And if our eye outlooks that mark, to whom should I express my thanks more readily than to Augustine himself? To live with him intermittently for ten years, to think, to pray, to preach, to teach under his tutelage, has been a life-shaping experience of which, I fear, the reader of this study will gain barely an idea. There can be few thinkers, Christian or not, who have so much that they can give to a careful student. And yet he gives it always with a caution: Expectationem vestram Deus impleat ex ore nostro. Amastis enim ut veniretis: sed amastis, quid? Si nos, et hoc bene: nam volumus amari a vobis, sed nolumus in nobis. Quia ergo in Christo vas amamus, in Christo nos redamate, et amor noster pro invicem gemat ad Deum.

September 1979
Toronto

INTRODUCTION:
THE PROBLEM OF SELF-LOVE

"The primal destruction of man was self-love." "There is no one who does not love himself; but one must search for the right love and avoid the warped." "Indeed you did not love yourself when you did not love the God who made you." These three sentences set side by side show why the idea of self-love in St. Augustine of Hippo constitutes a problem. Self-love is loving God; it is also hating God. Self-love is common to all men; it is restricted to those who love God. Mutually incompatible assertions about self-love jostle one another and demand to be reconciled. And Augustine himself refuses to undertake this task for us. There is no "theory of self-love" articulated in his pages. He rarely tells us what he means by the phrase, and when he does he is misleading.

Yet the problem has a far greater fascination than if it were merely a matter of sighing over terminological loose ends in the work of a single theologian. For the notion of self-love has never been long absent from Christian theology, and whenever it has returned it has brought its sheaves of paradox with it. Two texts from the synoptic Gospels have kept it in view. One of them, the second member of the twofold love-command, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," was fundamental to Western Christian moral thinking. The other, while not actually using the expression "self-love," was definitive for the paradox: "Whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." This biblical foundation served to support bewilderingly complex and conflicting ways of speaking. We find Calvin describing self-love as a "noxious pest" and Joseph Butler lamenting that men have not enough regard to their own good. We hear Kierkegaard enigmatically
instructing us to “love yourself in the same way as you love your neighbour when you love him as yourself.” St. Thomas Aquinas warns us of the multiple meanings of the phrase and cautions us against confusion. Generalizing broadly, we may say with Thomas that there are three different evaluations of self-love possible within the Christian theological tradition: friendly, hostile, and neutral. But many writers have slipped, consciously or unconsciously, from one to another of these. The truth is that despite Thomas’s cautions the idea of self-love has rarely been thoroughly examined. In a manner quite appropriate to the texts of Scripture which started it all, self-love has been the object of a thousand passing allusions.

If we look for a well-defined and limited area of study in which to attempt some clarification, the writings of St. Augustine immediately recommend themselves. He is the first of the Latin Fathers to make any serious use of the expression amor sui and the first of any of the Fathers to offer an account of the scriptural phrase “as yourself” in this connection. He uses the phrase over the whole of its evaluative range, positive, negative, and neutral, and so represents the wider problem rather well. And his use of it is associated with the eudaemonist theory of ethics, central to his theological and metaphysical convictions, so that we have access to the question in a context where the predominant theological pressures may easily be traced. Certainly “self-love” is not a great Augustinian theological artifact; yet it has been significantly fashioned by Augustine’s theology, and there are many such artifacts in the middle ground and background of the picture.

The history of “self-love” before Augustine can be summarized briefly. There exists in Greek a word, philautia, the natural tone of which is negative. With this tone it makes its one appearance in the New Testament (2 Tim. 3:2), and with this tone it is found in the works of Philo of Alexandria, who regards it as the central impiety from which other vices flow. In the Greek Christian writers the influence of Philo can be felt: Clement of Alexandria makes a number of references to philautia, Origen a few, the Cappadocian Fathers and their dependents a number. Outside this mystical company we find a scattering of isolated occurrences, some of them comments on the scriptural text, all of them negative in tone. Before Maximus Confessor in the seventh century A.D. it appears that no Greek Christian thought of philautia as something possibly commendable.

There was, however, an inclination in pre-Christian Greek philosophy to speak of philautia in a different way. In Plato’s Laws we first encounter the saying, apparently traditional, that “every man is naturally his own friend.” This idea was to provide Aristotle with a developed theory of friendship. In the Eudemian Ethics he elaborates the theory that friendship is formed on the basis of self-esteem by the recognition in the friend of that rational nature which one has learned to value in himself; in the Nicomachean Ethics the word philautia is brought in to express this positive self-evaluation. Introducing the word, Aristotle acknowledges that common usage is against its carrying anything but a negative tone; but common usage, he thinks, is wrong. It is not, of course, the universality of this Aristotelian self-love which breaks with customary modes of speech, for anyone in a moment of disillusion may say that all men are selfish, but its neutral, or even positive, moral tone.

In Latin the situation is not at all so clear, and, without the assistance of a study as thorough as that which Hausherr devoted to the Greek expression, we must be content with some tentative generalizations. There appear to be three ways of speaking about amor sui (or dilectio sui), not consciously distinguished and often flowing into one another. First there is what we take to be the common, popular idea of self-love as a widespread but not very praiseworthy attitude. Often love seems to carry an evaluative sense in this context: self-love is having a high opinion of yourself, being blind to your own limitations. Secondly, there is the Latin equivalent of Aristotle’s philautia, the self-estimative basis of friendship. This use is in evidence in that treatise which, at one or two removes, seems to be strongly dependent on Aristotle’s Ethics, Cicero’s Laelius. (And inasmuch as
Cicero is more insistent than Aristotle that only virtuous men can form true friendships, "self-love" in this work takes on a more positive aspect even than it had in the source. Thirdly, there is a use of *amor sui* that is characteristic of the Stoics and relates to their doctrine of *oikeiosis*. Self-love is a natural dynamism in animal life which operates to protect and defend the integrity of the subject. Its tone is basically neutral but can fluctuate between positive and negative. Positively, it appears in both a lower and a higher form, as life according to animal nature in the infant and as life according to reason in the philosopher; philosophic conversion is the transformation of self-love from the one form to the other. Negatively, it is the reason why even adults with philosophical aspirations will retain their fear of death.

The phrase *se ipsum diligere* was employed by Rufinus to translate Basil’s *philautia*; but we cannot say that the expression in this or one of the other senses played any significant part in Latin theology before Augustine. Indeed, it is surprising how little attention is paid to the "summary of the law," the "two commands" of love-of-God and love-of-neighbor, in either the Western or the Eastern Fathers. Clement of Alexandria and Origen both comment on the summary and argue that the "neighbor" whom we are to love second to God is Christ; Gregory of Nyssa mentions it, and adds as a third command love of one’s wife. "Barnabas" tactfully glosses the phrase "as yourself" to mean "more than your own life." Until more detailed research proves otherwise, we must make the supposition that Augustine is responsible not only for the currency of "self-love" in the theology of the West but also for the predominance of the "summary" in Western Christian ethics.

**THE PHILOSOPHY OF SELF-LOVE**

The philosophical analysis of self-love is altogether more complicated than even the subtle St. Thomas admitted. Having differentiated the senses in which the three contrasting evaluations are made, we face extensive work ahead of us. First, we must ask what concepts of love and of self are appealed to in the various uses of the phrase. What models can we use for the act or attitude of loving? We may, perhaps, think of love as a way of human relating, a behavior pattern involving more than one person, rather like dancing a pas de deux. In this case self-love must appear, as it has appeared to many theologians down the centuries, inescapably paradoxical, and the same will be true if we take the seeking or acquisitive pattern as characteristic of love. Conceptual purism may then suggest that all thought of loving oneself had better be abandoned altogether. Alternatively, we may search for a proper use for the paradox. Some reflexive expressions have a negating sense: if a man "talks to himself," for example, he need not literally address himself as "you," but may just talk into the air, to nobody; or if a man is "self-deceived" it does not mean he is so by any ruse or trick but simply that he acts on false assumptions, as he would if someone had deceived him, though in fact nobody has done so. In just the same way, it could be held, self-love is a kind of nonlove; and this could be taken either negatively as a failure to love or positively as an attitude of confidence such as might have sprung, though it did not, from the consciousness of being loved.

There are other ways of understanding love which offer a better prospect for the reflexive use. Psychologists sometimes speak of self-love to mean what they express more technically as autoerotism. In this context, where love is nothing more than receiving erotic stimulation, love of oneself would seem to be analogous to love of someone else. More sophisticatedly, some recent philosophical studies analyze love as a synthesis of value judgment and emotional attraction, and again, on certain readings of this thesis, there would seem to be no reason why self-love should not be treated as a literal expression. It is as easy to form value judgments about oneself as it is to form them about other people, though whether the emotional aspect is as simply accommodated will depend on how the emotions are conceived of as operating. What if love is interpreted as benevolence, that is, planning and acting to promote someone’s welfare? Here, too,
one may love oneself in just the same way as one may love others. When we condemn "selfishness," we normally mean "thinking of oneself" in just this sense, with the unspoken assumption that "thinking of others" is something one ought to do as well, or instead. And the possibilities are still not exhausted. Within the Thomist tradition love has been used with a wide metaphysical sense to mean a movement toward, or a force maintaining, cohesion and unity, whether of the universe at one extreme or of the individual personality at the other. This will tend to yield an idea of self-love as a kind of personal ontological integrity, an "identity with ourselves, an adherence to ourselves," as Gillemann describes it. In this case love-of-self, so far from being the surd among loves, becomes the archetype of them all, a presupposition of all further loving relationships, which will, given the interrelatedness of all agents, necessarily lead on to other loving relationships if only it is itself complete.  

Of such a kind are the ambiguities of the word love. It would hardly seem possible that so inoffensive an item as the reflexive pronoun could complicate things much more, and yet here too there is room for disagreement. To certain thinkers it comes naturally to conceive of "divisions" of the psyche; to others it appears obvious that the psyche must be something unitary. Contemporary Christian theologians are somewhat jealous of their monist anthropology, and though no doubt they will accept a demand for compromise more readily from Freud than from Plato, they are still hardily likely to be enthusiastic. We must grant Christian monists the point that divisions of the soul, whether Platonic or Freudian, have a most obscure metaphysical status. Freud occasionally appears to argue for them on no more sophisticated ground than the mere fact of reflexive operations, thus begging the whole question of whether or not the operation in question can naturally be conceived of as reflexive or not.  

The matter is confused still further when psychologists of the so-called dynamic school introduce their own new category of the self, defined by one representative as "the body and mind . . . as they are observed and reacted to by the individual." Here, one would have thought, there could be no suggestion of ontological independence, for the "self" is by definition a creation of the "ego," nothing more than an idea in the subject's mind; yet such a consideration does not seem to limit the ease with which this "self" is commonly hypostatized. In principle the self should be as endlessly susceptible of division as the ideas of the mind are susceptible of multiplication, any new selection of features constituting at any moment a new idea of oneself. But psychologists of this school detect sufficient consistency in the way people view themselves to generalize the possibilities into two, an empirical and an ideal self, a "self as conceived" and a "self to be realised."  

Once the conceptual possibilities have been reviewed, we are faced with a series of questions in the realm of metaethics. How may an idea of justifiable self-regard be fitted into a theory of morality? One possibility would be to restrict it to a subordinate place in the hierarchy of principles. There are indeed, one might say, duties that a moral agent has with regard to himself, but they arise only because they serve some higher moral principle which is not self-regarding. The father of a family, for example, should take care not to destroy his own health by overwork; but the reason he ought not to do so is simply that he owes it to his family to be well. It is not necessary that the higher principle served by such self-referring obligations should be the principle of other-regard. Self-regard and other-regard might both alike be subordinated to some more abstract and generalized principle such as justice. A second possibility would be the ethical theory of "egoism," in which all other moral obligations are held to flow from an ultimate obligation of personal fulfillment. A third theory, more difficult to pin down but highly characteristic of Christian theologians, is that self-regard and some other non-self-referring principle ultimately coincide; so that while nothing can be justified on other grounds which could not also be justified on grounds of self-regard, equally, nothing could be truly self-regarding if it was not demonstrably right on other grounds.
the alternatives to self-regard (justice, other-regard, love of God, etc.) but by shifting the epistemological weight from one part of the hierarchy to another. It is not necessary in any ethical theory that the principle of ultimate justification should also be the heuristic rule for discovering what is right and what is wrong. A good example of the contrary case is the theory called “Rule Utilitarianism,” which (to summarize rather crudely) declares that the greatest happiness of the greatest number is the formal ultimate justification of all moral obligations, but then refers us to rules of a quite different kind, themselves justified by their utility, for daily practical guidance. A Christian theory which was formally “egoist” might nevertheless insist that only in the revealed moral law could we learn what kind of behavior served our own best interests. This point becomes of great significance for interpreting the third kind of theory, that in which two different moral principles are said to coincide. We often find Christians saying something slightly paradoxical, that virtue is indeed rewarding but that the blessing must not be “something which the agent himself intended.” Thus one modern writer remarks that “Heaven is full of people who are not particularly concerned with being there.” This paradox arises from an ethical theory which allows an equal but not exclusive justifying role to the principle of self-interest, but no epistemological role at all. As soon as the agent begins thinking about his own satisfaction, he is no longer on the way to achieving it. Virtue is good because it fulfills humanity. But humanity cannot pursue virtue by pursuing fulfillment.

When the foothills of philosophical investigation have been crossed, there open up to us yet higher and more massive ranges. The issues now are largely theological. Why should a Christian choose one kind of theory rather than another? The arbitration among ethical theories is normally thought to be a task of philosophy, to be settled on grounds of coherence and consistency. Should not the theologian remain indifferent to the outcome and accept whatever theory his philosophical colleague tells him is the best? In fact, however, theologians do choose theories of morality by criteria drawn from their own discipline; they find that one rather than another is convenient for expressing what they have to say about original sin or about the moral law and divine grace or about created theology and the eschaton. The nature of this transition from theological to philosophical principle is difficult to identify, but that there really is a connection theological history alone would lead us to conclude with some certainty. It is in the last degree implausible that Catholics have stoutly defended self-love down the ages and Protestants castigated them for it solely because of a foolish misunderstanding about what each meant by the phrase. An enquiry which begins as a simple attempt to sort out the different senses of self-love is bound to end by arbitrating major theological causes.

But the wider philosophical and theological issues must wait their turn until our last chapter. For the most part our study will be concerned to report and analyze the treatment they receive from St. Augustine.
An essential preliminary to our study is a survey of Augustine’s thoughts about “love” itself. But here we have to pick our way across the field of a major interpretative battle on which the smoke still hangs heavy—that battle, of course, which was provoked by Anders Nygren’s presentation of Augustinian caritas as a synthesis of self-sacrificing agape and self-seeking eros. To the merits of Nygren’s critique of Augustine (for that is what it is) we shall pay more serious attention in the final chapter. Our purpose for the present is to take as quick a path through the conflict as we may, observing only what will assist us in reaching our own interpretation. This will involve one or two general comments about Nygren’s approach, followed by a glance at the discussion it has provoked among Swedish scholars, a discussion into which our own view of the question fits most naturally.

It is inevitable that any account of love in Augustine’s thought will have to distinguish different strands within it. Perhaps it is unnecessary to labor the point at this stage that such distinctions cannot be made simply on the basis of vocabulary alone. Nygren’s popularizers have sometimes imagined that they could read off philosophy from the lexicon, as when one well-known writer argues, with reference to the famous “Love and do as you will” saying, that the use of diligere in preference to amare indicates the meaning “love with care” and not “love with desire.” Nygren himself is not so thoughtless, and yet his astonishing assertion that Augustine was disingenuous in claiming synonymity for the words amor, dilectio and caritas betrays the same sort of confusion. It may be convenient for modern thinkers to label certain motifs by the Latin or Greek words which they think incapsulate them, but they should not then suppose that they have discov-
thought but in reality. He calls them "different general attitudes to life." He calls the Augustinian idea of love a "synthesis," yielding a "tertium quid."9

Some of Nygren’s critics have apparently been content to accept the postulate of an objective plurality of loves, contending only that the different loves so identified can and should coexist in one subject, perhaps even in one relationship.10 And clearly, if we have a certain range of phenomena to study, this is a compelling approach. Consider the difference between a man’s love for his wife, his love for his son, his love for his childhood friend, and his love for his parents. We need to say that these are different kinds of love, species within the genus. They are different to the one who experiences them, they are different to one who observes them. If this had been the kind of distinction that Nygren was making, it would have been sufficient to reply that though different these loves are not different attitudes to life. They are meant to exist in combination. To be the subject of a number of them is to be a whole and balanced personality.

