

‘HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES AS YOUR OWN BODIES’: IS NUPTIAL LOVE A CASE OF LOVE OR ITS PARADIGM?

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“Here one encounters ‘another self’ not only by seeing in the other a similarity but also because by associating with this other in his or her difference one now has oneself—one now has one’s ‘body’—all the more.”

1. Introduction

We all think that we know what love is. Whether we refer to it casually or in earnest, we take what “love” means for granted. I love chocolate. God is love. She loves to dance. We ought to love our fellow man. Jennifer Lopez loves her husband. For that matter, I love my husband too! When, however, we have to say what love is, things are not so simple. Concerning the elusiveness of love’s meaning Paul Evdokimov wrote perceptively, “None of the great thinkers or poets have ever found an answer to the question, ‘What is love?’ . . . If one imprisons the light, it slips through the fingers.”¹

¹*The Sacrament of Love* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995), 105. Evdokimov echoes Socrates, who, after a long dialogue on friendship, says: “These fellows will say, as they go away, that we suppose we’re one another’s

If we look at all that we ascribe to love we notice that it is by no means easy to draw it all together. There is affection for things and persons we did not choose, and might not have chosen had we been given a choice: a brother, a great-aunt, or a hand-me-down sweater. On the other hand, we also say we love what is purely a matter of preference or "choice": cheesecake, red wine, herring with sour cream. There is the emotion, or passion, of love, which arises in us when the sense of some affinity is kindled in us. Love is benevolence (wanting the good) towards one whom we regard as uniquely precious. There is also that vehement or passionate *eros*, which transports the lover beyond himself and toward Beauty itself (though this sort of love can turn in on itself, becoming a kind of vulgar—demonic—imitation of its elevated form). Finally, there is God's love (*Agape*), the Love he is and the Love he has for his creatures, revealed to us in the Son's Incarnation and Cross.² And for all of this we insist on using one little word.

In this regard it might seem that the English language is impoverished—although many other languages are every bit as monoglot when it comes to love. Some differences, it is true, present only nuances, such as the terms "liking" and "loving," as when we wish to refer, say, to pleasing aspects of a person as distinguished from the person as a whole. But others appear to have little if anything to do with each other.³ For better or for worse, the little all-purpose word has its irresistible way of holding together, in a kind of tension, two apparently very different senses of love, which have been described—a little simplistically perhaps—as "need love" and "gift love."⁴ The first of these loves would gather up all of those

friends—for I also put myself among you—but what he who is a friend is we have not yet been able to discover" (*Lysis*, 223a).

²One hardly has to be reminded of C. S. Lewis' masterful presentations of the different meanings of love in his *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1960).

³Josef Pieper takes up this accusation of linguistic "impoverishment" where love is concerned in the introduction to his *About Love*, now published as *Faith, Hope, Love* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 1–8. Anders Nygren is perhaps the most famous for his critique of history's (Augustine's) grievous error of mixing up *Eros* and *Agape*, which in his view are "two conceptions which have originally nothing whatsoever to do with one another" (cf. *Eros and Agape*, trans. P. Watson [London: SPCK, 1982], 30).

⁴These are the terms with which C. S. Lewis first began his exploration of love. As he explains in the preface of his *Four Loves* (11–21), this division, which at first

expressions of desire and yearning which human creatures (beggars all) have for happiness and fulfillment. The second would refer instead to more “self-giving” kinds of love, whereby the lover puts himself at the service of the beloved. Clearly, the tension between these two senses of love does not mark a distinction *between* individuals so much as one that wells up *from within* every human being. We want to flourish; we want happiness; so we love ourselves. At the same time, we find ourselves to be together with others who aspire to be loved as we love ourselves and want to be loved, namely “for our own sakes,” and not as a mere means to another’s fulfillment.

It is generally agreed upon in the tradition, and not less so by those with a more “eudaimonistic” orientation, that a love that ventures out, in a calculating way, toward a loved one only to return, having secured what was previously lacking, is inferior to a love that aims wholeheartedly at the Beloved, at his good.⁵ But once

represented a simplistic division between selfishness and true love, had quickly to be abandoned. The most obvious problem with this division is that one easily misses with “need love” the fact that yearning for that which ultimately fulfills is not simply “acquisitive,” but can be very “ecstatic” and self-forgetful. At the same time, a lack or suppression of need is not so easily identified with the “other-centeredness” of “gift love.” That love, on the other hand, is itself accompanied by the greatest experience of joy and fulfillment.

⁵In Plato’s *Phaedrus*, Lysius’ carefully thought-out and regulated, risk-free and, for that matter, love-free, exchange of (sexual) favors in view of one’s own self-interests is ultimately trumped by *Eros*, which for Socrates is something divine, for the reason that it arouses in the lover an awe and reverence for the beloved akin to that for a god (251). Aristotle marks the two loves very clearly with his distinction between a friendship between those who love each other *absolutely*, —“for their own sakes”—and one between friends who love each other accidentally on account of usefulness or pleasure (*Ethics* VIII, iii, 6). (St. Thomas resorted often to this distinction with his own between “love of friendship” and “love of concupiscence” [cf. *ST*I-II, 26, 4].) The New Testament, of course, is no less demanding in its implicit ranking of loves: “Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interest, but everyone for those of others” (Phil 2:2–4); “No one should seek one’s own advantage, but that of one’s neighbor” (1 Cor 10:24). The Fathers, beginning with the Cappadocians, became explicit in their ranking of the different motives for loving God (based on elements in the New Testament): the slave’s love of God *for fear of punishment*, the hireling’s love of God *for hope of reward*, the son’s or friend’s love of God *for his own sake*. (For a good discussion of the “problem of love” in the Fathers, see A. Vincelette’s introduction to P. Rousselot’s *The Problem of Love in the Middle Ages* [Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002], 70–75). St. Augustine is noted for his distinction

this "hierarchy" has been established (even with different emphases) a problem still remains. How is the relation between the love one has for oneself and for one's own happiness or fulfillment, and one's love of another "for his own sake" to be conceived? This problem, which is sometimes called the *eros-agape* problem, goes to the heart of the "problem of love."

In his short treatise on love in the Middle Ages,⁶ Pierre Rousselot set forth the two medieval solutions to the problem concerning the *relation* between the two loves. As Rousselot notes in his "Preface" to the work, everyone in the medieval debate agreed that God was to be loved for himself (and so not merely as a means). There was also agreement that he was to be loved more than oneself. At the same time, however, he was understood to be the author of the unique and final end of the natural appetite. It seemed therefore to all parties that the solution to the general problem of reconciling love of self (wanting happiness for oneself) with a pure ("disinterested") love of another could be found in the question concerning man's love of God. But how was this reconciliation or convergence to be understood? Were the two loves founded on a duality and as such irreducible,⁷ or were they the twofold expression of one identical appetite for happiness?⁸ Was the love of another "ecstatic" and therefore violently cut off from, or at least radically discontinuous with, self-love (based on the natural inclination to happiness), or was it "physical," that is "natural," and thus an extension of that

between the love of "enjoyment" (where what is loved is loved for its own sake) and love of "use" (where what is loved is employed in view of obtaining what is loved for its own sake). Cf. *On Christian Doctrine*, 1.4.

⁶Pierre Rousselot, *Pour l'histoire du problème de l'amour au moyen âge, Beitrag zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters: Texte und Untersuchungen*, vol. 6, no. 6, ed. C. Baeumker and G. Freih von Hertling (Münster: Aschendorff, 1908), recently published as *The Problem of Love in the Middle Ages*.

⁷The most famous of the medieval theologians holding that the love of self (rooted in the desire for happiness) was at odds with a pure love of God was Peter Abelard. See E. Dublanchy, "Charité," in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, vol. 2, no. 2, ed. A. Vacant, E. Mangenot, and E. Amann (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1932), 2217–2228. More recently L.-B. Geiger, by way of a criticism of Rousselot, claimed the "ecstatic" view as St. Thomas' own in *Le problème de l'amour chez Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Montreal: Institut d'Etudes Médiévales, 1962).

⁸This position Rousselot claimed as St. Thomas' own in *Pour l'histoire du problème de l'amour*.

necessary propensity of beings to seek their own good?⁹ Different biblical texts could be invoked in favor of either position. There are the various texts that refer to self-denial,¹⁰ but then in those very counsels is the promise of “finding oneself.”¹¹ On the other hand, there is the commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself.”¹²

The following essay wishes to broach the question that was at the heart of the medieval debate, namely, to repeat, how the relation between love of self and love of the other is to be conceived. This essay will do so, however, in view of the specific love (or friendship) between a man and a woman, a love that has been called “nuptial love.”¹³ In that particular case of love, as is clear, we have not only two distinct persons, the relation between whom is already problematic enough (according to the aforementioned “problem”), but two who possess their humanity bodily in two distinct and mutually exclusive manners. The difference between the two sexes, which cuts through every level of human being,¹⁴ might

⁹Ibid., 76–77.

¹⁰Mk 8:34: “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” 1 Cor 10:24: “Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.”

¹¹Mk 8:34–37: “Whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For what can a man give in return for his life?”

