

A Second Tier? Aquinas on Mutual Love in the Procession of the Holy Spirit

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For the better part of a century now, Thomists have debated the place of mutual love in the procession of the Holy Spirit.¹ Some have argued that there is no mutual love in Thomas's God: in reality, each divine person loves only his own goodness, and Thomas's talk of the Holy Spirit as mutual love is merely metaphorical.² Others have countered that mutual love is not only real; it is just as logically basic as self-love.³ More recently, a new consensus has emerged. First articulated by Jean-Pierre Torrell, it has been developed more fully by Gilles Emery.⁴ As Emery puts it, "St. Thomas shows the property of the Holy Spirit as Love by considering the love through which God loves His own goodness, and then by reflecting on the mutual love of Father and Son, the second theme being founded on the first."⁵ Mutual love in God is real; it is no mere metaphor. Yet it is founded on a more logically basic self-love.

In the decades since Torrell first proposed this middle way, no one

¹ For a more detailed survey of this debate, see Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 233–34.

² For a fuller list of figures who take this position, see Anthony Keaty, "The Holy Spirit Proceeding as Mutual Love: An Interpretation of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* I.37," *Angelicum* 77 (2000), 533n1.

³ See Keaty, "Holy Spirit," 535n6.

⁴ See Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Spiritual Master*, vol. 2 of *St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 183–88.

⁵ Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 237. Emery engages with this question on 233–45.

has challenged it. Instead, readers of Thomas have flocked to it. Most important is Kenneth M. Loyer, for whom mutual love is a “noteworthy supplement” to a “prior” self-love,⁶ and who argues for this position in even more detail than either Emery or Torrell had.⁷ Emmanuel Durand,⁸ John Baptist Ku,⁹ and Matthew Levering¹⁰ have also, in briefer engagements, thrown their weight behind it.

Proponents of this path ground their reading in two main arguments. The first concerns the structure of question 37 of the *prima pars* of *Summa theologiae* [ST], where Thomas treats of the Holy Spirit as Love. As Emery puts it, in this question, Thomas “had first looked at the love through which God loves himself (‘God loves’ within loving himself: q. 37, a. 1). The second stage of the discussion is about mutual Love (q. 37, a. 2).”¹¹ Loyer makes the same point: he argues that Aquinas organizes question 37 by first exploring “the Holy Spirit who proceeds as the love of God’s own goodness (q. 37, a. 1), and then by taking up the question of whether the Father and the Son love one another by the Spirit, which is the question of the Holy Spirit as their mutual love (q. 37, a. 2).”¹² First, Thomas addresses self-love in article 1; next, he discusses mutual love in article 2.

Their second argument is deeper. Emery writes:

The idea of “mutual love” . . . as the immediate entrance to the study of the person of the Holy Spirit as love cannot be congruent to the purpose of disclosing the *unity* of an *immanent* procession. . . . This is why Thomas takes as his point of departure the case of the procession of the “imprint” of love which comes about in the will of the lover. When it is transposed into God, the imprint of love which

⁶ Kenneth M. Loyer, *God’s Love through the Spirit: The Holy Spirit in Thomas Aquinas and John Wesley* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 114.

⁷ See Loyer, *God’s Love*, 101–40.

⁸ See Emmanuel Durand, *La Périchorèse des personnes divines* (Paris: Cerf, 2005), 183, 259–61, 342–44.

⁹ See John Baptist Ku, *God the Father in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: P. Lang, 2013), 265.

¹⁰ In *Engaging the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2016), Levering does not take up this question up directly; but he alludes to it (see 91n91), and he cites Emery and Loyer at almost every turn in his treatment of *Summa theologiae* [ST] I, q. 37 (see 99–103).

¹¹ Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 233.

¹² Loyer, *God’s Love*, 137. See also 139–40: Thomas “first establish[es] that the Holy Spirit is love in person, the love proceeding in God on the basis of God’s single and unique affection for himself, and then address[es] the problem of mutual love.”

arises from *God's love for himself* can be understood as a subsistent relation, the very person the Holy Spirit is. Once he has set these bases into position, Thomas can erect the *second tier* of his analysis, and show that the Father and the Son love each other through the Holy Spirit.¹³

Thomas's chief goal in his pneumatology is to underscore the immanence of the Holy Spirit's procession. And, in order to secure this immanence, he begins with "God's love for Himself," and he makes of mutual love a "second tier."¹⁴

This reading has much to recommend it, and its adherents have done a great deal to clarify the question of mutual love in the procession of the Holy Spirit. Yet it also has limits. In what follows, I hope to draw these limits out, and to propose that, even in the *ST*, interpersonal love is more than a second tier in the procession of the Holy Spirit. Instead, it goes just as logically deep as self-love.¹⁵

To show as much, I will begin my first section with some background principles which suggest that, because of the role of a word in the procession of love, self-love in God is already, and just as basically, interpersonal love. From there, we will spend the bulk of our time with the organization of question 37 in the *prima pars*. We will see that this organization does not actually reflect a straightforward priority of self-love over interpersonal love. Yet it also does not reflect a straightforward priority of interpersonal

¹³ Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 236 (emphasis added). Emery makes a similar point on 235. See also Loyer, *God's Love*, 135, 140.

¹⁴ To clarify, there is an obvious way in which, for Thomas, self-love in God does come before interpersonal love: those who have not encountered revelation can conclude that God loves his own goodness, but they cannot know of any mutual love in God. Accordingly, Thomas establishes this essential self-love in the *ST* before turning to the Trinity: see *ST* I, q. 20, a. 1, ad 3. Yet Emery and company go further: they claim that, *within* Thomas's Trinitarian theology, and in his treatment of the procession of the Holy Spirit, self-love is more logically basic than mutual love. It is this latter claim which I hope to challenge.