But neither Augustine nor Nygren generally had this wide scope of particular affections, each with its different psychological structure, in view. Their discussion turns on the universal moral attitudes which Christ commands as the sum of moral and religious duty, love-of-God and love-of-neighbor. And to attempt to distinguish different kinds of love within either of these would appear to be artificially precise. How could one love God with the wrong kind of love? One can love him too little; one can love Mammon in its place. But the love of God is simply the love of God, not an attitude in need of further specification before we can discern what it is that is required of us. The same can be said for love of neighbor, provided that it is still the universal attitude and not the particularized relationships that is in question.11

When we find ourselves distinguishing different strands of thought about love-of-God and love-of-neighbor, then, it is not that there are several different loves, immanently distinguished, but that the loving subject stands in a complex and variable relation to the reality which his love confronts. Pluriformity is imposed upon his love from out-

side by the pluriform structure of reality; or, in Augustine’s favorite phrase, his love is “ordered.” He may find himself dependent or depended upon, equal or unequal, commanding or under command; but these are not things that he controls, and his love must still be love in whatever relation to its object it may find itself. Thus we do well to speak of “aspects” of love rather than of “kinds” and to remember as we differentiate them that we have to do not only with subjectivity but with the complex order of reality that is love’s object. Subjectively, love-of-neighbor is one thing. Augustine himself will even be prepared to say that it is one thing with love-of-God, for in either case the ontological ground of love is the Holy Spirit shed abroad in our hearts.

Nygren contrasted his eros and agape especially in terms of their differing grounds, objective and subjective, for finding an object valuable. Eros “recognizes” value in the object of love, agape “creates” value in it.12 A love which presupposes a subject-object polarity between itself and the value in which it rejoices is, for Nygren, “thirsty” and so self-seeking. Only when value is posited in the object by the subject is there self-giving love. If we measure Augustine’s view of love by this criterion, it is clear that only God’s love for man can be agape, for that alone is without presupposition. Man’s love for God rests in the absolute value which is intrinsic to God’s being, while man’s love for man presupposes the value which God, as Creator and Redeemer, has already set upon the object before the subject stumbles upon him. No man could claim to have conferred the value that he finds in his neighbor. On the other hand, Augustine’s defenders have put a question mark against Nygren’s equation of delight-in-objective-value with self-seeking. Why must it be that a lover who finds value objectively given in the object of his love should wish to appropriate that value to himself? Can the subject-object relationship not be understood in quite a different way?

Joseph Mausbach’s foundational work Die Ethik des Heiligen Augustinus (1909) had already drawn attention to the significant concept of order in Augustine’s thought about love. Nygren’s first
major Swedish critic, Gunnar Hultgren, made important use of this notion in pitting Mausbach’s “ontological” conception of order against Nygren’s “psychological” conception. 13 “Order,” in either case, is a teleological notion. The subject-object polarity between love and value does not have to mean that the subject imposes his own teleological order upon the objective value he finds. He does not have to love it for himself, subordinating it to his privately conceived goal of happiness. It can equally well mean that he discovers, with the value, a teleological order that is already implicit in it, and that in loving it he bows in obedient conformity to the order he finds. For Nygren, objective value could only be loved by the subject’s imposing an order upon it; for Mausbach the order was given objectively with the value.

Hultgren used Mausbach to correct Nygren’s account of Augustine; and yet he conceded that there was a psychological order present in Augustine’s thought as well as an ontological, and that there was a certain untidiness in the overlap of the two. No such concession was made by Rudolf Johannesson or by the latest in the distinguished series of Swedish contributors to the debate, Ragnar Holte. 14 For Holte every feature of Augustine’s moral discourse is to be understood in terms of an ontological cosmic order. In particular, the “happy life” (beata vita) is not something which man postis as a goal for himself, but is, quite literally, God himself. The desire for happiness is a spontaneous movement of the soul released by the Idea (Platonically conceived) of the Good. Thus Holte’s presentation of Augustine sets him diametrically at the opposite extreme from Nygren. Everything is given in the object, so much so that the very reality of the subject as free agent becomes problematic. 15

It is striking that neither Hultgren nor Holte, both of whom concentrated their studies upon Augustine’s earlier writings, made any use of a passage from City of God in which Augustine, almost in so many words, confronts the difference between positive and objective order:

Now among those things which exist in any mode of being, and are distinct from God who made them, living things are ranked above inanimate objects; those which have the power of reproduction, or even the urge towards it, are superior to those who lack that impulse. Among living things, the sentient rank above the insensitive, and animals above trees. Among the sentient, the intelligent take precedence over the unthinking—men over cattle. Among the intelligent, immortal beings are higher than mortals, angels being higher than men.

This is the scale according to the order of nature; but there is another way of valuing things, based on the use that each individual has for them [pro suo cuiusque usu]. By this we would put some inanimate things above some creatures of sense—so much so that if we had the power, we should be ready to remove these creatures from the world of nature, whether in ignorance of the place they occupy in it, or, though knowing that, still subordinating them to our convenience. For instance, would not anyone prefer to have food in his house, rather than mice, or money rather than fleas? There is nothing surprising in this; for we find the same criterion operating in the value we place on human beings, for all the undoubted worth of a human creature. A higher price is often paid for a horse than for a slave, for a jewel than for a maidservant.

Thus there is a very wide difference between a rational consideration, in its free judgement, and the constraint of need, or the attraction of desire. Rational consideration decides on the position of each thing in the scale of importance, on its own merits, whereas need thinks in terms of means to ends [quid propter quid expectat]. Reason looks for the truth as it is revealed to enlightened intelligence; desire has an eye for what allures by the promise of sensual enjoyment. 16

Certain things are left obscure in this passage; in particular, what
relation does the order of use have to the evil wills of the rebellious angels and to the "law of justice" which prefers good men to evil angels? But the general message is clear. Augustine distinguishes the ordering imposed upon things by individuals pursuing their private ends from the order that things have in themselves. But this, of course, is the late Augustine. Early Augustine did not make this distinction but worked with a very simple rule of order: "Whatever is for something else is of less value than the thing it is for." Yet he needed the distinction; and the lack of it sometimes led him into absurdity, as when he persuaded himself that professional singers, because they perform "for money" or "for fame," know nothing about music since they imagine music to be of a lower ontological status than money and fame. As we shall see, it is significant that Augustine had not yet discovered the distinction at the time he wrote the first book of De doctrina Christiana.

This ambiguity affects Augustine’s handling of the classical tradition of thought about the finis bonorum.

A tradition originating in the opening pages of Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics and continuing in the Peripatetic and Academic streams of philosophy down to Cicero interpreted morality as the pursuit of a "final good" (in Latin, finis bonorum) or "supreme good" (summmum bonum). This offered an account both of the homogeneity of the moral enterprise in all its forms as the pursuit of a common goal, and of the wide variety of conflicting moral beliefs as differences of opinion about the identification of the goal. In the form in which Augustine first encountered this tradition and in which it had the profoundest of influences upon him—the form in which he met it as a young man reading Cicero’s Hortensius—the final good was assumed to be identified with "happiness," and the variety of opinions were all concerned with what happiness consisted in. It was "eudaemonist."20

But this tradition was susceptible both of a more realist and of a more positivist interpretation. On the realist side one could stress that there was at least this single goal toward which all rational beings moved, thereby minimizing the extent, if not the importance, of disagreements. On the positivist side one could regard the concept of final good simply as a convenient point of comparison, so that for each school the "final good" was what it chose to make it.21

There was much in Augustine’s Neoplatonic inheritance that inclined him to a realist interpretation of the teleological tradition. Especially if we concentrate on the concepts of "happiness" (beata vita, beatitudo, beatitas) and "supreme good" (summmum bonum) in his thought, we are bound to say, as a generalization at least, that his preference was to characterize the telos objectively, in terms of the order of beings. There is an argument to which he returns constantly throughout his life, demonstrating that, since the supreme good could hardly be something "below" man and is unlikely to be something of an equality with him, it must be looked for "above" him.22 But we cannot go all the way with Ragnar Holte and conclude that the positivist strain in the tradition exercised no influence upon Augustine. For the very same apologetic concern that led him to identify the "final good" of classical philosophy with the transcendent God of Christianity required him to criticize non-Christian philosophies not simply as mistaken in their description of the human situation but as morally perverse in the goals that they set for themselves. And so it is that Augustine continues to speak of "positing an end" (finem ponere, finem constituere), especially when he is engaged in systematic criticism of the classical options. While summmum bonum is an expression to which he usually gives a realist interpretation, finis bonorum, though ostensibly a synonym, more often introduces a positivist note.23

Intersecting with this ambiguity we may discern another. The Peripatetic tradition supposed that the finis bonorum was a function of the subject himself, an activity or state of being. Augustine, again under Neoplatonic influence and again with a Christian apologetic concern, objectified this into a transcendent object of worship and delight, God himself. Thus the classical tradition of morality as seeking one’s own true well-being became transformed into the Christian...
command that one should love God as *summun bonum*. Frequently Augustine refers to God himself as the true *beata vita*, a strikingly paradoxical identification which puts the axe to the root of the subjectivism in the classical eudaemonist tradition. On the other hand Augustine found that this identification left him with a problem: how was he to maintain a sufficient opacity about the identification of God and the happy life? Once again, Christian apologetics required him to criticize the pagan options, and this he could hardly do if they all amounted ipso facto to the love of God. And so we find a marked withdrawal in his later writings toward a description of the final good once again in terms of a state of the subject, as “peace in life eternal” or “fellowship in the enjoyment of God.”

Clearly the debate between advocates of a “psychological” and advocates of an “ontological” account of love in Augustine will turn on the relative significance assigned to the Academic and Ciceronian strain in his thinking on the one hand and to the Neoplatonic on the other. Nevertheless, it is important that the debate should not become polarized. In between the extremes of cosmic love and positive love, as we shall call them, the cosmological force in which the subject is hardly let to be subject at all, and the self-direction of the subject toward the end which he has chosen for his happiness, there are intermediate possibilities which became increasingly important to Augustine as he continued his search for an “ordered” love in which the subject was neither victim nor master. He can represent love as an admiring appreciation of good, in which the subject recognizes a teleology which he has not himself imposed but from which he can maintain an observer’s independence. This we refer to as rational love. And Augustine also conceives that the subject, having recognized the objective order of things, may freely affirm it, thus giving the weight of his agency to support an order which he did not devise. This we describe as benevolent love. In tracing these four aspects of love in Augustine’s thought we will show how he may have been moved from one to the other in order to do justice to the command of love that Christ gave to his disciples.

**Four Aspects of Love**

Clearly Augustine believed that love is firmly grounded in the fundamental realities of the cosmos. The three Stoic divisions of philosophy are included in the two precepts upon which the Law and the Prophets hang: “Here is our natural philosophy! Here is our moral philosophy! . . . Here is our logic!” That the command to love God and neighbor should be regarded, even in rhetorical exaggeration, as a datum of natural philosophy is likely to surprise a modern man accustomed to making a rather sharp distinction between moral and physical necessity. But Augustine stands in a tradition of classical cosmology which was used to explaining the motions of the heavens by the attraction of like to like, an attraction described as *philia* or *eros*, and he sees the love of man for God as a special case of the same attraction. Because all things do move to their goal, their final cause, therefore man ought to.

This view of love as a natural law of the universe is well illustrated from the passage in *City of God* XIX where Augustine examines the “love of peace” and finds it expressed in a wide variety of events. “Just as nobody is reluctant to be glad,” he claims, “so nobody is reluctant to have peace.” Even warriors fight in order to establish a peace which will suit them. Those who disturb an existing political peace do so not to abolish peace but to exchange one form of it for another. This thesis he defends with a series of extreme examples which imply an a fortiori argument. Bandits depend upon “peace among comrades,” the mythical half-human wild man Cacus slays and kills to maintain peace with his own body, the wildest birds and animals preserve their own kind in a sort of peace, and finally, the most grotesque example, a man suspended upside down, so that the natural “peace” between soul and body is inevitably brought to an end, will nevertheless achieve a certain “peace” as his body decomposes, providing food for the creatures which breed in its putrefaction.

The significance of this argument for our purposes lies in Augustine’s readiness to subsume a number of differing phenomena under...
one all-embracing natural law which is a kind of love. A physical phenomenon, that matter in flux seeks an equilibrium, is compared with a political phenomenon, that men form communities even in the course of overthrowing others, and both are compared with the anthropological phenomenon that men do not want to die and will fight to preserve their lives. Behind all of them is discerned the universal tendency toward pax, a word which we might translate as “stability” or “equilibrium” were it not that it must also do justice to the perfect bliss of the City of God. Man cannot love no peace, for that would be to erase the last features of nature, but he may love an unjust peace, a kind of stability which falls short of perfect peace in the presence of God. The fact that he must love some peace is the ground of the argument that he ought to love that peace. And so we see that the distinction between natural necessity and moral obligation is not completely eroded, but that the one is used to give strong reinforcement to the other.

If a natural law such as this is to be the basis of human morality, its application must be differentiated. Each item of the natural universe loves the kind of peace which is appropriate to it. The peace to which farmyard animals are drawn is the peace of the carnal life; it is their appropriate good. The tree, which cannot love anything with sentient motion, seeks to grow more fertile and fruitful. The stone, the river, the wind, and the flame, with no sense of life at all, still tend toward their proper places of rest. “For the movements of gravity are, as it were, the ‘loves’ of bodies, whether they strive downwards or upwards as heavy or light objects. As the mind is carried by its love, so is the body by its weight, each to its own place.” Such analogies are a favorite theme with Augustine. “Weight does not fall to the bottom simply, but to its own place. Fire goes up, a stone comes down. . . . Oil. . . . floats on water. . . . My weight is my love; by it I move wherever I move.” Thus the love of God is interpreted metaphysically as the proper movement of the human will toward its final cause. It has its own “force,” so that “love cannot be idle in the soul. It must necessarily cause movement.”

In accounting for love in this way Augustine faces the major difficulty that human love is free to direct itself to an improper object. The cosmic account seems to prove too much; disobedient and unnatural motions are left without satisfactory explanation. In a passage of De libero arbitrio Augustine addressed the problem by comparing in some detail the movement of a stone falling to earth and that of a will inclining to sin, clarifying what the two phenomena have in common and where they differ. The difference is expressed like this: The movement of the stone is “natural” while the movement of the human will is “voluntary” and therefore susceptible of praise and blame. It would be monstrous to blame the stone for falling because it does not have it in its power to restrain its downward motion. How are the two movements alike? “The movement of the soul is like the movement of the stone in this respect: just as the one is the proper movement of the stone, so the other is the proper movement of the will.” Translation is difficult. If we say, “It is the stone’s own movement,” we render the assertion trivial, for it conveys nothing to declare that a moving will is like a moving stone in that it is the will or the stone which moves in either case and not something else. But neither can we render proprius by “characteristic,” for this would be to make Augustine say something he does not believe; it is the destiny of the human will to cleave to God, and any movement away from him toward sin is, in an important sense, out of character. Rather, the movement of the stone and of the will are each “proper” in that they occur without any exterior propulsive force intervening as an efficient cause. It is not a “proper” movement of a stone when it is thrown upward into the air, but only when it falls again and is drawn downward by its final cause.

