

The Word Breathes Forth Love: The Psychological Analogy for the Trinity and the Complementarity of Intellect and Will

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The “psychological analogy” refers to the parallels that are found between the Trinitarian processions and the operations of intellect and will. This analogy is generally thought of as a way of deepening our understanding of the inner life of the Trinity, but it can also help us understand the spiritual operations of intellect and will, their fruitfulness and complementarity, and how they are elevated by grace and glory. Marginalization of this analogy, which occurs frequently in the theology of the last century,¹ is detrimental not only to our ability to penetrate into the Trinity, but also for supernatural anthropology.

In the second section of this paper I will make use of this analogy to argue against an absolute primacy of either the intellect or the will, defending instead their complementary roles in human life in general, and particularly in final beatitude. The complementarity of the Trinitarian processions is mirrored in the soul by the complementarity of the spiritual operations of intellect and will, in which the first makes God known and is thus the principle of the second, but the second brings the subject into more perfect

¹ In many strands of theology of the last century, the psychological analogy has been replaced with a “social analogy.” See: Neil Ormerod, “The Psychological Analogy for the Trinity—at Odds with Modernity,” *Pacifica* 14 (2001): 281–94; *The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 16, 213; Robert Doran, *The Trinity in History: A Theology of the Divine Missions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 146.

union with the beloved through a “sincere gift of self,”² completing the circle.

The Psychological Analogy

The Names of the Second and Third Persons of the Trinity Suggest Operations of Intellect and Will

One of the most fruitful of the many great contributions of St. Augustine to theology was his exploration of the analogy between the processions of the Word and of the Spirit in the divine life and the operations of our intellect and will. Here we will look at the psychological analogy above all as further developed by St. Thomas Aquinas.

This analogy is suggested in the first place by Revelation in the words “Logos” and “Spirit,” which refer to the second and third persons of the Trinity. “Logos,” or “Word,” suggests the process of intellectual knowing, and “Spirit,” which means wind, breath, or impetus, is expressive of the activity of the will, which is a kind of impetus to the beloved. Other names given in Revelation also highlight the intellectual and volitional aspect of the Word and the Spirit. The Word is also called Wisdom³ and Image,⁴ and the Holy Spirit is also Love⁵ and Gift.⁶ The name Gift applied to the

² See Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, §24.

³ 1 Cor 1:24.

⁴ Col 1:15.

⁵ See Rom 5:5: “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” See also St. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 15.5.27: “According to the holy scriptures this Holy Spirit is not just the Father’s alone nor the Son’s alone, but the Spirit of them both, and thus he suggests to us the common charity by which the Father and the Son love each other” (*The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991], 418). For St. Thomas’s development of this name of the Holy Spirit, see *Summa theologiae* [ST] I, q. 37, aa. 1–2.

⁶ See: Acts 2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17; John 4:10; St. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 15.5.29: “And yet it is not without point that in this triad only the Son is called the Word of God, and only the Holy Spirit is called the gift of God” (trans. Hill, 419). See the extended discussion in *De Trinitate* 15.5.29–37. For St. Thomas on the Holy Spirit as Gift, see ST I, q. 38. For a defense of this Augustinian approach, see Matthew Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit: Love and Gift in the Trinity and the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 51–70, esp. 69–70: “In sum, the web of scriptural texts that insistently associate the coming forth of the Spirit with ‘love’ and ‘gift’ suggests that in these two terms we have found a scriptural parallel with the Son’s name ‘Word.’ ‘Love’ and ‘Gift’ offer a limited, but precious, instruction from God the Teacher regarding the distinctiveness of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity. Through the economic manifestations of and inspired scriptural witness to the Spirit, we gain insight into the eternal identity of the Spirit. Augustine’s interpretation of the New Testament’s characteristic ways of speaking

Holy Spirit seems to indicate that the Spirit proceeds through love, for love manifests itself in the giving of gifts, and ultimately in the giving of oneself. The Holy Spirit is the personal Gift in God.⁷

Immanent Operations

Although the scriptural evidence is primary, theological reflection, through the establishment of a psychological analogy, supports our initial connection of the Word and the Spirit with the operation of the divine intellect and will. In seeking an analogy for the Trinitarian processions, it is important to start with what is highest in the created order. St. Thomas remarks that it is crucial to use an immanent rather than a transitive activity as the basis for an analogy of the Trinity. Otherwise one will fall into the Arian or the Sabellian heresy.⁸

An immanent operation produces a fruit or product that remains

about the Spirit, therefore, should continue to guide contemporary theology of the Spirit: the Holy Spirit is the Gift of Love.” See also Luigi Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of St. Augustine’s De Trinitate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁷ See *ST I*, q. 38, a. 2: “Now, the reason of donation being gratuitous is love; since therefore do we give something to anyone gratuitously forasmuch as we wish him well. So what we first give him is the love whereby we wish him well. Hence it is manifest that love has the nature of a first gift, through which all free gifts are given. So since the Holy Spirit proceeds as love, as stated above (q. 27, a. 4; q. 37, a. 1), he proceeds as the first gift.”

⁸ See *ST I*, q. 27, a. 1: “Divine Scripture uses, in relation to God, names which signify procession. This procession has been differently understood. Some have understood it in the sense of an effect proceeding from its cause; so Arius took it, saying that the Son proceeds from the Father as his primary creature, and that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as the creature of both. In this sense neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit would be true God: and this is contrary to what is said of the Son, ‘That . . . we may be in his true Son. This is true God’ (1 Jn 5:20). Of the Holy Spirit it is also said, ‘Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Spirit?’ (1 Cor 6:19). Now, to have a temple is God’s prerogative. Others take this procession to mean the cause proceeding to the effect, as moving it, or impressing its own likeness on it; in which sense it was understood by Sabellius, who said that God the Father is called Son in assuming flesh from the Virgin, and that the Father also is called Holy Spirit in sanctifying the rational creature, and moving it to life. The words of the Lord contradict such a meaning, when he speaks of himself, ‘The Son cannot of himself do anything’ (Jn 5:19); while many other passages show the same, whereby we know that the Father is not the Son. Careful examination shows that both of these opinions take procession as meaning an outward act; hence neither of them affirms procession as existing in God himself; whereas, since procession always supposes action, and as there is an outward procession corresponding to the act tending to external matter, so there must be an inward procession corresponding to the act remaining within the agent.”

within the agent, while the product of a transitive action is external to the agent. If one uses a transitive action, such as biological generation, as a model for the Trinity, then the person generated will be understood as external to God, which was Arius's heretical conclusion. An immanent operation, on the other hand, produces an interior fruit that does not constitute a separate being, although there is a distinction of relation, for the interior fruit proceeds interiorly from its source. Only in this way can a procession generate a distinct divine person without it being another god separate from the first, compromising monotheism.

We experience immanent actions in cognition and appetite. Both of these exist on the sense level and the intellectual level. The operations of our internal senses have an aspect of immanence, for the phantasm remains within the internal senses. Sensing, however, also involves transitive activity by which the sensed object causes a physical change in the organs of the external and internal senses. Similarly, the sense appetite always involves transitive activity and physical changes, as when our mouth waters and our heart starts to pound, and so on. It is only the intellect and will that have perfectly immanent and reflexive operations, and it is there that we must look for an analogy to illuminate the divine processions.⁹ The psychological analogy thus gives an account of why there are precisely two processions in God, for the two processions coincide with the two spiritual and immanent operations of knowing and loving.

The Immanent Action of Knowing and the Eternal Generation of the Logos

In the operation of knowing, we can distinguish the act of knowing and an interior product that we form in our mind. If we examine our act of thinking, we experience that we form an interior word, called the "concept" or "idea," which is signified by the spoken word. The concept is not properly *what* we know, but that *through which* we know reality. This interior word is formed in the operation of knowing and remains within as that *in which* we see what we have come to know.¹⁰

⁹ See *ST I*, q. 27, a. 5: "The divine processions can be derived only from the actions which remain within the agent. In a nature which is intellectual, and in the divine nature these actions are two, the acts of intelligence and of will. The act of sensation, which also appears to be an operation within the agent, takes place outside the intellectual nature, nor can it be reckoned as wholly removed from the sphere of external actions; for the act of sensation is perfected by the action of the sensible object upon sense. It follows that no other procession is possible in God but the procession of the Word, and of Love."

¹⁰ See *ST I*, q. 85, a. 2.

If we apply this analogy to the divine operation of knowing, it is reasonable to think that, in knowing himself, God also forms an immanent product or interior Word. The divine intellect, however, is infinitely perfect, and its interior fruit, likewise, must be infinitely perfect. This interior Word, therefore, which is generated as the fruit of God's infinite intellectual action, must be an infinite immanent "product" that perfectly images all that God is. Indeed, as noted above, "Image" is another name given to the second person of the Trinity by St. Paul (Col 1:15).