¹⁵ Of course, we are dealing here with a logical distinction: in reality, each divine person's act of loving his own goodness (and himself) is identical to his act of loving the others. Logical distinctions, however, matter. One thinks, for example, of all the implications at stake in the question of whether God's intellect or will is logically prior. In our case, the logical order of self-love and mutual love in God might have implications for the relationship between a self-love and a mutual love in us, where they are really distinct. For a taste of some of the very concrete questions at stake in getting this relationship right, see D. C. Schindler, *The Politics of the Real: The Church between Liberalism and Integralism* (Steubenville, OH: New Polity, 2021), 208–14.

love over self-love. Instead, it reflects a priority of both. More concretely, I hope to show in my second section that article 1 of question 37 is not about self-love instead of interpersonal love, and in the third section, I hope to show that article 2 is not about interpersonal love instead of self-love. Instead, both articles concern both self-love and interpersonal love, and in both Thomas speaks both of self-love and of interpersonal love, to the point that it is difficult to say which ultimately has the priority.¹⁶

Before beginning, we should introduce a distinction which has yet to be made in the context of this question: we should distinguish interpersonal love, which is love that involves more than one person, from mutual love, in which two or more people love each other. When a man falls in love with a woman, for example, that love is interpersonal: one person loves another, and so more than one person is involved in it. But it may not be mutual: she may not love him back. Similarly, when my friend and I together love theology, it is interpersonal, but it is not mutual: theology does not love us back. My love for my wife, in contrast, is mutual: I love her and she loves me. What we say here will certainly touch very strongly on mutual love, and we will see that mutual love goes deeper in the procession of the Holy Spirit than proponents of Emery's position recognize. Yet we will sometimes speak more of interpersonal love. Indeed, in the end, therefore, we may be able to establish firmly only that interpersonal love goes just as logically deep as self-love in the procession of the Holy Spirit. We will suggest as much regarding mutual love, but we will not be able to draw this conclusion with the same firmness. That said, if all we manage to show is that interpersonal love goes just as deep self-love does—indeed, if we show

¹⁶ Whereas my first section will draw from a number of Thomas's works, the second and third will focus exclusively on the *ST*. Again, my main aim is to respond to Emery and company, and they have invoked the specific structure of *ST* I, q. 37, as evidence for their claim; they have not given similar attention to the details of any other text. Thus, while a rich account of mutual love in Thomas's pneumatology would require that we put the *ST* in conversation with other texts, or that we trace out developments which lead to the presentation of the *ST*, our particular task will be more limited. Indeed, except for a few very brief remarks, we will not look at question 37 in its larger context, and we will not even exhaustively account for *why* this question is organized in the way that it is. We will offer some reasons related to the very specific question of mutual love and self-love. Yet we will speak to this point only to the extent that it is relevant to our question, and we will spend almost all our time showing *that* self-love does not precede interpersonal love in this question—which should be enough to establish that the organization of this question cannot be invoked as evidence that self-love is most basic than mutual love in Thomas's Trinity.

only that things are more complicated than the now-dominant reading lets on—then that will already be enough to advance this discussion.¹⁷

Immanent and Interpersonal

We should begin by defining some basic terms. As we will see in the second section, Thomas recognizes that the language of love can create some confusion. In God, “love” can refer to the act of love which is common to all three divine persons. Yet “Love” can also refer to the distinct person of the Holy Spirit. To make sense of this potential muddle, Thomas introduces a distinction: “From the fact that anyone loves anything, there comes forth a certain impression, so to speak, of the beloved thing in the affection of the lover, according to which the beloved is said to be in the lover.”¹⁸ When we say that the Holy Spirit is “Love,” we do not mean that he is the *act* of love: this act is common to all three divine persons, and Thomas therefore names it “essential love.” We mean that he is the *impression* which proceeds in this common act of love.¹⁹ Because this Love-impression is a distinct

¹⁷ This distinction between interpersonal love and mutual love can also help to respond to one of Emery’s arguments. He writes that, “*in our world*, interpersonal love does not give us an adequate example of an immanent procession. . . . [Mutual love in our world] consists in a double external impulsion, flowing between two different people each of whom is external to the other. If one takes this analogy as one’s *starting point*, one will have a very hard time getting to grips with the *unity* of the Holy Spirit’s immanent procession, or his consubstantiality” (*Trinitarian Theology*, 235 [emphasis original]; see also Loyer, *God’s Love*, 135–36). We can respond on three levels. First, Thomas writes that, “since charity unites affections and makes, as it were, one heart of two, one seems not to have brought forth to the exterior of his heart that which he reveals to a friend” (*Summa contra gentiles* [SCG] IV, chap. 21, no. 5; see also *Super Ioan* 5, lec. 3, no. 2016). Even in mutual love among human beings, the procession of love might be immanent to a single heart: the hearts of two friends may not be, as Emery puts it, “external to [each] other.” Second, even if this passage leaves certain questions open, and even if things are therefore complicated with mutual love among humans, everything changes when the two persons who love each other are a Speaker and his inner Word. Third, and more to our current point, there may be certain respects in which Emery’s concerns are valid regarding mutual love among humans. These concerns, however, do not hold *on any level* regarding my love for my wife. Even in the most straightforward sense, my love remains within me not only when I love myself, but when I love things—and people—other than myself (see *ST I*, q. 37, a. 1, ad 2). Love’s procession is *always* immanent, no matter what a lover is loving. Interpersonal love, therefore, is entirely consistent with the immanence of love’s procession. We will speak to this point a bit more in the second section.

¹⁸ *ST I*, q. 37, a. 1.

¹⁹ For clarity’s sake, I will generally refer to the impression which proceeds in the act of

divine person, Thomas names it “personal love.” Finally, “notional love” is his name for the act whereby the Father and the Son breathe forth this Love-impression.²⁰

Before saying more about love, we should run very quickly through a few points concerning the divine Word.²¹ I have developed these points at length elsewhere.²² We will survey them only briefly here. First of all, because the divine Word proceeds from his Speaker, he—like all words—is really distinct from his Speaker.²³ Yet, because the divine nature is simple, the divine Word—unlike any other word—subsists as a person in the divine nature.²⁴ Next, because this Word is a subsistent person, and because acts belong to subsisting things, the divine Word acts with the Father.²⁵ As Thomas puts it, “the Word understands Himself,”²⁶ and he is “a Word breathing forth Love.”²⁷ The divine Word is not merely an accident involved in a single person’s act of understanding or love; he is himself a person who understands and loves, and who understands and loves in a uniquely filial way.²⁸ Such a word, finally, has everything to do with the procession of love: the meaning of love demands that no love-impression,

love as a “love-impression” in order to distinguish it from the act of love. In God, I will also generally use “love” with a lower-case “l” for the essential act of love; I will use “Love” with a capital “L” for the Holy Spirit.

²⁰ To be fair, these points are not without controversy. This reading of Aquinas seems to have originated with John of St. Thomas, and some have disagreed with it. We, however, will take it for granted in what follows. First of all, it is the reading which Emery and those who follow him accept. My goal is to dialogue with them, and so it makes sense to accept their terms, and then to show that, even on those terms, things are more complicated than they suggest. More importantly, I am fairly convinced that, on this point, Emery is right (for his argument, which we will not rehearse here, see *Trinitarian Theology*, 62–69, 225–33). I am all the happier, therefore, to assume that it is true in what follows.