Love accounts not only for natural motion in the universe but also for natural cohesion. If we were not convinced that timber and stone held together, bound into loving union, we would never dare to step inside even a church building. There is a corresponding series of expressions in which the Christian soul’s love for God is pictured as rest in God and as unification with God, whether proleptically of
spiritual experience in this life or in an eschatological context. "Cleaving" to God, *adhaesio* or *inhaesio*, is a common expression, particularly under the influence of the text Psalm 72 (73): 28, "It is good for me to cleave unto God," a verse which Augustine quotes often. The perfected soul "rests" in God, sharing the sabbath rest which he has eternally in his own being. By cleaving to the Lord the believer is "one spirit" with him, drawn into his life, "glued together with him through immortality."34 The premise from which the metaphysical notion of love proceeds is the derived status of man as a creature. Insufficient of himself for himself because he does not have true being in himself, man is drawn back toward the source of being with a love which expresses his dependence, needy and thirsty like Plato's *eros* in one of its aspects, full of the longing which affects us for things to which we naturally belong but from which we are separated, *desiderium*.35 And yet the Christian doctrine of creation-from-nothing has imposed its own distinctive shape upon a cosmic teleology which is in other ways similar to the Neoplatonic conceptions of Plotinus. Whereas for the pagan philosopher each degree of existence, body soul and mind, had its own inherent good, form life and intelligence respectively, related in each case to the degree above it, soul mind and God, as effect to cause; in Augustine's Christian Platonism the good of each degree is actually identified with the degree above it. Thus love-of-the-good does not operate self-containedly upon the different levels of the derived order, but reaches up in each case to the higher level upon which the subject depends for its existence. The result must inevitably be that the highest of all goods, God himself, exercises a totalitarian claim upon the love of man.36

Here we meet a major problem for Augustine's ethics and indeed for any ethics which makes serious claim to be Christian. Augustine was aware (what theologian ever more so?) that the Bible sums up the Christian ethic in two love-commands with two objects of love, God and neighbor. To these he is constantly alluding; they are the very heart of the meaning of Scripture, they are the two feet on which we must mount, they are the two feet on which we approach God, the two pence paid by the Samaritan at the inn, and even the twin lambs borne by all the flock in the Song of Songs.37 And yet, as metaphysician, Augustine was impelled to the conclusion that only one object of love was permissible: "It is a simple love by which the multiplicity of loves is overcome! One love is needful to overcome the many! One good love ranged against all the evil ones!" Any love was perverse unless it was totally directed to God, for "he loves thee less who loves thee beside thee."38 This is not, as is sometimes suggested, a mere vagary of Augustine's Neoplatonic youth. The totalitarian claim is persistent because it is implied in the very idea of a single *summum bonum*, and that implication is drawn out, rather than concealed, by the modifications which Plotinian teleology underwent at Augustine's hands. The problem is succinctly stated in the early commentary on Galatians: "Contemplation of the truth is founded on the love of God alone; good morals are founded on the love of God and neighbor." It is plain that unless some formula can be found for saying at once that God alone is to be loved and that our neighbor is to be loved at the same time, the demands of the spiritual enterprise will be left hopelessly at variance with the demands of the moral law.39

In the *Solutioqua* we see Augustine already conscious of the difficulty and attempting to resolve it. The famous formula of the early dialogues, "God and the soul," is to be understood as an attempt to reach a resolution on traditionally Platonist lines. In this phrase the exclusive claim of the spiritual world to our love seems to be honored since the soul of man, like God, is spiritual and not material. At the same time it allows us to love other men, in that they too are souls and so included in the legitimate object of our love.40 As a solution, however, it falls down at two points. One of them was apparent to Augustine from the beginning: there was no real basis of unity between God and the soul, no guarantee that love of God will not pull one way and the demands of our friends the other way. God and the soul are not, as they may seem, one single object of knowledge and love.41 The second difficulty emerged more clearly later in his devel-
development: the formula “God and the soul” concedes nothing to biblical materialism. Whatever solution is found to the problem of the totalitarian claim, it must allow for love of our neighbors as material bodies and not only as souls.42

The solution had to lie in the idea of an “order” of love. But this proved difficult for Augustine to work out. The concept of love as cosmic necessity allowed him no room for it; and so he turned to supplement it from the other side of the classical tradition and establish an order of love in the free choice of the subject. Thus it came about that he took the false step of which his critics accuse him and of which Holte attempted to excuse him. Certainly he took it but equally certainly he recovered from it. The mistake was to see the ordering of the two loves in terms of an imposed subordination of means to an end.

POSITIVE LOVE

Man’s relation to the good, in the eudaemonist tradition that Augustine learned from Cicero, was usually expressed by the verbs desire or pursue on the one hand, gain and achieve on the other. In Augustine’s vocabulary we find a range of verbs of this kind, especially petere and its compounds expetere and appetere, optare, sequi, for pursuit, and for achievement, adipisci, habere, and invenire.43 Augustine innovates on the tradition, however, by using the verb love as a synonym for the verbs of pursuit. This at once gives the idea of love a new significance as the quest for a subjectively conceived good and at the same time marries this positivist teleology to the cosmological Plotinian teleology as its obverse and complement.44 Love takes on new positive connotations without losing the old cosmic ones. Naturally this identification of love with the pursuit of subjective goals has been helped by the other modification Augustine made to the tradition, the transformation of the finis bonorum from being a state of the subject to being a transcendent object of attention, God himself.

FOUR ASPECTS OF LOVE

The eudaemonist tradition offered Augustine a way to formulate an “order” of love. It spoke of the difference between what we have come to call “ends” and “means,” more clumsily, things which are pursued for themselves and things which are pursued for the sake of something else. In Augustine’s vocabulary this idea is expressed by the preposition propter, “for the sake of,” and by the verb referre, which is used of the subject’s “directing” his interest in some object to the pursuit of a further goal.45 But Augustine also employed the more general verb uti, to “use,” which from the beginning to the end of his literary career was his favorite term to describe the Christian pilgrim’s attitude to worldly goods, things which must be subordinated to his heavenly goal. Yet, whereas “love” is early used as a synonym for the pursuit of a goal, even of a false goal, Augustine does not for some time bring himself to employ it as a synonym for “use,” the pursuit of a means to the goal. Indeed, “use” is the opposite of love. It is a way of “ordering” that which one does not love toward the goal of achieving that which one does.46

For quite a brief period in the 390s Augustine departed from this practice, believing that he had found in the concept of “use” a good way to accommodate the second love which Christ commanded, love of the neighbor, within the unitary love of God that Christian metaphysics demanded. The steps toward the experiment are quite clear. First, into the general category of “objects of use” Augustine introduced the particular relations that bind us to other human beings, so that we are said to “use” our friends for kindness, our enemies for patience, etc.47 Then the term use was brought together with its partner enjoyment (frutti), which is love in possession of the supreme good; these two, which had been quite independent in the writings of the 380s, would frequently appear as a pair thereafter.48 Thirdly, Augustine took the decisive step of including human beings among the proper objects of “use.”49 And finally, in the first book of De doctrina Christiana (397), he characterized “use” as a kind of love, so that the use-enjoyment pair corresponded to the twofold command of love to God and neighbor.
This book has well deserved the considerable attention it has received both from mediaeval and modern readers. But its very popularity may obscure the experimental and finally inconclusive character of its solution to the problem of the order of love. It begins with a distinction, important for the subsequent direction of the later books, which are about language, between "things" and "signs"; "things," which are to be the subject of the first book, are then categorized into "objects of enjoyment" and "objects of use." In the initial characterization of this distinction, "enjoyment," but not "use," is described as "love": "To enjoy something is to cleave to it in love for its own sake, to use something is to direct (refere) the object of use to obtaining that which one loves" (4.4). These terms are then left on one side for the first half of the book, which is devoted to a review of the Christian doctrines of God and salvation; this, however, is still intended to support the contention that "only eternal and unchanging things are to be enjoyed, and others to be used with a view to achieving the enjoyment of those." Returning to the pair halfway through, he asks whether men should "enjoy" or should "use" each other and adds: "We are commanded to love one another; the question is whether man is to be loved by man for his own sake or for the sake of something else." Tentatively Augustine replies: for the sake of something else (22.20).

This is the first occasion on which he has spoken of "use" as a kind of love, and the novelty of the idea seems to call for some defense. No one, he insists, has a right to resent our loving him for God's sake, since that is how we love ourselves too. God alone is to be enjoyed. Any other object of love that occurs to us should be "carried off in the direction in which the whole stream of our love is flowing" (22.21). However, he will concede a qualification. Not all "use" of temporal things is "love." "Love" is appropriate only to four kinds of object: God, self, neighbor, and (an exceptional addition to the usual three) our own bodies. One of these four is above us, one is ourselves, one beside us, and one beneath us (23.22). At some length (23.23-26.27) he proceeds to reconcile this list of four with the twofold command of love for God and neighbor by arguing that love of self and love of one's body can be taken for granted. On this we shall have more to say at a later stage.59

We should notice in passing where his need to qualify the use-enjoyment scheme has led our author. He has appealed to an overtly ontological order of things, a hierarchy of reality for which the subject's devising of end and means is not responsible. For a moment he lingers about this alternative approach, anticipating his mature thoughts on the order of love: "Holy and just living means being a sound judge of things. Such a one has an ordered love, neither loving that which should not be loved nor failing to love what should be loved, nor loving more what should be loved less, nor equally what should be less or more" (27.28). Here for a moment we see an order of love which is imposed upon the subject's judgment by the order of things, not imposed upon things by his pursuit of his own ends. Love is "ordered," not "ordering."

Meanwhile, however, Augustine is stuck with defending the contrast of use and enjoyment, and when, after a digression about proximate relations, he returns to it, he quickly gets into difficulties. Of what kind is God's love for us? It is unthinkable that we should call it "enjoyment," which would suggest that God was in need of our goodness, and so we must call it "use," "for if he neither enjoys us nor uses us, I do not know what kind of love he could have for us" (31.34). But then again there are problems in thinking of his using us: we "direct" our use-love of men to our enjoyment of God, and so God must "direct" his love for us to his own goodness; but as our existence depends upon this goodness, it is not his welfare, but ours, that is served by it. So that God's "use" of men has a double "direction" or "reference," to their welfare and to his own goodness. And as though this was not confusing enough Augustine points out that man's own love of his neighbor has the same kind of double reference, being intended in the first instance for his neighbor's welfare, though it carries with it as a consequence that it will serve his own (32.35).

Here once again we see Augustine tempted to abandon the means-
end order and account for the subject’s ultimate welfare as an unintended consequence of his love of the neighbor. And at this point, when he has conceded that the neighbor is the term at least of the subject’s benevolent intentions, he lets slip a phrase which is new, speaking of mankind’s “enjoying one another in God” *(nobis invicem in ipso perfruamur)*. But how is this expression to be reconciled with the judgment that we “enjoy” only God and “use” men? It is to be understood, replies Augustine, as a loose expression, authorized by St. Paul’s address to Philemon *(Philem. 20)*. To enjoy someone in God is quite different from enjoying him in himself, for it is really God in that case and not man that one enjoys. He closes his discussion with a stern reiteration of his rule: “To pass through the pleasure one takes in an object of love, and to refer it to that end where one wishes to remain, this is ‘use,’ and can only loosely be called ‘enjoyment’; while to stay in it and remain with it, making it the end *(finem ponens)* of one’s joy, that is what ‘enjoyment’ properly means, and that we must never do except with that Trinity which is the highest and unchangeable good” *(33.37)*.

These words belong entirely to the tradition of classical eudaemonism. The end is something one “posits”: there is a right end and a wrong end, but right or wrong one posits it where one will. “Enjoyment” and “use” are determined entirely by the subject’s attitude and not by the object—and that despite the fact that in the past Augustine has sometimes been unwilling to speak directly of the “use” and “enjoyment” of improper objects. It would appear that in the first book of *De doctrina Christiana* positive love has prevailed. And yet, as we have seen, Augustine was already feeling for a different conception of order in love. He has shown himself ready to fall back on the ontological order when he feels pressed to defend the positive order. He has hinted at the distinction between the intentional, posited term of an action and its implicit ontological term. And above all he has conceded a “loose” way of speaking which avoids the scandalous formula that we must “use” our friends.

As we have observed, the book has often been taken too seriously as representing Augustine’s final thoughts on teleology. In fact, it was a false step. True, Augustine did not repudiate it in the *Retractions*, but his subsequent behavior speaks for itself. There is no single instance in any later writing of the verb *uti* being used of the love of men for other men. The pair “use” and “enjoyment” continues to be a familiar mark on the landscape, but whenever Augustine wishes to accommodate love-of-neighbor into this contrast, he does so by means of the phrase “enjoy in the Lord”—and quite without further apology for its looseness or impropriety. The “use” of means is never again a form of love. The only positive love that remains is that by which a man pursues his final goal, his *finis bonorum*.

**RATIONAL LOVE**

“Holy and just living means being a sound judge of things *(rerum integer aestimator)*,” Augustine ventured to say, even while attempting to work out the order of love on a positive basis. This introduces an idea which is consistently present in his mature thought. The subject stands at an observer’s distance from the good, as one might stand at a distance from a painting to admire it. His reason is engaged with the object’s goodness; but this engagement is not a force drawing him toward it nor a hand reached out to possess it but a relation which allows the contemplative distance to remain. Love is neither “appetite” nor “movement” but estimation, appreciation, and approval.

Such synonyms for love are plentiful in Augustine’s writings: “Let us admire them! Let us praise them! Let us love them!” Especially prominent are the expressions *adprobare, aestimare, magni pendere*. The lover’s response to the object of his admiration is *delectatio*: “Nothing can be the object of love which does not afford delight.” But the basis of this delight is rational. The more the object is known, the more it is loved; one could not delight in something one understood to be evil, since it is precisely the knowledge of its value that permits one to love it. But neither is this rational delight purely
passive, since it evokes conformity in the subject to the good which is the object of his love. "The more you love someone," he remarks in passing, "the more you take him as a model for your actions." 58

On the face of it there is no place left for love of the wicked, a conclusion which is obviously going to be unacceptable to anyone who believes in God's love for sinners and the Christian's duty to love his enemies. Augustine has a way of avoiding this conclusion. He can continue to speak of rational love for the unworthy by allowing the possibility of loving a certain aspect of a person. This also permits him to distinguish right and wrong love of the worthy: If we love that which is admirable in our friends, their faithfulness, benevolence, and their love of God, we love them rightly, while if we love their injustice, concupiscence, error, and stupidity our love is not well directed. 59 But what does Augustine find to be lovable in the wicked? Two things: by virtue of his creation each man has a good "nature" which is quite distinct from his empirical wickedness, and by virtue of God's redemptive work he has the possibility of being saved. What we love in our enemy is what he is essentially and what he yet may be. An impressive indication of the prominence of the rational idea of love in Augustine's thought is his constant appeal to these justifications for love of the wicked. We love our enemies "because they have a share in goodness." 60 We hate their iniquities and love what God has made. 61 There are two distinct words, "enemy" and "man." We love "what God created, the man and not the error." 62 We love "the fact that they have rational souls, true even of brigands." 63 Even in his wife a man is to love merely "the fact that she is mankind." 64 And God, too, is said to love "what he wished to make, not what he found in us." The verse Genesis 1:31, "God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good," is taken as the basis for God's love: "God loved them all, in their different grades of excellence, because he saw that they were good since they were brought to being by his word." 65 The love of a person's future possibility is expressed somewhat paradoxically in essentially the same way. The doctor "loves the healthy, not the sick"; it is the patient's capacity for health which demands the doctor's interest and constructive attention. 66 The Christian ought "to regard each one as though he were what he wants him to be." Love is claimed by human nature "whether yet to be perfected or already perfect." 67