Our concepts are imperfect likenesses of what we know because they are abstract and leave out particularity. The divine Word, on the other hand, must be a perfect Word, and thus will be lacking nothing that belongs to God, and will in no way deviate from its source. If there is a relation of perfect identity, it follows that the Word that is generated will itself be God just as the source or speaker of the Word is God. Hence this interior Word can be understood as "God from God."

Furthermore, the Word eternally brought forth in this way is fittingly spoken of as Son eternally generated. The notion of generation implies that something proceeds from another by way of *similarity in nature*, for a son shares the nature of his father.¹¹ As in biological generation, the concept or interior word proceeds in the intellectual operation according to similarity, for the concept is a true likeness of what it represents. In the case of the Word of God, the concept produced by the divine act of self-knowing so perfectly represents the knower that it is identical in nature. This procession therefore merits the name of generation, and its fruit merits the name of Son.

It is not accidental that, even with regard to human knowing, the word "concept" is taken from "conception," for it indicates the profound relationship between biological generation and the generation of ideas through the immanent operation of knowing. However, in human self-understanding there is not an identity of nature between the concept and the thing conceived, because our ideas are abstract and leave out much of the reality they represent. Thus our ideas are distinct in nature from the reality they enable us to know. In God, however, the knowing is perfect and the

¹¹ St. Thomas explains why the procession of the Logos is called generation in *ST I*, q. 27, a. 2: "In this manner the procession of the Word in God is generation; for he proceeds by way of intelligible action, which is a vital operation . . . by way of similarity, inasmuch as the concept of the intellect is a likeness of the object conceived. And he exists in the same nature, because in God the act of understanding and his existence are the same, as shown above (q. 14, a. 4). Hence the procession of the Word in God is called generation; and the Word himself proceeding is called the Son."

interior word fully realizes the notion of generation, which is procession from another according to identity of nature. St. Thomas explains:

The act of human understanding in ourselves is not the substance itself of the intellect; hence the word which proceeds within us by intelligible operation is not of the same nature as the source whence it proceeds; so the idea of generation cannot be properly and fully applied to it. But the divine act of intelligence is the very substance itself of the one who understands. The Word proceeding therefore proceeds as subsisting in the same nature; and so is properly called begotten, and Son. Hence Scripture employs terms which denote generation of living things in order to signify the procession of the divine Wisdom, namely, conception and birth; as is declared in the person of the divine Wisdom (Pr 8:24), "The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived; before the hills, I was brought forth."¹²

*The Immanent Action of Loving and the Eternal Procession
of the Holy Spirit*

Since there are two persons who proceed in God, there must be a second immanent operation in God. Here too the psychological analogy can be applied, for the operation of the will also involves immanent activity. When we think of the will, we may think first of transitive activity, for it is true that the will commands operations that have an external result, such as the movement of our limbs, or God's act of creating the world. The will, however, is first the source of interior affective movements (affective love) before it is the source of commanding acts that result in external or transitive operation (effective love). No one would will any external action if one did not first interiorly *love and desire* the object of that action. The affective acts of loving, desiring, and rejoicing are immanent acts that result in a change within ourselves. The act of loving already interiorly qualifies the lover and creates a relation to the beloved, before it leads us to do any external action.

We can see this immanent effect of love by the fact that we are changed interiorly when, for example, we love God or fail to love him. Similarly, our love for our spouse, family, and country forges our inner identity and results in our becoming interiorly *for* the beloved. We are also changed for the worse if we love something disordered and sinful, and especially if we order our life to it. Through the immanent effect of the act of loving, we

¹² ST I, q. 27, a. 2, ad 2.

carry our loved ones with us even when we are physically separated from them and give ourselves interiorly to them. Our loved ones are not only known by our intellect through our concepts of them, but are also present in our will as the object of the impetus of love and self-gift. Ultimately it is through love of benevolence that we order ourselves to our final end, by loving either God above all, or self, according to the brilliant analysis of St. Augustine in the *City of God*.¹³

The difficulty lies in identifying the interior product or fruit of the action of the will. St. Thomas explains that the beloved becomes present in the will as the object of the movement or impetus of love:

The operation of the will within ourselves involves also another procession, that of love, whereby the object loved is in the lover; as, by the conception of the word, the object spoken of or understood is in the intelligent agent. Hence, besides the procession of the Word in God, there exists in him another procession called the procession of love.¹⁴

Human love engenders a movement or impetus in the soul of the lover to the beloved. This impetus is an immanent fruit of the operation of loving which remains in the soul and makes the beloved somehow present as the goal of the will's interior movement of love.¹⁵ Applying this analogy to God, the Holy Spirit would proceed as the immanent impetus of the mutual love of Father and Son. Hence the Holy Spirit is fittingly described as "proceeding" or being "breathed forth."

St. Thomas also uses the psychological analogy to show why the procession according to will or love is not called generation. As stated above, in the act of knowing we form a likeness of the object in ourselves, and thus it is naturally compared to conception or generation. In willing or loving, we form not a likeness but an impulse that orders us toward the object of our love, for an impulse of love gives the lover *to* the beloved. Thus it is fitting that the fruit of the procession of love in God is referred to not as a second Son but as the Holy *Spirit*, for spirit, in Hebrew and Greek, means "breath," "wind," or "impulse":

The procession of love in God ought not to be called generation. In

¹³ See St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 14.28 (found in vol. 2 of Hendrickson's edition of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st series).

¹⁴ *ST I*, q. 27, a. 3.

¹⁵ See *ST I*, q. 27, a. 4.

evidence whereof we must consider that the intellect and the will differ in this respect, that the intellect is made actual by the object understood residing according to its own likeness in the intellect; whereas the will is made actual, not by any similitude of the object willed within it, but by its having a certain *inclination* to the thing willed. Thus the procession of the intellect is by way of similitude, and is called generation, because every generator begets its own like; whereas the procession of the will is not by way of similitude, but rather by way of *impulse and movement towards an object*. So what proceeds in God by way of love, does not proceed as begotten, or as son, but proceeds rather as *spirit*; which name *expresses a certain vital movement and impulse*, accordingly as anyone is described as moved or impelled by love to perform an action.¹⁶

Distinction of Love of Concupiscence and Love of Benevolence

St. Thomas's explanation of the procession of the Holy Spirit is not lacking in difficulty, for it is hard to see how this divine impetus of love constitutes a divine person.¹⁷ His explanation can be clarified, I think, by the distinction he introduces between two aspects of love, which are love of concupiscence (or desire) and love of benevolence,¹⁸ and connecting that distinction with the notion of self-gift as developed above all by St. John Paul II.¹⁹

¹⁶ *ST I*, q. 27, a. 4 (my italics).

¹⁷ It seems that St. Thomas's thought on this point matured significantly over time. In his earlier works, such as *In I sent.*, d. 10, q. 1, a. 1, and *De veritate*, q. 4, a. 2, ad 7, St. Thomas denies that there is an interior term or product. Instead he holds that the Holy Spirit proceeds as the subsistent *operation* of love. In *ST I*, q. 27, a. 3, and q. 37, a. 1, on the contrary, he maintains that there is an interior fruit in the will in the operation of love. See: M. T.-L. Penido, "Gloses sur la procession d'amour dans la Trinité," *Ephemerides theologiae Lovanienses* 14 (1937): 33–68, at 37–40; Frederick Crowe, "Complacency and Concern in the Thought of St. Thomas [part 1]," *Theological Studies* 20, no. 1 (March 1959): 1–39. For the development of St. Thomas's teaching on love, see Henri D. Simonin, "Autour de la solution thomiste du problème de l'amour," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 6 (1931): 174–276.

¹⁸ See *ST I-II*, q. 26, a. 4. This distinction is already present in his commentary on the Sentences, *In III sent.*, d. 29, a. 3, in *On Love and Charity: Readings from the Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, trans. Peter A. Kwasniewski, Thomas Bolin, and Joseph Bolin (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 212. See also *In de div. nom.* 4, lec. 9.

¹⁹ See Pascal Ide, "Une Théologie du don: Les occurrences de *Gaudium et spes*, no. 24, 3 chez Jean-Paul II," *Anthropotes* 17 (2001): 149–78, 313–44; Michael M. Waldstein, "Introduction" in John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. M. Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books and Media,

In every act of love, we will *some good* for *someone*. The aspect of love that is directed to some good is referred to as love of desire, or *eros*. The love directed to the person for whom we will the good is called love of benevolence, or *agape*. When love of benevolence is mutual, it is love of friendship.

