

Movements of Love: A Thomistic Perspective on *Agape* and *Eros*

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POPE BENEDICT XVI'S inaugural encyclical *Deus caritas est* is an exquisite portrait of love, human and divine, with a focus on *agape* and *eros* as two "dimensions" of love.¹ The pope continues a long tradition of exploring the richness of love by describing different types of love as well as the relationship between those types. The encyclical is in part a rebuttal of the dichotomization of *eros* and *agape*, a division typified in different twentieth century works on love. As a Thomist and therefore lover of distinctions, the pope's clarifications pleased me to no end. But I also wondered how Benedict's *agape* and *eros* would compare to certain distinctions within Aquinas' thought on love, in particular his distinction between *amor concupiscentiae* (love of concupiscence) and *amor amicitiae* (love of friendship).

Shortly after the encyclical, Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J. wrote a brief essay entitled, "Love, the Pope, and C.S. Lewis," where he extols Benedict's rich analysis of love.² Dulles situates the pope's treatment

¹ Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005), www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_benxvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est_en.html.

² Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., "Love, the Pope, and C.S. Lewis," *First Things* 169 (January 2007): 20-4. For other inquiries into *agape* and *eros* in relationship to the encyclical, see David C. Schindler, "The Redemption of *Eros*: Philosophical Reflections on Benedict XVI's First Encyclical," *Communio* 33 (Fall 2006): 375-99, and Diana Fritz

of *agape* and *eros* in a broader historical context that includes both the theology of love in the Middle Ages (with the important *amor concupiscentiae/amor amicitiae* distinction) as well as C.S. Lewis' 1960 volume entitled, *The Four Loves* (with its attention to *agape*, *eros*, *philia*, and *storge*).³ Toward the end of his essay Dulles observes with some degree of wonder that no Scholastic author, including St. Thomas Aquinas, is ever cited in the encyclical. While noting that "the pope does not disagree with St. Thomas, as far as I can see," Dulles at least implicitly suggests that dialogue between the encyclical and the Angelic Doctor's work on love could be fruitful. Dulles' suggestion sets the agenda for this essay. He also adds another observation. Dulles observes that the encyclical contains almost no attention to *philia*, and claims "perhaps, at some future time, Benedict will supplement *Deus caritas est* with a deeper examination of friendship."⁴ The present article may be understood as an attempt to heed Dulles' charge and continue the reflection on love in *Deus caritas est*.

The purpose of this essay is to mine St. Thomas' treatment of love, and in particular his distinction between love of concupiscence and love of friendship, for any contribution it might make to Pope Benedict's exposition of *agape* and *eros*. In doing so it also attends to the place of *philia* in this conversation. The significance of the present inquiry may be hinted at by posing two questions. First, if *agape* and *eros* encapsulate the meaning of love, how are we to understand *philia* or friendship? Second, to what extent is *eros* in these discussions intended as a reference to male/female love or what is called here "romantic" love?⁵ The main constructive contribution of this essay is proposing a distinction between what are called here "movements" (or Benedict's "dimensions") of love, on the one hand, and "venues" of love on the other hand. Movements of love refer to different ways one loves the beloved, ways that are specified below. These movements can exist in any venue of love, be it the love among family members, the love of friends, or the love of spouses (romantic love). Failure to recognize the difference between movements and venues of love can muddy our understanding of love and in particular our understanding of *eros*. Such a failure can also lead to a misinterpreta-

Cates, "Thomas Aquinas on Intimacy and Emotional Integrity," *Studies in Spirituality* 16 (2006): 111-30.

³ C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1988).

⁴ Dulles, "Love, the Pope, and C.S. Lewis," 23.

⁵ The term "romantic" is used with some hesitancy given that it can connote simply emotion, even infatuation. Though that is included here, romantic love is not intended to be limited to those experiences of love. The male/female love typified not only in falling in love, but also in marriage, is what is intended here.

tion of Pope Benedict's encyclical *Deus caritas est*, and it is hoped that this essay will help prevent such misinterpretation.

This article proceeds in four sections. The first section examines the work of St. Thomas Aquinas on love, with particular attention to his *amor concupiscentiae* and *amor amicitiae* distinction. This distinction pervades various experiences and contexts of love, and names distinct movements that can nonetheless operate together. The goal of this section is to explain and contextualize how Thomas' work on love of friendship and love of concupiscence can illuminate the contemporary discussion of *agape* and *eros*.

The second section reviews Anders Nygren's groundbreaking *Agape and Eros*. Although Pope Benedict does not cite Nygren, a look at *Deus caritas est* reveals Benedict clearly has Nygren in mind. Nygren, unlike Pope Benedict, does indeed explicitly reference Thomas Aquinas' work on love. Clarifying the relation between Nygren and Thomas thus allows us to bring Benedict into conversation with Thomas via Nygren by establishing that all three thinkers are using their distinctions to address comparable questions. The main purpose here, important for the overall argument, is to examine in what sense Nygren and Thomas address the same question (even while using different terms and having different answers). One obvious question they both seem to be concerned with is: how are love of self and love of others properly related?

The third section heeds Dulles' call to attend to how *philia* fits into the discussion of *agape* and *eros*. It explains how Nygren, Thomas, and C.S. Lewis each locates *philia* in his respective treatment of love. In this section it becomes evident that friendship is a venue of love, whereas in the previous two sections Aquinas and Nygren had treated movements of love. A term such as *eros* can rightly be examined as a venue or movement of love. Yet the two should not be confused. To understand love—the very foundation and goal of the Christian life—primarily through the lens of the venue of romantic love and marriage is inherently distorting of the complete reality that is love.

With this distinction firmly in place, the fourth and final section begins by offering some historical reasons why movements and venues of love can be easily conflated. It then examines *Deus caritas est* to show how such conflation can lead to a misinterpretation of the encyclical. The essay ends by affirming the importance of recognizing both movements and venues of love as bases for further distinctions about love, and returns to Cardinal Dulles' suggestions to see what this inquiry has yielded.

THOMAS AQUINAS: AMOR AMICITIAE AND AMOR CONCUPISCENTIAE

Prompted by the treatment of *agape* and *eros* in *Deus caritas est*, the purpose of this section is to examine Thomas Aquinas' thought on love, and in particular the love of concupiscence/love of friendship distinction, in order to determine what resources there are in Thomas' thought that might contribute to contemporary discussions of *agape* and *eros*. Thomas' typical Scholastic precision proves most helpful in sorting through different types of love and their relationship to one another. In order to properly contextualize the love of friendship/love of concupiscence distinction, several other distinctions will have to be examined first.

There are a host of distinctions Thomas deploys when examining love. Love in general is a movement of the lover toward the beloved due to the lover having some "connaturality" or fittingness with the beloved.⁶ The object of love effects a change (*immutatio*) on the lover, such that there is an aptitude in the lover toward "complacency" in the beloved as something good. Lest one think this describes only exalted forms of love, Thomas immediately points out that love is present at varying levels of creaturely existence. It can be "natural," as when a heavy body like a stone "loves" the center of the earth. In such "natural" love the lover has an aptitude toward what is good for it not by apprehending the beloved, but simply due to its nature as provided by the "Author of nature."⁷ Love can be "sensitive," not in the sense of tender but rather when the lover apprehends the beloved as good for it by the senses. Such loves are present, for instance, in non-rational animals. Finally, love can be "intellectual," not in the normative sense of "smart" but rather when the lover apprehends the beloved as good through an intellectual capacity. Given that Thomas' treatment of love occurs in the treatise on passion located in the *Secunda pars* of the *Summa Theologiae* on the human journey toward God, Thomas focuses mainly here on human love, which even while rational remains also a movement of the sensitive appetite of the rational animal that is the human person.

So immediately we see that Thomas distinguishes types of love based upon the lover's mode of apprehension of the beloved.⁸ Thomas also examines different terms used for love and claims that while

⁶ See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger, 1947), I-II q. 26, a. 1.

⁷ *ST* I-II q. 26, a. 1.