²¹ For a fuller account of the Word in Thomas, which goes beyond the very limited points we will make here, see (among many others) Hyacinthe Paissac, *Théologie du Verbe: Saint Augustin et saint Thomas* (Paris: Cerf, 1951), 117–236.

²² In *Giving One’s Word: Interpersonal Love, Knowledge, and Self-Giving in Aquinas’s Psychological Analogy for the Trinity* (forthcoming from Catholic University of America Press), I develop more fully all of the points we will touch on here in my first section.

²³ See Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 184–87.

²⁴ See Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 191–92.

²⁵ See *SCG* IV, chap. 13, no. 9. For background here, see Brian Carl, “Action, Supposit, and Subject: Interpreting *Actiones sunt Suppositorum*,” *Nova et Vetera* (English) 17, no. 2 (2019): 545–65.

²⁶ *SCG* IV, chap. 13, no. 3.

²⁷ *ST* I, q. 43, a. 5, ad 2.

²⁸ See note 32 below for this last point.

anywhere, can proceed at all unless it proceeds both from a lover and from his word of the beloved thing.²⁹ In God, therefore, the Holy Spirit can only proceed as Love if he proceeds both from the Father and from his Word. He can only proceed, that is, if he proceeds from two persons.

This point can already speak to our larger question. Thomas writes: “When the term ‘love’ is taken in a notional sense, it means nothing else than to breathe love, just as ‘to speak’ is to produce a word.”³⁰ To love notionally is to be a person from whom love proceeds. Yet, because Love cannot proceed from the Father unless this Love also proceeds from the divine Word, the Father cannot love anything notionally unless his Word loves with him. The Father, therefore, cannot even love *himself* notionally unless a second person loves with him. Because of the role of a word in the immanent procession of love, the Father’s self-love itself is already interpersonal love.

Even more, it is *as other* that this second person loves in the Father’s self-love. The Son loves with the Father in the Father’s self-love not only insofar as, like the Father, he is identical to the one divine act of love or to the goodness which the Father loves. He loves with the Father also insofar as, unlike the Father, he is a Word. The Word, moreover, goes to the foundation of the Father’s self-love. For love does first not proceed from a lover and only then proceed from his word. Instead, it proceeds from the lover *at all* only if it also proceeds from his word. In the procession of the Holy Spirit, therefore, the presence of a second person goes to the foundation of the Father’s self-love: the Father’s self-love is just as basically interpersonal love.

The most basic point is that, in God, the immanence of love’s procession does not prevent this love from being interpersonal. Nor is interpersonal love added to this immanent procession from the outside. Nor, finally, is interpersonal love introduced only after this immanent procession has been firmly established in terms of self-love. Instead, immanent procession in God, on its own terms, is already interpersonal love.

We can suggest more tentatively that it may also already be *mutual* love. When the Father loves himself, he does not love a generic or impersonal essential goodness—for there *is* no generic or impersonal divine goodness. Instead, the one divine goodness exists as fatherly in the Father, as sonly in the Son, and as proceeding in the Holy Spirit—and it exists in no other

²⁹ See *ST* I, q. 27, a. 3, ad 3; q. 36, a. 2; *SCG* IV, chap. 19, no. 8; *Compendium theologiae* [CT] I, chap. 49; *De rationibus fidei*, chap. 4; *De potentia*, q. 10, a. 4. See also Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 286–88.

³⁰ *ST* I, q. 37, a. 2.

way.³¹ When the Father loves himself, therefore, he loves the one divine goodness as fatherly and as fatherhood. In the Father's self-love, however, the Word can breathe forth Love with the Father only if he loves what the Father loves, for no one can breathe a love-impression unless he loves the thing of which it is an impression.³² When, therefore, the Father breathes forth Love in loving his own fatherly goodness, his Word too must love this fatherly goodness—which means that the Word must love the Father himself, as a distinct person. In the Father, self-love is not only just as basically loving *with* another; it is just as basically being loved *by* another.³³

Returning to Emery, he claims that the chief goal of Thomas's pneumatology is to secure "the unity of an immanent procession."³⁴ I entirely agree. I also agree that, in presenting this immanence, "Thomas takes as his point of departure the case of the procession of the 'imprint' of love which comes about in the will of the lover." Emery, however, takes a final step. He writes that this "imprint of love . . . arises from God's love for himself." This point is by no means untrue: the Father loves his own goodness in the procession of the Holy Spirit. Yet, in loving his own goodness, he loves with a second person. He is also loved by this second person. Because of the role of a word in love, divine self-love itself is interpersonal love and mutual love. In the procession of the Holy Spirit, therefore, interpersonal love and mutual love are no "second tier" built on a more conceptually basic self-love. Instead, they go to the foundation of that procession.

Emery and those in his train, however, base their reading not only on the logic of an immanent procession. They also invoke Thomas's treatment of the Holy Spirit in the nitty-gritty organization of question 37 of the *prima pars*, the details of which we can now address.

³¹ See *Super Ioan* 16, lec. 4, no. 2112. See also Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 111–22; Thomas Joseph White, "Divine Simplicity and the Holy Trinity," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 18 (2016): 87; Wayne Hankey, *God in Himself* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 130–31. François Bourassa explores this point with reference to mutual love in in "Sur la propriété de l'Esprit," *Science et Esprit* 29 (1977): 27, 36–43. For goodness specifically, see Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, d. 10, q. 1, a. 5, ad 3; *SCG* IV, chap. 26, no. 5; *ST* I, q. 30, a. 2, ad 4.

³² For this last point, see *SCG* IV, chap. 19, no. 4 and *CT* I, chap. 45.

³³ We will limit ourselves here to self-love in the Father. When I speak of self-love in what follows, therefore, I will mean the Father's act of loving his own goodness (or, better, I will mean the one divine act of love for the one divine goodness, as this goodness and this love exist in the Father). I draw out similar points with regard to the same at of self-love in the Word in *Giving One's Word*.

³⁴ Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 236.

Summe Theologiae I, Question 37, Article 1*"When Anyone Understands and Loves Himself"*

The first thing to note is that Emery's reading of question 37 is anything but baseless. In the corpus of article 1, self-love is highlighted at a prominent point, whereas neither interpersonal love nor mutual love is so much as mentioned. In article 2, in contrast, Thomas asks "whether the Father and the Son love each other by the Holy Spirit," and talk of mutual love is front and center throughout.³⁵ Based on these features of the text, it seems reasonable to conclude that article 1 is about self-love and that article 2 is about mutual love.

