 24, a. 3*). He says that “when the higher part of the soul is intensely moved to anything, the lower part also follows that movement,” and it does so appropriately, as long as the intensity of the will’s motion is itself appropriate to the situation (*ST I-II q. 24, a. 3 ad. 1*). Aquinas uses the metaphor of “overflow” to characterize the relationship between the “higher” motion of consent and the “lower” motion of emotional resonance, but his moral psychology clarifies what makes this sort of appetitive synchronicity possible. Our powers of intellectual apprehension provide objects for our will—apparent goods to which we are free to consent. Our powers of sensory apprehension provide objects for our sensory appetite—apparent goods that move us. Again, if we think with reference to images, then ordinarily when we move ourselves to consent to something or someone, we will also be moved to feel a simple pleasure in relation to it.<sup>47</sup> Aquinas notes that enjoying this coordination of our appetites can be highly valuable, not only because it can constitute a complete and un-conflicted response to an actual good, but also because it can have many beneficial effects: It can help us to focus our attention, with ease, on what is positive and possible in a person and a situation. It can raise our energy level, making us feel more fully alive. It can increase our motivation to draw closer to a person and make ourselves useful (*ST I-II q. 24, a. 3 ad. 1*).

With another self who possesses evident goodness, it is generally easy to consent to him and feel a corresponding emotional love when we entertain images of him. Our response to him might be limited by a competing emotion, such as envy, but if we possess notable goodness ourselves, our judgment of another person’s goodness will generally bring a pleasing emotional resonance in its wake. It is *much* harder to resonate in this way with individuals who do not appear to be good people, especially individuals who have hurt us and seem

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<sup>47</sup> See Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions*, chs. 7-10.

glad to have hurt us. It is especially with respect to the love of enemies that our conceptual analysis can bear fruit. Among other things, our analysis can help us to specify what the love of an enemy involves. It can help us to diagnose where the problem lies when we fail in an attempt to love a particular enemy.

Of course, we may not aspire to love our enemies. If we do not aspire to such love, there is little chance that we will experience it. Instead, we will probably feel only hatred for our enemies, at least to the extent that we cannot ignore them. Let us suppose, however, that we aspire to love them. On the basis of our reflection, we can indicate some of what this involves. It involves—as impossible as it might seem—extending to our enemy a measure of friendship-love, namely, a consent to him as a person who is, in important respects, like us. Loving our enemy involves *appreciating* that he is a human being who has amazing capabilities. He has realized some of these capabilities and has the potential to realize more of them in the future. He has the potential to awaken to the fact that some of his perceptions, emotions, and actions are off kilter (perhaps terribly so). He can undergo a change of heart, and such a transformation is possible for as long as he lives, perhaps longer. Our enemy is loved by a God for whom all things are possible. More than appreciating these things *about* the person, neighbor-love involves appreciating *the person* in respect of these things.

From a Thomistic perspective, there is no other way to extend to an enemy a love that is similar in kind to the love that God extends to him. Loving an enemy is not simply a matter of restraining our impulse to respond to him in kind, with hurtful behavior. It involves more than trying to calm our desire to see him do poorly. It is not merely a matter of wishing him well, in an abstract way, without calling him to mind, imagining what it would look like for him to do well, and tending toward him with that image in mind. It involves more than wishing that he would become a better person, while refusing to appreciate the goodness within him that makes such a change possible. Just as well-wishing and well-doing are not sufficient for Christian love, none of these approaches in themselves will bring us to love. Only consent will do that. And if consent occurs, it will ordinarily be accompanied by a corresponding emotional shift.

It is easy to think that we have consented to a person in her humanity and her God-given dignity when we have not. Most of us like to think of ourselves as loving people. If we think we have consented to a person, but we feel a dogged emotional antipathy toward her, and we cannot bring ourselves to the point of feeling comfortable at the thought of her being alive, being good, and doing well, then we probably have not, in fact, consented to her. We are probably withholding our consent. We are experiencing neither spiritual nor sen-

sory love in her regard. Aquinas's moral theology and psychology make visible some of what might be happening in such a case. It could be, for example, that we lack faith. Perhaps we do not really believe that the other person has her being and goodness in God. Perhaps we do not believe this about ourselves, either. It could be that we are preoccupied with a monstrous image of who the other is. We might be in the habit of focusing on aspects of her that we find disturbing, to the extent that these aspects seem to become the whole of her. Our awareness might be dominated by an emotion such as hatred. It could be, in consequence, that this hatred is conditioning our intellectual judgments, causing us to think of the other as worse than she actually is, or causing us to judge her unworthy of any affirmation from us (*ST I-II* q. 9, a. 2).