⁸ In explaining how the beloved must be somehow grasped, or apprehended, in order for there to be complacency in the lover toward the beloved, Thomas affirms the logical priority of apprehension to appetite, or more colloquially, the priority of knowing to loving.

all four refer, in a way, to the same thing, they also differ.⁹ *Amor* is love in the most general sense and the term Thomas employs in describing all of the above. *Dilectio* is a form of *amor*, but one that includes some choice on the part of the lover. All *dilectio* is *amor*, therefore; but the opposite is not the case. Since choice requires rationality, only intellectual beings can have *dilectio*. *Amicitia*, or friendship, is also a love. But Thomas says it has the character of a habit in addition to an act or passion as the previous two. Again, all *amicitia* is *dilectio* and *amor* but the opposite is not the case. Finally *caritas* is also love. It can refer to either an act or a habit. Yet as indicated, Thomas says, by the term's etymology, *caritas* is love toward what is most dear (*carus*). As will be clear in the *Secunda secundae* examination of the theological virtue charity (*caritas*), charity is rightly understood as the highest form of human love not only since it is a habit as well as including acts, but also because it is directed toward God, our greatest (most dear) Good, in a manner that is rightly understood as friendship (*amicitia*) with God. Again, *caritas* is *amicitia*, *dilectio*, and *amor*, but not all instances of the latter three are *caritas*.

It would be helpful to note one last Thomistic distinction before turning to the focus of this section. For Thomas love (*amor*) is the foundational or basic passion. It is distinguished from both desire (*concupiscentia*) and delight (*delectatio*).¹⁰ In other words, though *amor* is rightly understood as a "movement" due to the change on the lover wrought by the beloved, it is a distinct "movement" (really more an "aptitude-ization") from the movement of desire toward the beloved. Therefore there are three basic passions in response to something good (or evil), and they are (with their opposite partner in parentheses): love/*amor* (hatred), desire/*concupiscentia* (aversion), and delight/*delectatio* (sorrow).¹¹ It is important in this study to be aware of this threefold stance in relation to the beloved. For Thomas claims that love is the most basic or foundational of the three since it

⁹ The following relies on *ST I-II* q. 26, a. 3.

¹⁰ *Delectatio* may also be translated pleasure. Also note that both of these movements or passions have intellectual forms just as love does (in *dilectio*). Thomas claims that intellectual *delectatio* is joy (*gaudium*) and intellectual *concupiscentia* is *desideratio*. Both of the latter are generally translated desire in English. See Thomas Aquinas' *Commentary of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* (Notre Dame: Dumb Ox Books, 1993), 294.

¹¹ For more on Thomas' classification of the various passions, see 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).

is only with that initial love/*amor* that a person can have delight and desire in something or someone. Therefore, despite some potentially confusing terminology, the distinction noted next concerns *amor*, and therefore is properly understood as more basic than either desire (confusingly named *concupiscentia*) or delight.

All of what has been said of love so far appears largely in the first three articles of Thomas' treatment of love. Though this next distinction follows the above (in art. 4), it still appears rather early in Thomas' examination of love. It is the distinction between *amor concupiscentiae* and *amor amicitiae*, translated commonly as love of concupiscence and love of friendship. Since both words following *amor* in this distinction have appeared already, it is important to be precise as to the meaning of this distinction lest it be confused. As will soon be evident, the basis of this distinction is not always the same in Thomas' work. The tensions within Thomas' different uses of this distinction are prompted by the very difficulties that confront us in trying to define love (self/other, sort of object, etc.). Hence to the extent we are able to make sense of Thomas' complicated use of this distinction, we may go a long way in addressing those issues. In the analysis of *amor concupiscentiae* and *amor amicitiae* in the *corpus* of Thomas Aquinas, I am heavily indebted to the work of G. Mansini, whose article on this topic is the gold standard of Thomistic treatments of the distinction.¹²

Mansini demonstrates how Thomas uses this distinction in varying ways. But Mansini's most constructive work is proposing a way to understand how those different manners of distinction are related to one another. The broadest way Thomas employs the distinction is best described by this quote from his first extended treatment of the distinction in the *Summa Theologiae*:

As the Philosopher says (Rhet. ii.4), "To love is to wish good to someone." Hence the movement of love has a two-fold tendency: toward the good which a man wishes to someone (to himself or to another) and towards that to which he wishes some good. Accordingly, man has love of concupiscence toward the good he wishes toward another, and he has love of friendship toward the one to whom he wishes the good."¹³

Mansini calls this Thomas' broadest use of the distinction because either love of friendship or love of concupiscence can exist toward oneself or another, as explicitly stated by Thomas. Furthermore, one

¹² Guy Mansini, "Duplex Amor and the Structure of Love in Aquinas," *Thomistica* (1995): 127-196.

¹³ *ST I-II* q. 26, a. 4.

can have love of concupiscence or friendship toward what is possessed or not possessed. Consider an example from Mansini, where I want to provide a college education for my child. With what sort of love do I do this? From Thomas' broadest use of this distinction, I can be said to love the college education with a love of concupiscence, and my child with a love of friendship.

This first and broadest is a metaphysical distinction reflective of two ways to understand the relationship between goodness and being.¹⁴ Things can be loved to the extent that they simply are (i.e., that they "subsist"), in what Mansini also calls a "terminal" way.¹⁵ This is love of friendship. Things can also be loved as they are good for something else. Mansini calls this a love for inhering goods, or a love in a non-terminal way. To use a stock Thomistic example, wine may have being and thus be rightly said to subsist. But I do not love wine that it be wine. I love it that it bring some "perfection" in me or another. Thus it is loved with a love of concupiscence (i.e., as a non-terminal, inhering good). Notice again, this use of the distinction does not yet indicate whether the ultimate terminus of one's love is one's self or another. Nor does it indicate whether what is loved is possessed or not.

Immediately in the same article, however, Thomas does further limit the meaning of the love of friendship vs. love of concupiscence distinction. In his reply to the first objection, he specifies love of friendship and love of concupiscence by claiming that "a friend is, properly speaking, one to whom we wish good, while we are said to desire what we wish for ourselves."¹⁶ Now the "movement" of love Thomas calls love of friendship is not simply toward a subsistent (terminal) good, but it must be ultimately toward another person (and not oneself). And the "movement" of love called love of concupiscence is now ultimately directed toward one's self. We return to the example above about providing a college education for my teenage child. If I love that education for the good of my child, the whole movement (toward both the education and my child) is properly

¹⁴ *ST I* q. 5, a. 1; Mansini, "Duplex Amor and the Structure of Love in Aquinas," 166-7.

¹⁵ The term "terminal," used synonymously by Mansini with subsistent, is reminiscent of Augustine's term "enjoy." Mansini ("Duplex Amor," 169) goes on to describe the four possible ways something subsistent can be good for the lover, and thus loved terminally: as whole of which lover is a part (e.g., our love of God), by way of identity (our love of self); by likeness within the same order of being (our love of neighbors) and by being a part of which I am the whole (e.g., our love of our bodies). What is particularly striking here is how these metaphysical relationships between lover and what subsists correlate directly to the order of love as examined by Augustine in *De doctrina Christiana* I and Aquinas, *ST II-II* q. 26, esp. aa. 1-5.

¹⁶ *ST I-II* q. 26, a. 4, ad.1.

called love of friendship according to this more narrow use of that term. If I desire the education ultimately for myself (e.g., so I can brag about my child's success), then it is love of concupiscence at work. In this more narrow use of the distinction, the "end" of the love is what governs all movements of love ultimately toward that end.

In several ensuing articles Thomas even further specifies the distinction between love of concupiscence and love and friendship while explaining how all love is caused by likeness. While all love is caused by likeness between lover and beloved, there are two sorts of likenesses.¹⁷ There is actual likeness, which engenders love of friendship, where the lover has complacency with the beloved on the basis of some quality they both possess. Yet there is also likeness of potentiality, where the lover is inclined toward what the beloved has in actuality. This engenders love of concupiscence. "He that loves what he needs bears a likeness to what he loves, as potentiality bears a likeness to its act."¹⁸ Thus Thomas now adds that love of friendship is toward something that exists in actuality, something already possessed (by the other). A friend sees and delights in the goodness of his or her friend. Love of concupiscence is toward what is not yet possessed (by the self). With this more metaphysical claim about how the lover stands in relation to the beloved on the basis of actuality or potentiality, Thomas seems to return to his first *Summa Theologiae* distinction between love of friendship and love of concupiscence, which averred the former as directed toward terminal (subsisting) goods and the latter as directed toward non-terminal (inhering) goods. After all, in the third version of the distinction, the lover loves with a love of friendship that which actually exists in the other (and which is alike to the self), whereas the lover loves with a love of concupiscence that which completes or actualizes the potential in the lover. Yet note an important difference that comes from the third use of the distinction retaining the crucial element of the second use. Whereas in the first version one could love with a love of concupiscence something ultimately directed toward another, in the third version Thomas states that the lover loves with a love of concupiscence only that which is not yet possessed by the self.

Mansini labels these three versions of the love of friendship/love of concupiscence distinction the broadest (version one here), narrower (version two) and strictest (version three). It is suggested here that the first and third are quite similar, but that the third (strictest) use of the distinction differs from the first (broadest) in that the for-

¹⁷ *ST I-II* q. 27, a. 3.