To go deeper, however, we can begin just before question 37. For, the first question Thomas devotes to the Holy Spirit is not 37, but 36. The Holy Spirit's status as Love is not the focus of question 36. Instead, this earlier question deals largely with the Holy Spirit's procession from both the Father and the Son. Yet Thomas had already spoken of the Holy Spirit as Love in question 27, and this language is not entirely absent from 36. What *is* entirely absent from 36, however, is self-love. Interpersonal love, in contrast, shows up twice. It emerges very clearly in the final article of question 36: as Thomas is explaining how the Father and the Son, as two persons, can be one principle of the Holy Spirit, he writes that, "if we consider the suppositis of the spiration, in this way the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as distinct; for he proceeds from both as the unitive love of both."³⁶ The other passage comes as Thomas is wrestling with traditional language, taken from the legend of St. Andrew, which speaks of "the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and resting in the Son."³⁷ According to the objector, this language suggests that the Holy Spirit cannot proceed from the Son: for "nothing proceeds from that in which it rests." Thomas responds: "When the Holy Spirit is said to rest or abide in the Son, it does not mean that He does not proceed from Him; for . . . the Holy Spirit is said to rest in the Son as the love of the lover rests in the beloved."³⁸ Thomas, it is true, does not specify here whether "the beloved" in question is the lover himself or someone else. Yet, again, the objection had revolved around the language of "the Holy Spirit proceeding *from the Father* and abiding in the Son." Insofar as Thomas has this

³⁵ ST I, q. 37, prol.

³⁶ ST I, q. 36, a. 4, ad 1. For more on this passage, see Emile Bailleux, "Le personnalisme de saint Thomas en théologie trinitaire," *Revue thomiste* 61 (1961): 36–38.

³⁷ ST I, q. 36, a. 2, arg. 4

³⁸ ST I, q. 36, a. 2, ad 4.

language in mind in his response, therefore, it seems reasonable to infer that the Father is “the lover” from whom love proceeds and that the Son is “the beloved” in whom love rests.

Whatever the particulars of this second passage, however, the first passage alone is enough to establish our current point. Again, our question here is whether self-love or mutual love comes first. It is therefore important that, before Thomas speaks of self-love in question 37, he is explicit that the Holy Spirit is “the unitive Love” of the Father and the Son, and he suggests that the Holy Spirit rests in the Son because he is the love of the Father for the Son.³⁹

With these passages in the background, we can turn to question 37. Thomas begins by admitting that the procession of love is difficult to discuss because we lack the terms required to do so. He then makes his first claim about love:

Just as, from the fact that anyone understands anything, there comes forth in the one who understands a conception of the object understood, which conception we call word, so *from the fact that anyone loves anything*, there comes forth a certain impression, so to speak, of *the beloved thing* in the affection of the lover, according to which *the beloved* is said to be in the lover, just as the thing understood is said to be in the one understanding.⁴⁰

Thomas begins in the most general terms. He speaks neither of self-love nor of love for another, but only of “anyone” loving “anything,” of “the beloved thing,” and of “the beloved.”

Thomas continues, however, by speaking of self-love: “In this way, when anyone understands and loves himself, he is in himself not only through real identity, but also as the understood is in the one understanding, and the beloved is in the lover.”⁴¹ We have here the strongest piece of evidence in support of Emery’s reading. Indeed, this is the *only* detail within article 1 to which either Emery or Loyer appeal in substantiating their claim.⁴² Its importance should not be underestimated: its presence is enough to prevent anyone from claiming that interpersonal love enjoys any sort of

³⁹ The Holy Spirit is spoken of as Love elsewhere in *ST* I, q. 36. Yet every other passage speaks of love in general, without specifying whether it is self-love or interpersonal love. *ST* I, q. 37, a. 1 (emphasis added here and to all passages from Thomas to follow).

⁴¹ *ST* I, q. 37, a. 1.

⁴² See Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 229–30, and Loyer, *God’s Love*, 129n76. Torrell had not referred to any details in the text when he first proposed this reading.

straightforward priority in the organization of question 37. According to Emery and Loyer, however, its presence is enough to ensure that self-love *does* enjoy such a priority. We will see that there is reason to question this inference.

First of all, after this sentence, Thomas never speaks of self-love again in the corpus of article 1. After this single mention of self-love, he continues by speaking of “the relation of the lover to *the beloved thing*”; he speaks next of “the impression or the affection of *the beloved thing*”; and, towards the end of the corpus, he speaks again of “the relation of the lover to *the beloved thing*.”⁴³ Thomas, then, begins article 1 with the most general terms of “anyone loves anything,” of “the beloved thing,” and of “the beloved”; he then shifts to “when anyone understands and loves himself”; yet he ends by shifting back and using three times the more general language of “the beloved thing.” Thus, while self-love is certainly present in the corpus of article 1, it neither begins, nor frames, nor saturates the discussion as a whole. It therefore seems a stretch to say that article 1 is fundamentally *about* self-love. Instead, article 1 seems to be about the presence in the lover of whatever thing the lover might happen to love, and self-love seems to serve as a helpful example which illustrates this presence. Yet this example is left behind once it has served its illustrative purpose.⁴⁴

This point is reinforced by the end of the corpus, where Thomas, for the first time, speaks directly of divine love and of the procession of the Holy Spirit. As Thomas is broaching the distinction between “essential,” “notional,” and “personal” love in God, he writes that, “insofar as love

⁴³ ST I, q. 37, a. 1.

⁴⁴ Of course, one might ask *why* Thomas chooses self-love as his example. Without pushing this point too far, we can look to a passage from the SCG which might shed some light here: “Everything that is understood, insofar as it is understood, must be in him who understands; . . . hence, *even* [*etiam*] our intellect understanding itself is within itself, not only as identified by essence, but also as apprehended by itself in the act of understanding” (SCG IV, chap. 11, no. 9). It might perhaps be obvious that, when I understand a dog, that dog somehow exists-as-understood within my intellect. It might be less obvious that, when I understand my intellect, my intellect itself exists-as-understood within my intellect—for my intellect is *already* within my intellect. It is already identical to itself. This detail suggests that Thomas may focus on self-knowledge and self-love as a sort of limit case which underscores the universal scope of the rule he is laying out: the known is in the knower *even* when the knower knows himself; the beloved is in the lover *even* when the lover loves himself. Again, I propose this point tentatively—especially because the language of *etiam* is not present in the ST—and my conclusions will in no way hinge on it. But this passage from the SCG in many way echoes the language of our ST text, and it can therefore perhaps shed some light on our current passage.

means only the relation of the lover to the beloved thing, ‘love’ is said essentially, as ‘intelligence’ and ‘to understand.’” When Thomas speaks of essential divine love, he does not cast it in terms of self-love. Instead, he speaks of a lover’s relation to the thing he loves, and he does not specify whether this beloved thing is the lover himself or another. As he turns to notional and personal love, he says even less: he speaks merely of “the relation of what proceeds by love to its principle, and vice-versa.” Indeed, once Thomas transitions from love in general to divine love, self-love disappears: it gives way to love in the most general terms, and it never reappears in the corpus of article 1.