This distinction is very often understood as if it were a distinction between two different kinds of complete acts of love which would be distinguished according to whether a good is willed for oneself or for another. *Eros* and *agape* would be contrasted as selfish and selfless love.²⁰ This is *not* how St. Thomas understands the distinction. It is not a distinction between two different kinds of complete acts of love ordered either to self or other, but rather a *distinction between two tendencies simultaneously present in every complete act of rational love*. Goods are always willed for the sake of someone. There can be no love of concupiscence for any good divorced from a love of benevolence for someone, whether it be oneself, family, friend, community, or God. Love of benevolence thus has a primacy with respect to love of concupiscence, because it is its motive and because only the object of love of benevolence is loved for its own sake.²¹ We love goods for the sake of persons and communities.

St. Thomas writes:

As the Philosopher says (*Rhetoric* II, ch. 4), “to love is to wish good to someone.” Hence the movement of love has a twofold tendency: towards 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 towards the good that he wishes to another, and love of benevolence towards him to whom

2006), 24–34.

²⁰ This type of interpretation was made famous by Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip Watson (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1953).

²¹ See *In IV sent.*, d. 49, q. 1, a. 2, qa. 1, ad 3: “An object of love is of two kinds. There is an object that is loved in the manner of benevolence, when we will the good for another on account of himself, as we love our friends, even if nothing should come to us from them. And there is an object that is loved by the love of concupiscence. . . . Now whatever is loved with a love of concupiscence cannot be the ultimate object of love, since it is referred to the good of another (his, namely, who has concupiscence for it); but that which is loved by a love of benevolence can be the ultimate object of love. Therefore the created beatitude that is within us is loved only by a love of concupiscence; hence the love of it we refer to ourselves, and consequently we refer it to God, since we ought to refer even ourselves to God; and thus, it cannot be the ultimate object of love. Nevertheless it is the ultimate object of concupiscence by the very fact that it is the greatest good that comes to us from union with God” (*On Love and Charity*, 354).

he wishes good. Now the members of this division are related as primary and secondary: since what is loved with the love of friendship is loved simply speaking and for itself; whereas what is loved with the love of concupiscence, is loved, not simply speaking and for itself, but for something else.²²

St. Thomas clearly indicates that these two aspects of love should be understood as a “twofold tendency” that comprises the full act of love.

The Twofold Tendency of Love Applied to the Procession of the Holy Spirit

How should we apply this distinction to understand a procession according to love in the divine will? Should we think of the procession of the Holy Spirit according to the tendency of *eros* or *agape*, or both? According to what has been explained above, however, it seems that both aspects must be present—a good willed that is referred to a beloved person. Since we are speaking about the inner life of the Trinity, both aspects of love must clearly be directed to God himself.²³ That is, it seems that the eternal act of love that breathes forth the Holy Spirit should be understood as a love directed to a divine person for whom the divine good is willed. I think that this idea can be illuminated by reflecting on the notion of gift of self in the love of friendship.

The love that gives rise to an eternal breathing forth of a divine person should be understood according to the highest and most primary kind of love that we encounter in human experience, which is the mutual love of benevolence in friendship or conjugal love. And the highest or most total form of the love of friendship is that in which the good that one wills for the beloved consists not simply in exterior goods, but includes one’s self, which is given *for* the other. In spousal love, one is called to make a total gift of self to the beloved, and it is perfect to the extent that it is total and mutual. Of course, in this life all our movements of love are imperfect and fall far short of a complete self-gift. In God, an impetus of self-gift must

²² ST I-II, q. 26, a. 4.

²³ See *De potentia*, q. 9, a. 9: “Both in us and in God there is a certain rotation in the acts of the intellect and will: for the will returns to that whence came the beginning of understanding: but whereas in us the circle ends in that which is external, the external good moving the intellect and love tending to the external good; in God, on the other hand, the circle ends in him” (*On the Power of God*, trans. English Dominican Fathers, 3 vols. [Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1952], 3:158).

be entire, for nothing will be lacking, and perfectly mutual. The whole divine good that each person is, is eternally given to the other in a perfectly mutual way, so that it is but one love of mutual self-giving, uniting the two, that proceeds from the two persons.

Although he does not use the term, “self-gift,” St. Thomas refers to the Holy Spirit as the inter-Trinitarian *Gift*, for the nature of love is to give oneself to the beloved. This love is the source of all other gifts.

Now, the reason of donation being gratuitous is love; since therefore do we give something to anyone gratuitously forasmuch as we *wish him well*. So what we first give him is the *love whereby we wish him well*. Hence it is manifest that love has the nature of a first gift, through which all free gifts are given. So since the Holy Spirit proceeds as love, . . . He proceeds as the first gift.²⁴

Understanding the divine love in this way as self-giving *agape*, it is easier to see that the fruit of this immanent operation is indeed nothing other than God himself.²⁵ So God, in knowing himself, which generates the Son, loves the Son, as the Son does the Father, and a mutual total gift of self is the bond of unity, which is another divine person, the Holy Spirit. St. Thomas writes:

The Holy Spirit is said to be the bond of the Father and Son, inasmuch 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 that of the lover to the beloved. But from the fact that the Father and the Son mutually love one another, it necessarily follows that this mutual Love, the Holy Spirit, proceeds from both.²⁶

²⁴ *ST I*, q. 38, a. 2 (my italics).

²⁵ A different account of the procession of the Holy Spirit is given in Crowe, “Complacency and Concern,” 15–18. Crowe, following Lonergan, sees the interior term of the divine love not in the divine self-donation, as I have suggested, but as the complacency breathed forth in the will by the Word. See also: Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 2, ed. Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 209–16; *The Triune God: Systematics, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 12, trans. Michael Shields, ed. Robert Doran and H. Daniel Monsour (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 621–25.

²⁶ *ST I*, q. 37, a. 1, ad 3. See also *ST I*, q. 36, a. 4, ad 1: “But if we consider the *supposita* of the spiration, then we may say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father

Order of the Processions

The psychological analogy also illuminates the distinction and order of the three divine persons in the Trinity. The real distinction of the two processions is made clearer by the contrary directions of the operations of knowing and loving. The object of knowledge is assimilated to the knower because he speaks its form interiorly and thus conceives it within himself. In the self-donation of love, the lover is interiorly ordered and given by the impetus of love to the beloved.²⁷

In our soul, knowing is both chronologically and logically prior to willing, for we cannot will or love what we do not know. In God there is no chronological progression, but there is a logical order between the two eternal operations/processions. By analogy with our knowing and willing, it is fitting that also in God the procession of the Holy Spirit logically presupposes the generation of the Word, who breathes forth love. There is no temporal priority in God, for the three persons are co-eternal, but there is a logical order of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which order is also found in Revelation, as in the baptismal formula in Matthew 28:19. The fact that knowing logically precedes willing also shows that the Word is involved in the procession of the Holy Spirit. The Son proceeds from the Father alone, but the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son together.

The order of the processions can also be grasped from the fact that a mutual love of benevolence or friendship presupposes two persons, for it is an interpersonal love.²⁸ The procession of the Holy Spirit, therefore, presupposes the procession of the Son. The operation of knowledge, on

and the Son, as distinct; for he proceeds from them as the unitive love of both"; *In I sent.*, d. 29, q. 1 (unic.), a. 4, ad 2: "Since spiration requires a distinction in the subjects (*supposita*), it is therefore in some way from more than one subject insofar as they are distinct, since it is a personal act" (my translation).

²⁷ See *ST I*, q. 82, a. 3; *In III sent.*, d. 27, q. 1, a. 4: "Through willing and loving man is, in a way, drawn into the very things willed and loved, whereas through knowledge, on the contrary, things known are made to be in the knower by way of their likenesses" (*On Love and Charity*, 140).

²⁸ See St. Thomas, *De potentia*, q. 9, a. 9, ad 20: "The process of nature and the process of the intellect have this in common that in either case one thing proceeds from one thing in likeness to that whence it proceeds. But love which proceeds from the will, proceeds from two who love each other mutually" (*On the Power of God*, 3:164–65); *In I sent.*, d. 2, q. 1, a. 5, ad 1; St. Bonaventure, *In I sent.*, d. 10, a. 1, q. 3: "Since love has the perfection of delectation and union and rectitude out of a mutuality, either it is not that one posits a person among the divine to proceed through a manner of love, or, if he does proceed, he proceeds through a manner of mutual charity" (*Opera omnia*, vol. 1, *On the One and Triune God* [Mansfield, MA: Franciscan Archive, 2014], 199).

the other hand, does not presuppose any prior procession or distinction of persons.

*The Word Breathes Forth Love: Circular "Movement"
in the Trinitarian Life*

The psychological analogy also suggests that the two processions entail a circular kind of movement involving a going forth and a return, or *exitus* and *reditus*.²⁹ The Son comes forth from the Father as his Word that is uttered. The Word then breathes forth love for the Father, giving himself back to him, and the Father likewise by the same perfect impetus gives himself to his Son. The Spirit proceeds thus from the mutual and eternal self-gift of Son to Father and Father to Son. Thus the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as the bond of unity. The *filioque* is not merely an abstruse point of theological speculation, but something that is existentially vital. If the Spirit truly proceeds from a love that is *agape*, how could that love be one-sided?