¹⁸ *ST I-II* q. 27, a. 3, ad. 3.

mer retains the contribution of the second version (ultimate referral to other vs. self). So the strictest use of the distinction contains all claims made in the narrow and broad uses, though the opposite is not the case.

Before identifying the relevance of these Thomistic claims about love of friendship and love of concupiscence for more recent discussions of *agape* and *eros*, it is worth noting an already evident Thomistic contribution to inquiry into the relationship between love and desire, or better, the relationship between love of self and love of others.¹⁹

Why is this relevant for our inquiry? The goal here is to accurately depict Thomas' love of friendship/love of concupiscence distinction so as to determine its relationship to later discussions of love that focus on the *agape/eros* distinction. Treatment of this latter distinction is the task of the following section. What can be said in summary of Thomas' love of friendship/love of concupiscence distinction that may prove useful for that comparison? First, it must be recalled that both movements described by Thomas are "interior" to the most basic, all-encompassing term Thomas uses for love: *amor*. Thomas famously expands the "traditional" twofold distinction of movements toward goods from desire and joy to the threefold distinction of love, desire, and joy.²⁰ In his schema, love (*amor*) is the initial aptitude-ization, or attunement toward good objects that is the root of both desire (good object not possessed) and joy (good object possessed). The love of friendship/love of concupiscence is "within," if you will, that initial attunement of love. It is more basic than and indeed the ultimate source of any ensuing desire or joy. Furthermore, these two movements are present at the very heart of all more "developed" instantiations of love, such as *dilectio* (love involving choice) and *amicitia* (friendship), and even in a sense *caritas* (as theological virtue of friendship with God and others in God).

Second, and unsurprisingly given the previous claim, love of friendship and love of concupiscence are both distinct movements at the core of all love, and yet they are complementary movements that

¹⁹ For a helpful contextualization of Thomas Aquinas' work in the context of medieval debate over love and desire, see Michael, Sherwin, O.P., "Aquinas, Augustine, and the Medieval Scholastic Crisis Concerning Charity," 181-204 in Michael Dauphinais, Barry David and Matthew Levering, eds., *Aquinas the Augustinian* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007).

²⁰ For more on the relationship between love and desire in Aquinas, see: Mark Drost, "In the Realm of the Senses: Saint Thomas Aquinas on Sensory Love, Desire, and Delight" *The Thomist* 59 (1995): 47-58; Peter Kwasniewski, "St. Thomas, Ecstasy, and Union with the Beloved" *The Thomist* 61 (1997): 587-603; and, Christopher Malloy, "Thomas on the Order of Love and Desire" *The Thomist* 71 (2007): 65-87.

can and do coexist. Two things make this possible. First, and ultimately most important, Thomas' metaphysical commitments to God as the origin and *telos* of all being, and his concomitant affirmation of the common good, means that ultimately the good of the self and the good of others cannot be rivals. Both rather find their common fulfillment in God. Put more experientially, self-fulfillment is found in love of God and others. So while love of friendship and love of concupiscence (understood in reference to other and self, respectively) are indeed to be distinguished, they are ultimately not mutually exclusive. Second, Thomas's varying uses of the love of friendship and love of concupiscence distinction provide an account of how they are complementary. Indeed, both coexist inside of love. Recall how Thomas claims:

The movement of love has a two-fold tendency: toward the good which a man wishes to someone (to himself or to another) and towards that to which he wishes some good. Accordingly, man has love of concupiscence toward the good he wishes toward another, and he has love of friendship toward the one to whom he wishes the good.²¹

As Mansini demonstrates, Thomas' broadest use of the love of friendship/love of concupiscence distinction makes this complementarity possible.²²

Third and finally, it must also be acknowledged that while love of concupiscence and its (in the second and third version) concomitant self-fulfillment is not incompatible with love of friendship, Thomas does in the "strictest" versions of that distinction insist on two crucial differences: love of friendship is both other-oriented and toward what is possessed, whereas love of concupiscence is both self-oriented and toward what is not possessed. Even if Thomas clearly depicts these movements as compatible, in his "strictest" use of the distinction, they are distinct enough that surely a person can have one without the other. This is perhaps no surprise with regard to love of concupiscence. Of course one can seek one's own fulfillment without regard for the other (except perhaps instrumentally). But it is surprising with regard to love of friendship. Can it ever be without love of concupiscence?

Recall that what Mansini calls the strictest version of the love of concupiscence/love of friendship distinction is based on whether what is loved is in actuality or potentiality. So another way to ask the previous question is: Can a human person ever love without potenti-

²¹ *ST* I-II q. 26, a. 4.

²² More detail on this complementarity is provided below in section three's examination of friendship in Aquinas.

ality? The answer is yes, that is, in the state of perfect happiness that is the beatific vision. Since there can be no lack in that state, there can be no love of concupiscence, only love of friendship. Hence it is crucial to Thomas to maintain this distinction despite the fact that in the *saeculum* they exist in concert for the human person. Amazingly, Thomas' maintenance of the love of friendship/love of concupiscence distinction, despite its application to the root of all love, is ultimately a claim about natural love (as well as of course supernatural love) that is eschatologically informed by Thomas' Christian faith. A quick peek at the difference between charity (*caritas*) and hope will help support this claim.

Throughout his work, Thomas clearly associates love of friendship with charity (*caritas*) and love of concupiscence with hope. In explaining the rationale for the three theological virtues, Thomas addresses an objection that there should be only two theological virtues, since the human person is directed to God by one's reason and will. Since faith is the theological virtue that orients the human intellect toward God, it seems there should be only one theological virtue of the will. Thomas replies that "Two things pertain to the appetite, viz. movement to the end, and conformity with the end by means of love."²³ Thus there are two theological virtues: hope, whereby one moves toward God as ultimate end, and charity whereby one conforms to God as ultimate end. Thus a main difference between hope and charity is that hope is present only when there is a lack of possession (i.e. potentiality) in a human person, whereas charity can exist with or without such lack.

Relatedly, in charity one loves God Himself, whereas in hope one loves God for the fulfillment God provides (i.e., one's own happiness). In a passage that beautifully combines the two movements of love as well as the relationship between hope and charity, Thomas differentiates between hope and charity by saying:

Now there is a perfect, and an imperfect love. Perfect love is that whereby a man is loved in himself, as when someone wishes a person some good for his own sake; thus a man loves his friend. Imperfect love is that whereby a man love something, not for its own sake, but that he may obtain that good for himself; thus a man loves what he desires. The first love of God pertains to charity, which adheres to God for His own sake; while hope pertains to the second love, since he that hopes, intends to obtain possession of something for himself.²⁴

²³ *ST I-II* q. 62, a. 3, ad. 3.

²⁴ *ST II-II* q. 17, a. 8: Amor autem quidam est perfectus, quidam imperfectus. Perfectus quidem amor est quo aliquis *secundum se amatur*, ut puta cui aliquis vult

And should there be any doubt that for Thomas hope is aligned with love of concupiscence and charity with love of friendship, he claims:

Hope presupposes love of that which a man hopes to obtain; and such love is love of concupiscence, whereby he who desires good, loves himself rather than something else. On the other hand, charity implies love of friendship, to which we are led by hope.²⁵

Even in this statement of the distinction, Thomas grants that hope may lead one to charity. Nonetheless the two movements of love are distinct enough to be aligned with different theological virtues.

Why are these passages on hope and charity important? Recall that having established that for Thomas love of friendship and love of concupiscence operate together in the human person in this life, we are here acknowledging that Thomas does distinguish them, and that they are in principle separable. Having established their respective connections to hope and faith, it should be evident why Thomas is committed to that separability. For in the state of perfect happiness (i.e., actuality) that is the beatific vision, there is no hope. Only charity remains.²⁶ It seems reasonable to conclude that there is no love of concupiscence; only love of friendship remains.

In conclusion, Thomas' employs a love of friendship/love of concupiscence distinction to distinguish between movements of love. They are distinct movements that are in principle—and at times in reality—separable. Yet Thomas is also clear they are not mutually exclusive. In fact, from the very basic level of human passion, to the graced life of charity informed hope, these movements of love operate in concert. It is also noteworthy that nowhere in this discussion has Thomas equated either of these movements of love with what will be called below a “venue” of love, such as friendship or male/female romantic love. Thus it is reasonable to assume that both of these movements of love are operative in all different venues.

bonum, *sicut homo amat amicum*. Imperfectus amor est quo quis amat aliquid non secundum ipsum, sed ut illud bonum sibi ipsi proveniat, *sicut homo amat rem quam concupiscit*. Primus autem amor Dei pertinet ad caritatem, quae inhaeret Deo secundum seipsum, sed spes pertinet ad secundum amorem, quia ille qui sperat aliquid sibi obtinere intendit.