¹²The text from Lev 19:18 is called upon frequently in the Aristotelian and Thomistic theory that all love, even love for God, is caused *in via generationis* by self-love (cf. Aquinas, 3 *Sent.*, d. 29, a. 3, ad 3).

¹³We follow Angelo Scola, who refers to the term “as the inseparable intertwining of sexual difference, love, and fruitfulness” (*The Nuptial Mystery*, trans. Michelle K. Borrás [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005], xx). It should be noted that by this term we are not speaking always exclusively of marriage, but include also those relations which are taken up into “virginity for the Kingdom of God.” Scola states that “virginity is the culmination of nuptiality—even for spouses” for the reason that it points to the ultimate meaning of indissolubility, namely loving the other as “other,” in his or her own destiny (“The Nuptial Mystery at the Heart of the Church,” *Communio* 25 [Winter 1998]: 658). For this understanding of virginity Scola is indebted to Luigi Giussani (cf. *Il Tempo e il Tempio* [Milan: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 1995], 11–35). On this broader notion of nuptiality see also Hans Urs von Balthasar (*The Christian State of Life* [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983], 224–249) as well as John Paul II (*The Theology of the Body* [Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1997], 276–278; 285–287).

¹⁴Commenting on this difference, Hans Urs von Balthasar writes: “The male

seem—to some who would to take this form of love seriously—more than merely one sort of love among many, and might seem to validate forcefully the position described as “ecstatic,” wherein loving the other requires a radical departure from, or at least a momentary deflection from one’s love of self, and therewith from one’s search for happiness.¹⁵ On the other hand, when we consider the natural tendency that the sexes have for each other, and the joy and fulfillment that accompanies their encounter, it is hard to see how the love of the other sex can be so severed from one’s own desire for happiness. Indeed, in the so-called “physical” approach, which is the more dominant one in the tradition, this nuptial love would be included among the loves, or friendships for others, which proceed from a love for oneself and help to realize it, even if, or rather, especially, when the beloved is loved “for his own sake.”¹⁶

According to that more dominant account, however, the love between a man and a woman as such seems not only to be one among many cases of love but in fact even one of love’s lower forms.¹⁷ And this, it seems, is due to the *differences* that so mark it. In

body is male throughout, right down to each cell of which it consists, and the female body is utterly female; and this is also true of their whole empirical experience and ego-consciousness. At the same time both share an identical human nature, but at no point does it protrude, neutrally, beyond the sexual difference, as if to provide neutral ground for mutual understanding. Here there is no *universale ante rem*, as all theories of a nonsexual or bisexual (androgynous) primitive human being would like to think. The human being, in the completed creation, is a “dual unity” (*Theo-Drama*, vol. 2: *Dramatis Personae: Man in God* [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990], 364).

¹⁵Dietrich von Hildebrand, in his book *Man and Woman* (Manchester, N.H.: Sophia Institute Press, 1992), seems to take this view when he begins by separating love “in its authentic sense,” namely, “the love for another person, for a *thou*” from “vague analogies of love, such as the desire for self-perfection” (8–9). Hildebrand would found love not upon appetite, which reduces an object to that which satisfies a need, but upon response evoked by a value which is important-in-itself (15–17). See also “Prolegomena,” *Das Wesen der Liebe*, in *Dietrich von Hildebrand, Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Der Dietrich von Hildebrand Gesellschaft, vol. 3 (Regensburg, 1971), 13–29.

¹⁶For a very thorough exposition of love of self as the cause of friendship for others *in via generationis*, according to the thought of St. Thomas, see D. Gallagher, “Desire for Beatitude and Love of Friendship in Thomas Aquinas,” *Medieval Studies* 58 (1996): 1–47.

¹⁷According to his triple ranking of loves (friendships), Aristotle considered the

contrast, loves or friendships, of a more perfect sort would, in the account to which we are referring, be so in virtue of a certain kind of *similarity*.¹⁸ If, however, nuptial love has been placed by the Christian tradition “front and center” as the first and paradigmatic expression of love among other loves, as it appears,¹⁹ what would this hallowing of nuptial love signify for our understanding of love generally, and more specifically for our understanding of the relation between the love of one’s self and the love of another, on the supposition that these two loves are compatible? This is the question that this brief essay wishes to explore.

With that in mind we will proceed by considering the basic features and rankings of friendships in the Aristotelian account and then the same in the Thomistic account, looking carefully at the criteria for such ranking as well as the understanding of the relation or unity between friends (lovers) in the different degrees of love. While doing this we shall note with particular attention those few places where the friendship between husband and wife is expressly connected to the question of the different degrees of love and

friendship of man and wife as such to be one of utility and pleasure combined—both of which were ranked below friendship based on virtue—insofar as the man and woman, with their different functions, supply each other’s wants (*Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, xii, 7). He also notes that between a husband and wife there can be a friendship of virtue if they be of high moral character, but it appears that this possible friendship of virtue is not had in and through the difference of sex which specifies their relation. Where this difference is taken into account, Aristotle identifies the friendship chiefly as one of use and pleasure combined.

¹⁸St. Thomas takes similitude to be the proper cause of love (*ST I-II*, q. 27, a. 3); but according to its twofold expression. A similitude between two things that have the same quality actually gives rise to a “love of friendship” (love in the fuller sense) where the lover takes the friend to be one with him and wishes good to him as to himself. A similitude between two things, one which possesses it actually and the other potentially, gives rise, he says, to an expectation of something which is desired, hence to a “love of concupiscence,” that is, a love founded on usefulness or pleasure (*ST I-II*, q. 27, a. 3, obj. 4 and ad 4). It would seem that the difference between man and woman which gives rise to a nuptial love *as such* would be classified as this dissimilar kind of “similitude,” giving rise to a “love of concupiscence” (cf. *ST I-II*, q. 28, a. 4, c).

¹⁹So central is this, says Balthasar, that the contemplation of being itself, within the sphere of the Church, is a “being dedicated and taken up into the mystery of the nuptiality between God and the world, which has its glowing heart in the marital mutuality of Christ and the Church” (cf. *Explorations in Theology*, vol. 2: *Spouse of the Word* [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991], 368).

friendship. Finally, referring to the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar and the “theology of the body” of John Paul II, as well as to Angelo Scola’s thought on “nuptial love” (which is indebted to that of Balthasar and John Paul II), we will consider the nature of the relation between man and woman as expressed in the categories of “original unity” and “unity of the two” (for John Paul II),²⁰ “dual unity” (for Balthasar),²¹ and “asymmetrical reciprocity” (for Scola),²² all with an eye to its implications for the particular problem, in the theory of love, of the relation between love of self and love of other.

2. Friendship of pleasure, use, and virtue according to Aristotle

Towards the end of his *Ethics*, Aristotle moves to the question of friendship which, now—a smaller, more intimate community than that of the polis, in view from the beginning—is the ethos of the virtuous life.²³ There Aristotle outlines the features of friendship. “Friendship” in its most basic sense is between persons who consciously wish each other’s good (or “have good will for each other”) and who frequent each other’s society.²⁴ This basic meaning is then quickly broken down into three kinds according to the three qualities which arouse liking or love, and in virtue of which friends wish each other good. Such qualities are the pleasant, the useful, and the good.²⁵ So the good will that friends wish each other is based on one of the three lovable qualities and this, in turn, gives rise to one of three kinds of friendship.

Once Aristotle observes the different kinds of friendship, he ranks them. In the case of friendship of pleasure and friendship of

²⁰*The Theology of the Body*, 42–48.

²¹*Theo-Drama* 2, 365–382

²²Scola, “The Nuptial Mystery at the Heart of the Church,” 643–645.

²³*Nicomachean Ethics* VIII. See Paul J. Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), for a discussion of the significance of Aristotle’s “shift” to friendship after a long series of “lecture notes” on the moral life (44–69).

²⁴*Ethics* VIII, ii, 1156, and VIII, v, 1157.

²⁵*Ethics* VIII, ii, 1155b.

use, friends, we are told, “do not love each other in themselves, but in so far as some benefit accrues to them from each other.”

[I]n friendship based on utility, or on pleasure, men love their friend for their own good or their own pleasure, and not as being the person loved, but as useful or agreeable. And therefore these friendships are based on an accident, since the friend is not loved for being what he is, but as affording some benefit or pleasure as the case may be.²⁶

The example provided for the friendship based on pleasure is that between witty people who enjoy each other’s society “not because of what they are in themselves but because they are agreeable.”²⁷ These friendships of utility and pleasure, though “accidental,” are not to be understood as exploitative friendships, for after all a certain “mutual wishing of the good for the friend’s own sake” is implied in friendship as such.²⁸ In the friendship between two witty men one likes his friend because he is agreeable but also wants to be agreeable in return. It is the same in a friendship of utility, where the friend wants to be useful in return (perhaps in the form of payment). And, of course, to repeat, they enjoy each other’s company.