The objectivity of rational love offers Augustine a way forward to a flexible and coherent statement of the "order" of love. What he needed was an account in which every proper love of creature implied the love of its Creator, while from every improper love this implication was missing. The order of use and enjoyment knew only two grades of dignity, the end of the subject's choice and the means that he directed to that end. Rational love, on the other hand, could accept as complex an order as it discovered to be present in the universe, since love was at the same time an understanding which comprehended the object's place in the scheme of things. Love's order is given by its comprehending conformity to the order of reality. This is the significance of the text from the Song of Songs (2:4) which Augustine began to use at the end of the 390s, "Order love within me!" Love accepts and does not impose its ordering. 68 It has to be appropriate to its object: "That love may itself be an object of ordered love, wherewith we love well love's proper object, that within us there may be the virtue of living well. It seems to me that a concise and accurate definition of virtue is 'ordered love.' Which is why in the Song of Songs Christ's bride, the City of God, sings, 'Order love within me!" 69

And so we may be allowed and encouraged to love things which are not themselves the supreme good, provided that we do not mistake them for the supreme good, the source of blessedness. "Woe unto your love if it takes any object to be more beautiful than He is!" It had been Augustine's mistake as a youth, when reduced to despair once at the death of a friend, not to love "humanly." There was an element of pretence in that bitter grief, a self-deception which hid the plain truth about himself and his friend, that they were both men and not gods. 70 Correct rational love perceives that God is the supreme source of value and being, and loves him "as God." Correct rational love discriminates that which is of real value in an evil man and loves
him not "as sinner" but "as man." And within any man correct rational love can discern that the soul is of greater value than the body: "It is beyond question that the inner man is more loved than the outer man," an evaluation confirmed even by the behavior of those who are accustomed perversely to subject their souls to their bodies and yet at the moment of choice prefer to live.72

In revising his understanding of the order of love Augustine revised with it his use of the preposition propter, which continues in use as the most usual expression for the subordination of one object of love to another. To love someone "for God" (propter Deum) is equivalent to loving him "in God" and to loving "God in him." Its opposite is to love him "more than God," or "in himself." To explain the logic of these expressions we need to state the true or false understanding that is implied in each love. To love man "in himself" is to admit the false belief that he is a self-standing, independent being. It is to see him as though he were his own source of value and so to set him in the place of the one who is in fact his source of value. To love him "in God" is to recognize that his real nature can be grasped only by reference to his Creator, while love "in Christ" implies that he is what he is by virtue of membership in Christ's body.74 To love "Christ in him" or "God in him" is to make precisely the same assertion, identifying as the beloved's most valuable feature that which relates him to God. To put the propter language in this context is to free it from the embarrassment of seeming to commend a kind of friendship which has an ulterior motive. Augustine may now say, without any sense of contradiction, what he first attempted to say in De doctrina Christiana I, that we seek the welfare of a friend for its own sake (propter se) while we love him "for God."75

BENEVOLENT LOVE

The order of things which rational love acknowledges is a teleological order, which is to say that each object has not merely a place within the structure but a destiny, a telos, to fulfill within it. Apart from

God, whose telos is his own being and who is therefore always at rest, all beings are in motion toward their final cause. Just as we ourselves are drawn by the pull of the supreme good, so is all that we observe; and we cannot understand the place in which a fellow creature stands unless we also know the place to which he is being drawn. As we have seen already with love-of-the-enemy, to love someone is to love his possibility. Thus it is that the objective order evokes more than delight from the contemplating subject. That which is lower than God, that which still has to fulfill its destiny, demands also the subject's willing assent to its fulfillment. This is what Augustine means by benevolentia. It is the will that something which has its existence from God should fulfill its existence for God.

Benevolent love is a possibility only between creature and creature, for God has no fulfillment to which he strives. But because benevolence is still concerned with an order that is independent of the subject, it cannot be appropriate either for inferior beings whose telos is to be of use to man. An entertaining passage of the Tractates on 1 John makes the point rather clearly:

All love contains an element of good-will towards those who are its object. For our love for mankind ought not to be (indeed, could not be) . . . like the love which gourmands express when they say, "I love grives." You ask, "What does this love mean?" It means killing and eating. He says that he loves them, and his love means their extinction and destruction . . . Is that what we mean when we say we must love mankind? That we must swallow them up? No, there is such a thing as friendship based on good-will, a tendency to support those we love when necessary. It does not matter if there is no occasion for actual support, for the good-will alone makes the love. We should not wish our friends trouble so that we can have the opportunity of giving aid! . . . It is better to love someone in prosperity when there is no need for support.76

But if benevolence cannot be shown to God and cannot be shown
to objects of man's use, it is, as the same passage makes clear, a feature of all relations of love between man and man. It is not one kind of human love but a partial analysis of the whole of human love. Hence the importance of freeing it from empirical conditions such as actual deeds of kindness and of distinguishing, as Augustine sometimes does, between the attitude, beneficentia, and the act, beneficentia. This again emphasizes the independence of the beloved from the lover. I must will the fulfillment of my brother's existence even though that fulfillment is not in myself and will very probably make no call upon my agency. Otherwise I shall be loving falsely, as a lower being dependent upon me, not as my neighbor who is beside me.

Certainly in this way of describing love the lover has in view a goal for the beloved which his dealings with him will seek to promote. A variety of different phrases and clauses express the one purpose which benevolent love pursues: "He must care for his neighbour that he may love God" (ad diligendum Deum); "he must care for them, that they may obtain his Kingdom" (ad eius regnum obtinendum); "doing them good for the sake of their eternal welfare" (propter salutem ipsorum aeternam); and, with an ut finale clause, "so to deal with him that he too may love God," "to work for him, that he too may love God with you." These expressions of purpose are generally introduced by a verb such as consulere, "to act in someone's interest," but it is only a short step from this to attaching final clauses directly to the verbs amare and diligere. This too Augustine does, instructing us to love someone "that he may be righteous" (ut iustus sit) and to love evil men "that they may grasp righteousness" (ut apprehendat justitiam).

Two comments may be made about this purposing in benevolent love. In the first place, the subject's purpose is not posited by himself and imposed upon the object of love but is received from without. The subject has discovered that his neighbor has this destiny already given him in his human nature, and in willing its fulfillment he conforms his will to the order of reality. That is why Augustine seems so often to represent benevolent love-of-neighbor as consisting exclusively in the attempt to bring him to God. It is not that he rejects other goals which may be adopted from time to time but that this one is fundamental, for it is the only purpose that the subject can conceive for the object which he can be absolutely sure is not a willful imposition.

In the second place, the purpose expressed in benevolent love is not an ulterior purpose. Although the subject does conceive his fellow's salvation as the goal of his action, he does not love him in order to achieve this goal, subordinating love as means to this end; rather, it is in pursuing this goal for his neighbor that he loves him. The purpose is "internal" to the action of the verb. "To what end does Christ love us," he asks, "but that we should reign with him?" But our reigning does not lie the far side of his loving, as an end which it subserves; it is a goal that has arisen within his love for us, and his pursuit of that goal is the clearest expression of his love for us. The distinction has to be made clearly because while the internal purpose is quite proper to true beneficentia any external or ulterior purpose is the denial of it. "To look after one's brother for personal temporal advantage is not to look after him with love; it is really to look after oneself, not him whom one ought to love as himself." In such a context, where we catch an echo of Cicero's repudiation of utility as a motive for friendship, we can understand those occasional expressions which seem to restrict the notion of true love entirely to love which regards the object "for his own sake." The context of benevolent love such a restriction makes sense as a way of ruling out ulterior purposes; the opposite of "for his own sake" at this point is not "for God's sake" but "for personal advantage."

This then is the last complexity which we must mark in the use of the phrase propter Deum in Augustine's mature conception of the order of love. We have said that love "for God's sake" is the reason's acknowledgment that the object has a certain position in the order of things beneath God; but there is also this note of purpose which is the will's assent to the neighbor's natural teleology. The fact that Au-
Augustine believed firmly in a teleological order allowed him to pass easily between the proposition and the purpose, between the expression of rational love and that of benevolence: "He therefore who loves men, ought to love them either because they are righteous men, or that they may be so." "He truly loves his friend who loves God in his friend, either because God is in his friend, or that he may be so." "What did our Lord love in us? He loved God in us! Not that we had God, but that we might have him." The transition from a qua- to an ut- clause which surprises the reader in each of these examples, marks the fact that for Augustine a purpose, because it is a telos given by God and not merely a purpose conceived by the subject, is as good a "reason" to love a man as some feature that is extant.

The preposition propter and the verb referre continue to be useful to Augustine as expressions of the simple means-end subordination of worldly goods to heavenly, even while, in the context of neighbor-love, they have taken on the more subtle nuances of his mature thought about ordered love. Thus they form a flexible and imprecise language which enables Augustine to appeal to more than one aspect of love at once. The theological point served by this looseness is the unity of every volitional impulse in the service of the love of God. The choice of means to ends, the admiration of the neighbor's goodness, the pursuit of the neighbor's true welfare, all these are the subjective aspects of a single movement of the soul which reflects the one dominant cosmic movement, the return of the created being to its source and supreme good.

The subordination of the second great command to the first leaves the love of God in complete possession of the moral and ethical field. "Love of God" will include any act, thought, or impulse which is in accord with man's created teleology, no matter whether it is a "religious" act, thought, or impulse or, in a narrower sense, a "moral" one. But Augustine also recognized as entirely coincident and coextensive with the love of God the principle of right self-love. The perfection of the one was the perfection of the other. There was no kind of right self-love which did not imply the love of God; there was no way in which God could be loved without the lover loving himself as well. The final state of affairs to which all pursuits were subordinated was "life with God and from God... for this indeed is how we love ourselves, by loving God!!" On the basis of this association of the two principles we may formally characterize Augustine's ethics as "egoist" or "self-referential."

In maintaining that these two loves are entirely coextensive, Augustine is bound to reject two alternative ways of relating them. On the one hand, self-love might be represented as an area of self-referring duty independent of and complementary to the love of God. For example, the love of God requires that we say our prayers; love of self requires that we do not pray so late into the night that our health suffers. On the other hand, love of God might be represented as a spirit of devotion from which, at the highest moments, all thought of self is strained out, a position maintained by the mediaeval champions of "pure" love. But Augustine has no place either for a virtue of self-love independent of the love of God or for the love of God without self-love.
It is easy to see what his objection must be to the first of these possibilities. The totalitarian claim of the love of God would be challenged by any independent source of obligation or value. The pyramidal *ordo amoris* supposes that every subordinate good derives its value from its final orientation to God. To allow a claim for self-love which did not flow from this apex would be to destroy the metaphysical premise on which all of Augustine's ethics were constructed. And so we find frequently repeated the assertion that self-love without the love of God is not self-love at all. "You do not even love yourself rightly if your love for God can be diminished by turning away, even to yourself."3

But what of the second possibility? Why does Augustine continue to maintain that self-love must exist alongside the love of God at every level? Why must it always be true that "in loving God one loves himself"? The question is the more puzzling precisely because of the identification of the two. Constantly he stresses that neither can exist without the other and will even go so far as to say that "there is no other love that one has for oneself apart from the fact that one loves God."4 It is central to his doctrine of the believer's reward that the only prize God can offer to those who love him is "Himself."5 In Plato's terms, to praise the love of God with reference to love-of-self is to praise it "for itself" not "for its consequences." And since it is plainly self-love, not the love of God, which is persuasively redefined in order to effect the assimilation of the two, we may well ask why Augustine continues to speak of two loves at all. Why not speak only of "love of God," leaving the term "self-love" free for some other attitude that was plainly different from it? And on occasions we see Augustine tempted by this simplification, more especially when he speaks of "self-forgetfulness": "If the soul loves itself and ignores its Creator, it must become a lesser thing, diminished by love of that which is less, for itself is less than God. . . . And so we must love God . . . to the point where, if it is possible, we are oblivious of ourselves as we love him the more." Self-forgetfulness expresses the total and uncompromising claim made upon our love by the Creator, and it might be taken to suggest that true love of God will extinguish love-of-self altogether. "What is there left of your heart for you to love yourself?" he asks in *Sermon* 34. "What is there left of your soul? What is there left of your mind? God says, 'With all . . .'. He who made you demands all of you."6

But close as he comes to dissolving right self-love into the love of God, Augustine will not go that far. He continues to speak of the two loves even while he asserts that they are coextensive. He continues in *Sermon* 34: "Do not be depressed, as though there were nothing left within you to cause you joy. . . . 'But,' you say, 'there is nothing left to me for love-of-self, because I am commanded to love him "with all my heart and all my soul and all my mind," how am I to keep the second command and love my neighbour as myself?' . . . Shall I tell you how you are to love yourself? This is your self-love: to love God with the whole of yourself." The distinction between self-love and the love of God is still important. The love which man has for God is cosmic love, the attraction of the creature toward the supreme good; the love which he has for himself is benevolent love. In terms of his destiny within the cosmos, man must love God alone, cleave to God alone, aspire to God alone, so that God is sole object of his love. But God can never be served by this love. It does God no good to be loved; rather, he is himself man's good. It is self, and not God, that must be the object of benevolence. It is self, and not God, that is served when one loves God with all his heart and soul and mind and strength. "Do you think it helps God," he asks, "when you love him?" "No one would say he had done a service to a fountain by drinking or to the light by seeing."7 Augustine's text of Psalm 15 (16):2 reminded him of God's ontological self-sufficiency: "Thou hast no need of my goods." "It is not only a matter of sacrificial beasts or any other corruptible and corporeal thing; we are not to imagine even that God needs man's righteousness. When God is rightly worshipped, it is wholly to man's benefit, not to God's." Every petition in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done," is really a petition for man's advantage and not for God's. And every
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word of praise that man can utter, God desires it, “that you may be helped, not that he may be exalted. There is simply nothing that we can give him in return, and what he demands he demands not for himself but for you.” In coupling self-love (benevolence) with the cosmic love of God, Augustine defended the latter against misinterpretation and asserted God’s ontological position as the source of all good and of all beatitude—in case anybody should be so foolish as to suppose he could be altruistic toward God.7

Furthermore, the coincidence of the two loves was by no means a self-evident matter. The content of self-love, Augustine insisted, had to be taught and learned. “Man must be instructed in a way of loving: that is, he must be taught how to love himself to advantage.” “Learn!” he counsels his congregation. “Love God, and so learn to love yourselves!” “Learn to love yourself by not loving yourself!” For the real content of self-love is something which it is possible, even natural, not to know. “If we prefer any other object of love to God, or regard any other object of love as God’s equal, that shows that we do not know how to love ourselves.” But the Scripture has taken care that man should be instructed: It has set before him for his happiness an end to which he is to refer everything that he does. So it is that he learns to love himself. And only when that lesson is learned can a man be entrusted with the responsibility of neighbor-love. “First see whether you have learned to love yourself. . . . If you have not learned how to love yourself, I am afraid you will cheat your neighbour as yourself!”8

In the identity of benevolent self-love, properly taught, and metaphysical love of God, we see reflected in Christian terms a cherished dictum of classical ethics, the identity of “the useful” and “the right.” Two streams of thought in the classical world defended the claim that “nothing was useful that was not right.” There was the Stoic tradition, which had support in Academic circles, notably from Cicero, and was mediated through him to Ambrose. This interpreted the issue as one between the individual and society and defended the identity of the two principles on the ground that otherwise “human society, the most natural thing in the world, would have to be torn asunder.” The other tradition, the Platonic, saw the thesis as arbitrating between the external and the internal goods of the individual. The appearance of conflict lay in man’s failure to locate utility where it belonged, in his soul.9 The Stoic version was an apology for social responsibility, the Platonic version an apology for spirituality. Augustine’s form of the claim was basically Platonic, though the capacious all-inclusiveness of the first command in Augustine’s thought ensured that the social implications were not excluded.