Though Thomas does not use the actual terms *amor concupiscentiae* and *amor amicitiae* here, the (added) italicized phrases above contain terms consistent with his descriptions of those. And the following citation settles any question as to whether Thomas aligns hope and charity with his two movements of love.

²⁵ ST I-II q. 66, a. 6 ad. 2.

²⁶ ST I-II q. 67, aa. 4 and 6.

TWENTIETH CENTURY DEBATE ON LOVE: AGAPE AND EROS

Thomas Aquinas employs a distinction between love of friendship and love of concupiscence to describe different movements of love. He clearly distinguishes between the two, but also presents them as both present in the virtuous human life. The purpose of this second section is to determine the relationship between the Thomistic distinction between love of friendship and love of concupiscence on the one hand, and twentieth century discussion of *agape* and *eros* on the other hand. This *agape/eros* distinction is depicted most famously by Anders Nygren and is employed throughout the twentieth century and beyond including in Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical *Deus caritas est*. The basic conclusion will be that the *agape/eros* distinction is indeed a distinction regarding movements of love akin to its medieval counterpart.

Nygren published each of the two volumes of his renowned book *Agape and Eros* in the 1930's.²⁷ Volume One is an analysis of the "Christian Idea of Love" through an examination of "two fundamental motifs," namely, *agape* and *eros*. Volume Two is an examination of historical development with regard to the Christian conception of love. A summary of Nygren's view of *agape* and *eros* is made simple by Nygren's own tabular summary of each form of love.

According to Nygren's summary list, *eros* is "acquisitive desire and longing;" an "upward longing" that is "man's way to God;" an "egocentric love" even if "of the highest, noblest, sublimest kind;" a "will to get and possess which depends on want and need;" and, "man's love," which, even if ascribed to God, is "patterned on human love." *Eros* finally "recognizes value in its object" and then loves it; hence it may be called "evoked" or "motivated."²⁸

On the other hand, *agape* is "sacrificial giving." It is "unselfish love" that "gives itself away." It "comes down" and is "God's way to man." It is God's love; indeed "God is *agape*." "Even when attributed to man, *agape* is patterned on Divine love." It is "freedom in giving," depending on "wealth and plenty." It is "sovereign in relation to its object," "directed to both the evil and the good," and is thus "overflowing," "spontaneous," and "unmotivated." It "creates value in its object."²⁹

The difference between the two forms of love is quite evident. But Nygren is sure to emphasize not only that they are distinct, but also that there is a "fundamental opposition" between the two.³⁰ Indeed

²⁷ The two volumes are found together in the English *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip Watson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953).

²⁸ Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 210.

²⁹ Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 210.

³⁰ Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 208.

he claims that the two conceptions in truth “have nothing to do with one another.”³¹ Thus “there is no way, not even that of sublimation, that leads from *Eros* over to *Agape*.”³² Even while noting that being able to contrast two things generally necessitates some sort of commonality, Nygren claims “there seems in fact to be no possibility of discovering any idea common to them both which might serve as a starting point for the comparison; for at every point the opposition between them makes itself felt.”³³ In the end he claims the only commonality between them is that they are both (opposing, mutually exclusive) answers to the same questions about humanity’s relationship to the divine and the nature of the ethical life.³⁴

Nygren’s conceptual argument about the nature of *agape* and *eros* and the relationship between them is complemented by an historical argument about the relationship between the two. He laments how “in the course of history they have none the less become so thoroughly bound up and interwoven with one another that it is hardly possible for us to speak of either without our thoughts being drawn to the other.”³⁵ Nygren’s project can be accurately described as an attempt to disentangle *agape* from *eros* and thereby restore it to its proper place in the Christian life.

Given this brief sketch of Nygren’s argument, one question for this essay is: Is Nygren’s *agape/eros* distinction rightly understood as roughly equivalent to Thomas Aquinas’ love of friendship/love of concupiscence? The short answer is yes. In fact we turn in a moment to Nygren’s own account of Thomas’ love of friendship/love of concupiscence distinction to corroborate this claim. Yet first a caveat is in order.

The basic claim here is that what Nygren describes by *agape* and *eros*, Thomas Aquinas describes by love of friendship/love of concupiscence. However, beyond the obvious use of different terms, such a basic claim must be further qualified. It is certainly not as if what Thomas meant by the two movements of love he describes is exactly the same as the two fundamental motifs described by Nygren, and the two figures simply (and drastically) differ on how to understand the relationship between their entities. One’s understanding of how the two are related is inextricably bound to how one understands the

³¹ Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 30.

³² Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 52.

³³ Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 209

³⁴ Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 209.

³⁵ Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 30. The breadth of Nygren’s historical argument (vol. 2 of his project) is well beyond the scope of this essay. Suffice it to say that Augustine and medieval theologians like Thomas Aquinas do not fare well. Luther is a rare bright spot in the era after the *eros/agape* “synthesis” (641).

nature of each. To state the obvious, if Aquinas thinks love of friendship and love of concupiscence can operate in concert, they *cannot* be the same as what Nygren depicts as *agape* and *eros*. Defining these entities under consideration is inextricably bound to one's account of how they are related. That said, there is enough commonality in how the pairs are described to warrant the claim here that both figures are describing similar movements of love. Nygren himself claims this is the case.

During the medieval portion of Nygren's historical narrative, he claims that Aquinas follows Augustine and Dionysius the Areopagite in acknowledging that since everyone loves himself and desires happiness, all love is acquisitive love. Yet Nygren also claims "it did not escape Thomas, however, that his basic view of love accords badly with Christian love, which 'seeketh not its own'."³⁶ How did Thomas respond, according to Nygren?

He tries to overcome this difficulty in his usual way, by introducing a distinction which has since been of the very greatest importance for Catholic theology.... We must distinguish between two kinds of love: *amor concupiscentiae* and *amor amicitiae*, acquisitive love and the love of friendship. *Caritas* is a love of the latter sort.³⁷ The Christian loves God, himself, and his neighbor with the love of friendship or benevolence, "*amor amicitiae sive benevolentiae*."³⁸

Here we have from Nygren's own pen an affirmation that Thomas' love of friendship/love of concupiscence distinction is an attempt to address the very problem that drives Nygren's project. As Nygren writes, "Thomas felt the tension between the *Eros* motif, on which his thought as a whole is based, and Christian *Agape*-love, and... he tried to find a solution with the help of the idea of '*amor amicitiae*'."³⁹

Lest it seem that Nygren affirms the Thomistic distinction as a suitable solution to the problem, Nygren continues by saying, "It need hardly be said that this attempt was doomed to failure." Why? In addition to dismissing Thomas' attempt to illuminate *agape* with the "alien idea" of friendship, Nygren claims that the Aristotelian idea of friendship employed by Thomas is also ultimately rooted in self-love. Thus the "unity of Thomas' doctrine of love suffered" from the distinction between love of friendship and love of concupiscence,

³⁶ Nygren, *Eros and Agape*, 644. For an account of Nygren's view of Thomas, see M.C. D'Arcy, *The Mind and Heart of Love, Lion and Unicorn: A Study in Eros and Agape* (London: Faber and Faber, 1953), 65, 79.

³⁷ Note that for Nygren *caritas* is not equivalent to *agape*, but rather is the corrupted Augustinian and medieval synthesis of *eros* and *agape*.

³⁸ Nygren, *Eros and Agape*, 644.

³⁹ Nygren, *Eros and Agape*, 645.

since on the one hand love of friendship is introduced (Nygren claims) to address the problem of distinguishing *agape* from self-love, and yet on the other hand Thomas' view of friendship in the end "constitutes no threat to the doctrine that all love goes back ultimately to self-love."⁴⁰

We therefore see that Thomas Aquinas and Nygren are indeed employing their respective distinctions with comparable meanings in response to roughly the same problem. However, it would be inaccurate to say that what Thomas means by love of friendship Nygren refers to as *agape*. Likewise, it is inaccurate to say that what Thomas means by love of concupiscence Nygren refers to as *eros*. Their difference in understanding the relationship between the two entails a difference in how each understands both sides of the distinction. Because of this difference, Thomas' work on love of concupiscence and love of friendship can inform contemporary debate on *agape* and *eros*. It also serves as a resource to support Pope Benedict's arguments against dichotomizing *eros* and *agape*.