The highest form of friendship which is based on the good exists between the virtuous,²⁹ and it is the friendship in which friends “wish each alike the other’s good in respect of their goodness”³⁰ These friends “are friends in the fullest sense, since they love each other for themselves and not accidentally.”³¹ Here friendship finds its perfect form;³² for, as P. Wadell notes, “there is this unity between

²⁶*Ethics* VIII, iii, 1156a.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸*Ethics* VIII, ii, 1156a.

²⁹Aristotle will say not only that this third friendship is between the virtuous, but that it is the very relationship that is necessary for men to be virtuous. One might therefore note a certain dilemma here. How can the very friendship that is crucial for the moral life be the preserve of the already virtuous? P. Wadell suggests as a solution that “Aristotle calls these relationships perfect not so much because of the qualities of the friends, though it is partly that, but more exactly because of the moral possibilities of the friendship” (*Friendship and the Moral Life*, 54–55).

³⁰*Ethics* VIII, iii, 1156a.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²Aristotle elsewhere calls this friendship “friendship in the primary and proper

what is loved and the person who is loved, between the good that is sought and the person who embodies it."³³

It is not, of course, that such friends are not also pleasant and profitable for each other. They are and abundantly so; but they are so on the grounds of their absolute goodness, which goodness *is the chief object of affection*.³⁴ We might say that, in the case of this friendship among the virtuous, the pleasure or gain that comes from the friend is never one that bypasses the absolute good of the friend. In this vein, friends are also good for each other;³⁵ but they are so because the kind of friendship they have is the environment in which virtue can be lived, and more precisely, is the relationship by which men become good.³⁶ In the friendship between the virtuous, there is thus a unity not only between the good willed and the person who is loved (each wants for the other his absolute good, his perfection, that is); there is also a unity between the good of the person loved and the good of the one loving, for precisely in wanting the fullness or perfection of his friend, one becomes himself more perfect.

Once Aristotle has set forth the three kinds of friendship and ranked them, he introduces the distinction between equal and unequal friendships.³⁷ In his initial exposition of the three kinds of friendship Aristotle has in mind "friendships of equality," in which both parties "render the same benefit and wish the same good to each other, or else exchange two different benefits, for instance pleasure and profit."³⁸ The key here seems to be that the friends are

meaning of the term," comparing it with the other kinds which are only friendships in an analogical sense, "since such friends are friends in virtue of a sort of goodness and of likeness in them; inasmuch as pleasure is good in the eyes of pleasure-lovers" (*Ethics* VIII, iv, 1157).

³³Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life*, 52–53.

³⁴*Ethics* VIII, iii, 1156b.

³⁵"Each is good relatively to his friend as well as absolutely, since the good are both good absolutely and profitable to each other" (*Ethics* VIII, iii, 1156b).

³⁶Clearly, for Aristotle, the highest of friendships is itself one of the highest goods for those in such friendships (*Ethics*, IX, ix, 1169b–1170b). Cf. Wadell, who treats Aristotle's response in Book IX of the *Ethics* to the provocative popular dictum: "When fortune favors us, what need of friends?" (*Friendship and the Moral Life*, 61–62).

³⁷*Ethics* VIII, vii, 1158b.

³⁸*Ethics* VIII, vi, 1158b.

both lovable and exchange good will to each other *to the same degree*.³⁹ Aristotle will refer to this equality as an “equality of quantity.”⁴⁰ But it is also clear that “equality” indicates, as well, the similarity in the good that is loved and exchanged, be it pleasure, utility, or the good absolutely speaking. This aspect of equality, Aristotle says, renders friendships (between equals) more lasting: “[F]riendship is most lasting when each friend derives the same benefit, for instance pleasure, from the other, and not only so, but derives it from the same thing, as in a friendship between two witty people.” Where this does not happen, where friends do not derive from each other the same benefit (e.g., pleasure or utility) or, in the event that they do, but not from the same thing, the friendship will be less enduring. The example provided of just such a friendship is that between “lover and beloved”⁴¹ (a sexual love, which by no means should be assumed to be that between a man and a woman, even if it ought to include it), where both find pleasure in each other, but in different things, the lover “in gazing at his beloved,” and the beloved, “in receiving the attentions of the lover.”⁴²

When Aristotle begins to take up unequal friendship explicitly, he indicates quite clearly the superiority of one party over the other. Examples he provides of such friendships are between father and son, between an older person and a younger, between husband and wife, and between any ruler and the persons ruled.⁴³ From the basic inequality within each of these and other similar friendships, other inequalities are derived, it seems, namely the differences in “function,” “motive,” “affection,” and “benefits.”⁴⁴ Here then is not only the disparity in “how much” one ought to be loved, due to the fact that one of the parties is more worthy than the other (because more useful, more pleasant, or excellent), but also a disparity in the good (the “motive”) that is loved in the other and

³⁹This seems clear when Aristotle begins to introduce the category of unequal friendship by saying: “there is a different kind of friendship, which involves superiority of one party over the other” (*Ethics* VIII, vii, 1158b).

⁴⁰*Ethics* VIII, vii, 1158b.

⁴¹*Ethics* VIII, iv, 1157a.

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 1158b.

the benefits received and given. A father does not love in the son the same as the son loves in the father, for the father loves his son as his offspring, as part of himself, and the son his father as the author of his being⁴⁵; and this in turn explains the difference in what each renders to the other (reverence in the case of the son and care in the case of the father).⁴⁶

As regards the relation between husband and wife as such, it is taken for granted that it is a friendship of unequals in the basic sense, that is, where one of the parties is better.⁴⁷ But it is also a friendship of unequals because the man and the woman have different functions by which they supply each other's wants by putting their special capacities into the common stock.⁴⁸ This can be seen in both of the aspects which specify the relation between husband and wife, namely, domestic life and the generative act, each of which is good in differing ways. And in these two main aspects of the relation between husband and wife, Aristotle sees a combination of friendship of use and of pleasure, in which the woman and the man are mutually useful and pleasant but in differing ways.⁴⁹

Within the context of unequal friendships, the theme of "opposites" (or contraries) which attract is also raised.⁵⁰ Examples of friendships that stem from opposition are those between a poor man and a rich one or a learned man and an ignorant one, or indeed between the lover and beloved when one is beautiful and the other

⁴⁵*Ethics* VIII, xii, 1161b.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 1158b.

⁴⁷*Ethics* VIII, xi, 1161a.

⁴⁸*Ethics* VIII, xii, 1162a. In St. Thomas' commentary he notes: "[t]hese functions—it is immediately apparent—are so divided between man and woman that some are proper to the husband, like external works; and others to the wife, like sewing and other domestic occupations. Thus mutual needs are provided for, when each contributes his own services for the common good" (*In VIII Eth. lect* 12, n. 1721).

⁴⁹Aristotle adds that the friendship between man and woman can be based on virtue "if the partners be of high moral character." It might seem that this would be so *in spite of* the difference of the sexes (which seems to be tied to the "supplying of needs," etc.), but then he adds the interesting note: "for either sex has its special virtue, and this may be the ground of attraction" (*Ethics* VIII, xii, 1162a). Cf. note 17.

⁵⁰*Ethics* VIII, viii, 1159b.

plain.⁵¹ Above all, such friendships between opposites seem to give rise to friendships of utility; for the rich man and the learned man are clearly loved because they have something that the inferior party lacks and wishes to gain. (The inferior party will, of course, give something useful in return but, as he is inferior, he cannot reasonably ask to be loved or considered useful to the same degree.) Interestingly here, Aristotle notes that in these friendships the attraction is not so much to the opposite as to the mean between them (and therefore to an overcoming of the opposition).⁵²

Once all of the “inequities” of such friendships are indicated it becomes necessary to explain how such friendships can be possible. They are so, it seems, in virtue of another kind of equality, that of proportion, where each of the parties is loved according to his worth.⁵³ When Aristotle likens the friendship between husband and wife to the relation between rulers and subjects in an aristocracy, he resorts to the principle of proportion where “the better party receives the larger share of good, whilst each party receives what is appropriate to each.”⁵⁴ Proportion provides then a sort of balance in friendships between unequals. Such balance, or equality, however, can only go so far. In cases of great disparity, proportionate love is incapable of either bringing together or holding together two “friends.”⁵⁵ And this is evidence that in friendship “‘equal in quantity’ is the primary meaning, and ‘proportionate to desert’ only secondary.”⁵⁶

Considering the three kinds of friendship, it is clear that friendship based on the good of the friends (where they are loved for themselves) is superior to the other two, in which the friends are loved in an accidental way (notwithstanding appearances closely resembling their superior relative). Moreover, looking at both equal and unequal friendships, it is clear that as regards the possibility and durability of friendships, equality of quantity is preferable as is

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³*Ethics* VIII, vii, 1158b.

⁵⁴*Ethics* VIII, xi, 1161a. St. Thomas comments on this, drawing out implications for the governance of the household: “the husband, being more worthy, is placed over the wife; however, the husband does not direct the affairs belonging to the wife” (*In VIII Eth. lect. XI*, n. 1694).

⁵⁵*Ethics* VIII, vii, 1159a.