Through love of benevolence, the eternal vital activity that goes forth in the generation of the Word or Image returns back to the source through the impetus of mutual self-gift, generating the most perfect kind of "movement," which is circular. This is particularly appropriate for a vital operation that is eternal. Human movements in this life tend to have a linear aspect because we have a beginning and a final end. God, whose eternal life has neither beginning nor end, fittingly is constituted by a circularity of eternal vital operation eternally returning to its source.³⁰

The Psychological Analogy and the Economic Trinity

A theory that seeks to shed light on the Trinitarian processions in the inner life of God should find confirmation from the missions of the divine persons in salvation history.³¹ We have seen that the psychological analogy

²⁹ See *De potentia*, q. 9, a. 9, quoted above. St. Thomas received this idea from St. Albert, who speaks about a circular "movement" in the Trinitarian processions in his commentary, *In I sent.*, d. 11, a. 1, sol. See Gilles Emery, *Trinity in Aquinas* (Ypsilanti, MI: Sapientia, 2003), 44.

³⁰ St. Thomas, drawing on Pseudo-Dionysius (*On the Divine Names* 4.8–9), speaks of the most perfect contemplation as a circular movement in *ST II-II*, q. 180, a. 6, ad 2: "Dionysius assigns the circular movement of the angels to the fact that their intuition of God is uniform and unceasing, having neither beginning nor end: even as a circular movement having neither beginning nor end is uniformly around the one same center. But on the part of the soul, ere it arrive at this uniformity, its twofold lack of uniformity needs to be removed."

³¹ In more technical terms, the immanent Trinity is revealed by the economic Trinity.

has its point of departure not in metaphysical speculation, but in the names given in Revelation for the Logos and the Spirit. Scriptural support for the analogy, however, is not limited to the intellectual and volitional character of these names.

Because we cannot love what we do not know, it is fitting that the Word was sent visibly to reveal the Father. Revelation, which began through prophecy, culminates in the Mission of the Word made flesh, and especially in his Paschal mystery. In the well-known words of *Gaudium et Spes* §22:

Only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of him who was to come, namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and his love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear.

The Word reveals the Father as his visible Image, and his task is to restore the *imago Dei* of the sons and daughters of Adam that has become deformed by sin.

Since the second person is generated by way of likeness, and as the divine Word is the exemplar cause of creation,³² it is fitting that the Image of the Father becomes man to restore our likeness to himself. Hence *Gaudium et Spes* §22 states: "He who is 'the image of the invisible God' (Col 1:15), is himself the perfect man. To the sons of Adam he restores the divine likeness which had been disfigured from the first sin onward."

God's plan from the beginning was to elevate man to share in the divine nature and thus become his sons and daughters. After this sonship was lost through original sin, again it is fitting that God the Son become man to make the sons and daughters of men into sons and daughters of God.³³ The natural Son comes to restore our adopted sonship.

Since the Son breathes forth the Holy Spirit in his love for the Father, it is fitting that the Son's mission culminate with the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost ten days after his Ascension. We would have no likeness

³² See *Summa contra gentiles* [SCG] IV, ch. 42 (no. 3803).

³³ See St. Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 3.19.1: "For it was for this end that the Word of God was made man, and he who was the Son of God became the Son of man, that man, having been taken into the Word, and receiving the adoption, might become the son of God" (in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* [Hendrickson ed.], 1:448–49). See also St. Augustine, Sermon 23B.1: "The Son of God became a son of man, in order to make sons of men into sons of God" (*Sermons*, vol. 3/11, *Newly Discovered Sermons*, trans. Edmund Hill [Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1997], 37).

with the Son unless we too breathe forth love for the Father. The likeness with the Son cannot be the work of the Son alone, for if we are made sons and daughters of the Father, we must be made to share in the “spirit of sonship,” which is the work of the Spirit, as St. Paul testifies in Romans 8:16: “When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” Or in Galatians 4:6: “And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” Since the Holy Spirit proceeds in the divine life by way of love, it is fitting that the mission of the Spirit is ordered to infusing love into our hearts³⁴ and inciting us to return the love shown to us by the Father who “so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Trinitarian Dimension to Beatitude

Let us now turn the analogy around and use the Trinitarian processions to shed light on a disputed question in the Scholastic tradition concerning the relation of the intellect and will. Is beatitude constituted essentially by the operation of one or the other of these faculties, or both together in complementarity?³⁵ This suggests a second question: does one of these faculties have an absolute primacy with respect to the other?³⁶ These two questions

³⁴ See Rom 5:5: “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

³⁵ Bl. Duns Scotus holds the primacy of the will in beatitude; see *Ordinatio* IV, d. 49, q. 4–5, and *Reportatio parisiensis* IV, d. 49, qq. 2–3. Many earlier Scholastics—such as Hugh of St. Victor, St. Bonaventure, and St. Albert the Great (*In IV sent.*, d. 49, a. 4)—held that beatitude involves the complementary operation of intellect and will. See Hugo of St. Victor, *Expositio in hierarchiam coelestem S. Dionysii*, bk. 7: “Knowledge illuminates, love satiates. . . . Beatitude consists in knowing and loving the good. Scripture says, ‘Taste and see that the Lord is good’ (Ps 33). In ‘taste’ love is indicated, and knowledge in ‘see.’ Both knowledge and love are distinctly commended” (*PL*, 175:1065B; my translation). Although St. Bonaventure puts the emphasis on beatific love (*In II sent.*, d. 38, a. 1, q. 2, *conclusio*), he includes both vision and love in the essence of beatitude in *In IV sent.*, d. 49, pars 1, q. 5, *conclusio*, in which he speaks of them as “dowries” (together with fruition) in the heavenly matrimony between the soul and God.

³⁶ See *ST I*, q. 82, a. 3: “If therefore the intellect and will be considered with regard to themselves, then the intellect is the higher power. And this is clear if we compare their respective objects to one another. For the object of the intellect is more simple and more absolute than the object of the will; since the object of the intellect is the very idea of appetible good; and the appetible good, the idea of which is in the intellect, is the object of the will. Now the more simple and the more abstract a thing is, the nobler and higher it is in itself; and therefore the object of the intellect is higher than the object of the will.” For an engagement with this

are intimately related, because if beatitude were essentially constituted by the operation of only one of these two faculties, then it would seem to have an absolute primacy with respect to the other.

The psychological analogy, with its parallel between the divine processions and the operations of the human intellect and will, sheds much light on this question.³⁷ We have seen that, although both Trinitarian processions and the three divine persons are co-eternal, there is nevertheless a priority of order of the first procession with regard to the second, for love presupposes knowledge of the beloved, and because the impetus of benevolent love or *agape* requires the logically prior constitution of two persons. We can also say, however, that the procession of the Holy Spirit has an ultimate and finalizing character, for with it the divine life returns to its eternal source in a circular movement. Through the first procession, the second person is generated *from* the first ("God *from* God"), and through the second procession, the first and second persons are *for* the other through the Spirit who is the bond of unity, since he proceeds as the love of the two.³⁸ The two processions thus have a complementary relationship, and neither has an absolute primacy, which would be incompatible with the consubstantiality of the divine persons constituted by the processions.

Since the divine life is its beatitude, it follows that the divine beatitude is constituted equally by the two processions in their complementarity. It would be absurd to suppose that the divine beatitude is constituted essentially by only the first or only the second procession, because that would imply some kind of inequality in the divine persons.

The psychological analogy should also reveal a parallelism between the operations of the soul in beatitude and the divine processions. St. Thomas hints at this in his commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard. He teaches that, just as the divine processions are the exemplar causes of

text, see David C. Schindler, "Towards a Non-Possessive Concept of Knowledge: On the Relation between Reason and Love in Aquinas and Balthasar," *Modern Theology* 22, no. 4 (2006): 577–607.

³⁷ This analogy is the principal foundation for understanding man as the image of God. See *ST* I, q. 45, a. 7: "Now the processions of the divine persons are referred to the acts of intellect and will, as was said above (q. 27). For the Son proceeds as the word of the intellect; and the Holy Ghost proceeds as love of the will. Therefore in rational creatures, possessing intellect and will, there is found the representation of the Trinity by way of image, inasmuch as there is found in them the word conceived, and the love proceeding." See also *ST* I, q. 93, aa. 4–5.