Aquinas argues that in some cases it is appropriate to hate another person in the specific sense of feeling a painful emotional dissonance in his regard, particularly when we apprehend correctly that he intends us harm (*ST I-II* q. 29, a. 1). However, such hatred cannot be virtuous unless it is accompanied by a suitable amount of emotional love—by a tangible, embodied recognition that there is *something* pleasing, helpful, or attractive in the other. No emotion can be virtuous if it keeps us from imagining our enemy in a favorable light—as having a life apart from us that is in *some* respects good and worthy of happiness. No person is reducible to his disturbing, hurtful features, and to respond to him (upon reflection) as if he were is to make a moral mistake. It might be possible to establish this point apart from an appeal to religious faith, but our concern here is with what faith requires. In Christian perspective, persons are to dissent from emotions that are based in small-mindedness and undue defensiveness. They are to undermine the causes of these emotions while focusing on the dignity of persons.

In some situations it is understandable that a person would withhold her consent and make herself invulnerable to feeling a simple pleasure in relation to her enemy (even as she feels whatever else she feels).<sup>48</sup> It is understandable when the person has been deeply wounded by her enemy. But a person ought not to settle for an absence of emotional love indefinitely and as a matter of policy—not with an enemy that continues to come to her mind. It is not good to

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<sup>48</sup> Sometimes this reaction is not a matter of choice, as when a person suffers trauma and her protective emotional defenses will not dissipate, for a long period of time, even at the command of her will. See Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

inure oneself to what is good in a fellow human being, including the possibility that the other has his final end in God.<sup>49</sup>

Many thinkers have noted that an ethic of Christian love is demanding, partly because it can require self-sacrifice. In a Thomistic spirit, I am arguing that an ethic of love can require the sacrifice of some emotional defensiveness and callousness. It can require a surrender of the emotional security that comes with thinking of neighbor-love as an act of the intellect or the will that need not engage the sensory appetite—need not expose us emotionally to what is good and attractive in the neighbor, and also to what is awful. I take seriously that people have an interest in protecting themselves from emotional harm, particularly the harm that comes from being disappointed, even crushed, by other people from whom they dared to expect something decent and kind. However, a Thomistic moral theology demands the cultivation of a strength of character that comes from learning to carry on, in the wake of emotional injury, with a trust in the power of goodness.

A person cannot love his neighbor and withhold himself emotionally—not completely and inflexibly—not without thinking of what he is doing and revisiting periodically the value of a greater emotional responsiveness, in light of the situation at hand. None of this is to suggest that a person ought to put himself in a position of being an emotional victim. It is partly the power to look for and love what is good, even as we register emotionally what is bad or hurtful, that keeps us from feeling that we are under the control of a nasty individual.

It sometimes seems that talk of love and the ethics of love has become old-fashioned. Perhaps like so much other religious language, the language of love has simply become hollow. Perhaps some segments of our population have become disillusioned because they think that other segments of the population are claiming to love their neighbors as themselves while expressing something that looks a lot like hatred. At times like this, it is worthwhile to return to the resources of our religious traditions, recollect insights that have been articulated in the past, and reconsider how some of these insights might change our lives and societies for the better. Aquinas's conception of love has this sort of transformative power. If it does not change our minds, it should at least make us think.<sup>50</sup> 

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<sup>49</sup> For a discussion of forgiveness that treats with great sensitivity its complexity see the film *Forgiveness: A Time to Love and a Time to Hate*, produced and directed by Helen Whitney (2011).

<sup>50</sup> Special thanks to William McDonough for inspiring conversation on grace and love, and to John P. Reeder, Jr., for encouraging me in the study of love. Thanks also to Jonathan Schofer, William Mattison, Edward Vacek, Daniel Morris, Christine Darr, John Haman, and David McCarthy.