⁵⁶*Ethics* VIII, vii, 1158b.

similarity of the good that brings friends together. As regards the friendship between husband and wife as such, it is one between unequals and when considered according to that which specifies it, is primarily a combination of friendship of use and of pleasure, in which each finds the other useful or pleasant in different manners.

Before we turn to the way in which St. Thomas ranks loves, we shall briefly note a key ingredient in Aristotle's philosophy of love. It appears after the distinctions we have just entertained and we thus assume that it is, for Aristotle, an ingredient in all of the friendships he has outlined, though only analogously, in the two lower friendships. This ingredient will assume a large role in St. Thomas' doctrine of love and in fact will be the criterion for his basic distinction. It is precisely this: that the good will one has for a friend seems to be derived from the good will one has for oneself.⁵⁷ The very terms of good will, that is, by which one can identify a friendship (e.g., wishing the good of another for his own sake, wishing his existence and preservation, desiring his company, desiring the same things, and sharing his joys and sorrows)⁵⁸ are what one has first and most fully for himself.⁵⁹ If then they are characteristics of a *friendship* it is because one "feels towards his friend in the same way as towards himself (for a friend is another self)."⁶⁰ As we turn now to St. Thomas' ranking of loves we will see this conception of unity (identifying a friend with oneself) linked to the highest form of friendship.

3. Love of concupiscence and love of friendship in St. Thomas

It is within the context of Thomas' discussion of love as the first of all the passions that he introduces us, in a thematic way, to his

⁵⁷*Ethics* IX, iv.

⁵⁸*Ethics* IX, iv.

⁵⁹When treating the question of whether or not one ought to love oneself or one's friend the most, Aristotle notes: "we admit that one should love one's best friend most; but the best friend is he that, when he wishes a person's good, wishes it for that person's own sake, even though nobody will ever know of it. Now this condition is most fully realized in a man's regard for himself, as indeed are all the other attributes that make up the definition of a friend . . ." (*Ethics* IX, viii, 1163b).

⁶⁰*Ethics* IX, iv, 1166a.

famous distinction between “love of concupiscence” and “love of friendship,” a distinction which identifies the twofold tendency within every act of love.⁶¹ By way of eliminating one of the obvious difficulties in understanding this distinction, we should say at the outset that the word “concupiscence” is connected here simply with the general idea of desire and in no way has a pejorative sense nor does it indicate a tendency only to sensible things.

Calling upon the Philosopher’s definition of love, namely, that “to love is to want the good for someone,” Thomas identifies two objects in the movement of love, *the good* which is wished or wanted for someone, be it himself or another, and *the one for whom* he wishes that good (again, himself or another). Echoing Aristotle, Thomas notes a point which is perhaps missed when we think of ourselves as loving someone: always implicit in our loves is that we want certain “things” for the one we love, be it a box of candy, rest, health, virtue, holiness, and, ultimately, the fullness of being (however we understand such fullness). We wish such things also for ourselves, of course. In loving we are always “wishing good to someone.” Now Thomas calls the love for the good “love of concupiscence,” and the love for the one to whom the good is wished “love of friendship.”⁶²

Once Thomas has identified the two objects of love (and their two loves), he shows the order that exists between them. One (the object of the love of friendship) he says is primary because it is loved simply and for itself. The other (the object of the love of

⁶¹*ST* I-II, q. 26, a. 4. See G. Mansini for a history of the development of this distinction prior to St. Thomas and in St. Thomas’ own works (“*Duplex Amor* and the Structure of Love in Aquinas,” in *Thomistica*, ed. E. Manning, 137–196. *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale, Supplementa*, vol. 1 (Leuven: Peeters, 1995).

⁶²We should note two things here in the use of the term “friendship” in this Thomistic distinction. In the first place, “friendship” here does not mean what it means immediately for Aristotle, and what it usually means for us. In the second place, “friendship” in “love of friendship” does not require that the one loved with such a love be *another person*, as one might easily think. While it is true that man is not “friend” to himself, he is, in Thomas’ account (*ST* II-II, q. 25, a. 4c), more than a friend to himself in virtue of the fact that he is one with himself (which, Thomas says, is more than being united to another). Moreover, in that same account, since the unity one has with oneself is the principle of union with another, the love one has for himself is the “form and root of friendship” (*ibid.*). Thus “love of friendship” can indeed be used for one’s love of himself.

concupiscence) is secondary because it is loved not simply and for itself, but for something (rather, someone) else. This order is shown more forcefully with an analogy between the two goods (in the two loves) and the two distinct manners of existing, namely, existing *per se* (substances) and existing in another (accidents):

For just as that which has existence is a being simply, while that which exists in another is a relative being; so, because good is convertible with being, the good, which itself has goodness, is good simply; but that which is another's good, is a relative good. Consequently the love with which a thing is loved, that it may have some good, is love simply; while the love, with which a thing is loved, that it may be another's good, is relative love.⁶³

In view of this analogy, it is clear that the ones to whom we wish the good, in a love of friendship, so that they may *have* the good (whatever that may be) are *rational* substances (persons).⁶⁴ It is

⁶³ST I-II, q. 26, a. 4c. Cf. also Thomas' commentary on the *Divine Names*, where he makes this same analogy: "[L]ove implies the first inclination of the appetite towards a thing according as it has the nature of good, which is the object of appetite. But as being is said in two ways, namely of that which exists *per se* and of that which exists in another, so is good. In one way, it is said of a subsisting thing which has goodness, as man is called good. In another way, it is said of that which exists in something, making it good, as virtue is called a man's good, since by it a man is good. Similarly, white is called being, not because it itself is something subsisting in its own being, but because by it something is white. Love, therefore, tends to something in two ways: in one way, as towards a substantial good which indeed happens when thus we love something so as to wish it good, as we love a man, willing his good. In another way, love tends to something as towards an accidental good, as we love virtue, not indeed for the reason that we will it to be good, but for the reason that by it we may be good. Now certain people call the first mode of love a love of friendship, but they call the second a love of concupiscence" (*In Librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus* 4.10 [pars. 427–428]).

⁶⁴ST II-II, q. 25, a. 3c. One might immediately object to what seems to be for Thomas the impossibility of loving non-personal things with any regard other than a merely accidental one, where one attaches oneself only to one or several of the qualities of a thing and only insofar as someone can benefit from them. Beyond the level of the obvious where "it would be absurd to speak of having friendship for wine or for a horse" (ST II-II, q. 23, a. 1c), Thomas seems to base the impossibility of loving irrational things with a love of friendship upon the grounds that they lack freedom by which they can *have* good, and be the master of using the good that they have (ST II-II, q. 25, a. 3c). A further, and more ultimate reason could be that the goodwill one has for a friend in love of friendship is ultimately tied to the good of beatitude, which can only be attained by rational beings (ST I-II, q. 1, a. 8c).

also clear that those goods loved, in a love of concupiscence, so that by them others (or, indeed, we ourselves) may be good, may be subsisting goods, like wine, to use the classic example. What is happening in these cases, as Thomas notes, is that “we do not love them for themselves but according to something accidental belonging to them. So we love wine, wishing to receive its sweetness.”⁶⁵

It is, of course, also true, as we have seen with Aristotle, that persons can be loved *per accidens*, that is, not for themselves, but on account of pleasure or utility.⁶⁶ And when this occurs the person is the object of a love of concupiscence. St. Thomas links his love of concupiscence with Aristotle’s friendship of use or pleasure. We should note, however, that, as with Aristotle, such a love of a person is not considered disordered even if it is ranked lower than love of friendship and is not considered to be a friendship in the truest sense:

When friendship is based on usefulness or pleasure, a man does indeed wish his friend some good: and in this respect the character of friendship is preserved. But since he refers this good further to his own pleasure or use, the result is that friendship of the useful or pleasant, in so far as it is connected with love of concupiscence, loses the character of true friendship.⁶⁷

One might think that the difference between the two loves is that in one case, one has something to gain and in the other nothing at all. But everyone would agree, except for some post-moderns (ready even to crucify the joy they might have at seeing their beloved happy),⁶⁸ that it would be strange to think of one of the greatest joys in life as in no way beneficial to us. And, of course, this would be strange in a *Thomistic* theory of love which, after all, has been preceded by a long treatise on the desire for happiness.⁶⁹

⁶⁵*In Librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus* 4.10 (par. 429).

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

⁶⁷*ST* I-II, q. 26, a. 4, ad 3. Cf. also *ST* I-II, q. 27, a. 3, ad 4, where Thomas connects the love of concupiscence with the friendship of use and pleasure. Note also the very interesting text where St. Thomas seems to connect Augustine’s “enjoyment” of God (because God is the highest good man can want for himself) with love of concupiscence (*ST* II-II, q. 26, a. 3, ad 3).

⁶⁸See J. Milbank, “The Ethics of Self-Sacrifice,” *First Things* 91 (March 1999): 33–38.

⁶⁹*ST* I-II, 1–5.