Apologetic, however, exists to defend and not to supplant its object. One may justify a course of action in terms of some feature it possesses without implying that the value of the action is derivative from and secondary to the value of the feature. There is no suggestion either in the classical formulations or in Augustine that virtue can be reduced to an enlightened pursuit of personal utility. The justifying role played by self-love is a modest one. It provides what is sometimes called a “background of intelligibility” for the command to love God and never appears to be the whole point of the exercise. Augustine establishes this point firmly by qualifying “self-love” with the phrase propter Deum. As we have argued, the logic of this expression is flexible, and its function is to guard against a suggestion that the movement from love-of-God to self-love, implied in the idea of “learning” to love oneself by loving God, is anything more than an epistemological movement. The teleological thrust reaches its term in God alone.10

AUTHORITY AND REASON

A question which exercised Augustine’s mind on several occasions was why, of the three proper objects of love—God, self, and neighbor—the dominical command should mention only two directly. The answers he gave to this question fall into two groups. According to one set, the more common, the answer is simply to be found in the identity of self-love and the love of God. The command has been given us
to love God, and "he who loves God will make no mistakes in the matter of loving himself." "True, although the love which God's law requires must be shown to God, self and neighbour, yet there are not three commands but two on which 'hang all the law and the prophets,' that is, love of God and love of neighbour. That is to show that there is no other love that one has for oneself apart from the fact that one loves God. Indeed, any self-love which differed would better be called self-hate." But there is another pattern of answer in which this identification is somewhat qualified. To instruct a man to love himself, he says, would be like instructing him to eat or breathe. All men do it anyway by an unshaken law of nature which applies even to the beasts. All we need is instruction in how to love ourselves to the greatest advantage; and "when love of God is given prominence and set forth as the prescribed way of love so that everything else flows into it, then although nothing is said directly about self-love, nevertheless the words 'Love your neighbour as yourself' show that it has not been forgotten." This does not constitute a withdrawal from the view that the first part of the Great Command is the solution to the question of self-love. Rather, "right" self-love is allowed to have a kind of foreshadowing in a "natural" self-love, common to all, which is the part of the Great Command to school into right ways. Self-love is not totally given in the love of God. The love of God comes as the answer to a question which has already been posed.

Here is an ambiguity fundamental to Augustine's treatment of the subject. On the one hand self-love is nothing else than loving God; on the other it is a natural phenomenon in need of direction. On the one hand the natural man does not love himself; on the other he does love himself, but misguided. But this ambiguity is no more than a reflection of a much more general one, characteristic of all Augustine's epistemology, the ambiguous relationship of authority and reason.

The classical philosophical schools, if we may venture a generalization, regarded the field of human knowledge and experience as a single territory, while Christian doctrines of God and man divided it down the middle. A Stoic or Platonist could cheerfully propose an intellectual expedition which would start from anthropology or physics and hope to reach conclusions in theology or ethics; but the Christian would see in such an itinerary the vain pretensions of human pride in face of an unbridgeable epistemological chasm. It required the merciful self-communication of God to intervene from yonder side and carry the thinker across. In Augustine's thought we find this epistemological caution most clearly expressed in the role of auctoritas, standing guard as the censor and guarantor of ratio. There is an overarching continuity on the map of human knowledge which makes it possible for the perfected mind to understand, but also a stubborn discontinuity which makes it necessary for the yet imperfect mind to believe. Substitute "be fulfilled" and "obey" for "understand" and "believe" and the generalization will apply equally well to the epistemology of morals. Augustine can treat "self-love" in either way, as a continuous phenomenon, linking natural and the perfected humanity, or as a discontinuous one, flowing only from an achieved virtue which is the gift of grace. But we are more frequently conscious of the latter approach, the approach of authority, supported by the identification of self-love with the love of God and making no concessions to natural states of affairs or prior perceptions.

The approach by way of authority is well illustrated by a characteristic preaching paradox which tells us that what we call "love" of self may in reality be hatred. This assertion is intended to be startling: "Certainly, if I were to ask you whether you loved yourself, you would reply, 'Yes! Who is there that hates himself?' 'Who is there that hates himself?' you would ask." Again: "And who is there, asks one, 'who does not love himself?' Look! I will show you who! 'Who loveth iniquity, hateth his own soul.'" Self-love, so far from being the universal predicate that Augustine's flock naturally expect, is a matter on which it is possible to be self-deceived. Augustine can shake the conventional "egoist" by taking from him what might seem to be the most immediate delivery of his self-consciousness.

"Indeed you did not love yourself. . . . You thought you loved your-
self?" "Do you think you love yourself? You are mistaken!" 15

While the text, Psalm 10(11):6, "Who loveth iniquity, hateth his own soul," is usually associated with the appearance of "self-hate" in Augustine's mind, we may guess that if Scripture had provided no direct warrant for the expression, rhetorical flourish and philosophical tradition might have conspired to invent it just the same.

We are within the magnetic field of the extremely potent Platonic commonplace (the obverse of the identification of the useful and the right) that one who wrongs another really wrongs himself. This dictum, in one form or another, was a part of the philosophical landscape in which Augustine grew up. Plotinus had it and so did Ambrose. In using it Augustine was simply a traditionalist, but in clothing it with the original description "self-hate" he was exercising his own rhetorical genius. 16

The wicked man's boast that he loves himself is shown to be empty by the terrible consequences he brings upon his own head. What sort of a "love" is it that "ties a noose for the beloved's neck"? 17 Love is love only by virtue of its good effects. In chapter one we showed how benevolent love, as the will for a fellow human being to fulfill his existence, necessarily seeks to bring him to the union with God for which he was made. We did not ask the question: What if this will is misdirected, not perceiving where the other's true well-being lies? In the context of self-love, at least, Augustine cannot avoid this question, and his answer to it is severe: "Such self-love is better called hatred." 18 The criteria for benevolent self-love are objective: one's purposes must correspond to one's given destiny. Self-harm is self-hate, even though unintentional. "Certainly [the mind] does not know that it wills itself evil, for it does not think that what it wills is harmful. But it does will evil all the same, since it does will what is harmful." 19

On the face of it, then, Augustine has opted for exclusively objective criteria for benevolent love-of-self. Yet this is not all of his thinking. If we read the last-quoted sentences from De Trinitate in their context, we will be left in some doubt as to whether the matter is as clear as it seemed:

The human mind is so constituted that it is never forgetful of itself, never fails to understand itself, never fails to love itself. But because one who hates another is anxious to hurt him, it is not unreasonable to describe the human mind as "hating" itself when it hurts itself. Certainly it does not know that it wills itself evil, for it does not think that what it wills is harmful. But it does will evil all the same, since it does will what is harmful. Hence the Scripture: "Who loveth iniquity, hateth his own soul." So that if a man knows how to love himself, he loves God; but if he does not love God, even granting that self-love which is naturally instinct within him, yet he may be described not inappropriately as hating himself, since he does what is inimical to himself and persecutes himself like an enemy. 19

There emerge from this passage two important conclusions: first, that Augustine does not intend entirely to deny himself the idea of a neutrally valued universal self-love simply in order to limit the notion to objective criteria; second, that he sees the oddity of taking nothing but objective criteria to establish a claim for hatred. The real enemy, after all, is intent on doing harm, while the uninstructed lover-of-self does harm unwittingly. In this passage, then, Augustine will go only so far as to say that such a one may "not inappropriately" be described as hating himself. Alongside the objective criteria, according to which self-love depends on the correct identification of the final good, he retains a place for subjective criteria, by which he can say, "The mind never fails to love itself," and, in another place, "No one hates himself." 20

Augustine occasionally refers to benevolent self-love, "the will to serve one's own advantage" (prodesse sibi velle), 21 as a duty which we owe to ourselves on precisely the same basis as we owe love to others. The value of this paradoxical way of speaking, once again, is that it strengthens the suggestion of auctoritas: self-love is not something which may be assumed to come naturally but is a necessary matter of exhortation and encouragement. "It is improper for a man not to do to himself what he does to his neighbor, when he hears God
say, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself", and again, "Have mercy on your soul, pleasing God." There is a rich vein of remonstrance here, tirelessly quarried for ammunition against theological opponents who risk the fires of hell by refusing to submit to Catholic teaching. Pelagian or Donatist, the adversary is feelingly implored to "spare himself," "show mercy to himself," to recognize that he is his own persecutor and his own enemy. The Scripture instructs him to "Have mercy on your soul, pleasing God" (Ecclus. 30:24). This duty can be imaginatively interpreted as a special case of the "works of mercy" and almsgiving which the Christian is obliged to perform toward the poor. It makes no difference whether we perform these works to ourselves or to our neighbor; in either case their sole purpose is "to deliver us from wretchedness and restore us to blessedness." But we must begin with ourselves, "for almsgiving is a work of mercy, and there is supreme truth in the saying 'Have mercy on your soul, pleasing God.'" 22

The incongruity of regarding self-love in this way is somewhat reduced when the recipient of the alms is seen specifically as the soul. The fate of the damaged or neglected soul Augustine treats in classically Platonic terms of internal division and strife, civil war within the breast. The wicked man will "crucify himself with himself," he will "make for himself a divided heart which will detain him from the vision of God." With a little rhetorical license, Augustine can depict a touching scene. A man confronts his own soul and finds it a beggar: "Whoever you may be that live wickedly, whoever you may be that live in infidelity, return to your conscience! There you will find your soul, beggared, needy, pauperized, care-laden. Not only needy, perhaps, but reduced by very want to silence! Is it beggared? Is it hungry for justice! When you find your soul in such a state (it is within you, within your heart, that these things are found!), first give it alms! Give it bread!" When God gave man a soul, he gave him a task: he must care for his soul and make sure that it flourishes. "Who loves the secret chamber of his heart, let him do some good there." 23

This care may include severe discipline. Just as one who loves his

soul "according to the world" hates it "according to God," so, "if it were his wish to give it alms so that all things should be clean for him, he would hate it according to the world and love it according to God." 24 Because in Augustinian anthropology anima includes the principle of physical life, the instinct to preserve life at all costs is an error of the soul, not merely of the body. "Perhaps your soul says, 'Tell him not to strike or else I shall have to leave you! If he strikes, I cannot stay with you! Tell him not to strike if you don't want me to go!'" The solution of this mock-pathetic drama comes when the man so addressed by his soul realizes that it is he himself and not some other who is speaking and that what becomes of the body is of no concern to him! 25 The one who cares for his soul must free it from this passionate and misconceived desire to remain attached to the body. Augustine wanders with perfect inconsistency between calling this disciplinary attitude "love" and calling it "hate." "It is no self-hate, this ruthlessness with yourself!" he tells us; but then on another occasion: "Utterly amazing that man should love his soul to destroy it and hate it to preserve it! To love wrongly is to hate; to hate rightly is to love!" 26

The same severely constructive benevolence can as well be expressed toward the flesh as toward the soul. So seriously, in fact, does Augustine take the ontological hierarchy of goods—the good of the soul is God, the good of the body the soul—that it is quite impossible to discern any substantial difference between love of the soul and love of the body. "When God is loved more than the soul ... then true and complete care is taken of the soul, and consequently of the body too." Asceticism, fortitude in the face of death, self-discipline are equally characteristic of either. Since the good of the body is "not pleasure, not freedom from pain, not strength, not beauty, not speed, not any other quality that might be included in a list of bodily goods, but wholly and completely the soul," true love of the flesh commits us to that subordination of matter to spirit which will enable the soul to resist the faults of the flesh. Then it is that the flesh is properly cared for. 27 The text Ephesians 5:29, "No one hates his own flesh,"
The opposite approach, which we have associated with the role of ratio in Augustine's epistemology, is marked by the universal claim that all men love themselves naturally. The passages in which this claim is made (rather less frequent, though perhaps also less rhetorical, than those in which it is denied) divide themselves into two groups.28 Those from the De Trinitate have their own distinctive pattern: the universal self-love which they assert is a love of the human mind, an activity of man's self-consciousness belonging with self-understanding and self-awareness. The texts from the Sermons, on the other hand, and (with some qualifications) from the De doctrina Christiana take as the subject of self-love man as a psychosomatic unity and conceive self-love not as the distinctive feature of human self-consciousness but as something that man shares with the beasts. We can speak, then, of a psychological model for universal self-love (which we reserve for consideration in chapter three) and of an animal model.

There is in every living creature a deep-seated desire to continue existing, to avoid death and to maintain life, a desire “to be at one with oneself” (conciliari sibi). “It is the first and greatest word of Nature that man should be at one with himself, and therefore should flee death naturally, so much a friend to himself that he wishes him-
for the fear of death. Fear of death is an instinctive feature common to all, even the Old Testament saints, overcome in the Christian church not by any weakening of the love of life (he pours scorn on the Stoics for their inconsistent contempt of death!) but by faith in the resurrection. "It is natural," he says, "not only for men, but for all creatures which have any kind of life, to reject death and fear it." Together with the fear of death we may mention related features of instinctive behavior which show love for one's own existence: the shielding of the eyes when an object is about to hit them; care for one's own health and safety; and the most absurd and yet most natural of man's bodily concerns, an anxiety over the fate of his mortal remains. Augustine's Stoicized anthropology, interpreted in the light of Ephesians 5:29, allows him to be generous to this foible so deeply ingrained in the ecclesiastical tradition. "Whatever attaches to the burial of a body is not a precaution for salvation, but a humane duty which corresponds to the impulse whereby 'No one ever hates his own flesh.' It is right to show what care he can for the neighbour's flesh when he who once wore it has left it behind." But not all of Augustine's interests are with death and its avoidance. The passage of the Confessions in which he discusses his childhood instincts also owes something to the Stoic tradition: "Even when I was a child, I existed, I had life and sense, I had care for my safety—a trace of the hidden unity from which I sprang—by interior sense I guarded the integrity of my senses and in small things and thoughts about small things I took pleasure in the truth. I did not wish to be deceived, I had a good memory, I became ordered in my speech, gentle in my friendship, I fled grief, rejection and ignorance." We can see, however, in the mention of "hidden unity," the corrosion of the Stoic pattern through its suspension in a concentrated solution of Neoplatonic Christianity. Not only has it been defined as a "unity of body and soul," which was not quite what oikeiostis meant, but it has been taken as a lost aboriginal unity of the unfallen creature, never empirically experienced in this world. What Stoics had seen as a sign of integration, the Christian

saw as the ruins of a once integrated, but now disintegrating, human nature. Animal self-love, the unity of body and soul, can again be analyzed as love-of-the-body on the one hand and as love-of-the-soul on the other. We see natural love of the soul expressed in the desire for life (for life is a function of the soul), common to all, even those who in despite of it reach out for martyrdom. Those who fear martyrdom love their souls overmuch. Those who live dissipated and sensual lives, though constantly subjecting their souls to the humiliation of serving bodily desire, yet show their preference for the soul by their readiness to lose any kind of pleasure if need be in order to stay alive. The use of "soul" to represent the principle of physical life, though strange, has a double justification in Scripture and philosophy. The Latin Bible used the word anima to translate the Greek ψυχή in all of the Gospel verses which speak of losing "life" in order to save it. This suggested to Augustine that it was the animal soul which had to be lost, though only temporarily, for the sake of the rational soul. While beasts could not be blamed for fearing death, men, though born with the same instinct, could be blamed for continuing to allow fear to dominate them, since as rational beings they were able to reach toward a higher life than that which they shared with the animals. When man sacrifices his "soul" in martyrdom, he shows his preference for the rational good to the animal and so saves not his rational soul only but ultimately his animal soul and his body with it.