Before turning to the question of *philia* in the following section, two more observations are in order. First, at no point in Nygren's discussion of *agape* and *eros* is there any mention of the "erotic" as romantic love associated with the venue of male/female romantic love. Despite a common association of *eros* with that type of love, Nygren does not draw on this common association with *eros*. That is not to say that male/female love cannot exemplify what Nygren calls *eros* and *agape*. It is simply to say that for Nygren, *eros* is not ascribed particularly to the venue of male/female love.

Second, if it is true that Thomas and Nygren are rightly understood as addressing a comparable question, it is also the case that Pope Benedict XVI in his inaugural encyclical *Deus caritas est* is rightly understood as contributing to that same question. The encyclical not only begins with an extended reflection on *agape* and *eros* (and their relation), but also defines the terms in a way suggestive of Nygren's project. *Eros* is "possessive or covetous" and "ascending" (no. 7); it is "neither planned nor willed but somehow imposes itself upon human beings" (no. 3). *Agape* is "descending" and "oblative" (no. 7), entailing "concern and care for the other" (no. 6). It "seeks the good of the beloved: it becomes renunciation and it is ready, and even willing, for sacrifice" (no. 6). Surely these terms resemble the descriptions of *agape* and *eros* by Nygren. Yet in terms of the relationship between *agape* and *eros*, rather than the "fundamental contradiction" posited by Nygren, Pope Benedict claims deep interrelation.

⁴⁰ Nygren, *Eros and Agape*, 644-5.

“[L]ove” is a single reality, but with different dimensions; at different times, one or other dimension may emerge more clearly. Yet when the two dimensions are totally cut off from one another, the result is a caricature or at least an impoverished form of love. (no. 8)

Benedict XVI makes clear claims that not only settle any question as to whether he had Nygren in mind in discussing *agape* and *eros*, but also firmly place the pontiff’s position as starkly opposed to the Lutheran pastor.

In philosophical and theological debate, these distinctions have often been radicalized to the point of establishing a clear antithesis between them: descending, oblation love—*agape*—would be typically Christian, while on the other hand ascending, possessive or covetous love—*eros*—would be typical of non-Christian, and particularly Greek culture. Were this antithesis to be taken to extremes, the essence of Christianity would be detached from the vital relations fundamental to human existence, and would become a world apart, admirable perhaps, but decisively cut off from the complex fabric of human life. Yet *eros* and *agape*—ascending love and descending love—can never be completely separated. The more the two, in their different aspects, find a proper unity in the one reality of love, the more the true nature of love in general is realized. Even if *eros* is at first mainly covetous and ascending, a fascination for the great promise of happiness, in drawing near to the other, it is less and less concerned with itself, increasingly seeks the happiness of the other, is concerned more and more with the beloved, bestows itself and wants to “be there for” the other. The element of *agape* thus enters into this love, for otherwise *eros* is impoverished and even loses its own nature. On the other hand, man cannot live by oblation, descending love alone. He cannot always give, he must also receive. Anyone who wishes to give love must also receive love as a gift. (no. 7)

In the very same section the pope solidifies the connection between the discussion over *agape* and *eros* to which he and Nygren contribute, and the corresponding medieval debate: “There are other, similar [to *eros/agape*] classifications, such as the distinction between possessive love and oblation love (*amor concupiscentiae* – *amor benevolentiae*)” (no. 7).

Consonant with Cardinal Dulles’ intuition that the discussion of *agape* and *eros* in *Deus caritas est* could be augmented by attention to medieval thought on love, this second section has simply established that Thomas Aquinas, Anders Nygren, and Pope Benedict XVI all address the same question of how to describe distinct movements of love, and their relationship to one another. The following section ex-

amines *philia* in particular as a way to introduce another approach to different types of love.

AGAPE, EROS, AND PHILIA

In addition to *agape* and *eros*, *philia* (commonly translated “friendship”) demands attention by those who examine different Greek terms for love, especially given the prominence of *philia* in Greek thought. Yet where can we “fit in” friendship in thinkers like Thomas and Nygren who depict two movements of love? These two rightly recognize that *philia* is not a third movement alongside their other two, and therefore each offers a strategy for how to describe *philia* in relation to their two movements. Yet a third approach, represented here by C.S. Lewis partly due to prompting from the title of Cardinal Dulles’ aforementioned article, similarly avoids labeling *philia* as a movement of love, but then in depicting it as a venue does indeed place it alongside *eros*, thus transforming *eros* from a movement of love to a venue. Though depicting *eros* as a venue of love is not inherently problematic, doing so while failing to attend how that depiction differs from a movement does distort the meaning of love. After presenting these three strategies (Nygren, Aquinas, Lewis) for conceptualizing *eros*, this section concludes with a closer look at the movement/venue distinction.

Nygren’s work exemplifies one way to conceptualize *philia* in relation to *agape* and *eros*, namely, by subsuming it into *eros*. While well aware of the term *philia*, Nygren’s tome is entitled *Agape and Eros*. Where is *philia*? As mentioned above in Nygren’s analysis of Thomas’ use of friendship, for Nygren *philia* falls squarely on the *eros* side of his dichotomy. Rooted in self-love, friendships do not require any addition to the “two fundamental motifs” construction of Nygren. Their motif is *eros*.⁴¹ Since Nygren does not ever equate friend-

⁴¹ This explains the renewed attention to the question of how “particular relationships” (i.e., family member, friendships, marriages) stand in relation to *agape* among those thinkers influenced by Gene Outka and his *Agape: An Ethical Analysis*, a book that echoes certain features of Nygren’s thought in its emphasis on *agape* as equal regard. For a later contribution by Outka to the topic of *agape* as equal regard, see his “Universal Love and Impartiality,” 1-103, in *The Love Commandments: Essays in Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy*, ed. Edmund N. Santurri and William Werpehowski (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1992). For an example of attention to particular relationships from the perspective of *agape* as equal regard, see William Werpehowski, “‘Agape’ and Special Relations,” 138-56 in *The Love Commandments*. For attention to the question of special relationships that is not from this particular *agape* tradition, see Stephen Pope’s Thomistic analysis in *The Evolution of Altruism and the Ordering of Love* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1994) and Edward Vacek’s *Love, Human and Divine: The Heart of Christian Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996).

ship with *eros*, he at least implicitly recognizes that friendship is something other than, even if rooted in, *eros*. It could be that he implicitly describes friendship as what is a venue rather than a movement of love. In other words, he seems to recognize that friendship is a certain type of relationship with people, rather than a movement present in varying types of relationships. Nonetheless, *philia* is ultimately about self-love and therefore “covered” by *eros* in Nygren’s two fundamental motifs.

How might *philia* function in a system that does not polarize *eros* and *agape*? Since Benedict does not explore *philia* in any depth we do not know how he would explain it.⁴² But Thomas Aquinas does indeed attend to friendship, and thus his thought is used to describe a second approach to relating *philia* to *agape* and *eros* (or in Thomas’ terms, friendship to love of concupiscence and love of friendship). Thomas does not take the distinction suggested by the three Greek words *eros*, *agape*, and *philia*, as a starting point for his reflection on love.⁴³ Furthermore, his use of the term friendship in the love of friendship/love of concupiscence distinction raises the possibility of confusion. Nonetheless, a Thomistic account of friendship is clearly discernable even without recourse to the Greek term.

Recall that Thomas distinguishes four ascending levels of love based on four distinct Latin terms: *amor*, *dilectio*, *amicitia*, and *caritas*.⁴⁴ Recall also that what distinguishes friendship (*amicitia*) from the previous two terms for love is the habitual nature of friendship.⁴⁵ As to what is possessed by habit, Thomas claims that friendship is characterized by mutual benevolence; friends wish the friend good,

⁴² Amazingly, the terms “*philia*” and “friendship” appear only twice each in the entire encyclical, with all instances occurring within two sentences toward the beginning of the document: “Let us note straight away that the Greek Old Testament uses the word *eros* only twice, while the New Testament does not use it at all: of the three Greek words for love, *eros*, *philia* (the love of friendship) and *agape*, New Testament writers prefer the last, which occurs rather infrequently in Greek usage. As for the term *philia*, the love of friendship, it is used with added depth of meaning in Saint John’s Gospel in order to express the relationship between Jesus and his disciples” (Benedict, *Deus caritas est*, no. 3). As in this essay, the pope focuses on three of the Greek terms for love and leaves aside *storge*.

⁴³ The presence of Greek is quite infrequent in Thomas’ work. To my knowledge there is no reflection on different Greek terms for love in any of Thomas’ treatments of love. For Nygren’s less charitable read of Thomas’ lack of attention to Greek, especially in the context of his *Commentary on the Divine Names*, see *Agape and Eros*, 652.