Concerning the benefit that a person can be for the one loving in both love of concupiscence and love of friendship, D. Gallagher writes:

I love the other as good for me precisely because of the good that the other has in himself without it first being referred to me. In love of concupiscence, the object is taken as good, not in itself, but *only* in reference to me; its goodness consists solely in its contribution to my well-being. In love of friendship, in contrast, I take the other person as somehow good in himself or herself, and *for this reason* as a good for me.⁷⁰

For all of the "other-directedness" or "selflessness" implied by the love of friendship, then, it is not so "pure" that the lover is in no way better off than before.⁷¹

Having looked at the basic features of the distinction between love of concupiscence and love of friendship we should look more closely at the conception of unity that accompanies it at every juncture. In Thomas' theory of love, unity can be said to play a part in love in three moments, as love's efficient cause, as love's formal cause, and as love's effect.⁷²

We have already been operating at the level of love's formal cause; and at that level love, for Thomas, be it natural, sensitive, or rational love, before it is a movement of desire for and eventual union with what is loved, is what he calls a "complacency" (*complacentia*) in a particular good.⁷³ This term "complacency," together with a small constellation of synonyms used, expresses the modification which a subject has undergone in the face of that good, such modification being precisely an "affective union" with the

⁷⁰D. Gallagher, "Desire for Beatitude and Love of Friendship," 26.

⁷¹As for how one is better off in a love of friendship, one could refer to the Thomistic doctrine of the common good according to which a good held in common is more lovable to the individual than his private good (cf. *ST* II-II, q. 26, a. 4, ad 3), even if this goodness (for oneself) of a *companionship in the good* indicates an imperfection as Thomas says when referring to Divine Love: "The saying that the possession of any good cannot be pleasing without companionship applies when perfect goodness is not found in one person, and so one needs for the full goodness of the pleasure, the good of having someone else as a companion for oneself" (*ST* I, q. 32, a. 1, ad 2).

⁷²*ST* I-II, q. 28, a. 1, ad 2.

⁷³*ST* I-II, q. 26, a. 2c. See also *ST* I-II, q. 25, a. 2c and ad 2.

object.⁷⁴ Now this affective union, or “complacency,” is to be considered in a twofold manner. On the one hand, it can be “as to something belonging to oneself,” or “belonging to our well-being,” if in the case of a love of concupiscence. On the other hand, it can be like substantial union “inasmuch as the lover stands to the object of his love, as to himself,” or “as his other self,” and “wills good to him, just as he wills good to himself,” if in the case of a love of friendship.⁷⁵

The twofold union which love is, is further explained by considering the efficient cause of love. As just noted, love as affective union (or, complacency) is something that is effected in someone by another (thing or person).⁷⁶ It is not, as it were, self-motivated. At the same time, the good who “moves into the affections,” so to speak, does not do so groundlessly but always as seen, that is, always as apprehended to be in one way or another one with the lover.⁷⁷

Now, this twofold oneness, the seeing of which brings about love between the lover and the thing loved, Aquinas identifies as likeness (*similitudo*).⁷⁸ It is precisely as similar that a known good can

⁷⁴The object, as St. Thomas explains in his exposition of love as passion (cf. *ST* I-II, q. 26, a. 2c), “enters into” (*immutatio*) the affections as it were and gives them “a certain adaptation to itself” (*coaptatio*) which can be more psychologically described as pleasure felt in the face of a perceived good (*complacentia*). For an in-depth analysis of these terms, cf. H. D. Simonin, O.P., “Autour de la Solution Thomiste du Problème de L’Amour,” *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 6 (1932): 190–197.

⁷⁵*ST* I-II, q. 28, a. 1c and ad 2.

⁷⁶*ST* I-II, q. 26, a. 2.

⁷⁷*ST* I-II, q. 28, a. 1c and ad 2.

⁷⁸*ST* I-II, q. 27, a. 3. Pieper notes that this “previous union” which arouses love may in fact be found in the etymological link between “love” and “liking.” “Love,” he notes, is associated with “likeness” not so much on account of a common English root which does not appear to exist, as on account of the Latin *amare*, which is in turn related to the Greek *háma* (“at the same time”). He concludes that this relation between love and likeness “brings to the fore a long suspected and almost consciously known semantic element: that ‘love’ includes and is based upon a pre-existent relation between the lover and the beloved; that, in other words, no one could love anyone or anything were not the world, in a manner hard to put into words, a single reality and one that can be experienced as fundamentally characterized by unity—a world in which all beings at bottom are related to one another and from their very origins exist in a relationship of real correspondence to one another. In short, we are confirmed in our sensing that love

bring about love in the lover. And this likeness is, of course, twofold. In the first instance it is between two that have the same quality actually. The most basic example of such likeness between two human beings, would be, of course, the likeness in humanity which each possesses actually. One could move then to more particular qualities such as color, intelligence, profession, interests, etc., to find a likeness of the first kind; and, of course, the intensity of the love of friendship will vary according to the nature and the degree of the similarity between two persons. Where there is a likeness of this kind, it is as though, says Thomas, two had one form (specifically) making them to be, in a way, "one in that form;"⁷⁹ and thus "the affections of one tend to the other, as being one with him; and he wishes good to him as to himself."⁸⁰

It should be noted how similarity underscores the way in which, in the Thomistic account of love, the love of another is an extension of one's love for oneself. It is because we find lovable in another the very good that we love in ourselves that we can extend the love we have for ourselves to another, taking him as another self.⁸¹ (It goes without saying that the particular reason for a similarity must be something one considers *lovable*, that is *good*, and so also lovable in another). So, similarity is not only the reason we love another but why we love another always as an extension or overflow of our love for ourselves. Thomas will point to the Old Testament text: "Thou shalt love thy friend as thyself" (Lev 19:18) as the authority for such a view (as well as to Aristotle, who held, as we have noted, that "the origin of friendly relations with others lies in our relations to ourselves [*Ethics*, IX, iv, 1166a].⁸² It is, of course, not the case that we are dealing here with some narrow individualism. If the movement of love begins with love for oneself and if love

not only yields and creates unity, but also that its premise is unity. Paul Tillich has actually included this state of affairs in his definition of love. Love, he says, is not so much the union of those who are strangers to one another as the *re*-union of those who have been alienated from one another. But alienation can exist only on the basis of a pre-existing original oneness" (Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 159–160).

⁷⁹ST I-II, q. 27, a. 3c.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Cf. D. Gallagher on the connection between similarity and love as extension of self-love ("Desire for Beatitude," 32).

⁸²ST II-II, q. 25, a. 4c.

of another is understood in its light, the self in question is clearly a most expansive one.

The second kind of likeness is between one that possesses a quality actually and another having it only potentially by way of inclination. So, for example, between the learned and the ignorant, or between one who wants a promotion and another who has the influence to get it, or between two who seek each other out for the sake of pleasure, there is a “similarity.” Where love arises from a likeness or union of this kind, and *where this likeness is the reason for the friendship*, we have a love of concupiscence, because the friend is not being loved, in the ultimate analysis, *for himself or for his own sake*, but only to the extent that he can provide or offer something the lover lacks and wants.⁸³ Thomas associates this love of concupiscence with the Aristotelian friendship of usefulness or pleasure.⁸⁴

We turn now, finally, to the union which love as affective union both aspires to and effects. This union Thomas calls “real union” where the lover seeks the presence of the one (or thing) loved.⁸⁵ Interestingly, when speaking of this kind of union, Thomas

⁸³Though love of concupiscence, for Thomas, does not exclusively refer back to oneself—one can want something with a love of concupiscence, say virtue, for another—in this case where similarity of the second kind is the cause of love between two persons, the person loved is loved with a love of concupiscence and so the love is referred ultimately back onto the lover as Thomas says when speaking about similarity as love’s cause: “in the love of concupiscence, the lover, properly speaking, loves himself, in willing the good that he desires” (*ST I-II*, q. 27, a. 3c.). On this point, one could refer also to the third effect of love which is “ecstasy”—a being placed out of oneself—which, in the case of a love of concupiscence, is caused by love only “in a certain sense,” “in so far . . . as not being satisfied with enjoying the good that [the lover] has, he seeks to enjoy something outside himself. But since he seeks to have this extrinsic good for himself, he does not go out from himself simply, and this movement remains finally within him” (*ST I-II*, q. 28, a. 3).

⁸⁴*ST I-II*, q. 27, a. 3c. It might seem that, given the likeness that causes the love of concupiscence, this latter would not have much to do with friendships of use or pleasure between equals. It would be linked only to cases of opposites, such as between rich and poor, learned and ignorant, or beautiful and ugly, but not to friendships of use or pleasure *per se*. G. Mansini explains that friendships of use or pleasure where there is an equality in usefulness or pleasantness are not exempt from the cause of likeness which gives rise to the love of concupiscence. In these friendships each is recurrently in potency for what the other has. The point is that the friend, in these friendships, is not being loved for his own sake, as one, that is, in whom the good inheres as it does in oneself (“*Duplex Amor*,” 185–187).

⁸⁵*ST I-II*, q. 28, a. 1c.

refers to Aristotle where he in turn refers back to Aristophanes, who "stated that lovers would wish to be united both into one," but that since "this would result in either one or both being destroyed,"—then Thomas adds—"they seek a suitable and becoming union to live together, speak together, and be united together in other like things."⁸⁶ Real union, then, is wanting to be with the other.