³⁸ See *ST* I, q. 93, a. 7: "Now the divine persons are distinct from each other by reason of the procession of the Word from the speaker, and the procession of Love connecting both."

creation, so likewise they must be the exemplar cause of beatitude, which is the perfect return of rational creatures to their Source. It is fitting that the return to God be realized through the same exemplar principle by which they were brought forth. St. Thomas takes this idea of perfect return from Pseudo-Dionysius:

In the going forth of creatures from the first principle there is found a certain circular movement or return [*circulatio vel regiratio*], in that everything returns to its end in that from which it took its beginning. And thus it is necessary that the return to the end be through that principle from which it was brought forth. Since, as was said above, the procession of the divine persons is the exemplar of the production of creatures by the First Principle, so also the same procession is the exemplar of their return to the end. Since we were created through the Son and the Holy Spirit, so likewise we are joined through them to the final end.³⁹

St. Thomas is saying that there is a circular movement in creation by which the creature is meant to be rejoined to its first principle. This rejoining is effected by the same principle by which the creature was brought forth. The principle of our creation is the procession of the divine persons. Therefore, it is fitting that the principle of reunion with our source also be through the same processions of the divine persons, which are the generation of the Word and the breathing forth of the Spirit of Love.

St. Thomas's main point here is that it is fitting that we are saved through the missions of the Son and the Spirit, such that the cause of salvation—the missions of the Son and the Spirit in salvation history—mirrors the exemplar cause of creation, which are the eternal processions of the Son and the Spirit. However, this principle that the final end should mirror its exemplar has fuller implications, because it implies that our final beatitude should also mirror its exemplar in the Trinitarian life. Although St. Thomas does not draw this conclusion, it would seem to imply that the rational creature reaches perfect beatitude through the divinized operation of intellect and will together in their complementary and circular movements. It is fitting that we return to our source in beatitude by mysteriously participating in the two divine processions through beatific knowledge—seeing the Father in the Word—and beatific love, giving ourselves perfectly back to God through and with the Holy Spirit. In this way the

³⁹ *In I sent.*, d. 14, q. 2, a. 2 (my translation).

Trinitarian image of God in the soul is brought to perfect similitude.⁴⁰

St. Thomas himself, however, has various texts that do not take this position suggested by the psychological analogy. On the contrary, he argues in these texts that beatitude is essentially constituted by the act of the intellect alone. Let us examine his argument.

St. Thomas's View That Beatitude Is Essentially Constituted by the Act of the Intellect Seeing God

In various texts spanning his career, of which the most well-known are one in the third book of the *Summa Contra Gentiles* (ch. 26) another in the *prima secundae* (q. 3, a. 4) of the *Summa theologiae*,⁴¹ St. Thomas examines the question of whether beatitude consists essentially in the operation of the intellect or the will. He first makes a distinction between the objective final end outside the rational creature, which is God himself, and the acts of the creature by which God, the final end, is attained. This latter must consist in the highest operation(s) of the creature with regard to God, for every creature reaches its perfection through the operations proper to it.

But which operations are these? Knowing, loving, or delighting in the knowing and loving? St. Thomas consistently holds that the essence of beatitude consists in the action of the intellect in knowing God in the beatific vision. The will then completes and "consummates" this essential beatitude by delighting in it.⁴²

He begins his argument by looking at the acts of the will of love, desire, and joy. He reasons that beatitude cannot consist essentially in any of these because both love and desire precede the attainment of the final end, and joy (delight) rests in its attainment:

Now it is impossible for the act of desiring to be the ultimate end. For it is by desire that the will tends toward what it does not yet possess, but this is contrary to the essential character of the ultimate end. So too, the act of loving cannot be the ultimate. For a

⁴⁰ See *ST* I, q. 93, aa. 7–8.

⁴¹ Other parallel texts are: *ST* I, q. 26, a. 2c and ad 2; *Super Ioannem* 17, lec. 1 (Marrone no. 2186); *Quodlibet* 8, q. 9, a. 1; *Compendium theologiae* I, ch. 107; *In IV sent.*, d. 49, q. 1, a. 1, qa. 2. For a comprehensive analysis of this question, see Jacobus Ramirez, O.P., *Opera omnia*, vol. 3, *De hominis beatitudine*, In *I-II Summae theologiae Divi Thomae Commentaria (QQ. 1–5)* (Madrid: Instituto de Filosofía "Luis Vives," 1972), 3:173–248.

⁴² See *ST* I-II, q. 3, a. 4: "So, therefore, the essence of happiness consists in an act of the intellect: but the delight that results from happiness pertains to the will."

good is loved not only when possessed but also when not possessed. Indeed, it is as a result of love that what is not possessed is sought with desire, and if the love of something already possessed is more perfect, this results from the fact that the good which was loved is possessed. So, it is a different thing to possess a good which is the end, and to love it; for love, before possession, is imperfect, but after possession, perfect. . . . So delight is not the ultimate end.⁴³

St. Thomas illustrates this with the example of money. A covetous man who puts his end in wealth both loves and desires money before he actually attains it. Clearly neither the love of money nor the desire of it is able to make him happy. He becomes happy only upon knowing that he actually possesses the money and can use it whenever he wills. His will then delights in the knowledge of the money possessed. St. Thomas therefore concludes: "So it is with an intelligible end. For at first we desire to attain an intelligible end; we attain it, through its being made present to us by an act of the intellect; and then the delighted will rests in the end when attained."⁴⁴

Another analogy that he uses in his treatment of this question is that of local movement.⁴⁵ In every natural movement we can observe four things: a natural tendency toward an end (such as gravity), the movement itself, the reaching of the destination, and the resting in it. He then compares this with the process of attaining beatitude and with the three primary movements of the will toward a good: love, desire, and joy. Love corresponds to the natural tendency underlying the movement; desire and the actions which issue from it correspond to the movement itself; and the joy therein corresponds to the resting. But what about the actual attainment of the end? Can that also correspond to an act of the will? It would seem not, because of the three fundamental acts of the will, two of them—love and desire—occur before the attainment of the end, and the third, joy, is a consequence of the attainment. Therefore, St. Thomas reasons that the actual attainment of beatitude must be the act of another faculty: the intellect.⁴⁶

⁴³ SCG III, ch. 26, no. 12.

⁴⁴ ST I-II, q. 3, a. 4. St. Thomas concludes: "So, therefore, the essence of happiness consists in an act of the intellect: but the delight that results from happiness pertains to the will. In this sense Augustine says (*Confessions* X, 23) that happiness is 'joy in truth,' because, to wit, joy itself is the consummation of happiness."

⁴⁵ *Compendium theologiae* I, ch. 107.

⁴⁶ Another argument frequently used by St. Thomas is similar. He says that since the formal object of the will is the good and the final end, it is impossible that an act of the will itself be the final end. For if that were the case, an act of the will would be both the end, and *for* the end (insofar as it is an act of the will). See *In IV sent.*,

Tension in St. Thomas's View

St. Thomas's position in these articles⁴⁷ raises a difficulty for several reasons. First of all, it is out of harmony with the complementarity of intellect and will suggested by the psychological analogy. In order to mirror the Trinitarian life, the human soul in beatitude should mirror both divine processions through the complementary operation of intellect and will. Secondly, St. Thomas's position seems hard to reconcile with various biblical texts on the primacy of charity, such as 1 Corinthians 13:13.

A third difficulty with St. Thomas's position is that it seems to contradict other statements that he makes in other contexts, in which he implies that the love of God has a primacy with respect to the understanding of the intellect.⁴⁸ He affirms the relative superiority (*secundum quid*) of the act of love over that of knowledge, when the object of love and knowledge is higher than the soul.⁴⁹ This is because the intellect receives into itself a

d. 49, q. 1, a. 1, qa. 2: "But it is not possible that the act of the will itself be the ultimate end of anyone, because since the will's object is the end, this very act (namely, to will), and any other act of the will, are nothing other than to order some things to an end; hence such an act presupposes another end, and so, if the willing itself may be said to be willed, one must presuppose that something is willed before this" (*On Love and Charity*, 342). This argument is also used in *SCG* III, ch. 26, nos. 9–10, and *ST* I-II, q. 3, a. 4, ad 2. The problem with this argument is that it applies only to love of concupiscence, but not to love of friendship, in which one wills the good *for a person*. In love of friendship for God, one can will one's own perfect love for God (giving oneself perfectly to God) as one's final perfection, not ultimately for its own sake, but as a good *for God*, who is loved above all.

⁴⁷ *SCG* III, ch. 26; *ST* I-II, q. 3, a. 4; I, q. 26, a. 2, corp. and ad 2; *Super Ioannem* 17, lec. 1 (no. 2186); *Quodlibet* 8, q. 9, a. 1; *Compendium theologiae* I, ch. 107; *In IV sent.*, d. 49, q. 1, a. 1, qa. 2.

⁴⁸ For this tension in Aquinas's thought, see Schindler, "Towards a Non-Possessive Concept of Knowledge."