More commonly the self-protecting instinct in man is described as love of the body. Here a strong influence is exercised by the text Ephesians 5:29, "No one ever hated his own flesh." Within the scope of this much-used principle Augustine was ready to include a large amount. Here he could locate the fear of death, delight in pleasurable sensation, aversion to unpleasant sensation, rejection of suicide, as well as the other features of self-protective behavior already mentioned. The text is one of the most important in Augustinian anthropology and of particular significance for his anti-Manichaean polemics. His opponents, leaning heavily upon Galatians 5:17, "The flesh
lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh," supposed that there was an absolute opposition between the corporeal and spiritual natures of man. This "carnal error"—the play on words is relished!—not only misunderstood the text in Galatians, but showed the Manichees to be poor observers of themselves. Did they not evade blows, avoid falls, take care not to subject their bodies to extremes of temperature just like everybody else? Did they not protect themselves and think about their health? It is in this context of anti-Manichean apologetic that we can best understand the view that natural self-love is a trace of unfallen goodness still left in fallen humanity. It is a sign that the body really is the workmanship of a good Creator that, while the creature does despite to order and unity in his relationships with God and man, he cannot completely lose his concern for order and unity within himself. Thus the Neoplatonist understanding of evil as deficiency is maintained against the Manichaean dualism of good and evil. Wrong sensuality is good insofar as it is love-of-self and love-of-body, but evil in that it is despite-of-God and despite-of-soul.38

When we contrast these expressions of love for the body and the soul with those we recorded earlier, we are made aware of the striking difference that separates the two interpretations of self-love. Everything that is reckoned as "love" from the natural point of view, especially the instinct to preserve life, was seen as "hatred" from the point of view of divine revelation. Where from the one point of view Augustine can recognize distinct physical and psychological areas of interest, values of the body and values of the soul, from the other point of view he ruthlessly assimilates all the interests of body and animal soul to the ultimate concern of the rational soul. To such a degree does the authority of the divine command reverse man's natural assumptions and values.

And yet Augustine is not content simply to set natural and revealed self-love in paradoxical antithesis. He has in mind an apologetic argument: to plead for the love of God by way of reason rather than authority, starting from the fact that all men love themselves. If self-love is natural and universal, how can men not be concerned to love themselves rightly? And if right self-love is nothing other than love-of-God, what else can we think but that this love is the logical implication of all that men find in themselves by nature? We can see the argument in a somewhat unpolished form in a paragraph from De libero arbitrio:

If you wish to escape wretchedness, love this very thing in yourself, that you wish to continue existing. For if you wish to exist more and more, you will come near to that which is supremely existent. Be grateful, now, that you exist! . . . For the more fully you will desire eternal life, and you will hope so to be fashioned that your sensibilities are not bounded by time, branded and imprinted by love of time-bound things . . . But he who loves existence, accepts other things inasmuch as they really exist, and loves that which exists for ever.39

But there is a difficulty. If, as we have seen, the discovery of perfect self-love "from above" by the teaching of authority suggests a redefinition of self-love in terms of the love of God, this approach to it "from below" runs the risk of redefining in the opposite direction and reducing the love of God to enlightened natural self-concern. The treasure in heaven to which the argument is supposed to lead us may turn out to be nothing much more than the small change of human ambition on earth. And so we find that when he employs this apologetic approach, Augustine is much more guarded about asserting the virtual identity of self-love and love-of-God, and has much more to say about the need to transcend natural self-love.

In a passage from the contemporary De vera religione we can see this caution emerging. The argument begins with a universal premise, "We want to be invincible," and proceeds to pursue the claim that only the Christian achieves what all men want. "He who loves that which alone cannot be taken from its lover, he it is who is unquestionably invincible . . . For he loves God . . . and his neighbour as himself." But can his neighbor not be taken from him? Not if he
loves him “as himself,” “because in loving himself, what he loves is not that which is apparent to the sight or to any other of the corporeal senses. It follows that to love someone as himself is to have him in himself.” There are two kinds of neighbor-love, then, and only that which is modeled on self-love will lead us to the invincibility which all men desire. But this self-love is itself not an undifferentiated, natural self-love, but the self-love of one who, by loving God, “has” or “possesses” himself entire. He loves himself, as he loves his neighbor, for “what he is to himself” but for “what he is to God.” “That which he loves in them, he has perfect and entire in himself.” Apud se, translating the Greek ἐπὶ ἑαυτῷ, gives away the Stoic-Platonic background: We are speaking of the philosopher.49

The caution emerges even more clearly in the comparable passage of De doctrina Christiana 1. There, as we have seen, Augustine identifies four proper objects of love, that which is above us, that which we ourselves are, that which is beside us, and that which is beneath us—our bodies, for only the human will count as a proper object of love, even of “use-love.” With respect to the second and fourth of these there was no need of a command, “for however far a man may depart from the truth, he retains his love for himself and his love for his own body.” This explanation shows us that Augustine will approach self-love from the point of view of ratio rather than from auctoritas, basing himself upon a universal love-of-self which is rooted in the original goodness of man’s created nature. “For the soul, though it flees from the unchangeable light that rules all things, acts to govern itself and its own body, and so cannot help but love itself and its body.”48

Here, however, there is a check. The self-love of the soul is corrupted into a desire to rule not only itself and its body but its fellow man too. “Man’s perverted soul is inclined to seek and claim as its due that which properly belongs to God alone. Such self-love is better called hatred,” a description which is supported, as so often, by an appeal to Psalm 10 (11):6. Yet normally when Augustine attributes self-hatred to the wicked man, he means what he says, but in this case, where he is concerned to build upon an idea of universal self-love, he does not treat the description literally. His last word on the matter is that nobody hates himself. To which he adds: “There has been no argument about this in any philosophical school.” Perhaps because none of them had heard the sermons of Augustine of Hippo!42

The experimental distinction between the self-love of the soul (here animus, the rational soul) and the love of the soul for the body has not, in the event, proved very fruitful, as Augustine has had rather little to say about the positive content of the soul’s self-love. Turning now to the love-of-the-body to demonstrate that for this love too there is no need of a command, he is on more familiar territory. Ephesians 5:29 is to the fore in response to the Manichaean use of Galatians 5:17. Love for the body includes discipline, “because the more the spirit loves the flesh the more it wishes it subject to that which is better than the flesh.” Ascetic discipline is no exception to love-of-the-body except when it is practiced by Manichees, “who wage war against the body as though it were their natural enemy.” Nor is it incompatible with such love that one will suffer damage to his body in order to pursue higher goods, for “one should not be thought to have no love for the safety and integrity of the body simply because one loves something else more.”43

The universal claim having thus been established on both fronts (for self-love and love-of-the-body belong to us by an unshakable law of nature which applies also to the beasts), it remains to forge the link between natural self-love and the command that we should love God. In the first place, Augustine has said that man needs a “prescribed way of self-love, that is, how he is to love himself to best effect... and how he is to love his body ordainably and prudently.”44 In the second place, “when love of God is given prominence and set forth as the prescribed way of love so that everything else flows into it, then although nothing is said directly about self-love, nevertheless the words ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’ show that it has not been forgotten.”45 Thus there is a clear continuity between natural and taught self-love; the difference between them is the “way” which will
give a successful issue to the self-concern which all men share. But in reaching this conclusion Augustine has tried not to reduce the gap too much. He has shown that there is indeed a wrong kind of self-love which is arrogant self-assertion; he has shown that love-of-the-body does not mean acquiescence in its disordered impulses. We do not need a command to tell us to do what comes naturally, but we do need instruction to tell us how to do it properly. Even if Augustine does imply that there is a direct road from Nature to Perfection, he knows that there are many beguiling sidetracks and doubts whether anyone will complete the journey without a map.

The journey of the first book of De doctrina Christiana is Stoic in its inspiration. Led from the beginning by self-oriented instincts common to all living creatures, the Stoic philosopher experienced a conversion which altered the direction of their leading but did not displace them. So for Augustine self-love is a continuous but articulated personal dynamism. It cannot be removed, but it can be transformed. But Augustine will not stand by this position. Although it allows him to call some self-love good, it does not allow him to call it good enough; although it allows him to call some self-love evil, it does not allow him to call it the very root of all human and angelic sin. His next attempt to approach right self-love by the route of human reason will involve him in a more Platonic route. To this we shall return when, in the context of rational-love-of-self, we discuss the later books of De Trinitate.

SELF-LOVE AND THE DESIRE FOR HAPPINESS

Benevolent self-love has a number of features in common with the desire for happiness which makes a comparison of the two irresistible. We have already commented on the importance which the eudaemonist principle "We all wish to be happy" has for Augustine. Most readers of Augustine are familiar with the way this principle, which is accorded the status of a priori certainty, is made the premise for an apologetic argument which leads to God as the source of, sometimes as the reality of, the happy life: the happy life must be a higher good than ourselves, it must be unchanging and impossible to forfeit, and it must be universally available. With only small modifications Augustine stood by this argument solidly from his earliest writings to his latest. Thus the desire for happiness, like self-love, is equivalent to the love-of-God when it is "taught," but has a natural, nonmoral area of reference in which it is common to all men. In either case this articulation is made the basis for a rational approach to man's goal, more systematically developed with the eudaemonist principle than with self-love, in which there is a certain amount of continuity between the natural and the perfected but also a necessary opacity.

But can we go further than the comparison of the two and identify self-love with the desire for happiness? It is an easy identification for students of Augustine to make, and most of them have made it. The principal dissenting voice has been that of Ragnar Holte, and his reasons do not entirely commend themselves. In the first place, having rejected altogether the presence of what we have called positive love in Augustine's thought, he cannot take Augustine's assurances about the self-evidence of the eudaemonist principle at their face value. In his view "desire for happiness" cannot be the pursuit of an unspecified, subjectively conceived good; it has to be already, in its fullest sense, love for God. In the second place, Holte's understanding of self-love is based entirely upon the treatment of that idea in De doctrina Christiana I, from which he conceives it as a self-standing teleological thrust within the active life alone, thus missing the point of Augustine's assertions about perfect self-love being one with the love of God.

Nevertheless, Holte was right to dissent. In support of the differentiation of self-love and the desire for happiness I would make three points:

a. In two texts only are self-love and the desire for happiness mentioned together in a way that suggests their synonymity. As there are some 150 references to self-love in Augustine's work, this small number should rather damp our enthusiasm for an identification of the two ideas.
b. Augustine regards the desire for happiness as the fundamental reality underlying all other desires, a position which arises naturally out of the tradition of discussing the finis bonorum. Thus one man's desire to be a soldier and another man's desire not to be one are equally forms of the desire for happiness. But the desire to be a soldier would never be an example of universal self-love. It is not the case with universal self-love, as it is with the universal desire for happiness, that everything everyone does expresses it one way or another. Only some things that everyone does, shielding one's eyes, for example, or avoiding death, are instances of natural self-love.

c. Although there is continuity and discontinuity between the natural and the perfect in both self-love and the desire for happiness, the settlement is somewhat different in either case. Augustine will say, quite normally, that not all men love themselves and that what pretends to be self-love is often mere self-hatred. With the conflict between this and the universal self-love he is apparently prepared to live. Universal self-love is never presented as an unsuccessful groping toward God. But Augustine will never admit that not all men wish to be happy, and so he is constantly having to come to terms with unsuccessful desire for happiness. The problem of the continuity between what all desire and what only some achieve is always vexing him in the eudaeemonist context. But with self-love he forgets the continuity whenever it is no longer useful for apologetic purposes.

What are we to make of the similarities between the two notions and especially of the two texts which unambiguously treat them as equivalent? Augustine's thought about self-love was much less systematized than his thought about the desire for happiness, which was, anyway, part of a tradition of thought which he inherited. It is not surprising if at times his treatment of self-love became attracted by the stronger magnetic field of the eudaeemonist principle. Indeed, we may reasonably suppose that Augustine's eudaeemonism was responsi-
ment, both horizontal and vertical. By this double movement of reunification, the love-of-neighbor acting as cradle for the love-of-God, the Spirit whose name is Dillectio completes his redemptive work.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS:

SELF-LOVE AND EUDAEMONISM

In tracing Augustine's use of the phrase "self-love," we have been forced to make a number of distinctions. We have distinguished different evaluative tones which the phrase may carry: an unfavorable tone, with which it represents the root of all sin and rebellion against God; a neutral tone, to represent the natural condition either of man's animal or of his rational nature; a favorable tone, to represent man's discovery of his true welfare in God. We have tried to show that although a bridge of moral apologetic is sometimes constructed between the neutral and the favorable there is no such commerce between the unfavorable and either of the others; and that evil self-love relates to natural and to right self-love only in paradox. We have distinguished, too, different aspects of love which may be presupposed by the idea of self-love: benevolent, rational, and cosmic. Benevolent self-love, the promotion of one's own true welfare in God, we have seen used in association with the favorable tone, and sometimes, rather ambiguously, with the neutral. Rational love, the evaluative estimation of oneself, false or true, we have seen associated with both favorable and unfavorable tones. Cosmic love, the idea that love is a movement through the universe, encompassing self as the midpoint, we have also seen used in connection both with man's fall and with his redemption. The fourth aspect of love, which we called "positive," we have not found in any intelligible reflexive use.

All this may tempt us to conclude that there is no such thing as a "concept" of self-love in Augustine's thought. There are too many points left unresolved and incoherent. Is it, in the end, possible not to love oneself? In what sense do we love our neighbor "as" ourselves? Although the term is the product of Augustine's most important
psychological and theological speculations, it is not in itself a finished, self-conscious theological artifact.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to suppose that the idea is without its own wider significance. For, as we have also seen, self-love, however rough-hewn, forms part of the supporting structure of the Augustinian "eudaemonist ethic," his theory of morality and human action, related in the classical way to the ideas of happiness and fulfillment. In saying that self-love finds its only true expression in love of God Augustine is formulating in one of many possible ways a principle fundamental to his metaphysical and ethical outlook, namely that all moral obligation derives from an obligation to God which is at the same time a call to self-fulfillment. This principle has generated much controversy in the course of this century, and our purpose in the course of this chapter will be to examine it and the role that "self-love" plays in its formulation.

THE CRITIQUE OF HOLL AND NYGREN

We approach our task by way of a highly influential critique of Augustine first voiced fifty years ago by Karl Holl in his paper "Augustine's Inner Development." Holl wrote with the primary purpose of refuting Harnack's contention that Augustine's intellectual conversion to Christianity happened in two stages, the former stage bringing him no further along the road than to a barely Christianized Platonism, and that the Confessions, written from the latter stage a decade afterward, reinterpreted the events of his earlier conversion to fit his mature, Pauline theological persuasion. Holl argued that an account of Augustine's conversion in essential agreement with that of the Confessions could be pieced together from the dialogues of Cassiciacum, virtually contemporary with the events, and that Augustine's later development could best be understood as an exploration of themes implicit from the beginning. And yet Harnack was not mistaken in detecting contradictions in Augustine's thought: not, as he had maintained, contradictions between the early Augustine and the mature

but between the Catholic Augustine and the disciple of St. Paul, contradictions that were present from the first and never resolved throughout his intellectual career. Augustine never grasped the full implications of the Pauline Gospel (which, Holl made no secret of believing, is the Gospel). St. Paul was always tempered by a Platonic and Catholic interpretation, and nowhere was this more evident than in the Augustine ethic.

Augustine approached religion from the point of view of classical eudaemonism, in pursuit of "the happy life." "The conversion," says Holl, represents nothing more than a change of taste. The fancy for earthly good is replaced by the sweeter fancy for heavenly good. Enjoyment reaches its peak in self-forgetfulness, and yet it is clear that the self-forgetful man (as he appears) is really busy thinking of himself all the time. Augustine does not shrink from the claim that in the "love of God," as he presents it, self-love at its highest is provided for at the same time.

Nor is the situation very much improved when Augustine includes love-of-neighbor with love-of-God as the supreme obligation. For when he expounds the command in greater detail, he constantly intrudes self-love between love-of-God and love-of-neighbor. It is the point of reference from which the two other articles gain their inner relationship and proportion. In connexion with this, we notice that Augustine could only grasp the commands of the Sermon on the Mount in their negative aspect. The most inward essence of neighbour-love, its meaning as the will for self-denying community, remained hidden from him.