⁴⁴ For a comparable reflection on different Latin terms for love, though with different conclusions, see Augustine, *City of God*, Bk. XIV.7.

⁴⁵ As to whether or not friendship is properly called a virtue, see *ST II-II* q. 27, a. 3.

and with a certain mutuality.⁴⁶ If one does not wish the beloved good, it is not love of friendship but love of concupiscence, whereby one loves the beloved simply for the sake of one's self, as one loves a horse or wine.⁴⁷ Immediately we see a possible tension. Both love of friendship and love of concupiscence characterize love in its most basic form (*amor*), and thus are presumably present in all higher levels of love, including *amicitia* or friendship. Yet given what Thomas says here about love of concupiscence as separate from love of friendship, is love of concupiscence actually compatible with and present in friendship?

The answer is yes. Thomas finds Aristotle's discussion of three types of friendship to be of great use on this question. According to Aristotle, there are three types of friendship and all three Thomas claims are rightly called friendship since they entail benevolence toward the other as well as mutuality.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, two are less perfect types of friendship. Friendships of pleasure exist because the friends share a delight in some common pleasure. Friendships of utility exist because the friends share a common cause or task. In both cases there is indeed friendship (in other words, the two are not, as we might say today, "using" each other simply to obtain something else) since there is benevolence and mutuality. Yet these friendships are imperfect because each is more about the common pleasure or cause than it is about the other person. If that common pleasure or cause were to cease, so too would the friendship. Yet in friendships of goodness (sometimes called friendships of virtue), while the friends may share common pleasures or causes, the goodness or virtue of the other person is what is primarily appreciated and enjoyed. Aristotle calls such a friend "another self," and says this is the most perfect friendship.

Clearly there is potential for confusion, since Thomas distinguishes love of friendship from love of concupiscence, and yet also discusses three types of friendship. Thomas explains how to relate these two sets of distinctions. Thomas claims that in friendships of pleasure and utility, one does indeed wish the good of the friend (in enjoying the pleasure or achieving the cause), but one further refers that good to one's self, i.e., to one's own enjoyment of the pleasure or achievement of the cause. Hence these two forms of friendship are properly "connected to" (*trahitur ad*) love of concupiscence, and thus depart from the perfect friendship.⁴⁹ Friendships of goodness,

⁴⁶ *ST* II-II q. 23, a. 1. Thomas is claiming that benevolence is required for friendship, but is insufficient. There must also be mutuality.

⁴⁷ *ST* II-II q. 23, a. 1.

⁴⁸ *ST* I-II q. 26, a. 4, ad. 3.

⁴⁹ *ST* I-II q. 26, a. 4, ad. 3.

however, entail a love for the friend as another self, and thus are friendships in the truest, most perfect sense of the term. Thomas associates these friendships with love of friendship.⁵⁰ These friendships are thus more praiseworthy than friendships of utility or pleasure.⁵¹

What can we conclude about Thomas' understanding of friendship in relation to his love of concupiscence/love of friendship distinction? There seem to be three levels of love Thomas has in mind here. First there is what we might call purely concupiscent love (as for a horse or wine, even at times a person?), where one loves the beloved without any mutual benevolence, and solely for one's self. This sort of love of concupiscence is not friendship. Second, there are friendships of utility or pleasure, rooted primarily in love of concupiscence though not without love of friendship, since they entail mutual benevolence and thus are rightly called friendships. But as they are ultimately referred to one's self, they depart from the nature of full or true friendship.⁵² Third, there are friendships of goodness, rooted in love of friendship, where the other is loved "as another self."

The question is: is there love of concupiscence in these friendships of goodness? The answer is yes. Thomas is quite clear in his *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* that these highest level friendships do indeed include the utility and pleasure of lower level friendships.⁵³ In such friendships the other is loved as another self. Yet "within" that friendship there can be the shared causes and pleasures that constitute friendships of utility and pleasure. Such "lower level" bases of friendship are likely what engendered the friendship of goodness, and they may indeed persist in perfect friendships of goodness. My true friend is still one with whom I derive pleasure in watching a ball game, or find common cause with in training for a marathon. These pleasures or causes are self-fulfilling, even while contextualized (perfected?) within a friendship context where that fulfillment is not the final goal. Similarly, love of concupiscence can be present where there is love of friendship.⁵⁴ While distinct move-

⁵⁰ *ST I-II* q. 27, a. 3.

⁵¹ *ST II-II* q. 23, a. 3, ad. 1.

⁵² For teleological language in this context of "further referring" some good to one's self, see *ST I-II* q. 26, a. 4, ad. 3.

⁵³ Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, no. 1578.

⁵⁴ See Michael 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), 156. There, employing the broadest sense of Thomas' distinction, Sherwin claims: "These are not two acts, but one act of loving a person that contains an inclination toward the good we desire for that person. In other words, our *amor concupiscentiae* occurs within the context of an *amor amicitiae* for someone."

ments, they are not exclusive. Friendships of goodness can therefore include love of concupiscence. Mansini's research, examined above, helps explain how love of concupiscence can be compatible with love of friendship and thus be present—even if not dominant—in friendships of goodness.

Therefore on Thomas' terms the two movements of love he calls love of friendship and love of concupiscence can complement each other in varying levels of expressions of love. There are also different types of friendships, which are different venues of love where love of concupiscence and love of friendship are present in different ways. Two conclusions are noteworthy for this study. First, to the extent that friendship may be aligned with one side of Thomas' basic distinction in movements of love, it more properly fits not with love of concupiscence (as it had been aligned by Nygren with *eros*), but rather with love of friendship. That said, it is best not to align friendship *simply* with either. Second, friendship is most properly understood in Thomas as a type of relationship, what is called here a "venue" of love, where both love of friendship and love of concupiscence are present. Therefore, not only is it best not to align friendship in Thomas with his love of friendship (akin to *agape* in Nygren) or love of concupiscence (akin to *eros* in Nygren), but it is also impossible on Thomas' terms to view friendship as an additional type of love alongside love of concupiscence and love of friendship.

We have thus far seen how Nygren and Thomas have related *philia* in two different ways to their two movements of love. Though importantly different, neither presents *philia* as a type of love alongside *eros* or *agape*. We now turn to a third author, one who does something of this sort. Again following Cardinal Dulles' lead, we turn to C.S. Lewis' book *The Four Loves* as an example of a third way to relate *philia* to discussions of *agape* and *eros*. In short, Lewis presents *philia* as a venue (not a movement) of love. In this he is not that different from either Nygren or Thomas. However, having presented *philia* as such, he then presents *eros* also as a venue, such that it is a distinct type (really venue) of love alongside *philia*. In this he is importantly different from Nygren and Aquinas. As will be seen, though viewing *eros* and *philia* as venues is not inherently problematic, it is indeed problematic when claims about the "movement" of love called *eros* are ascribed to the "venue" of love named as *eros*.

For Lewis, the most distinctive features of friendship are that it is engendered by a common interest among friends, and therefore it is not jealous. As to the first, Lewis claims that one cannot simply "want friends."⁵⁵ Friendship is about something. It arises among those who

⁵⁵ C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt, 1960), 66.

share that common interest. Friends do not only share common endeavors. Otherwise they would be mere companions, or perhaps we could say Aristotelian friends of utility. Rather they share mutuality in seeing and caring for the same things.⁵⁶ Constantly distinguishing *philia* from *eros*, Lewis claims that whereas in *eros* lovers stand face to face, gazing at each other, in *philia* friends stand side by side, absorbed in a common interest.⁵⁷

As to friendship's lack of jealousy, Lewis again contrasts *eros* and *philia*. *Eros* is exclusive, about only two. Yet friends are always willing to welcome a third or fourth or so on, as long as the newcomer shares the common interest. Indeed, when a friend in a group is lost, Lewis claims we do not gain more of the remaining friends. Rather we lose the part of the departed friend that was in the friends who remain.⁵⁸ Friendship is indeed bounded by common interest; there are those who are "in" or "out." But it is in principle inclusive, on the basis of sharing the common interest.