⁴⁹ See *ST* I, q. 82, a. 3: "But relatively and by comparison with something else, we find that the will is sometimes higher than the intellect, from the fact that the object of the will lies in something higher than that in which lies the object of the intellect. . . . For as we have said above (q. 16, a. 1; q. 27, a. 4), the action of the intellect consists in this—that the idea of the thing understood is in the one who understands; while the act of the will consists in this—that the will is inclined to the thing itself as existing in itself. . . . When, therefore, the thing in which there is good is nobler than the soul itself, in which is the idea understood, by comparison with such a thing, the will is higher than the intellect. But when the thing which is good is less noble than the soul, then even in comparison with that thing the intellect is higher than the will. Wherefore the *love of God is better than the knowledge of God*; but, on the contrary, the knowledge of corporeal things is better than the love thereof." See also *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 11: "Thirdly, with respect to divine things, which are superior to the soul. In this way to will is more excellent than to

likeness of the thing known, whereas love tends to the beloved as it is in reality outside the soul. The operation of the intellect thus reduces higher objects to its own level, whereas love draws the soul upward toward the level of the beloved. This superiority of love of God with respect to knowledge of him implies that the act of spousal love of God unites the soul more perfectly with God than any knowledge of him could do.

To this it is usually objected that the love of God is higher than knowledge of him in this life, but in the beatific vision it would be the reverse.⁵⁰ However, as Sylvester of Ferrara pointed out, this standard answer does not seem to conform to the mind of St. Thomas, nor to right reason. Even in the beatific vision, God is still higher in himself than as he is contained in the understanding of the blessed, who, although they see God, do not comprehend him.⁵¹ Therefore, the operation of love by which we give ourselves to God as he is in himself is still higher than the intellect's operation of receiving him in the vision.⁵²

Light is shed on this question by an article of St. Thomas (*ST* I, q. 108, a. 6) evaluating the fittingness of the nine-fold division of the angelic hierarchies given by Pseudo-Dionysius and St. Gregory the Great.⁵³ Dionysius puts the seraphim as the highest of the orders. St. Thomas explains: "The seraphim excel in what is highest of all—to be united to God himself." This is because the name "seraphim" refers to burning love. It is interesting that they are put higher than the order of "cherubim," whose name refers

understand, as to desire God or to love him is more excellent than to know him. This is because the divine goodness itself exists more perfectly in God himself as he is desired by the will than the participated goodness is in us as known by the intellect" (my translation, modifying that of Robert W. Schmidt in *Truth* [Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1954], 3:75). See the excellent article by Daniel Shields, "On Ultimate Ends: Aquinas's Thesis that Loving God Is Better than Knowing Him," *The Thomist* 78, no. 4 (2014): 581–607.

⁵⁰ This position is taken, for example, by Reginald Garrigou-Lagrangé in *Beatitude: A Commentary on St. Thomas's Theological Summa, Ia IIae, qq. 1–54* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1956), 91.

⁵¹ See *ST* I, q. 12, a. 7.

⁵² See also *In III sent.*, d. 27, q. 1, a. 4: "But if it be asked which of these is worthier simply speaking, it should be said . . . that there are things superior to the soul and things inferior to it. Accordingly, since through willing and loving man is, in a way, drawn into the very things willed and loved, whereas through knowledge, on the contrary, things known are made to be in the knower by way of their likenesses, it follows that with respect to things above the soul, love is nobler and higher than knowledge, but with respect to things below the soul, knowledge is preferable" (*On Love and Charity*, 140–41).

⁵³ See the discussion of this text by Shields, "On Ultimate Ends," 591–93.

to knowledge of the secret things of God.

St. Thomas then goes on to comment on the fittingness of Dionysius's division. He lays down a favorite principle: "The highest of an inferior order has an affinity with the last of a superior order." He then says: "Now the first order is that of the divine persons, which terminates in the Holy Spirit, who is Love proceeding, with whom the highest order of the first hierarchy has affinity, denominated as it is from the fire of love."⁵⁴ It would seem to follow from this text that the highest operation of the intellectual creature would be the movement of love by which the creature is assimilated to the Holy Spirit who proceeds by way of love.

St. Thomas returns to this point in the response to the third objection, which states: "Further, knowledge comes before love, and intellect is higher than will. Therefore the order of 'Cherubim' seems to be higher than the 'Seraphim.'" St. Thomas replies:

As explained above (q. 27, a. 3), knowledge takes place accordingly as the thing known is in the knower; but love as the lover is united to the object loved. Now higher things are in a nobler way in themselves than in lower things; whereas lower things are in higher things in a nobler way than they are in themselves. Therefore to know lower things is better than to love them; and to love the higher things, God above all, is better than to know them.⁵⁵

This text is interesting because it makes it clear that the primacy of love of God with respect to knowledge of God is maintained also in the beatific vision. The primacy of charity is not simply limited to this life of the "wayfarer."

In addition, there are other texts that also seem to indicate that St. Thomas considered the act of beatific charity in heaven to be an essential part of beatitude, complementary to the intellect's act of receiving the vision. For example, he explicitly says that the "perfection of charity is *essential* to happiness, as to the love of God."⁵⁶ He also states that the love of God is that "whereby principally we attain to our last end,"⁵⁷ and that "the interior act of charity has the character of an end, since man's ultimate

⁵⁴ *ST* I, q. 108, a. 6.

⁵⁵ *ST* I, q. 108, a. 6, ad 3.

⁵⁶ *ST* I-II, q. 4, a. 8, ad 3.

⁵⁷ *ST* II-II, q. 27, a. 6.

good consists in his soul cleaving to God, according to Psalm 72:28: 'It is good for me to adhere to my God.'⁵⁸

Furthermore, St. Thomas teaches that charity in heaven is the end to which the perfection of charity in this life is ordered: "Now God intends by this precept [of charity] that man should be entirely united to him, and this will be realized in heaven, when God will be 'all in all,' according to 1 Corinthians 15:28. Hence this precept will be observed fully and perfectly in heaven."⁵⁹

It would seem, therefore, that there is an unresolved tension in St. Thomas's treatment of the interaction of the intellect and will in the essence of heavenly beatitude.

Proposed Solution

I think that there is a simple way to resolve this tension. The distinction mentioned above between love of desire (*eros*) and love of benevolence or friendship (*agape*) is crucial in this regard.⁶⁰ We have seen that this distinction is helpful in clarifying the procession of the Holy Spirit who proceeds as the eternal, infinite, and mutual self-gift of the Father to the Son and vice versa. This is an eternal movement of self-giving *agape*. Therefore, if the operations of the human soul in final beatitude are to mirror the Trinitarian processions, the movement of the will must be taken according to the love of friendship (*agape*) that culminates in the gift of self.⁶¹

⁵⁸ ST II-II, q. 27, a. 6, ad 3. See also II-II, q. 23, a. 6: "Charity attains God himself that it may rest in him, but not that something may accrue to us from him."

⁵⁹ ST II-II, q. 44, a. 6.

⁶⁰ Shields has the merit of emphasizing this distinction to resolve this tension in Aquinas; see "On Ultimate Ends," 583: "Aquinas distinguishes two interrelated types of love: the love of friendship and the love of desire. Although he states in many places that happiness is a human being's ultimate end, a close reading of his work shows that he only intends this statement in a restricted sense: happiness—which is a created good, inhering in the human being himself—is the ultimate object of the love of desire (*ultimum concupitum*). But the love of friendship is more fundamental than the love of desire—we only desire something because we love someone—and the ultimate object of the love of friendship (and thus the *ultimum dilectum*) is God, not oneself."

⁶¹ The use of the category of self-gift in this regard is suggested by *Gaudium et Spes* §24, so often cited by John Paul II: "Indeed, the Lord Jesus, when he prayed to the Father, 'that all may be one . . . as we are one' (Jn 17:21–22) opened up vistas closed to human reason, for he implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine persons, and the unity of God's sons in truth and charity. This likeness reveals that

In the texts of St. Thomas examined above that argue that the act of the intellect constitutes beatitude, St. Thomas seems to consider only the love of concupiscence, and never explicitly addresses the question of whether spousal love of God (*agape*) could be an essential element of beatitude, together with the vision of the intellect. Despite the fact that St. Thomas clearly distinguishes the love of concupiscence (*eros*) from the love of friendship or benevolence (*agape*) and holds that the latter is primary,⁶² he seems to have neglected to sufficiently consider love of friendship in his resolution of this particular question. Thus his argument demonstrates only that the act of love of desire, or *eros*, does not itself constitute beatitude, but leads to it and rejoices in it. His argument, however, does not prove, nor does he hold (as witnessed by the texts given above), that the will's act of self-giving love (*agape*) to God does not enter into the essence of beatitude, mirroring the procession of the Holy Spirit in the divine life.

This oversight is further marked by the example that he uses of the miser, which involves love of concupiscence rather than friendship; and the same is true of the analogy of local movement. *Eros* is like the impetus of local movement. It is a love ordered precisely to overcoming the distance between oneself and the object of desire. Love of friendship, however, is not related to local movement in the same way. Through love of friendship, one is *already united* with the beloved through the mutual interior acts of self-donation, by which each one becomes interiorly *for* the other.