This approach has serious implications for the doctrine of grace:

Under the category of grace he has never been able to comprehend
more than that sudden discovery of a taste for the spiritual and eternal which eradicates man's craving for things of the senses. It is still true for Augustine that the will cannot be set in motion without something to attract it. Augustine now designates this more exalted longing, consistently with the biblical vocabulary, preferably as caritas, sometimes as dilectio or amor; but fundamentally it is still the old Platonic eros which shines through. Apart, of course, from Augustine's new insistence that this caritas does not arise from within man himself, but is "poured" or "breathed out" upon him, unproven, from on high. For it is God's way to allow man what he longs for. So it is with caritas, and that is why it is a gift of grace. Interpreted in this way Romans 5:5 becomes a basic point of reference for Augustine. Moreover it squares with this concept of Grace that, for all the self-accusation with which the Confessions proceed, forgiveness of sin never achieves the same decisive sense that it has in Paul.5

As the concept of grace is weakened, so is the force of the divine command:

Augustine is quite clear that one can only really deserve the highest good when he loves it "for its own sake." But this means no more than that he must not use it as a means to an end, aiming at some other good. He will never say that one should love it selflessly, without reference to his own happiness. Rather he continues to stress, as before, the true fulfillment of self-love in the love of God. This principle is repeated again and again: "right self-love is love of God." [It is plain that Augustine found no difficulty here, although he was constantly stumbling over the inner contradiction. Amor sui serves him as the root of sin, and yet he finds se ipsum diligere unexceptionable, just so long as it is expressed in the form of loving God!] Holl's note.6 Here we find substantiation for the claim that Augustine, on the face of it inebriated with the love of God, is the first to expound that attenuation of the command as concerns the duty of loving God on which scholasticism later built. An actual fulfillment of the command to love God with all the heart is only possible in the life beyond; here we must be content, as he says explicitly, with a justitia minor huic vitae competens.6

We may summarize Holl's critique under two heads: In the first place, the eudaemonist structure of classical ethics is the main object of attack. There are specific points of content to criticize, but it is the form which causes him the more profound discontent. Augustine should not have taken the quest for happiness as the model for Christian ethical thought. He should not have accepted the classical legacy of a teleological analysis of human action and will. Eudaemonism elides the distinction between the way of God's requiring and all other ways which man may devise. Christian ethics requires a different model, a different form, to do it justice. Secondly, it is the part of self-love in Augustine's thought to represent the eudaemonist structure as a whole. The intrusive presence of this third love alongside the two loves commanded in Christ's summary of the law is an indication that love of God and love of neighbor are both conceived eudaemonistically. They are measured and controlled by self-love because self-love is nothing other than the quest for happiness, without which no ethics, in Augustine's view, can be conceived. That self-love plays this role in Augustinian ethics is demonstrated by its moral ambivalence: Either sin or virtue may be called amor sui, for both are the product of the soul's quest for some beatitude. Holl's critique was elaborated in the much more widely known work of Anders Nygren.7 Nygren, despite his disavowal of value judgments, finds Augustine's mixture of Pauline and Platonic elements, the "caritas-synthesis" as he dubs it, every bit as disagreeable as Holl did, and the features which unsettle him are precisely those which alarmed Holl. "Caritas is in essence love to God. Yet according to Augustine, all love, even that which is directed to God, is acquisitive
love, and so, in a certain sense, self-love. 8 Amor sui is taken by Nygren to be an analysis of what Augustine conceived love-as-such to be. Whenever he spoke of love, whether as caritas, dilectio, or amor, he had in mind an impulse both acquisitive and self-referential. This impulse is properly described as self-love. Nygren too wishes to direct criticism at the form rather than the content of Augustine’s ethics. There is no question of a reprehensible egotism or selfishness, no question of Augustine’s urging us to pursue our own interests when we ought to be pursuing those of God and neighbor. The problem is simply that even when he does commend the love of God and neighbor he cannot break free of the self-referential framework. In the last analysis everything is justified by its place in the “acquisitive” pursuit of beatitude.

Nygren has his own way of dealing with the strange ambivalence of amor sui. It is not enough, he tells us, for a critic merely to distinguish two senses of the phrase, mutually contradictory, and opt for one or the other as “typically” Augustinian. 9 Amor sui, he thinks, describes something wrong when it specifies the object of love (because God is the only good for mankind) and something right when it specifies the nature of love (because all love is acquisitive love). 10 This seems to mean that when amor sui carries a negative tone it specifies a moral attitude susceptible to ethical evaluation, while in its positive sense it simply represents love as such, as yet unspecified. In the one case the objective genitive is a direct object, so that “self” stands in the same place as “God” in the phrase amor Dei. In the other case the genitive serves as a kind of indirect object and the phrase interprets what love, any love, amounts to. Thus Nygren’s complaint is fundamentally the same as Holl’s: Augustine is guilty of pouring substantively good ethics into an inadequate formal vessel which will not hold them.

Our analysis of Holl’s critique, then, will serve for Nygren’s as well: First, there were the objections to eudaemonism as an unsuitable vehicle for Christian ethics; secondly, there was the role of self-love, seen as a representative expression for the eudaimonist approach. Leaving the first and more general objection for discussion later in the chapter, we will give our immediate attention to the relationship between self-love and the eudaimonist categories, taking up in turn two pivotal claims in the Holl-Nygren case, the intrusion of self-love upon neighbor-love and the equation of self-love with the desire for happiness.

THE INTRUSION OF SELF-LOVE UPON NEIGHBOR-LOVE

“The most inward essence of neighbour-love, its meaning as the will for self-denying community, remained hidden from him.” We may now reasonably suppose that what Holl found lacking in St. Augustine’s treatment of Christian love was not so much “community” as “self-denial,” an element which has come to play a major part in modern treatments of the theme, especially Protestant ones. It has appeared (in Gene Outka’s words) as “the inevitable historical manifestation of agape insofar as agape was not accommodated to self-interest.” 11 Holl’s view is taken rather further in the direction of self-negation by Nygren, who sees the Cross as the normative expression of agape and characterizes this Christian idea of love as “sacrificial giving,” which “lives the life of God, [and] therefore dares to lose it.” 12 And if Outka can distinguish two different positions with respect to self-negation—an extreme position which regards sacrifice as the “quintessence” of love and a more modest one which allows it “only instrumental warrant . . . in promoting the welfare of others”—that is a difference of opinion which can be kept within the family of Augustine’s critics. 13 For the position which Augustine is accused of holding is far removed from either of these. It is a position in which self-sacrifice in the neighbor’s interest can never be recommended on any grounds because the measure and limit of what we owe to any man is constantly declared to be our own self-love.

Some apologists for Augustine are content to admit this implication. Etienne Gilson among them says “Loving another with one’s whole soul does not mean disowning or sacrificing oneself; it means loving
another as oneself, on a basis of perfect equality. The one I love is my equal and I am the equal of the one I love,... All charity for another’s person seeks its own good as well. This is self-evident because the definition of love implies desire for a good we want to possess, and if a person sacrificed himself in favour of the object of his love, he would possess nothing.”

Such a position might, of course, be pressed to yield a norm of physical self-sacrifice, assuming that after death there is a Heaven in which the subject may continue to exist and enjoy the object of his desire. Even without a Heaven, if one believed as the Stoics did that certain states of consciousness (including, perhaps, the awareness of not having done everything possible to save the beloved) were less to be desired than total extinction, one could argue for a form of suicide which would at least have sacrificial elements. But a sacrifice so controlled by considerations of the subject’s own welfare is not at all what is meant when agape is said either to consist in or to involve self-sacrifice in the neighbor’s interest. What is required is subordination in principle of self to other; and that, according to apologist and critic alike, is what Augustine cannot concede.

A slight unevenness in Gilson’s defense draws our attention to an ambiguity in the accusation. He defends self-love at one moment on a basis of equality with neighbor-love, at another on the ground that all love implies desire for some good. In the first case self-love is legitimized as one love alongside others, in the second as the presupposition of all loves. In a more technical treatise Gilson might have made the scholastic distinction between self-love as amor benevolentiae, a specific form of love with the self as its conscious object, and self-love as amor concupiscientiae, implied by the quest for good which is an aspect of any love. It is in the latter that we recognize the characteristic structure of eudaemonism, self-love sharing with the love of God the position of highest generality in the hierarchy of values. But the objections to Augustine’s use of the regula are actually directed at the former. The critic would like to have it both ways. Objecting, in the first instance, that Augustine shortchanges the neighbor by measuring his claim alongside that of the self, he then goes on to object that Augustine derives the neighbor’s claim from that of the self. But really he must choose between these two incompatible lines of attack. If the self-love in question is the ultimate value which, together with the love of God, is taken to be the source of all obligation, it cannot be measured, for good or ill, alongside the altruistic principle, since altruism too is an expression of it. If on the other hand this self-love is a substantive moral claim, a genuine rival to neighbor-love (and this is surely what the command in its original context suggests), then it has nothing to do with the central principle of eudaemonist ethics. Holl and Gilson may perhaps be forgiven for missing this distinction, which, as we observed in chapter five, often eluded Augustine also.

When Augustine says that true self-love is love of God, he is saying something not unlike what he means by the claim that God is man’s happiness. Both express the principle that duty and self-interest ultimately coincide. Holl appears to have concluded from this that self-love and the quest for happiness were in all contexts synonymous, something we have shown not to be the case. Nygren took the equation further with his suggestion that “self-love was what love, in Augustine’s thought, really amounted to.” Thus we have the equation of self-love, the quest for happiness, love. Why did it seem obvious to Nygren that this equation held true for Augustine? My tentative suggestion is that he found in contrasting mediaeval philosophies of love echoes of his own disagreement with Augustine and so inclined to credit Augustine with later, mediaeval views, in particular those of St. Thomas.

Pierre Rousselot’s veteran monograph, Pour l’histoire du Problème de l’Amour au Moyen Age, a work known to Nygren, distinguished two conflicting conceptions of love in the theologians of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, one which he called the “physical,” one which he called the “ecstatic” conception. The names are a little unfortunate and may suggest a kind of contrast which Rousselot did not intend.
What he had in mind was this: Thomist and pre-Thomist treatments explain the love of one being for another in terms of a metaphysical framework which embraces both subject and object, while the other tradition presents love as a confrontation of two absolutely individuated beings in which the loving subject suffers a kind of disintegration in face of the object of his love. For the Thomist, love is comprehensible as part of the rational movement of the universe toward integration and unity; for the “ecstatic,” love is neither rational nor comprehensible. For the one, the subject is related to the object within a subsisting ontological continuity which enables it to be conceived as an extension of the subject’s self. For the other, the object is so completely alien that the relation involves a disruption or dissolution of the subject’s self. From the former view, rooted in Platonist cosmology, comes the Thomist tradition; from the latter, equally rooted in Platonist mysticism (though Rousselot does not acknowledge this ancestry), come mysticism, quietism, voluntarism, even Reformation and post-Reformation views of love.

The treatment of self-love in these two traditions reveals their critical divergence. For the physicalist, represented by St. Thomas, “there is a fundamental identity between the love of God and self-love” (p. 3). For the ecstatic, although love may have its beginnings in self-love (p. 8), unless it leaves this starting point behind, it remains imperfect and flawed (p. 58). Self-love is incompatible with perfect love. Gregory the Great, in a sentence much quoted in the Middle Ages, distinguishes two kinds of love and reserves the word caritas for a love completely rid of self-concern. Other writers do not even acknowledge the possibility of a lower, self-referential love worthy of the name (p. 58ff.).

To judge from one or two suggestions, Rousselot is inclined to place Augustine in the physicalist camp, and it is obvious that a strong case can be made for this. Augustine identifies true self-love with the love of God. He declares that no one can hate himself, and, like St. Thomas later, he believes that all operations of the will express the quest for beatitude. He does not, it is true, take the step which in Rousselot’s view wins for St. Thomas the metaphysicians’ crown; he does not overtly extend the notion of unity so as to conceive of every agent simply as a part of the whole, though we have observed tendencies toward this solution. There is left in Augustinian thought a certain duality between self-love and the love of God which it remains for St. Thomas to erase. But the essential characteristics are already discernible. Self-love is evil only when the self is imperfectly understood and conceived of as an independent item apart from the rest of the universe. A true self-love, a self-love based on true self-knowledge, must coincide with love-of-God because it involves a love of the whole of which self is understood to be a part, the love of Being itself instead of love restricted to the self’s artificially individuated being.

And yet such a characterization, though initially plausible, must leave us uneasy. Our own conclusions suggest three reasons for uneasiness: First, we remember that for Augustine the equivalence of self-love and love-of-God can be maintained only when both are in their perfect state. True, he gives a very qualified assent to the view that all beings love God in some way or other; also, he subscribes from time to time to the view that all animate beings love themselves. But these two phenomena are not the same: The universal love of God, insofar as it can be maintained at all, can be maintained only on the ground of ultimate metaphysical tendency, while the universal animal self-love is a matter of empirically observable behavior. Only of perfect self-love and explicit love of God can it be said, “Herein you love yourself, by loving God.” And so the whole Thomist construct of a natural tendency which, as much in its inchoate as in its achieved form, is at the same time love-of-God and love-of-self is left without an essential supporting pillar. Secondly, the identification as one single tendency of love-of-God, love-of-self, and love-as-such, an identification central to the Thomist scheme, fails as well at the second link as at the first. It is not the case in Augustinianism that all love is reducible to love-of-self. True, all love, that is, all operations of the will, can be explained in terms of the quest for beatitude—in that St. Thomas and St. Augustine are at one; but, as we have shown, the identification of the quest
for beatitude with self-love cannot be maintained. Nowhere in Augustine’s page do we find the classic “psychological egoist” argument that since the very notion of appetition implies the desire to possess, all appetite is self-referential.\textsuperscript{20} Then, thirdly, perverse self-love is never treated by Augustine simply as a special case of the natural tendency. The wrong choice of the Fall, which could be interpreted from the Thomist point of view as an inherent risk in created nature, is for Augustine an absurdity.\textsuperscript{21} Although it is true for him, as well as for St. Thomas, that self-love in its corrupt sense belongs to a diminished and ontologically false concept of the self (\textit{amor rei privatae}), it is not the case that right self-love is simply the same impulse with the misconception corrected. Corrupt self-love is to be classed, according to the rough classifications we proposed, as either “rational” or “cosmic”; true self-love (outside the fourteenth book of \textit{De Trinitate}) is a matter of love as benevolence.

Augustine and Thomas are both “eudaemonists,” but there is a wide difference in the way that their eudaemonism is worked out. The difference may be summed up briefly: Where St. Thomas understands the equation of self-love and the love-of-God in terms of the analogy of being, for Augustine it is a datum of revelation.

Such a characterization of Augustine’s eudaemonism as against that of Rousselot’s “physicalist” school may lead us to suspect that the gulf between Augustine and the “ecstatics” is not so wide as Rousselot supposed. They too are unwilling to account for true love as something natural, as ordinary as selfishness. There is more than a suggestion that love is a transcendent, even a demonic, force. There would be something of lèse majesté in the attempt to dignify with the title “love” anything that belonged simply to normal human motivation. In this context we can find clear anticipations of the Reformers’ concern not to “reduce the demand” of God’s law. Abelard, for example, is strongly insistent that the love-command of the Gospel is something far and away more serious than anything in the law and the prophets, and he precludes any reference to the eternal blessedness we may hope to gain from the object of our love. And in quoting Augustine in support of this “gratuitous” love he is not doing him the violence that Rousselot imagines. For there is a place in Augustine’s thought not only for “free love” and “pure love,” a Gospel ethic distinct from anything carnal, but even for actual “self-forgetfulness” in the contemplation of God’s goodness.\textsuperscript{22}

And yet there are aspects of the ecstatic conception to which Augustine could never have subscribed. We may note two of them. First, Abelard is representative of the tradition as a whole when he takes his concern for “pure” love so far as to rule out even the Augustinian \textit{ipse praemium}, the doctrine that God himself is the reward of the blessed:

> Perhaps you say that our reward will be God himself and not something else... so that when you serve him for the eternal blessedness you expect to receive from him, that is pure and true love, love of God for his own sake... But if we really make God alone the object of our love, it must follow that we will love him just the same whatever he may do to us or to others, because it cannot but be what is best. In him our love has an object that stabilises it; since he remains stable, always the same, good in himself and as such worthy of our love.\textsuperscript{23}

Behind this divergence there lies a disagreement about the relation of God to his creation. For Augustine to say that God is or that God is good is to make a statement about the whole, of which creation is a part: God is the source of being, God is the source of value. “God is” means that we exist in and from his being; “God is good” means that he is \textit{our} good. For Abelard, on the other hand, God’s being and God’s goodness have to be thought about independently, without any reference to the being and good of his creation. What God does is “best” simply because he does it, and no inference can be drawn from this about its being best for his creatures.