Thomas further specifies the effect of love with the notion of "mutual indwelling." Here we will see the extent of the union to which love gives rise (though here the union in question is one in the affections). As is suggested by the term "mutual indwelling," the lover and the beloved can each be said to be in each other; and this, as we would expect, in two distinct manners corresponding to love of concupiscence and love of friendship.

On the one hand, the beloved can be said to be in the lover (because in his affections); and if the beloved is present, the lover takes pleasure in him, or, in the event that he is not present, the lover either "tends towards him" (with a love of concupiscence) or "toward the good that he wills to the beloved" (with a love of friendship). Furthermore, the beloved can be said to be in the lover in the case of a love of friendship when "he wills and acts for his friend's sake as for his own sake [*sicut propter seipsum*], looking on his friend as identified with himself [*quasi reputans amicum idem sibi*]." On the other hand, the lover can be said to be in the beloved. In the case of a love of concupiscence, this is described as a "seeking to possess the beloved perfectly, by penetrating into his heart." In the case of a love of friendship, it is described in the following manner: "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." Thomas says further that when the lover is in the beloved in this manner, so much so that what affects his friend affects himself, it is "as though he were become one with him [*quasi idem factus amato*]."

In looking at the basic features of the Thomistic distinction between love of concupiscence and love of friendship, we have noted in particular the notion of unity associated with each. Where love is based on the "similarity" of act and potency, where either one has what the other does not yet have or where each is recur-

⁸⁶ST I-II, q. 28, a. 1, ad 2.

rently in potency for (and wants) what the other has,⁸⁷ the beloved is being loved as “pertaining to the lover’s well-being,” that is, accidentally, in such a way that the love ultimately refers back to the lover.⁸⁸ Where, on the other hand, a similarity exists between two who each actually possess the same perfection, then the lover takes the other as another self, and wishes good to him as to himself. The highest friendship is associated with the highest form of similarity and quasi-identity between the two friends.

4. Nuptial friendship and its significance for a theory of love

We have now come to look specifically at “nuptial love,” the love (or friendship) between man and woman. It is clearly indisputable that between a man and woman, by virtue of their humanity, the highest form of friendship, where each in loving the other wants his or her good, can exist. What is not clear, however, is whether or not this can be said of the love between a man and woman *as such*, that is, taking into consideration the difference between the two which draws them into each other’s company and which so specifies the manner of their companionship. St. Thomas seems to connect the love between a man and a woman with love of concupiscence, when, for example, he takes up the last effect of love, namely, zeal, and offers as an example of zeal, in love of concupiscence, the husband’s jealousy of his wife.⁸⁹ The same seems to be implied in his commentary on the *Ethics* where he more or less accepts Aristotle’s association of the friendship between husband and wife, *as such*, with the friendships of use and pleasure combined.⁹⁰ These, as we noted, St. Thomas associates with love of concupiscence.⁹¹ One could, of course, turn to elements in St. Thomas’ thought that might weaken this link, such as his theology of marriage, which, to say the least, highly extols the sacramental union between man and wife;⁹² or

⁸⁷Cf. n. 84.

⁸⁸Cf. n. 83.

⁸⁹ST I-II, q. 28, a. 4c.

⁹⁰In *VIII Eth*, lect. 12, nn. 1721–1723. See nn. 17, 48, and 49.

⁹¹ST I-II, q. 26, a. 4, ad 3.

⁹²ST III, q. 42. Furthermore, one could identify texts such as the one where,

where he points to the equality between man and wife as an argument for indissolubility⁹³ and monogamy⁹⁴; but our question is whether that friendship, when confronted with the famous distinction, is still not ultimately ranked on the lower end, and, if not, then whether that does not imply in some way a nuancing of the terms of the distinction.

It seems that the difference (of sex) that specifies the relation between man and woman in the conjugal act and in domestic life is invariably read as a difference which, insofar as it is the reason for the relation and that which specifies it, is the element which makes it difficult for that love to be of the highest kind (where the other is loved for his or her own sake and not “accidentally,” according to a particular aspect of the other seen as beneficial to the lover). If, on the other hand, the nuptial relation appears to be paradigmatic of love (and friendship) as it seems in Christianity, and in its Jewish precursor, might we not be required to account for difference, at least the kind of difference which sexual difference is, in a new way? Following the thought of John Paul II, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Angelo Scola, we propose to suggest the elements of such an account.

5. *Dual unity*

In the first place, we will consider the phenomenon of man's existence in a “unity of the two,” or a “dual unity.” These expressions, which come from John Paul II⁹⁵ and Hans Urs von Balthasar⁹⁶

arguing for the indissolubility of marriage, St. Thomas calls marriage the “greatest of friendships” on the grounds that man and woman are united both in body and in a domestic partnership (SCG 123, 6). Perhaps one could find elements in such texts which might nuance the association of the nuptial relation with the love of concupiscence, but we do not think that Thomas is consciously attempting to do so here.

⁹³SCG, 123, 4.

⁹⁴SCG, 124, 5.

⁹⁵Cf. *The Theology of the Body*, 45–48 and *Mulieris dignitatem*, 7.

⁹⁶“Dual unity” pertains to the third of the three polarities (following body-soul and individual-community) of Balthasar's “dramatic anthropology.” Cf. *Theo-Drama* 2, 365ff.

respectively, indicate a polarity between the identity of human nature, which every individual possesses uniquely (unity), and the fact that that human identity is manifest always and everywhere in two different incarnations (duality).⁹⁷ On the one hand, then, is the human identity that every human individual possesses and which, between individuals, is shared, or homogeneous, even if this is not a matter of mere interchangeability.⁹⁸ On the other hand, there are always two different “incarnations,” as John Paul II says, or “two ways of ‘being a body’ of the same human being.”⁹⁹ Balthasar states it thus: “there is always the ‘other’ mode of being human, a way that is not open to its counterpart.”¹⁰⁰ The homogeneous human nature between individuals is always possessed then within a difference which carries with it the idea of a certain mutual exclusivity. Such exclusivity, or “un-openness,” means not, of course, that two who exist bodily in these distinct manners are not open to each other—to a communion—but rather that, precisely, for the sake of such a communion, the one can never overtake the other either by existing in the other bodily mode, or, as a way of attempting the same, possessing the other in his or her otherness.¹⁰¹

Two things can be said about this polarity of common humanity on the one hand and sexual difference on the other. In the

⁹⁷John Paul II writes: “Their unity denotes above all the identity of human nature; their duality, on the other hand, manifests what, on the basis of this identity, constitutes the masculinity and femininity of created man” (*Theology of the Body*, 45).

⁹⁸Angelo Scola, using the polarity “identity and difference,” notes that “identity” (or “unity”) is not mere “equality” (interchangeability, uniformity), but refers to the “unique and constitutive identity of the I” (*Uomo-Donna: Il ‘Caso Serio’ dell’Amore* [Milan: Marietti, 2002], 21).

⁹⁹John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body*, 43.

¹⁰⁰Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 369.

¹⁰¹Connecting the impossibility of possessing the other (and the attempt to overcome communion) with the mutual exclusivity of sexual difference, Balthasar writes: “as a human being, man is always in communion with his counter image, woman, and yet never reaches her. The converse is true of woman. If we take this man/woman relationship as a paradigm, it also means that the human ‘I’ is always searching for the ‘thou,’ and actually finds it (‘This at last . . .’), without ever being able to take possession of it in its otherness. Not only because the freedom of the ‘thou’ cannot be mastered by the ‘I’ using any superior transcendental grasp—since, in its proper context, all human freedom only opens up to absolute, divine freedom—but also because this impossibility is ‘enfleshed’ in the diverse and complementary constitution of the sexes” (*ibid.*, 366).

first place, it is not the case that the difference between the male and female manners of possessing humanity suggests, as it were, two partial (deficient) halves who, because of their deficiency, tend towards each other so as to attain wholeness, only to cease tending when united. To be sure, every man is *homo viator*, and why would not his sexual difference be caught up in his movement towards a fuller realization of his humanity? The point is that if the tendency towards the other that sexual difference instigates is caught up in the movement towards a greater possession of one's own humanity, such a tendency is not between two complementary "fractions";¹⁰² nor is such a tendency the temporary state through which each passes on the illusory and therefore always unsuccessful way to (or back to) some kind of an undifferentiated and androgynous identity, the kind which Aristophanes imagines in the *Symposium*.¹⁰³ Insofar as the male or female person is each a human "whole," that difference is not the expression of a deficiency or partiality to be overcome. Alongside Balthasar's "dual unity," Angelo Scola proposes the term "asymmetrical complementarity," the first part of which "consists in the fact that sexual difference, in a significant and immediate way, testifies that the other always remains 'other' for me,"¹⁰⁴ even if, or rather, together with the fact that he or she is similar (and compatible).