Instead of the example of a miser or local movement, which are not the highest realities that could be used in this analogy, a far better example would be to look at the happiness that men and women seek in marriage, the most total form of love of friendship in the natural order. It seems that the highest happiness found in spousal love consists in a dual union, mutually knowing one another and mutually giving oneself to the other. Who would say that the bliss of marriage is constituted solely by the mutual knowledge that the spouses have of each other? Rather, we would say that it is also constituted by their mutual self-donation. This self-donation includes the gift of mind, heart, and will to the other, whereby each one's happiness becomes identified with that of the beloved.

St. Thomas's reasoning is clearly correct with regard to the love of *eros*. The love of *eros* does not directly unite the lover with the beloved object,

man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself."

⁶² ST I-II, q. 26, a. 4: "That which is loved with the love of friendship is loved simply and for itself; whereas that which is loved with the love of concupiscence, is loved, not simply and for itself, but for something else."

but only moves him toward the beloved when absent, or rejoices when the beloved is already present, for *eros* desires union with the beloved as a good for the lover. St. Thomas's principal concern is to counter the idea that delight (consisting in the satisfaction of *eros*) is the essence of beatitude, and his reasoning is perfectly sound, for it is not the essence but its completion and "consummation," a resting in the substantial happiness of contemplation, which is loved with our noblest *eros*.⁶³

Love of friendship, or *agape*, on the other hand, which involves the gift of self, is not simply a natural inclination for happiness, a movement toward the end, or a delighting in it when it is already present,⁶⁴ but an act that essentially participates in attaining union with the beloved. The love of friendship with God in heaven is not simply delighting in a union already essentially completed, but is itself, in its perfection, the self-donation of the spirit back to God, which completes the union. Through it, the soul gives itself with the gift of God that it has received in the vision back to God through love. The glorification of God by the creature, and union with him, is not essentially completed with the act of the intellect, but needs to be completed in the act of self-giving love.⁶⁵

Citing Pseudo-Dionysius,⁶⁶ St. Thomas speaks of love of friendship as a "unitive power": "It is the very union or connection or transformation by which the lover is transformed into the beloved and in a way is turned into him."⁶⁷ Through love of friendship, "the beloved is contained in the lover, by being impressed on his heart and thus becoming the object of his

⁶³ Another argument given by St. Thomas in *SCG* III, ch. 26, no. 8, also seems to be valid with regard to love of concupiscence but not love of friendship. He argues that the essence of man's beatitude must lie in a perfect act of understanding, for understanding is man's proper operation, whereas love, desire, and delight are not proper to rational creatures, but common also to animals. However, while it is true that we share love of concupiscence (and the corresponding delight in its satisfaction) with the animals, this is not true of love of friendship and the gift of self, which is no less proper to a spiritual being than is the act of understanding. Only a spiritual being with true self-dominion is able to freely give himself to his beloved.

⁶⁴ In other words, the love of friendship does not correspond to any of the three movements of the will—desire, love, and joy—that St. Thomas considers in *Compendium theologiae* I, ch. 107, when he compares the process of attaining beatitude to local movement.

⁶⁵ See *ST* II-II, q. 180, a. 7, ad 1: "And this is the ultimate perfection of the contemplative life, namely that the divine truth be not only seen but also loved."

⁶⁶ *On the Divine Names* 4. 12 (*PG*, 3:709).

⁶⁷ *In III sent.*, d. 27, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2 (*On Love and Charity*, 123). See also *ST* I-II, q. 28, a. 1.

complacency. On the other hand, the lover is contained in the beloved, inasmuch as the lover penetrates, so to speak, into the beloved.”⁶⁸

Both knowledge and friendship love create union, but in two distinct and complementary ways. Through cognition the beloved object is brought into the knower’s mind; through love of friendship not only is the beloved brought into the lover, but the lover is brought into the beloved, acutely penetrating him.⁶⁹ The former creates *intentional* union; the latter creates *affective* union involving mutual “indwelling.” Cognition brings about the conformity of the intellect of the knower with the known object, whereas love of friendship realizes the conformity of the will of the lover with the will of the beloved, so that there is one will and one love between the two.

It would seem therefore that the perfect union with God which is the essence of beatitude is effected through the simultaneous and complementary presence of the perfect operation of the intellect and the will: perfect knowledge of God and perfect self-giving love (*agape*). This is precisely what the psychological analogy between the Trinitarian processions and our spiritual operations leads us to expect.

St. John Paul II confirms this insight in a General Audience of December 16, 1981, in which he speaks of heavenly beatitude not only as the vision of God, but also as including the gift of self of man to God through love. Only in this way does man fully mirror the Trinitarian life:

The reciprocal gift of oneself to God—a gift in which man will concentrate and express all the energies of his own personal and at the same time psychosomatic subjectivity—will be the response to God’s gift of himself to man. . . . This concentration of knowledge (“vision”) and love on God himself . . . cannot be anything but full participation in God’s inner life, that is, in Trinitarian Reality itself.⁷⁰

*St. John of the Cross on Our Participation in the Divine
Processions in Beatitude*

⁶⁸ ST I-II, q. 28, a. 2, ad 1.

⁶⁹ See St. Bonaventure, *In I sent.*, d. 1, a. 2, q. un., ad 2: “Whence (love) is like a penetrating acumen, and for this reason it is most fitting for it to unite and as a consequence, to take delight and rest: for this reason (love) is essentially, not dispositively, enjoying” (*Opera omnia*, 1:37).

⁷⁰ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, no. 68 (General Audience, December 16, 1981), §§3–4 (p. 395).

The divinization of the soul in glory produces within her the perfect image of the Trinity. She receives the Word from the Father in the beatific vision, and, on the basis of that vision, breathes forth Love for the Father and Son in and with the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit is the inter-Trinitarian Gift,⁷¹ it is fitting that the divinization of the soul in glory should enable the soul to make a perfect gift of self back to God, thus being fully likened to the Holy Spirit. St. John Paul II brings this out in *Mulieris Dignitatem* §7:

Being a person means striving towards self-realization (the Council text speaks of self-discovery), which can only be achieved “through a sincere gift of self.” The model for this interpretation of the person is God himself as Trinity, as a communion of persons. To say that man is created in the image and likeness of God means that man is called to exist “for” others, to become a gift.

Not surprisingly, the author who perhaps has most acutely grasped the role of self-giving spousal love in beatitude is a great mystic as well as theologian: St. John of the Cross. Michael Waldstein⁷² has shown that the doctrine of the gift of self, used so profoundly and extensively by St. John Paul II, was found by Karol Wojtyła in his study of St. John of the Cross.⁷³ In his dissertation, “Faith According to St. John of the Cross,” Wojtyła quotes the following passage from *Living Flame of Love*:

Being the shadow of God through this substantial transformation, it [the soul] performs in this measure in God and through God what he through himself does in it. For the will of the two is one will, and thus God’s operation and the soul’s are one. Since God gives himself with a free and gracious will, so too the soul (possessing a will more generous and free the more it is united with God) gives to God, God himself in God; and this is a *true and complete gift of the soul to God*.

It is conscious there that God is indeed its own and that it possesses him by inheritance, with the right of ownership, as his adopted child through the grace of his gift of himself. Having him for its own, it can give him and communicate him to whomever it wishes. Thus it gives him to its Beloved, who is the very God who gave himself to it. By this donation it repays God for all it owes him,

⁷¹ See John 4:10.

⁷² Waldstein, “Introduction,” 24–34.

⁷³ Karol Wojtyła, *Faith According to St. John of the Cross* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981), 228–29.

since it willingly gives as much as it receives from him.⁷⁴

Perfect spousal love creates a union of wills. This means that the soul is not content with receiving grace and glory from God, but, impelled by love, seeks to imitate God's giving and thus to return the gift received through self-giving love. But what can the soul give in return? Since the soul has received nothing less than God himself indwelling, she can return God to God by giving herself (as she has been enriched) entirely to God through love.

This logic can be extended to the state of heavenly beatitude, and implies that the reception of the beatific vision in the intellect makes possible a gift of self different from and far richer than what is possible for a wayfarer on earth. The gift of self of the blessed back to God includes all that they have received, which includes God himself. Thus the blessed in a sense return God to God through their total oblation.

Furthermore, if beatitude is the satisfaction of all upright desire, the soul will not be satisfied until she is able to love God as perfectly as he can be loved by her. The beatific vision alone would not satisfy this desire. The soul must also receive beatific love, by which she can give herself wholly, utterly, and irrevocably to God.