Again, Augustine could not easily have subscribed to the concept of an intermediate ethic of practicality, contrasted with an ultimate ideal.
Mediaeval ecstatics, though not in this case their Reformation successors, make considerable use of the “stages” of love. This doctrine can be seen in a highly developed form in the mystical ascent to the love of God expounded by St. Bernard; but in a more vestigial form we can see it in the commonplace distinction between slavish love (based on fear), mercenary love (based on hope of reward), and filial love, which is truly free. Self-concern in different forms marks and mars the first two of these; and yet we must begin our pilgrimage with self-concern, for that is the reality of our present condition. Abelard identifies this intermediate ethic with the requirement of the law; it is the light load laid on an untrained mule, far from the perfect demand of the Gospel. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” he quotes; for although fear is slavish, it would be foolish to pretend we were in a position to begin anywhere else. It is the starting point (incohatio) but not the completion (perfectio). Such an account of ethical obligation presupposes an interest in ascetic theology more characteristic of John Cassian than of his great contemporary. The mature Augustine was not interested in spiritual and moral progress as a matter for speculative theorizing. True, he began where the ascetic theologians began, with the Platonic mystical ascent of the soul; like them, he worked this out in Christian terms as a pilgrimage toward the purification of the soul and the vision of God; like them, he believed that the Christian life was a protracted moral struggle. But for him there was no ladder of progress by which the soul’s movement from one level of moral achievement to a higher one could be charted. The struggle rather consisted in a series of recapitulations of Adam’s choice between good and evil.

Rousselot detects within the ecstatic concept of progress to pure love a failure to reckon with the possibility of love, for God and self, which is natural but not fallen. “Between charity and cupidity there is an absolute antithesis. As charity and grace are equivalent, and grace is the opposite of nature, it was tempting to identify nature loosely with cupidity, to regard the latter as the natural fruit of the former and to draw only a very hazy distinction between natural and perverted love.”

St. Bernard is quoted: Natura semper in se curva est. Rousselot’s objections are founded on the entirely Augustinian premise of original righteousness: There is all the difference in the world between fallen and unfallen human nature; grace restores and, the Thomist will add, perfects nature. In the ecstatic concept, however, the weight of the contrast is between nature and grace as such. The irruption of the divine, as represented by demonic amor, summons nature to judgment not for being fallen but simply for being natural, self-contained, lacking the transcendent reference. The consequence for ethics must be a sharp division between all “natural” ethics and the evangelical perception of love. And when the latter is believed to be realizable only at the end of a period of moral ascesis, there is implied a relative and temporary authorization of the former. Here is the iustitia minor of which Holl complained, an absurdity in the context of a theological ethic. But it is not Augustine who can be charged with it.

A Rousselot finds it hard to see how a rational thinker could belong to the ecstatic group, a Nygren how a Christian thinker could be among the physicalists. In conspiring to class Augustine (as rational but only half-Christian) among the ranks of St. Thomas’s predecessors, they misrepresent him, for Augustine belongs to neither tradition. And yet he anticipates both. There are clear premonitions of the ecstatic doctrine of the stages in the passage from the Tractates on 1. John in which Augustine speaks of how we learn to love our enemies: “Extend your love to your neighbour. . . . Extend it to those whom you do not know but who have done you no wrong. Pass beyond them, and reach the stage of loving your enemies.” As yet there is no suggestion that the highest stage, the love of enemies, is to be left out of our ethical principles for practical purposes until an intermediate ascesis has brought us to the point at which it is realistic. It is still a duty incumbent upon every Christian. But here is the acorn from which that oak will grow. There are premonitions of the physicalist treatment, on the other hand, in the later books of the De Trinitate, where perfected self-love is regarded as the correlate of perfected self-knowledge and is allowed greater continuity than usual with the imperfect self-love which is
common to all. This is the beginning of the road which will end in the identification of love-of-God, love-of-self, and love-as-such as a single undifferentiated teleological force in nature. But again it is only the beginning.

However, Holl and Nygren could have omitted all mention of self-love and we would still have had to meet the most important part of their critique, their case against eudaemonism. To this larger issue we devote a few general observations in concluding.

EUDAEMONISM AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS

In order to discover the profoundest motivation of the critique, let us set up against it an imaginary defender of Augustine and of eudaemonism, who will owe something to contemporary philosophical fashions in the English-speaking world. He will be an empiricist and as such will find no difficulty in the idea of casting an ethic of self-sacrifice in a eudaemonist framework, always provided that it is no more than a framework. Holl's charges we have already said are directed against the formal aspects of classical eudaemonism. He does not credit Augustine with any thing so blatant as recommending vice instead of virtue. But what interest, our defender will ask, can a merely formal objection have for the theologian and moralist? If Christ had said that men should deny themselves, and some Christian eudaemonist then proposed that they should seek their own happiness instead, then the point at issue would be clear. The counsel of the disciple would differ substantially from the counsel of the Master. But the eudaemonist has not done this. He has translated the requirement of self-denial out of the language and concepts of "deontology" into the language and concepts of eudaemonism. If he has translated accurately, what matter? Holl wants to make a moral criticism of a "language of ethics," and that simply cannot be done.28

Clearly such a defense will be committed to taking a positivist interpretation of the classical finis bonorum tradition. The analysis of different moral options in terms of different views of the final good will be seen primarily as a formal framework for posing the questions and marking the disagreements. When Aristotle begins his Nicomachean Ethics with the words, "Every art, every means, every activity and moral choice appear to aspire to some good," he is plainly not pretending (on this interpretation at least) to have identified a definite end, "some good," to which every activity really aspires; for although he says that "the good has been well defined as 'that to which things aspire,'" he must add, "on the other hand, it is plain that they aspire to different things."29 But neither is he encouraging us to view all activity as activity of one special kind. He is not telling us that every art and every moral choice is, for example, acquisitive. Acquisitive acts are grasping, clinging, seizing; but Aristotle's discovery relates as much to giving, loving, renouncing. In truth there is the world of difference between Aristotle's thesis and, let us say, the Christian doctrine of original sin, which is prepared to contemplate at least as an ideal possibility the thought of an unselfish man in order to argue by contrast that all actual men are selfish. The whole point of Aristotle's thesis is that every conceivable variety of human behavior is included in it. It is a formal structure of analyzing human activity morally, in a way in which we can think of, describe, and compare the choices which confront the human agent as he acts.

Leaving aside for the moment the question of how the classical tradition should be interpreted, let us imagine how Augustine's critics would answer this defense on its own terms. Perhaps they would say something like this: Christ presents self-denial and the selfish pursuit of personal happiness as diametrically opposed; the eudaemonist presents them, certainly, as sharply contrasted, but yet as related under the formal concept of happiness. The critic is disturbed not because the eudaemonist has forgotten the difference between virtue and vice but because after he has made every allowance for the difference there remains a suggestion of residual similarity in that both are conceived to be pursuits of happiness. The defense drew a sharp distinction between the language of ethics, which is not susceptible of moral criticism, and the content, which is its legitimate object. But does a language not control the content of what is said in it? Certain moral
“languages” might invite us to distort or misrepresent the Christian ethic. One way of speaking brings one issue to prominence, another brings another. The eudaemonist formulation of Christ’s demand for self-denial robs it of its starkness. By saying the same thing in a less challenging way, it distorts it, so that in the end it is not quite the same thing that has been said. The ultimacy of the demand is lost in the shadow of a purely formal but nevertheless obtrusive idea of happiness.

The defense might well be able to accept a good deal of this case. The critique is directed less against the morality of eudaemonist concepts (an idea which it finds difficult to understand) than against their epistemological efficiency as a linguistic vehicle for Christian ethics. And by interpreting the critique in this way, the defense might succeed in limiting its scope, so that it does little damage to Augustine. If someone complains that eudaemonism is inefficient, he is bound to say what it is that it is inefficient at doing. Efficiency and inefficiency are measured in relation to a task, and there may be some tasks for which eudaemonist terms are the most efficient tool available. There are times, for example, when it is convenient to refer to a straight line as the circumference of a circle with infinite radius; and the effect of doing this is not to obscure the distinctiveness of a straight line but to illuminate it by showing that no quantifiable increase in radius could ever transform a circle into a straight line. To make a contrast a formal point of comparison is required, and the concept of happiness, by affording such a point, can be a valuable framework for making contrasts.

When Augustine, in a famous section of City of God XIX, contrasts the Christian understanding of happiness with all the possibilities of classicism, it is clear that he intends not to elide the distinction between Christianity and classicism but to throw it into the sharpest relief. Such considerations should suffice to vindicate the Christian use of eudaemonist categories at least as an occasional possibility, and although a critic may object to an unguarded or unqualified eudaemonism, Augustine, a great deal of whose ethical reflection is in fact cast in a deontological form, cannot reasonably be accused of that.

But the critic is unlikely to consent to being brushed aside so lightly. The defense undertook to justify eudaemonism solely in terms of its being a useful conceptual “tool,” and now it has agreed to limit it by the same criterion. Either way it has avoided any discussion of the relation of eudaemonist language to reality. Yet how else can a conceptual tool be “useful” except by its correspondence to reality? True, if one is arguing against someone who believes that happiness is the supreme goal, one may say (but not without irony!), “My happiness is to do my duty”; but once the disputant has gone his way, there is no reason whatever to continue speaking in this way unless there is a real relation between happiness and duty. The “usefulness” or “epistemological efficiency” of a “language of ethics” can be evaluated only by its truthfulness. The critic finds great difficulty with the distinction between the “justifying” and the “epistemological” role of happiness in moral theory to which we made a reference in the Introduction. The man who says “Heaven is full of people who are not particularly concerned with being there” seems to want things both ways, to believe in an ethic of reward without encouraging other people to believe in it. Why should he not be concerned with getting to heaven if that is really the goal of human life? What grounds can there be for discouraging such a “language” for understanding our duties, unless it be that this “language” is telling us a lie?

In this way the critic makes it plain that his complaint against Augustine is a metaphysical one. He does not believe that a neutral eudaemonist language is conceivable nor, indeed, that that was what Augustine intended. Augustine’s eudaemonism was meant to be a description of the universe, a characterization of man’s moral life in relation to the wider context of reality in which it was set. Nygren’s description of agape and eros as “fundamental motifs” plainly means to suggest that he is criticizing something of the nature of “worldviews,” structures of thought more deeply committed to a perception of reality than mere linguistic convention could ever be. And, of course, in his assessment of Augustine’s own intentions the critic is perfectly correct. As we have seen, the classical tradition is open to a
realist as well as a positivist interpretation, and Augustine's Neoplatonism inclined him to read it that way. The "quest for happiness" reflects (at least) the teleological thrust by which all creatures are oriented toward their supreme good. The quest is common to all humanity not by definitional fiat but by virtue of man's status as creature. True, it accounts for all varieties of human behavior and is not itself one among other possible varieties; but that is not because it is a merely formal category but because all human behavior really does take place within this given metaphysical condition. It is this uncompromisingly metaphysical understanding of eudaemonism that the critique intends to take issue with, and that on the ground that its understanding of the nature of things is simply false.

However, once the critic has taken the battle onto the metaphysical field, he is bound to accept the realist interpretation of what Augustine says about man's goal. And (as we observed in chapter one) he needed the positivist interpretation in order to characterize his teleology as "egocentric." The force of his charge was that every object of desire was posited by the subject as desirable for himself; desire, even of the supreme good, did not involve the subject in genuine confrontation by a reality greater than himself which simply laid claim upon him. (That seems to be the force of Holl's jibe about divine grace becoming no more than a "change of taste.") But once the realist interpretation of the supreme good has been accepted, the charge appears to fall to the ground. Man's goal is an objective reality which the subject has not chosen for himself and his orientation to which is a necessity of his creation. Desire itself is understood not simply as an affect of the subject but as a decisive confrontation between subject and object. Where, then, is the egocentricity? This defense, common, with modifications, to most of the scholars who have written on Augustine's eudaemonism since Nygren, certainly puts the critic in an embarrassing spot. If he accepts the positivist interpretation of the theory, he is back on the empiricist's ground, struggling to show that his complaint is important; if he accepts the realist interpretation, he is on Augustine's ground, struggling to show that there is anything to find objectionable.

But if the critic is prepared to replace his charge of "egocentricity," a moral objection, with a charge of "anthropicentricity," a metaphysical one, then the fundamental nature of his quarrel with Augustine can emerge clearly. Augustine's picture of the universe shows us one who is the source and goal of being, value, and activity, himself in the center of the universe and at rest; and it shows us the remainder of the universe in constant movement, which, while it may tend toward or away from the center, is yet held in relation to it, so that all other beings lean, in a multiplicity of ways, toward the source and goal of being. But the force which draws these moving galaxies of souls is immanent to them, a kind of dynamic nostalgia rather than a transcendent summons from the center. Such a summons, of course, is presupposed; but it is reflected by this responsive movement which is other than itself, so that there is a real reciprocity between Creator and creature. In the last resort what is at issue is whether all movement in the universe is from the center to the circumference or whether there is also this responsive movement. Here is the nub of the agape-eros question for Nygren, who stands in a respectable Protestant theological tradition (though at an extreme point of it) rejecting immanent teleology as inconsistent with the doctrine of Creation.

This issue can be arbitrated no further within the limits of this study. We can simply say that Augustine does believe in immanent teleology and that that is the metaphysical root of his eudaemonist ethics. We can also observe, as we have done, that his epistemological program, credo ut intelligam, acts as a barrier against his allowing too much to the immanent force and requires him constantly to invoke the initiating movement of revelation and grace as the immediate and not just the ultimate presupposition of the response. In this context we can allow some validity to the distinction, which was brought into question a moment ago, between the metaphysical justification for the ethical demand and the immediate epistemological access to it. Augustine does not allow that we could infer the whole of our Christian duty by consulting our self-interest, even though the whole of our Christian duty does serve our self-interest. Rather, we are to discover the
meaning of self-interest by heeding the voice of authority as it tells us of our Christian duty. Augustine does not think we should be unconcerned with getting to Heaven; but he does not allow us to imagine that our natural ideas of what Heaven is like or how we might reach it will be of any service to us.

Yet even when so cautiously urged, the responsive movement, in the view of the critics, robs those categories which speak of the divine initiative of their force. Talk about God's "love" in particular seems hopelessly debilitated when it is followed in the same breath by talk about man's reciprocal love for God. Something quite different must mark the believer's attitude to God, something so very different indeed that many of Nygren's commentators have found it hard to tell whether he endorses the biblical command to love God at all. 33 It has sometimes been suggested that Nygren has no place for the doctrine of Creation, the ground on which Augustine would assert the continuity and stability of the created subject who is the object of God's grace. 34 It could perhaps be argued that the reverse is the case: He has no room for anything other than the doctrine of Creation, since every movement from the divine center has to be presuppositionless, ex nihilo, creative, bringing into existence something quite unprecedented. His rejection of "philosophic eros" is not so much the rejection of Creation as the refusal to presuppose it. Creation is existential, never to be taken as read, never to be regarded as the foundation for subsequent movements, both of initiative and response, which will be differently characterized. When man's conversion is described as a "new creation," the phrase is taken literally.

The heart of the quarrel between Augustine and his critics, then, is whether the creative work of God allows for teleology, and so for a movement within creation, which can presuppose the fact of creation as a given starting point, to a destiny which "fulfills" creation by redeeming it and by lifting it to a new level. It is the meaning of salvation that is at stake: is it "fulfillment," "recapitulation"? If this is indeed the authentic Christian understanding of what God has done in Christ, then Augustine's critics will have to face this implication: Between