The union towards which sexual difference (duality) tends is further testimony of the constitutive and unsurpassable character of this difference. Such union is not—however much it has been tried in the various ways of taking possession of another—aimed at the elimination of the other (the difference). It is not a romantic fusion of the two, but the welcome or "letting be" of a difference which, paradoxically, the more welcomed in this manner, is ever more different. The fact that sexual union is objectively tied up with and oriented to the possibility of a new life is the evidence that the couple, like it or not, knowing it or not, is not a closed (undifferentiated) circle. "There can be no question of saying that sexual intercourse suspends this contingency and renders the union

¹⁰²Prudence Allen calls this view of the complementarity between male and female "fractional sex complementarity" where the male "provides one half and a female one half of a whole human being, or some other combination of fractions" ("Integral Sex Complementarity," *Communio* 17, no. 4 [Winter 1990]: 539).

¹⁰³Cf. Plato, *The Symposium* 189d.

¹⁰⁴Scola, "The Nuptial Mystery at the Heart of the Church," 645.

absolute, makes it something at rest in itself (as Feuerbach thought and as Aristophanes gently suggests in the *Symposium*): for the normal issue is a child.”¹⁰⁵ The child issues from a union whose very nature is to welcome the other to such an extent as to wed his or herself, and future, gratuitously, to the other (including all of his or her difference, charming or otherwise, as well as any future changes almost certain to occur). He or she, the new unforeseen future, is the fruit of a love that intends not to “alter when it alteration finds”¹⁰⁶ and the expression of the “risk” taken with an *other*, not to mention the fact that he or she is now yet another with whom to contend.

6. Original unity

The second point concerning the polarity of “dual unity” is that the sexual other is not just another option “out there” within a field of “choices.” Rather, the nature of the difference is such that prior to any encounter between a man and a woman the meaning of one cannot but imply the meaning of the other. We have not a mere “diversity” between two (or more) things that can be put together or not, but a difference that points one, from his or her inner depths, *constitutively*, to the other,¹⁰⁷ so much so that, as Scola notes, “in

¹⁰⁵Insisting on the indissoluble link between sexual union and fruitfulness, Balthasar wrote: “If, in imagination, we were to exclude from the act of love between man and woman the nine months’ pregnancy, that is, the temporal dimension, the child would be immediately present in their generative-receptive embrace; this would be simultaneously the expression of their reciprocal love *and*, going beyond it, its transcendent result” (*Theo-Logic*, vol. 3: *The Spirit of Truth*, trans. Graham Harrison [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005], 160).

¹⁰⁶Shakespeare, *Sonnet* 116, 2–4.

¹⁰⁷On this point Scola, interpreting “dual unity,” proposes that the difference in question here be well-distinguished from mere “diversity.” This latter he notes, referring to its etymology (*di-vertere*: turning towards another direction), “has to do with a multiplicity and with the changing of something which puts into play the ‘external,’ without any reference to the intimate essence of the individual” (*Uomo-Donna: Il ‘Caso Serio’ Dell’Amore*, 21). Our own word “diversion” indicates more clearly, perhaps, the extrinsicism, or in any event the lack of an intrinsic link, between two “diverse” things. “Difference,” on the other hand, Scola notes, suggests from its roots (*dif-ferre*: to carry the same thing elsewhere) a “tendency towards” which is intrinsic to that which tends (*ibid.*).

order to be able to say 'I' in the fullest sense, *I need to take the other into account.*"¹⁰⁸

John Paul II accounts for the constitutive nature of sexual difference with his term "original unity."¹⁰⁹ Each of the sexes is unintelligible without the other, because each "from the beginning" is in some sense determined by the other. The second creation account (Gn 2) provides an image of "original unity" at the beginning of human history. In that account *Adam*, who is not "yet" specified as a man (male),¹¹⁰ is, with respect to the other creatures, alone and this, we are told, is "not good." It is then that "the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. The rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman" (Gn 2:21–22).

Clearly, as Balthasar notes, the "not good" of this second account of human beginnings "banishes the idea of a primal, androgynous human being (in whom there is no hint of the male-female difference) at peace with himself and only subject to unsatisfied longing after being split into two sexes."¹¹¹ Rather, in that text we have one, "Adam," who *from the beginning*, longs for another—it was "not good"—and who also already carries within him, potentially, the woman. Moreover—and this further banishes any hint of extrinsicism between the two—the formation of the woman from the rib does not permit us to think of them as having come from "different places" and only then to have encountered each other. Looking at the text we are told that it is only when woman—'*issah*'—appears that *Adam* becomes '*is*. (a man),¹¹² becoming more fully

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 643.

¹⁰⁹Cf. *The Theology of the Body*, 42–45.

¹¹⁰John Paul II does not see in the text's movement from "man" to "male and female" an espousal of androgyny as more original and therefore more perfect. Rather he reads in the apparent temporal development of things two moments, the first of which considers man in his relation to God ("original solitude"), which sets him apart from the animal world, making him thereby alone in the world, and the second of which further explicates his unique relation to God as well as the resolution of his aloneness in the world. The second moment is not a falling away, but rather, a development of what is already implied in the first (cf. *The Theology of the Body*, 35–37).

¹¹¹Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 373.

¹¹²John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 35.

himself. And, of course, it is clear enough that the woman becomes herself by virtue of the man (having come from his “rib”). If, then, when finally the two are turned towards each other in an “encounter” there is fulfillment (“at last!”), this is so because each stands before one who has been there *from the very beginning*, at the very foundation of his or her being.

It is precisely because of this “original unity” that one can sustain the simultaneity of the homogeneous human nature between a man and a woman, on the one hand, and the mutually exclusive difference, on the other, that is implied by “dual unity.” The “mythic” account of the woman coming from the rib gives us just such a foundation for there the common humanity, that basic likeness (*similitudo*) between the man and the woman—“bone of bones and flesh of flesh”—is established by one’s coming from the other (each in differing ways). Balthasar notes this unique feature in the creation of man: “God did not simply create mankind male and female as he had created the animals male and female. *He not only created them to be one in the duality of sex; he also created their duality out of their own oneness.*”¹¹³ It was from the oneness of Adam’s flesh (poised as it was towards another in its readiness to make of itself a gift), that another with the same humanity came into being. Here we can see in the relation between the first man and woman a homogeneity or likeness which is not first an “abstract” belonging to human nature, standing outside of or alongside difference, but a likeness carried within difference having been derived from the self-gift of one who was always awaiting another (with the “rib”).¹¹⁴

That the likeness (*similitudo*) between man and woman can be said to always stand within a difference and not alongside it is not without a deeper foundation. The very notion of “the image and likeness of God,” in which the man and woman are said to participate, implies as a necessary ingredient, at every point, the creature’s

¹¹³*The Christian State of Life* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 227.

¹¹⁴For Balthasar, this unique origin of the duality of human sexuality indicates that the fecundity of the human couple “lies always outside their power and must be bestowed upon them by God” (ibid., 228). That fecundity is “the result of the physical fecundity that God effected in Adam while he slept and that became, by the formation of Eve from the one living body of Adam, a direct physical image of the origin from the Father’s substance of the eternal Son who shares his nature” (ibid., 227). Eve, he notes, recognizes this after the birth of her first son when she says, “I have given birth to a man-child with the help of the Lord” (Gn 41) (ibid., 228).

being at a remove from God, having come *ex nihilo*. It is because of that remove, that *dissimilitudo*, Balthasar notes, "that the grace that called him into being could also bestow upon him the grace of likeness," by which "he shares in the independence, unity, personality and freedom of his Creator."¹¹⁵ Moreover, it is on account of the original *dissimilitudo* that growing in the image and likeness of God is never a matter of an identity where the two, God and man, are fused into one—were this possible—thereby extinguishing love. To be sure, the coincidence of similarity and dissimilarity implied in the *imago Dei* doctrine must find its ultimate foundation in a trinitarian conception of unity, but it is enough that we only mention this here.¹¹⁶ Suffice it to say that it is on those grounds that sexual difference is intrinsic to the homogeneity of nature between a man and a woman.

One might be tempted to dismiss the creation "myth" of human beginnings as hopelessly obscure and remote, as having no possible bearing on relations between other men and women, since, of course, men and women do seem *first* to encounter each other—each having been constituted in his or her humanity independently of the other—and only then form a union. However, it is precisely to those strange beginnings that Jesus turned when responding to questions posed to him about divorce in his day (at some distance from Eden). It was because God made man male and female, but more specifically, because one came from, or out of, the other that a man and woman join, becoming one flesh. "For this reason," Jesus said, quoting from Genesis 1:24, "a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Mt 19:5).

The fact that the first man and the first woman have each come to be by virtue of the other and do not just meet in the middle, so to speak, indicates a relation which is *constitutive*, pertain-

¹¹⁵Cf. *The Christian State of Life*, 68. Cf. also Balthasar's *Theo-Drama*, vol. 3: *Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 340ff.