“The Love of the Father for the Son”

To clarify, my claim is not that Thomas’s reference to self-love within the corpus of article 1 is unimportant. My claim is merely that it is less than all-determinative: my claim is that this lone reference to self-love is not the only factor to consider when sorting through the place of self-love and mutual love in *ST I*, q. 37, a. 1.

Other factors worth considering emerge as Thomas concludes the corpus and begins responding to the objections. For, as he does so, interpersonal love comes increasingly to the fore. We can begin with his response to the objection that “the Holy Spirit is a subsisting person. But ‘love’ is used to signify not a subsisting person, but rather an action passing from the lover into the beloved.”⁴⁵ In response, Thomas writes:

Although to understand, to will, and to love signify actions passing into their objects, nevertheless they are actions that *remain within* the agents. . . . Therefore, when we say that the Holy Spirit is the *Love of the Father for the Son*, or for something else, we do not mean something that passes into another, but only the relation of love to the beloved.⁴⁶

Again, I agree with Emery that one of Thomas’s chief aims in this article is to underscore the immanence of the Holy Spirit’s procession, and this immanence is front and center in this passage. First of all, in the objection, the objector had alleged that love is not, in fact, immanent: it “pass[es] from the lover into the beloved.” Thomas responds by underscoring the immanence of divine love. He does not, however, do so by clarifying that

⁴⁵ *ST I*, q. 37, a. 1, obj. 2.

⁴⁶ *ST I*, q. 37, a. 1, ad 2.

the love he has in mind is self-love, in which any such “passing” remains within a single self. Instead, he clarifies that *all* acts of love remain within the lover, even when that lover loves things other than himself; and he concludes that the Holy Spirit therefore remains within the Father *as the Father loves the Son*.

This point is worth stressing, for we have here the moment in article 1 where the immanence of love comes most directly under attack. Thomas had already established this immanence in the corpus, and he had done so with reference to self-love—which is important. Yet it is in this passage alone that he considers a counterargument which alleges that love does not, in fact, remain within the lover. And, importantly for us, when the immanence of love is called into question, Thomas does not respond by shooing away interpersonal love and laying all the emphasis on self-love. Instead, he highlights interpersonal love. It is “the love of the Father for the Son” which does not “[pass] into another,” and it is therefore interpersonal love which illustrates and safeguards the immanence of love.

More basically, we saw above that self-love appears in the corpus of this article, but only in general terms: it comes without any explicit reference either to divine love or to the procession of the Holy Spirit. Here, in contrast, Thomas speaks of “the Holy Spirit,” who proceeds as “the Love of the Father for the Son.” Self-love is mentioned first, yet interpersonal love is the first to be mentioned *with reference to God*.

We see the same thing in Thomas’s response to the next objection:

The Holy Spirit is said to be the bond of the Father and the Son, insofar as he is Love; because, since the Father loves himself and the Son with one love, and conversely, there is expressed in the Holy Spirit, as Love, the relation of the Father to the Son, and conversely, as lover to beloved. But from the very fact that the Father and the Son love each other mutually, it must be that this mutual love, which is the Holy Spirit, proceeds from both.⁴⁷

We have here the first time within question 37 that Thomas mentions divine self-love: “the Father loves *himself* and the Son.” Yet this mention of self-love comes just after Thomas’s talk of the Holy Spirit as “the bond of the Father and the Son,” and it comes in a passage devoted chiefly to the mutual love of the Father and the Son. Within this passage, talk of self-love in God is enmeshed in talk of mutual love in God. Indeed, Thomas here

⁴⁷ ST I, q. 37, a. 1, ad 3.

discusses mutual love with a level of detail which far outstrips the passing reference to self-love he offers in the corpus. Within article 1, therefore, it is mutual love, not self-love, which receives the most extended treatment.⁴⁸

Summing up, we should again emphasize that self-love is mentioned in the corpus of article 1, whereas interpersonal love is not. Yet self-love is mentioned only in passing, and it is mentioned in the most general terms: there is direct reference neither to God nor to the Holy Spirit. If one looks at this article as a whole—including Thomas's responses to the objections—it is evident both that interpersonal love is treated at greater length and that interpersonal love is the register Thomas uses most when he is speaking of God. In light of these points, it is difficult to maintain that article 1 is not about the love between the Father and the Son, but only about God's love for himself. Indeed, it is difficult to maintain even that article 1 is *more* about God's love for himself than it is about the love between the Father and the Son. Both self-love and interpersonal love are present in the article, and there are some respects in which self-love is privileged—it is mentioned first, and it appears at an important juncture in the corpus—and other respects in which interpersonal love is privileged, such as being discussed in far more detail, and it is the first to be mentioned with reference to God or to the procession of the Holy Spirit. Again, Emery writes of “the love through which God loves himself (‘God loves’ within loving himself: q. 37, a. 1),”⁴⁹ and Loyer speaks of “the Holy Spirit who proceeds as the love of God's own goodness (q. 37, a. 1).”⁵⁰ Yet this exclusive association of article 1 with self-love—or even the claim that article 1 concerns self-love more than it concerns mutual love—misses quite a bit.

If, however, article 1 is not about self-love instead of mutual love, then we are left with the question of what it *is* about. The answer seems straightforward enough. Again, Thomas asks here “whether ‘Love’ is the proper name of the Holy Spirit.” As we saw at the opening of the first section of

⁴⁸ Emery and Loyer both acknowledge the presence of mutual love in q. 37, a. 1, ad 3, and they therefore recognize that mutual love is already introduced before article 2 (see Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 237, including note 64; Loyer, *God's Love*, 114, 130). Yet they do not allow this point to complicate their basic two-tiered reading of these two articles in q. 37. Indeed, Loyer actively denies that his passage presents any challenge to this reading: “While in his response to the third objection in article one Aquinas uses mutual love to explain a particular nuance pertaining to the problem of personal love, it is not until the second article that he investigates in earnest whether the Father and the Son love each other by the Holy Spirit” (*God's Love*, 130). Neither Emery nor Loyer speak of interpersonal love in q. 37, a. 1, ad 2.

⁴⁹ Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 233.