It should be easy to see how Lewis understands *eros* from what has already been said about its contrast to *philia*. For Lewis *eros* is romantic love, or the "state of being in love."⁵⁹ He carefully distinguishes it from sex (which he calls Venus), noting how the two are often related, but not necessarily so. For instance, he claims that someone seeking sex (Venus) wants sex, and the particular person is simply the "necessary piece of apparatus" for that activity.⁶⁰ Yet in *eros* a person is focused on the lover his or herself. *Eros* focuses a lover on the beloved, hence its exclusivity. It is indeed about the other person in particular. As evidence that Lewis' *eros* is not that of Nygren or Pope Benedict, Lewis claims that *eros* "obliterates the distinction between giving and receiving."⁶¹ Furthermore, Lewis claims that *eros* drives the lover not toward his or her own happiness, but ecstatically outside the self toward union with the beloved, no matter the cost. Indeed lovers often feel subject to their own higher law, alone in the world, threatened by a world that opposes their love. *Eros* engenders a demand for total obedience. This ecstatic demand for obedience makes *eros* God-like in the totality of its demand.⁶² Yet Lewis claims this facet of our human nature, which can impel us toward love of God above all else, becomes demonic if not chastened in obedience to love of God and neighbor.

⁵⁶ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 64-5.

⁵⁷ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 61.

⁵⁸ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 61.

⁵⁹ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 91.

⁶⁰ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 94.

⁶¹ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 96.

⁶² Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 109-112.

Lewis concludes his book with an examination of *agape*. In traditional Christian fashion, Lewis recognizes that *agape* is not a venue of love distinct from natural venues of love like friendship and romantic love. Rather, it elevates natural loves and orients them toward God. Consonant with the central Christian mystery of the Incarnation, Lewis claims that *agape* “divinizes” natural loves.⁶³ Through *agape* we are invited to have our natural loves turned into Love Himself, present in all the frictions of everyday life.⁶⁴ Thus *agape* for Lewis is less of a “venue” of love than *eros* or *philia*.⁶⁵ Nonetheless it should be clear that for Lewis, the extensive treatment of *philia* alongside *eros* and *agape* leads him to depict both *philia* and *eros* as venues of love, relationships we call friendship (*philia*) or romantic love (*eros*).

To be sure, Lewis recognizes that lovers can be friends; yet he claims that observation simply substantiates the difference in the types of love.⁶⁶ It is noteworthy that Lewis never claims friends are erotic. This is perhaps unsurprising given how central exclusivity functions in *eros* for Lewis. Lovers can be friends within their exclusive love; it is far more difficult to see how inclusive friends can also be erotically exclusive within their groups of friends. Surely there is much to analyze here. For instance, Lewis’ account of friendship as so focused on the common endeavor seems oddly neglectful of the classic Aristotelian claim that the friend is “another self.” It would also be worth exploring how certain facets of *eros*, for instance, are akin to Nygren and Pope Benedict’s understandings of that motif/dimension, and yet how other facets are so inconsonant. But for the purposes of this essay it suffices to identify in Lewis a third approach to relating *philia* to *eros* and *agape*. When *philia* is treated as a venue for love, *eros* in particular can then be understood to be similarly exemplified in a venue, namely, male/female (i.e., romantic) love.

Having now presented a third way of treating *philia* in relation to *agape* and especially *eros*, we can identify more clearly the distinction between movement and venue in the context of analyses of love, and also identify a danger in not distinguishing the two approaches. One meaning of *eros*, typified in Nygren who distinguishes it from *agape*, is a possessive, seeking love oriented toward the beloved as fulfillment of the lover. This is the sort of *movement of love* Thomas has in mind in his love of concupiscence. Such an acquisitive love may be particularly evident in the venue of love referred to here as romantic

⁶³ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 133-7.

⁶⁴ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 136.

⁶⁵ *Agape* is less of a “venue” than *storge* for that matter, which Lewis sees typified in parent-child affection.

⁶⁶ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 67.

relationships. But such relationships are not rightly seen as the telos of *eros*. They may be particularly obvious examples, but it would not be accurate to say that *eros* is essentially oriented toward such a venue for love.

But another meaning of *eros*, typified by Lewis, is precisely the venue of love we call romantic relationships. Those who treat *eros* as such a *venue of love* present it as culminating in marriage. Yet it is noteworthy that neither Nygren in his treatment of *eros*, nor Thomas in his treatment of love of concupiscence, presents such a movement of love as reaching its perfection in marriage or the love between man and woman. *Eros* can be rightly presented as a venue rather than a movement of love. But when employed as such, it is no longer one of the two movements of love that, in Thomas' view, exist in the most basic passion of love all the way up to the grace-informed life of Christian faith, in concert together in presumably any venue of love.⁶⁷

When *eros* is used to refer to the venue of romantic love, the main issue presenting itself is how to depict its fulfillment (generally in marriage) in such a way that *eros* is purified or disciplined without nevertheless ceasing to be *eros*. This is a worthy endeavor. Indeed it shares commonality with a traditional Catholic approach to *agape* and *eros* or love of friendship and concupiscence in the sense of depicting how, though distinct, these movements can be fulfilled in concert with one another. Yet note how much more limited this focus on *eros* and marriage is. While worthy, it refers to only one venue of love. To equate this endeavor with the whole of love would be to reduce all love to that one venue, thus distorting the complete reality that is love.

BACK TO AGAPE AND EROS: MOVEMENTS VS. VENUES OF LOVE

This fourth section concludes the inquiry by addressing three questions. First, what historical reasons are there for confusing venues and movements of love? Second, how can such a confusion of

⁶⁷ Lest it seem that this essay assigns blame to Lewis for an erroneous shift to describing *eros* as a venue for, rather than movement of, love, it must be reiterated that there is nothing inherently problematic with using *eros* to refer to a venue of love. The problem is when that meaning of *eros* is grafted on to discussions of *agape* and *eros* as distinct movements of love. The fact that Lewis grasps the difference between what is called here a venue vs. a movement of love is evident in the fact that the introduction to his *The Four Loves* uses original terminology (i.e., “need love” and “gift love”) to describe what seem akin to the movements of love treated here (and in the *agape/eros* discussions of Pope Benedict and Anders Nygren). Thus there are resources in Lewis' book to distinguish movements and venues of love. How “appreciative love” fits into that traditional discussion is beyond the scope of this essay. See *The Four Loves*, 16-17, 140, and Dulles, “Love the Pope, and C.S. Lewis.”

movements and venues lead to a misinterpretation of *Deus caritas est*, and at what cost? Third, what has this inquiry yielded in response to Cardinal Dulles' programmatic suggestions?

First, it is worth pausing to reflect on possible historical reasons why venues and movements could be confused with one another. If reflection on *agape* and *eros* is so rooted in the tradition traced here from Thomas Aquinas on love of friendship and love of concupiscence, to Anders Nygren on *agape* and *eros*, and even to Pope Benedict XVI in the last decade in *Deus caritas est*, why would anyone reflecting on *agape* and *eros* consider *eros* as a venue of love? The answer is that there is actually a tradition of twentieth century scholarship on *agape* and *eros* from this perspective as well. In the very same decade that Nygren produced his classic on two movements of love, two other books appeared that focused on *eros* as a venue of love. One of them is mentioned in Cardinal Dulles' article. The other is not, even though its author is. It is not Dulles but M. C. D'Arcy, S.J. who provides an account of the foundational role played by the author of *The Four Loves* in twentieth century scholarship on *agape* and *eros* with *eros* understood as a venue of love.

In 1936 C.S. Lewis published his classic of literary criticism, *The Allegory of Love*.⁶⁸ According to D'Arcy, Lewis' research was "definitive" in exposing Victorian "imagination so soaked in images of romance that they had subconsciously identified Christian and romantic love." Lewis "made clear, beyond contention, the singular difference between the romantic or courtly and troubadour love and that of the Christian ideal."⁶⁹ Just a few years later in 1939, claims D'Arcy, Denis de Rougemont in his book *L'amour et l'Occident* offered an ambitious explanation of Lewis' claim through a history of romantic love in relation to Christian love.⁷⁰ The terms de Rougemont used to distinguish these two, were, unsurprisingly, *eros* and *agape*. De Rougemont understood *eros* to be "strange, wild," and passionate love that is the "implacable foe" of Christian love, represented by *agape*.⁷¹ *Eros* is the romantic love typified in the courtly and troubadour love, in other words, in the tryst. *Agape* is typified in "marriage and constant fidelity."⁷² This conceptual and historical account shares

⁶⁸ C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: a Study in Medieval Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936).

⁶⁹ D'Arcy, *The Mind and Heart of Love*, 34.

⁷⁰ See Denis de Rougemont, *Passion and Society*, trans. Montgomery Belgion (London: Faber and Faber, 1956). This same translation was published in the United States with the (more true to the original French) title *Love in the Western World* (New York: Pantheon, 1956).

⁷¹ D'Arcy, *The Mind and Heart of Love*, 34.

⁷² D'Arcy, *The Mind and Heart of Love*, 34.

many similarities to Nygren's work, not least of which is a dichotomization of *eros* and *agape*, with the corresponding claim that true Christian love (*agape*) is antithetical to and therefore must dispel *eros*.