¹¹⁶For a general treatment of the causality of the Trinity in creation where "the procession of Persons in unity of essence is the cause of the procession of creatures in diversity of essence" (Bonaventure), cf. Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 5: The Last Act* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), 61–109. As regards the bearing of this on the creation of man as male and female, cf. Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 283–360 ("Woman's Answer"); A. Scola, "The Nuptial Mystery," 655–656; and John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, 7.

ing, that is, to one's being, and not optional. This is why the "communion of persons," to which the "original unity" of man and woman leads, is a question of nothing less than their *being human persons*.¹¹⁷ When the Holy Father comes upon the biblical idea of a "helper," he comments that by their mutual existence "one for the other," their reciprocity in existence, the man and the woman "help" each other, in the first instance *to be*.¹¹⁸ Pieper had already noted the kinship between love, generally speaking, and creation:

[I]n fact the most extreme form of affirmation that can possibly be conceived of is *creatio*, making to be, in the strict sense of the word. . . . And I am convinced that no one more fully appreciates this, no one is more persuaded of it beyond all argumentation and proof, than the true lover. He "knows" that his affirmation directed toward the beloved would be pointless were not some other force akin to creation involved—and, moreover, a force not merely preceding his own love, but one which is still at work and which he himself, the loving person, participates in and helps along by loving.¹¹⁹

7. *Communion of persons*

Given the original state of affairs between man and woman, we have already begun to form a conception of the "communion of persons" they form when they in fact encounter each other. In the face of the other as such, each is helped *to be* according to the terms of their humanity, which exists always as a "dual unity." The second Genesis account does not look upon the expropriation of Adam's rib and its being "carried elsewhere" as a Feuerbachian type of "alienation" of self but rather the completion of a creation which had first to pass through the "not good" of human solitude. The movement of each toward the other, therefore, in no way constitutes an attempt to overcome the difference by repossessing the "rib," but

¹¹⁷ *Mulieris dignitatem*, 7.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Faith, Hope, Love*, 170–171. Pieper notes that, of course, "human love . . . is by its nature and must inevitably be always an imitation and a kind of repetition of this perfected and, in the exact sense of the word, *creative* love of God" (171).

rather the welcome of this *similar* humanity which has now been, so to speak, "resituated."¹²⁰

To think of such a welcoming of another in his or her otherness as anything but alienating can only be said, of course, with a relational or "dual" conception of the unity of the human person. (And, to be sure, this conception has to resist the tug of a certain common experience that would suggest otherwise). With "dual unity" the conception of union with the sexual other occurs as though with "another self," but not only because one is more oneself by associating his good with the good of another similar to him—the common good being greater for an individual than his individual good—but because one is more oneself when associating his good with that one who is similar ("bone of bones") always in and through his or her difference.¹²¹ John Paul II hints at this when interpreting the text of Ephesians 5:28: "husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself," and just a few verses later: "let each one of you love his wife as himself."

This phrase confirms that character of unity still more. In a certain sense, love makes the "I" of the other person his own "I": the "I" of the wife, I would say, becomes through love the "I" of the husband. The body is the expression of the "I" and the foundation of its identity. The union of husband and wife in love is expressed also by means of the body. . . . The "I" becomes in a certain sense the "you" and the "you" the "I" (in a moral sense, that is).¹²²

¹²⁰Cf. Scola's note on the meaning of "difference" in n. 107

¹²¹Speaking on the christological plane of the need for Christ to have the "woman's answer," Balthasar opens up the doctrine of the "mystical body" which relies on the Church's coming forth from his own substance. He notes: "while this complement and partner comes from him and can thus be called his ('mystical') 'Body'—resulting from what his physical body undergoes on the Cross for mankind and from its being 'eucharistized,' seen as a unity—it is not enough for him to see in her *only himself*, his influence, his work. For he *needs* the one who has come into existence from within him" (*Theo-Drama* 3, 341).

¹²²*Theology of the Body*, 319. Cf. P. Andriessen, who confirms this sense of "loving one's wife as his own body" by noting that the Hebrew idea of the flesh (*basar*) "is a principle of solidarity rather than of individuation," leaving terms such as "my flesh" or "my body" ambiguous, such that they could refer either to the one speaking or to his spouse, and by extension, his kin ("The New Eve, Body of the New Adam" in *The Birth of the Church—A Biblical Study*, ed. J. Giblet [New York, 1968], 114). Given this wider sense of "body," Andriessen notes that "Eve is

Here is the development (on the moral or psychological plane) of the more fundamental (ontological) truth that the “I,” being originally marked by a “you,” finds himself (or herself) more truly and more completely when “lost” (or re-situated) within the ethos of the “you.”¹²³ To return to the primordial myth, because Eve was originally within Adam, in the sense that he was *from the beginning* ready to hand himself over (in the “rib”), his union with her, after she is presented to him, is as much an embrace of another as it is a finding of himself (in its new and more complete form). Balthasar brings out the paradox of this situation forcefully:

It is through being overpowered in a “deep sleep” and robbed of part of himself, near to his heart, that man is given fulfillment At God’s instigation, [Adam] steps down from [his primacy] in a kenosis ; this results in the God-given fulfillment whereby he recognizes himself in the gift of the “other.”¹²⁴

8. Conclusion

We began by looking at the heart of the “problem of love,” namely, how one is to conceive of the relation between the love one has for himself and the love he has for another. Turning to two key moments in the tradition’s philosophical and theological thought on love and friendship, we noted that love or friendship is considered to be of the highest kind where what is loved in the friend, and what is therefore the reason for being with the friend, is the good of the friend “for his sake.” We noted furthermore that this friendship is possible because of the apprehension of a unity of similarity (resembling that of substantial union) whereby one “feels towards his friend in the same way as towards himself,”¹²⁵ and takes him to be another

shown to be Adam’s body (since she issued from it) in order that she might form with him the highest conceivable unity; she is as close to man as his own body. For this reason man will cling to his wife and they become one flesh (2:24) or as Paul will say, one body (1 Cor 6:16)” (ibid., 114–115).

¹²³Balthasar provides the trinitarian and christological grounds for an appropriation of self through expropriation in *The Glory of the Lord*, vol. 7: *Theology: The New Covenant* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 399–415.

¹²⁴*Theo-Drama* 2, 373.

¹²⁵Cf. Aristotle, *Ethics* IX, iv, 1166a.

self. Finally, concerning this friendship, we noted that it was precisely in loving another in this manner that one becomes more himself (and loves himself) for, by associating with another at the level of his good, one's own good has expanded, becoming fuller.

Ranked beneath that highest form of love or friendship is that love in which "we do not love [the ones loved] for themselves but according to something accidental belonging to them,"¹²⁶ looking at an aspect of the persons loved and referring it back to oneself, by-passing their good, as it were. Here one does not love the other "for himself" but according to something accidental in him which is perceived to be a benefit for the one loving. In this love, the "similarity" of the act-potency kind is offered as its underlying cause. One looks upon the other as one who has what the other does not have, whether one does not himself have the same thing actually, as in the case of unequals or opposites—the poor want the wealth of the rich, etc.,—or does, but wants and needs it from the other, as in the case of "equals" who are recurrently in want of a certain benefit from the friend, e.g., his wittiness.

We noted the few places in this theory of love and friendship where the love between husband and wife as such, looking at it in those aspects which specify it, tended to be ranked among friendships of the lower kind for the reason, it appeared, that the difference between man and woman suggested a "similarity" of the lower kind, which gave rise to an "accidental" exchange of sorts, in contrast to the kind of friendship in which one stands towards the other "as to himself," or as an "other self," and on that basis loves him "for his own sake."

But if nuptial love is so central to Christian revelation and in its precursor, we asked, might not another account of the difference standing between man and woman be necessary, an account which opens up and deepens the element of similarity long considered to be at the heart of the highest loves and friendships? We suggested just such an opening up in the categories of "dual unity," "unity of the two," and "asymmetrical reciprocity." That opening up could be summarized in the following way.

At the most basic level, what is indicated by these terms is the simultaneity of similarity (most basically that of a common human nature) and difference (male and female), where the former

¹²⁶Cf. St. Thomas, *In Librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus* 4, 10 (par. 429).

is always possessed in and through the latter. From this we can say that the movement towards the opposite sex is never the movement of a mere aspect of oneself nor a movement towards a mere aspect of the other; it is, rather, a movement of and towards a particularity in which the whole of his or her humanity is expressed. Moreover, because sexual difference is this kind of a particular, the movement towards the opposite sex is not *per se* a love of the other *per accidens*, whereby the other person is reduced to an object for the one loving (even if this is abundantly possible when sexual difference *is* taken to be a mere aspect of one's humanity and not the vehicle of its manifestation). It is rather the possibility of an affirmation of the good of the other as other, that is, of his or her (similar) humanity which always exists bodily in a different manner. This possibility is moreover the possibility of one's own fulfillment, for here one encounters "another self" not only because by seeing in the other a common humanity (or some other similarity) one identifies with the other, and so extends his love for himself, thereby expanding his own good (now a larger common good), but also because by associating with this other in his or her difference and leaving one's former place, so to speak, to be resituated, one now has one-self—one now has one's "body"—all the more and is more at home.

In a way, it should be no surprise that the "novelty" of trinitarian love, revealed in Jesus Christ, whose Body became a Bride, opens up and deepens what it means that our love for another be utterly bound up with our love for ourselves, that is, that we love others as ourselves. □

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