⁵⁰ *God's Love*, 137. See also 130.

the present discussion, this question is especially difficult because “love” is an essential name in God: all three persons love themselves, each other, and us. Thomas’s task here, therefore, is to explain how the name “Love” can be proper to the Holy Spirit when “love” is also common to all three persons. Thomas enters into this question, first, by distinguishing the act of love from the impression which proceeds in love; second, by drawing a three-fold distinction among the “essential” love which corresponds to the act of love, the “personal love” which corresponds to the love-impression, and the “notional love” which corresponds to the breathing of such an impression; and, third, by clarifying that the Holy Spirit is not the “essential” act of love, but the “personal” Love who proceeds as a Love-impression.⁵¹

Again, these points are straightforward enough. Two things, however, bear noting. First, before Thomas mentions self-love, he tells us that the distinction between the act of love and the impression which proceeds in love arises “from the fact that *anyone* loves *anything*.” An impression, therefore, proceeds within a lover when that lover loves another person no less than when he loves himself. The distinction at the center of this article, therefore, concerns interpersonal love no less than self-love. Self-love is introduced as an example in order to illustrate this principle; yet the principle itself extends beyond self-love. Second, and more basically, Thomas is not concerned in this article with the relationship between self-love and mutual love. Still less is he concerned with establishing self-love before he broaches mutual love in article 2. Instead, he is concerned with the relationship between essential love, personal love, and notional love: he is concerned with clarifying the sense in which love is both an essential name in God and the proper name of the Holy Spirit, and he speaks both of self-love and of interpersonal love in order to think this question through.

Article 2 of Question 37

ST I q. 37, a. 1, then, may not be about self-love instead of mutual love. Yet article 2 certainly seems to be about mutual love instead of self-love. Again, this article is devoted to asking “whether the Father and the Son love each other by the Holy Spirit.”⁵² Even more, whereas self-love had been mentioned only once, and only in passing, in the corpus of article 1, mutual love is mentioned repeatedly throughout the corpus of article 2.

⁵¹ Emery acknowledges these points, and he explores them in detail in *Trinitarian Theology*, 227–33.

⁵² *ST* I, q. 37, prolog.

Thomas, therefore, may not wait until article 2 to *introduce* mutual love, but he does seem to wait until article 2 to dive into it. There might be some respect, therefore, in which mutual love *is* a sort of second tier in the pneumatology of the *ST*.

In fact, however, article 2 is no more about mutual love instead of self-love than article 1 had been about self-love instead of mutual love. First of all, this article is not devoted to asking whether the Father and the Son love each other mutually. Nor does it ask whether the Holy Spirit proceeds in this mutual love. Indeed, *Thomas is not at all concerned here with establishing that there is mutual love in God or that the Holy Spirit proceeds in this mutual love*. He never offers any arguments to suggest that the Holy Spirit proceeds in mutual love, and he never addresses any counterarguments or objections which allege that the Holy Spirit does not proceed in mutual love.⁵³ Instead, he simply takes it as a given both that the Father and the Son love each other and that the Holy Spirit proceeds in this mutual love.⁵⁴ Indeed, as we saw above, he had already taken this mutual love as a given before question 37 had even begun.⁵⁵ What Thomas *does* focus on in this question, however, and what he does *not* take as a given, is a “difficulty” concerning “the ablative”: as he puts it in the opening words of the corpus, “this question raises a difficulty: when we say ‘the Father loves the Son by the Holy Spirit,’ the ablative is construed as denoting a cause, and it therefore seems to mean that the Holy Spirit is the principle of love to the Father and the Son; which is absolutely impossible.”⁵⁶ To say that one thing happens “by” another seems to imply that the second thing is the cause of the first. To say, therefore, that the Father and the Son love each other “*by* the Holy Spirit” seems to suggest “that the Holy Spirit is the principle of love to the Father and the Son; which is absolutely impossible.” Thomas’s task here, then, is not to establish that the Father and the Son love each other. Nor is it to show that the Holy Spirit proceeds in this mutual love. Instead, it is to explain how the Father and the Son can be said to love each other “by” the Holy Spirit when the Holy Spirit is not “the principle of love to the Father and the Son.”⁵⁷

⁵³ For a detailed account of the corpus of article 2, and for its larger historical context—and for the very different objections and counterarguments which Thomas *does* raise here—see Keaty, “Holy Spirit,” 549–56. See also Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 237–41.

⁵⁴ As Torrell reports, Thomas elsewhere treats the Holy Spirit’s status as the “bond of love” as “a well-known and taken-for-granted doctrine” (*Spiritual Master*, 186). He seems to do the same here.

⁵⁵ Recall *ST* I, q. 36, a. 2, ad 4, and a. 4, ad 1.

⁵⁶ *ST* I, q. 37, a. 2.

⁵⁷ We can reinforce this point if we look very briefly to Alexander of Hales, whose

The difficulty at play here, however, concerns self-love in God just as much as it concerns mutual love in God. This point comes out in the third objection:

By the same love the Father loves the Son, and himself, and us. But the Father does not love himself by the Holy Spirit; for no notional act is reflected back on the principle of the act; since it cannot be said that the “Father begets himself,” or that “he breathes himself.” Therefore, neither can it be said that “he loves himself by the Holy Spirit,” if “love” is taken notionally. . . . Therefore it is also false that the Father loves the Son by the Holy Spirit.⁵⁸

First of all, the objector does not deny that the Father loves the Son. Instead, he affirms that “by the same love the Father loves *the Son* and himself.” Again, Thomas—along with the objector—takes it for granted that there is interpersonal love in God. What the objector denies is that the Father loves the Son *by* the Holy Spirit. Yet he does so by arguing that, because the Father does not love *himself* by the Holy Spirit, he cannot love the Son by the Holy Spirit. It is not the case, in other words, that Thomas has already dealt with self-love in article 1 and that he is now dealing exclusively with mutual love in article 2. For it is not only mutual love that is at stake in the question of the ablative. Instead, at stake is the *one* love in which “the Father loves the Son, and himself, and us.” In article 2, self-love and mutual love are wed, to the point that, if Thomas cannot show that the Father loves *himself* by the Holy Spirit, then he will fail to show that the Father loves *the Son* by the Holy Spirit: if it is false that the Father loves himself by the Holy Spirit, then “*therefore* it is also false that the Father loves the Son by the Holy Spirit.”

opinion Thomas gives—and rejects—in the corpus of this article. According to Alexander, the difficulties with the ablative are so serious that we ought not to say that “the Father and the Son love each other by the Holy Spirit”: Alexander would jettison this language altogether (see *Summa Fratris Alexandri* I, no. 460; Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 238n4; Loyer, *God’s Love* 119n50). Elsewhere in the same work, however, Alexander makes very clear that the Holy Spirit is the love of the Father for the Son (properly speaking, not only by appropriation: see book I, nos. 307–8), and that he is the mutual love of Father and the Son (see especially no. 308, ad 3). Again, the question at stake in *ST* I, q. 37, a. 2, is not whether the Father and the Son love each other mutually. Nor is it whether Holy Spirit proceeds as mutual love. For one can deny that the Father and the Son love each other *by* the Holy Spirit and still affirm that the Holy Spirit proceeds as mutual love. The question, instead, is the meaning of the ablative.