However, as D'Arcy rightly notes, despite these formal similarities and even identical terminology, there is an importantly different distinction under examination. How passionate romantic love is related to the permanent and exclusive commitment of Christian marriage is certainly a legitimate and important question. But it is not the same question as how to understand the relationship between love that is self-referential and born of lack on the one hand (Nygren's *eros*), with love that is other-focused and proceeds from possession on the other hand (Nygren's *agape*). The distinction as employed by de Rougemont concerns one venue of love, namely, romantic relationships typified in male/female relations. It would be inappropriate to speak of *eros* in this sense in our family relationships or friendships, for example.⁷³ The distinction as employed by Nygren refers more broadly to movements of love. These movements are present in varying venues of love. For instance, it is striking that neither Aquinas nor Nygren devotes any significant attention to romantic relationships as particularly representative of *eros* or love of concupiscence. Now there may be something about *eros* as a venue such that it is particularly exemplary of the movement of love as *eros*. That would depend on how one understands each use of *eros*, and also how one understands the incubatory Greek thought that gave us this word.⁷⁴ There may even be something about marriage (as exemplar of *agape* in de Rougemont's sense) that makes it a helpful example of *agape* in Nygren's sense.⁷⁵ But the danger in confusing these meanings should now be most evident. Conflating the two senses of the distinction makes love, which is at the heart of the Christian life, essentially about marriage. Perhaps even more problematically, it makes *eros* as romantic love the basis of self-fulfillment and happiness.

We turn to the second question of this section: In light of the twentieth century scholarship on *eros* and *agape* within the venue of romantic love, is it possible to read reflection on *eros* in *Deus caritas*

⁷³ As to whether this understanding of *agape* and *eros* can be applied to one's relationship with God, see D'Arcy's account of the Christian attempt, exemplified in Theresa of Avila (*The Mind and Heart of Love*, 46-48).

⁷⁴ Any in-depth study of *eros* in, say, Plato's thought is well beyond the scope of this essay. Yet it is noteworthy how Plato's work is employed by both Nygren and de Rougemont in substantiating their account of *eros*.

⁷⁵ Yet as noted above, those rooted in Nygren's tradition of *agape* and *eros* have always struggled with justifying "particular relationships" such as friendships, marriage, etc.

est as a reflection on the venue of romantic love? There are three particular passages in the encyclical, cited presently, where Pope Benedict treats *eros* as a venue of love. Failing to distinguish these reflections on a venue of love from more general claims about *eros* as a movement of love leads to a misinterpretation of the encyclical.

There are three passages in *Deus caritas est* where *eros* refers to the venue of romantic love. By far the most direct assertion comes at the very beginning of Pope Benedict's analysis of *agape* and *eros*, where he claims, "That love *between man and woman* which is neither planned nor willed, but somehow imposes itself upon human beings, was called *eros* by the ancient Greeks."⁷⁶ Further on while examining the Song of Songs, the pope reflects on the "purification" of *eros* by *agape*. In what could appear in a description of the development of friendship of pleasure into the full friendship of goodness, the pope says:

Love now becomes concern and care for the other. No longer is it self-seeking, a sinking in the intoxication of happiness; instead it seeks the good of the beloved: it becomes renunciation and it is ready, and even willing, for sacrifice. (no. 6)

These words could surely be said of love in any venue. But that here the venue of romantic love is intended is quite evident from the ensuing reference to two essential features of marriage, namely, permanence and exclusivity:

It is part of love's growth towards higher levels and inward purification that it now seeks to become definitive, and it does so in a two-fold sense: both in the sense of exclusivity (this particular person alone) and in the sense of being "forever." (no. 6)

Finally, while the pope describes Christian faith's novel depiction of the human person, *eros* is at the heart of that revelation:

From the standpoint of creation, *eros* directs man towards marriage, to a bond which is unique and definitive; thus, and only thus, does it fulfill its deepest purpose. Corresponding to the image of a monotheistic God is monogamous marriage. Marriage based on exclusive and definitive love becomes the icon of the relationship between God and his people and vice versa. God's way of loving becomes the measure of human love. This close connection between *eros* and marriage in the Bible has practically no equivalent in extra-biblical literature. (no. 11)

⁷⁶ Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, no. 3 (emphasis added).

These three passages make it clear that *Deus caritas est* does indeed use *eros* at times to refer to the venue of romantic love. In that sense, it may be rightly called a response not only to Nygren's dichotomization of *agape* and *eros*, but also de Rougemont's dichotomization of the same. A grasp of the movement/venue distinction helps the reader appreciate these distinct contributions of the encyclical.

Before concluding this look at *Deus caritas est* with the movement/venue distinction in hand, a word is on order as to why reading the encyclical as if *eros* always refers to a venue of love would be a misinterpretation. After all, given the three passages cited above, why insist that Pope Benedict is referring to the movements of love described by Nygren and by Thomas Aquinas? Put differently, is it possible the pope is responding to a discussion typified by de Rougemont and *not* that typified by Nygren and St. Thomas? The answer is no. It is true the pope himself claims at the start of the encyclical that amid the multiplicity of meanings of the term love, "one in particular stands out: love between man and woman, where body and soul are inseparably joined and human beings glimpse an apparently irresistible promise of happiness" (no. 2). It is true he then claims "the love between a man and woman... was called *eros* by the Greeks" (no. 3). But despite using the venue of romantic love as an exemplar of *eros*, the words he uses to define *eros* are not exclusive to this venue of love. Indeed, the pope even once aligns the *eros/agape* distinction with *amor concupiscentiae/amor benevolentiae*.⁷⁷ Furthermore, they are the very words used in twentieth century discussions of *eros* as movement of love. Finally, toward the end of the pope's reflection on *agape* and *eros*, he returns to describing the "purification and maturation" of *eros*, and in doing so relies on a quote from Sallust whose context is describing "firm friendship" (not romantic love), which Sallust says entails "to want the same thing and to reject the same thing" (no. 17). The pope clearly recognizes the difference between venues and movements of love. Though relying on *eros* as a venue of love to make certain points, his reflection on *eros* and *agape*, which he himself describes as a reflection on the "reality of human love" (no. 1), should not be taken as limited to the venue of male/female love, as important as that venue is.

In conclusion, what lessons are learned from heeding Dulles' suggestions? First, Dulles counseled a look at Scholastic work on love, exemplified in Thomas Aquinas. Our examination here revealed that Thomas' love of concupiscence and love of friendship distinction

⁷⁷ See Benedict, *Deus caritas est*, no. 7. Note that *amor benevolentiae* and *amor amicitiae* are equivalent in medieval thought on love.

describes two movements of love. Those movements are identified by their self-reference and genesis in lack (love of concupiscence), or their other-directedness and genesis in possession (love of friendship). It is evident in Thomas' thought how and why these movements of love are distinguished—even to the point of charity existing without hope in the eschaton. Yet Thomas depicts ways these loves can be harmoniously related on a variety of levels in the virtuous Christian life, even while obviously recognizing that in sinful humanity they are at times not harmoniously related. And notably, he never aligns this distinction with venues of love. For Thomas love of friendship and love of concupiscence are movements of love that are seemingly present in families, friendships, romantic relationships, and indeed the human person's relationship with God.

Second, Dulles counseled us to attend more carefully to *philia*, or friendship, claiming it is too oft neglected “since the rise in the romantic theory of love in the nineteenth century.”⁷⁸ According to this study, how does *philia* fit into discussions of *agape* and *eros*? It can be reduced to one side of a dichotomy, as Nygren subsumes it into *eros*. Or, as suggested by St. Thomas, different types of friendships can be understood to involve love of concupiscence and love of friendship in varying proportions. Despite differing in their views of the relationship between friendship and *eros* (Nygren) or friendship and love of concupiscence/love of friendship (Thomas), both accounts implicitly suggest that friendship is best understood as a venue of love. Lewis' account most clearly describes the venue that is friendship. Though less attentive to movements of love, Lewis work does have resources to explore how friendships involve need love and gift love. The conclusion here is that *philia* is best understood as a venue. It is possible and legitimate to depict *eros* as a venue of love as well, in which case it blossoms into marriage within that venue. Yet while legitimate and even important, treatment of *eros* as a venue of love ought not be conflated with *eros* (or love of concupiscence) as a movement of love. Such conflation not only leads to a misinterpretation of *Deus caritas est*, but also leads one to inscribe features distinct to romantic love into all venues of love. **M**

⁷⁸ Dulles, “Love, the Pope, and C.S. Lewis,” 23.