In *The Spiritual Canticle*, St. John of the Cross addresses an objection that a Thomist might make to this idea. Does not St. Thomas teach that essential beatitude lies solely in the act of the intellect in seeing God? How could the soul desire something more? St. John of the Cross gives two reasons:

First, just as the ultimate reason for everything is love (which is seated in the will), whose property is to give and not to receive, whereas the property of the intellect (which is the subject of essential glory) lies in receiving and not giving, the soul in the inebriation of love does not put first the glory she will receive from God, but rather the surrender of herself to him through true love without concern for her own profit.

Second, the desire to see is included in the desire to love and already presupposed in the preceding stanzas, for it is impossible to

⁷⁴ *Living Flame of Love* 3.78, in *Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, DC: ICS, 1991), 706 (my emphasis). See also *Living Flame of Love* 3.80: "This is the soul's deep satisfaction and happiness: To see that it gives God more than it is worth in itself, the very divine light and divine heat that are given to it. It does this in heaven by means of the light of glory and in this life by means of a highly illumined faith" (707).

reach the perfect love of God without the perfect vision of God.⁷⁵

John of the Cross accepts the Thomistic terminology according to which the beatific vision received by the intellect comprises the essence of beatitude.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, he shows that beatitude would not be completely satisfying and final if it did not necessarily include, in complementarity with the vision, the act of beatific love whereby the soul gives or “surrenders” herself back to God with God’s own love.

In stanza 39,⁷⁷ St. John of the Cross takes this reflection one step further and connects the act of beatific love with the procession of the Holy Spirit. Since the soul in glory loves God with the same love with which he loves himself, by which the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds, St. John of the Cross concludes that the beatified soul, through its act of perfect charity, participates in some sense in the procession of the Holy Spirit:

By his divine breath-like spiration, the Holy Spirit elevates the soul sublimely and informs her and makes her capable of breathing in God the same spiration of love that the Father breathes in the Son and the Son in the Father. This spiration of love is the Holy Spirit himself, who in the Father and the Son breathes out to her in this transformation in order to unite her to himself. There would not be a true and total transformation if the soul were not transformed in the three persons of the Most Holy Trinity in an open and manifest degree.

And this kind of spiration of the Holy Spirit in the soul, by which God transforms her into himself, is so sublime, delicate, and deep a delight that a mortal tongue finds it indescribable, nor can the human intellect, as such, in any way grasp it. Even what comes to pass in the communication given in this temporal transformation is unspeakable, for the soul united and transformed in God breathes out in God to God the very divine spiration that God—she being transformed in him—breathes out in himself to her.⁷⁸

God is not content to enable the soul to receive him perfectly in the vision, conforming the soul to the Son, but enables the soul to perfectly

⁷⁵ *The Spiritual Canticle* 38.5 (*Collected Works*, 620).

⁷⁶ *Spiritual Canticle* 38.5 (*Collected Works*, 620).

⁷⁷ This text is also quoted by Wojtyła in *Faith according to St. John of the Cross*, 230.

⁷⁸ *Spiritual Canticle* 39.3 (*Collected Works*, 622–23).

give not only herself, but the uncreated Love back to God, conforming the soul to the Holy Spirit. It would seem that both the receiving (beatific vision) and the self-giving (beatific love) together essentially constitute the essence of supernatural beatitude, mirroring the life of the Trinity.

Furthermore, as St. John of the Cross explains, the beauty of this gift of self is that it includes the beloved. When the lover has been enriched by the beloved, then his gift of self back to the beloved involves giving also all that he has received. To make the gift of oneself to God means returning to God the gift of God's very Self that he has given to us in Christ and the Holy Spirit.

The Psychological Analogy Illuminates the Structure of the Eucharist

The psychological analogy for the Trinity also illuminates the structure of the Eucharist with its profoundly nuptial character that anticipates heavenly beatitude. In the Eucharist, there is a twofold movement: the Word incarnate comes to us, and we offer him and ourselves back to the Father in sacrifice. Christ becoming present on the altar and being received in Communion mirrors the first procession of the Word. The sacrificial offering of Christ to the Father in the Holy Spirit together with the gift that the faithful make of themselves mirrors the second procession through love. As *Lumen gentium* teaches: "Taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is the source and summit of the whole Christian life, they offer the Divine Victim to God, and offer themselves along with it."⁷⁹ The phrase "source and summit" also reflects these two movements. In Communion we receive the source of the Church's life, the Word incarnate, but in the movement of sacrifice the Church reaches the summit of her life in offering herself, with her Head, to the Father. Too often the faithful think of the Eucharist, like heaven, only in terms of receiving, but the Eucharist, the Christian Sacrifice,⁸⁰ is no less about self-offering.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §11. See also Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §48: "Offering the immaculate victim, not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, they should learn to offer themselves"; Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, §98: "In order that the oblation by which the faithful offer the divine Victim in this sacrifice to the heavenly Father may have its full effect, it is necessary that the people add something else, namely, the *offering of themselves as a victim*."

⁸⁰ See John Paul II, *Dominicae Cena* (1980), §9: "The Eucharist is above all else a sacrifice."

⁸¹ See the Third Eucharistic Prayer: "Grant that we, who are nourished by the Body and Blood of your Son and filled with his Holy Spirit, may become one body, one spirit in Christ. May he make of us an eternal offering to you" (*The Roman Missal*, 3rd typ. ed. [Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011], 653).

The Eucharist thus mirrors the circular movement of the Trinitarian processions. Christ gives himself to us so that, through the Spirit, we can return the Son to the Father together with the gift of ourselves.

Trinitarian Exemplarity in Creation

In summary, the psychological analogy is helpful not only for illuminating the Trinity, but also for seeing the Trinity as the pattern or archetype for creation and the life of heaven. In his *Introduction to Christianity*, Joseph Ratzinger has a profound reflection on how the triune God is the exemplar not only of unity, but also of multiplicity and individuality.⁸² We can add that the psychological analogy helps us to see the triune God, with its two eternal processions according to intellect and will, as the *exemplar* especially of *all created complementarity*, starting with that of intellect and will, but also extending to other fundamental complementary pairs, such as that of male and female, paternity and maternity, analysis and synthesis, receiving and giving, communion and sacrifice, bridegroom and bride, Christ and the Church.⁸³

⁸² Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 178–79: “Although to us, the nondivine, it [God] is one and single, the one and only divine as opposed to all that is not divine; nevertheless in itself it is truly fullness and plurality, so that creaturely unity and plurality are both in the same degree a likeness and a share of the divine. Not only unity is divine; plurality, too, is something primordial and has its inner ground in God himself. . . . This has a further important consequence. To him who believes in God as tri-une, the highest unity is not the unity of inflexible monotony. The model of unity or oneness toward which one should strive is consequently not the indivisibility of the atom, the smallest unity, which cannot be divided up any further; the authentic acme of unity is the unity created by love. The multi-unity that grows in love is a more radical, truer unity than the unity of the ‘atom.’” See also Emery, *Trinity in Aquinas*, 31: “The Trinitarian distinction is, for Aquinas, the cause not only of the distinction of creation (distinction between God and the world), but also of the plurality of creatures.” See *In I sent.*, d. 26, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2.

⁸³ It can be seen from this that the complementarity of marriage is a uniquely important icon of the Trinity, as of the Eucharist and the Church. See Pope Francis, General Audience of April 2, 2014: “The image of God is the married couple: the man and the woman; not only the man, not only the woman, but both of them together. This is the image of God: love, God’s covenant with us is represented in that covenant between man and woman. And this is very beautiful! We are created in order to love, as a reflection of God and his love. And in the marital union man and woman fulfil this vocation through their mutual reciprocity and their full and definitive communion of life. When a man and woman celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony God as it were ‘is mirrored’ in them; he impresses in them his own features and the indelible character of his love. Marriage is the icon of God’s love

Karl Rahner has complained that the Scholastic treatise on the Trinity, built on the psychological analogy, tends to stand in majestic isolation from the rest of theology and from human experience.⁸⁴ A right understanding of the psychological analogy, however, far from isolating the Trinity, enables it to be seen for what it is, the exemplar of all of creation, of the work of salvation, and of the life of the Church on earth and in heaven.

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for us. Indeed, God is communion too." See also: Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, trans. John Betz and David Bentley Hart (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 610–11; Marc Cardinal Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, trans. Philip Milligan and Linda M. Cicone (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006); Donald J. Keefe, S.J., *Covenantal Theology: The Eucharistic Order of History* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1996), 379–99.

⁸⁴ See Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 14: "Thus the treatise on the Trinity occupies a rather isolated position in the total dogmatic system. To put it crassly, and not without exaggeration, when the treatise is concluded, its subject is never brought up again. Its function in the whole dogmatic construction is not clearly perceived. It is as though this mystery has been revealed for its own sake . . . locked up within itself. We make statements about it, but as a reality it has nothing to do with us at all. Average theology cannot reject all these assertions as exaggerations."