⁵⁸ I q. 37, a. 2, arg. 3.

Thomas, moreover, accepts this link between self-love and mutual love in his response: he implicitly accepts the objector's premise that the Father cannot love the Son by the Holy Spirit if he does not love himself by the Holy Spirit. And he therefore sets about establishing that the Father *does* love himself by the Holy Spirit. To do so, he draws on principles he had laid out earlier in the article.⁵⁹ In the corpus of article 2, Thomas had explained that, when we say that the Father and the Son love "by" the Holy Spirit, we do not mean that he is the cause of their love; instead, he is the "formal effect" of their love. As he explains, "we say that fire heats by its heat, . . . and we say that a tree flowers by its flower"; likewise, "we say that the Father, by the Word or the Son, speaks himself and his creatures; and that the Father and the Son love each other and us by the Holy Spirit, or by Love proceeding."⁶⁰

With these points in the background, Thomas responds to this third objection:

The Father loves not only the Son, but also *himself* and us, by the Holy Spirit; because, *as above explained*, to love, taken in a notional sense, not only imports the production of a divine person, but also the person produced by way of love, which has a relation to the object loved. Hence, as the Father speaks himself and every creature by his begotten Word, . . . so He loves himself and every creature by the Holy Spirit, inasmuch as the Holy Spirit proceeds as the Love of the primal goodness whereby the Father loves himself and every creature.⁶¹

Without engaging all of the details of this passage, we can focus on the points relevant to our question. Thomas begins by applying the principles from the corpus—"as above explained"—to this objection. In the corpus, however, Thomas had unfolded these principles with reference to mutual love.⁶² Here, he applies these same principles to *self*-love. A tree's flower-

⁵⁹ A full account of the procession of the Holy Spirit would need to treat these principles in detail. For our very narrow purposes, however, we will touch on them only very briefly. For very helpful treatments of them, see Keaty, "Holy Spirit," 549–56, and Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 237–45.

⁶⁰ *ST I*, q. 37, a. 2.

⁶¹ *ST I*, q. 37, a. 2, ad 3.

⁶² These principles are further elaborated in ad 2, where Thomas explains his language of "the production of a divine person" and "the person produced," and where he does so again with reference to the Father's love for the Son.

ing by its flower not only explains how the Father can love the Son by the Holy Spirit; it also explains how the Father can love *himself* by the Holy Spirit. Again, this article is not about mutual love instead of self-love; it is about a very technical concern which is raised by the use of the ablative. Through the majority of the article, Thomas addresses this difficulty of the ablative in terms of mutual love. Yet, in this passage, he shows that this difficulty arises in self-love no less than in mutual love, and he shows that the solution he proposes holds in self-love no less than it does in mutual love. Article 2 is not merely about whether the Father and the Son can be said to love *each other* by the Holy Spirit. It is about whether the Father and the Son can be said to love *anything*—themselves, each other, or us—“by” the Holy Spirit when the Holy Spirit proceeds from them.

All that said, we are left with an obvious question: if Thomas is interested in a difficulty concerning the ablative, and if this difficulty arises with self-love as much as it does with mutual love, then why does he address this difficulty with almost exclusive reference to mutual love, and why does self-love only appear in his response to the final objection? Why, in other words, does Thomas focus so much more on mutual love in article 2 than he had in article 1?

We can gain some insight into this question if we look at a bit of historical context. First, Anthony Keaty has noted that the title of this question—“Whether the Father and the Son love each other by the Holy Spirit”—is a “reference” to “a statement from Augustine’s *De Trinitate* that the Father and the Son love each other by the Holy Spirit.”⁶³ Keaty continues:

This statement gained a prominent place in theological discussion after Lombard pointed out his difficulty in interpreting the statement. In *Sentences* d. 32, Lombard considers what the statement that the Father and the Son love each other by the Holy Spirit might mean. Two conflicting texts of Augustine make it difficult to interpret the statement that the Father and the Son love each other by the Holy Spirit. In the first (*De Trinitate* 6.5.7) Augustine refers to the Holy Spirit as the person by whom the one generated is loved by the one who generates and by whom the one generated loves his generator. In this statement Augustine seems to refer to the Holy Spirit as the person by Whom the Father and the Son love each other. However, Augustine remarks in another place (*De Trinitate*

⁶³ Keaty, “Holy Spirit,” 549. Emery alludes to this point in *Trinitarian Theology*, 237–38.

15.7.12) that no one would dare to say that neither Father, nor Son, nor Holy Spirit loves unless through the Holy Spirit. The conflict created by these texts leads Lombard to conclude I *Sentence* d. 32 with the confession that the problems associated with the statement [that] the Father and the Son love each other by the Holy Spirit are beyond him.

One purpose of Thomas's discussion in I.37.2, then, will be to reconcile these two conflicting texts of Augustine.⁶⁴

We just saw that, in this article, Thomas is interested in the question of the ablative. We see now that this question was not new: it had aroused the interest of Scholastics since Lombard. Thomas, then, is entering into a tradition when he engages with this question. Yet, in this tradition, the question of the ablative was cast in terms of mutual love.⁶⁵ As Keaty puts it here, when Lombard asks the question of the ablative, he "considers what the statement that the Father and the Son love *each other* by the Holy Spirit might mean": when the question of the ablative became a live question, "*This statement* [that is, 'The Father and the Son love each other by the Holy Spirit'] gained a prominent place in theological discussion." It did so largely because the "two conflicting texts from Augustine," in which the difficulty of the ablative is brought to the fore, speak chiefly of mutual love.⁶⁶ Whether or not Augustine had any intrinsic reasons for speaking of mutual love instead of self-love in *De Trinitate* 6.5.7 need not concern us here. The only thing we need to establish is that Thomas himself does not focus on mutual love in article 2 for any dogmatic reason. He does so for historical reasons. It is not the case, in other words, that Thomas is only now ready to address mutual love after having covered the more conceptually basic ground of self-love in article 1. Instead, he focuses on mutual love in article 2 because, for historical reasons, mutual love provided the standard terms according to which the question of the

⁶⁴ Keaty, "Holy Spirit," 549–51. Emery offers a briefer engagement with this historical background in *Trinitarian Theology*, 238.

⁶⁵ In addition to Keaty's article, see the much fuller discussion in W. Principe, "St. Bonaventure's Theology of the Holy Spirit with Reference to the Statement '*Pater et Filius diligunt se Spiritu Sancto*,'" in *S. Bonaventura 1274–1974*, vol. 4 (Rome: Collegio S. Bonaventura, 1974), 243–69, esp. 243–54. Principe does not inquire into the relationship between self-love and mutual love. Yet all of the texts he gives in which Scholastics work through the question of the ablative—and those texts are plentiful, and they are culled from a wide range of authors—speak of mutual love.

⁶⁶ Augustine's *De Trinitate* 6.5.7 speaks only of mutual love, and 15.7.12 speaks both of self-love and of mutual love.

ablative—which, again, is the question he is *really* concerned with—was addressed at his time.⁶⁷

Taking a step back, we saw above that, for Emery, article 2 is “about mutual Love,”⁶⁸ and that, for Loyer, Thomas devotes article 2 to “addressing the problem of mutual love.”⁶⁹ We see now that Thomas certainly speaks a great deal of mutual love throughout article 2. Yet we also see that article 2 is no more *about* mutual love than it is about self-love. Instead, it is about a difficulty which concerns self-love just as much as it concerns mutual love. Just so, we see that, for Thomas, there is no “problem” of mutual love. Instead, mutual love is remarkably unproblematic: Thomas simply asserts that the Holy Spirit is the “unitive love” of the Father and the Son,⁷⁰ that he is “the Love of the Father for the Son,”⁷¹ that he is “mutual love,”⁷² and that the Father and the Son “love each other mutually.”⁷³ Thomas sees no need to defend or to establish these claims. Instead, in all four texts, he introduces mutual love as an unproblematic given which can help to sort through more technical questions which *are* problematic.⁷⁴

Most basically, if article 1 comes before article 2, then it is not because article 1 is about self-love and article 2 is about mutual love, and it is not because self-love is more conceptually basic than mutual love in the procession of the Holy Spirit. Instead, article 1 is about the distinction among essential, notional, and personal love, and article 2 is about Thomas’s take

⁶⁷ It is true that, in his *Sentences* commentary, Thomas devotes an article to asking whether “the Father loves Himself by the Holy Spirit” (*In I Sent.*, d. 32, q. 1, a. 2), and another to “whether the Father and the Son love us by the Holy Spirit” (a. 3). Yet, even here, the first article of this question asks “whether the Father loves the Son by the Holy Spirit” (a. 1). Even here, therefore, the question of the ablative is framed first in terms of interpersonal love, and it is in this first article—that is, it is in the context of interpersonal love—that Thomas lays out all the principles which govern his use of the ablative for the Holy Spirit. Indeed, a. 2 consists largely of his applying the solution he reached in a. 1 to self-love. In a. 3, moreover, he grapples with a slightly different question, for he argues that the Holy Spirit *is*, at least in some way, the principle of God’s love for creatures (the Holy Spirit is the “ratio omnis liberalis collationis factae a Deo creaturae”).

⁶⁸ Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 233.

⁶⁹ Loyer, *God’s Love*, 140. See also 137: Thomas spends q. 37, a. 2, “taking up the question of whether the Father and the Son love one another by the Spirit, which is the question of the Holy Spirit as their mutual love.”

⁷⁰ *ST I*, q. 36, a. 4, ad 1.

⁷¹ *ST I*, q. 37, a. 1, ad 2.

⁷² *ST I*, q. 37, a. 1, ad 3.

⁷³ *ST I*, q. 37, a. 1, ad 3.

⁷⁴ Again, see Torrell, *Spiritual Master*, 186.

on a well-worn Scholastic question around the use of the ablative with reference to the Holy Spirit. If, therefore, article 1 comes first, then it is most likely because Thomas first had to draw the distinction among essential, notional, and personal love before turning to a question whose solution hinges on this distinction. Or, more basically, he had first to establish that “Love” is the name of a distinct divine person before addressing a very subtle point around the precise role of that person in the love of the other two persons.

Conclusion

We can conclude by summing up what we have seen so far. First of all, immediately before question 37, Thomas speaks of the Holy Spirit as “unitive love” of the Father and the Son.⁷⁵ Then, in the corpus of article 1, he speaks once of self-love in general terms, without any direct reference either to divine love or to the Holy Spirit; in response to the second objection, he speaks once of “the Love of the Father for the Son”; and, in response to the third objection, he first speaks of the Holy Spirit as “the bond of Father and Son,” then affirms that “the Father loves Himself,” and ends with a detailed treatment of mutual love. In article 1, then, self-love receives the first mention, but the Holy Spirit’s procession is first mentioned in terms of the Father’s love for the Son, and mutual love receives an extended treatment which dwarfs anything given to self-love. Thomas shifts more obviously to mutual love in article 2. Yet he does so not because he is only now focusing on mutual love, but because he is only now focusing on a question which, for reasons unrelated to the relationship between self-love and mutual love in God, Thomas’s contemporaries framed in terms of mutual love.

Attending to all of these details, we are not left with a straightforward priority of self-love over interpersonal love. Yet nor are we left with any straightforward priority of interpersonal love over self-love. Instead, we are left with a dense interweaving of self-love and interpersonal love: each is first in a certain respect, and neither is first straightforwardly or absolutely.

We are left, in other words, with precisely the sort of interpenetration of self-love and interpersonal love which we would expect given our reflections in our first section of the present discussion. For, we saw there that the procession of the Holy Spirit cannot be a matter of self-love unless it is just as basically a matter of interpersonal love. Because of the role of a

⁷⁵ *ST* I, q. 36, a. 4, ad 1.

word in the procession of love, interpersonal love and self-love are equally foundational in this the procession of divine Love—and, accordingly, each is equally prominent and prior in the concrete organization of question 37 of the *prima pars*.

We opened by noting that the new consensus on mutual love is based on a twofold claim: first, the immanent procession of divine love is a matter of self-love before anything else; second, the nitty-gritty organization of question 37 makes manifest an obvious priority of self-love over mutual love. There would be more to say both about the details of question 37 and about the marriage of self-love and interpersonal love in Thomas's Trinity. Indeed, even what little we have said might, in its details, be challenged in various ways. At the very least, however, I hope to have shown that both of the claims on which this dominant reading is built are open to being questioned. Seeing as much may not fully resolve the question of self-love, interpersonal love, and mutual love in the procession of the Holy Spirit. Yet it at least suggests that a straightforward priority of self-love over mutual love is unsustainable, and it may open the door to ways in which interpersonal and mutual love go to the very beginning of this procession.