



Leslie Dewart and “Spiritual Hedonism”

Lawrence Dewan

Volume 27, Number 1, 1971

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1020202ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1020202ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Laval théologique et philosophique, Université Laval

ISSN

0023-9054 (print)

1703-8804 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Dewan, L. (1971). Leslie Dewart and “Spiritual Hedonism”. *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 27(1), 25–39. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1020202ar>

LESLIE DEWART AND "SPIRITUAL HEDONISM"

Lawrence DEWAN

In *The Future of Belief*,¹ by way of general introduction to the problem of religion in our time, Leslie Dewart refers to Freud's view of religion, and particularly of belief in a God, as a case of an infantile illusion which has outlasted infancy (pp. 20-21). He then goes on to maintain that Freud himself was still under the spell of the older, primitive world-view, and showed himself to be so by sadly concluding that man cannot attain to happiness (pp. 23-26). Professor Dewart suggests the possibility of rejecting both the obsolete illusion and the Freudian substitute :

If reality is experienced as reality, if the world is envisaged as man's home, and if the purposiveness of conscious existence is conceived as *being* and not as *being happy*, the future forecast by Freud for the religious illusion might well come true — but in the form of a further development of Christian theism, not in that of its disappearance. If we transcend the inadequacies of the position represented by Freud, the assumption of its truth should lead us more adequately to envisage the future of belief (p. 26 his italics).

One can see readily enough the coherence of this view with the overall task sketched in the rest of the book. That task is the "*dehellenization of dogma*, and specifically that of the Christian doctrine of God" (p. 49). This involves, among other things, a philosophical doctrine of man different from that of earlier times : e.g. whether or not men regard themselves as pursuers of happiness will inevitably affect their view of what it is to be a God.

Having in the above-explained qualified way assumed the truth of Freud's position, Professor Dewart seeks to confirm its validity with some observations about Christian belief and practice (pp. 26-36). The general point is that it has been and is characterized largely (at least as regards "Western Christendom") by "the belief that the most consequential fact of life was the ultimacy, irrevocability

¹ DEWART, Leslie, *The Future of Belief*, New York, 1966 : Herder and Herder. References to this work will be made in the body of the essay, by page.

and absoluteness of the alternative possibilities open to man in the world beyond the grave : eternal and utter bliss, or eternal and utter suffering" (p. 27). In the course of presenting this point, Dewart speaks of popular preachers, present-day Thomists, St. Thomas Aquinas himself, Scholasticism, and finally of "the origins of that spiritual hedonism whose fountainhead . . . antedates St. Thomas by a thousand years, and which Scholasticism merely canalized" (p. 34). Still, his main interest is not in those origins. "What must be stressed above all is that this spiritual hedonism exists, not indeed as an isolated phenomenon, not as heresy, not as deviation from the norm, but as characteristic of the current form of our faith" (*ibid.*). Dewart is not even saying that it was always a bad thing, but only that it will no longer do (p. 35).

Now, it could not be denied that something of hedonism affects the spiritual life of most people, indeed that the Christianity of most Christians lives in a kind of bondage to a hedonism of sorts. Nor would one hesitate to say that integral Christianity is preached all too rarely. However, it is of considerable importance that, in making our diagnosis of Christianity today, we isolate truly undesirable features and not confuse them with similar but essential features of Christianity. And the question of the source of the hedonistic element in much religious understanding and practice is of great importance for one's conception of that element, the extent to which it is subject to elimination, and the way one would go about eliminating it.

I am sure Professor Dewart would agree with this. He sees what he calls spiritual hedonism as part of our Hellenic heritage, and he himself advances under the flag of "dehellenization". The reason he can set aside for another occasion² the question of sources is that he thinks he knows (and, indeed, has just sketched) enough of the answer to make headway. It is not as unessential to his view as one might think that he is able to present the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas as a spiritual hedonism (in principle). Thomas need not be the original source. He serves as a witness to the intelligible grounds of that spiritual hedonism, and in his doctrine the Greek background is evident enough. The case of Thomas makes it possible to say that this hedonism is no merely superficial malady of "Western Christendom", and that it is, in its primary intelligibility, Hellenic.

If this assessment of Professor Dewart's position is sound, it will be of some service to ask the question : is his judgment of St. Thomas Aquinas' doctrine adequate ? I hope to show that it is not, i.e. that St. Thomas' theory of the Christian life is not, in principle, a spiritual hedonism.

In speaking of St. Thomas, Dewart first establishes that, for him, man's fulfillment consists in happiness, i.e. in the attainment and enjoyment of the last end (p. 30). Secondly, the distinction between happiness and the necessarily concomitant delight is introduced, in an attempt to save the doctrine from an accusation of "classical hedonism" (pp. 30-31). Thirdly, this distinction (however true) is seen not be entirely adequate to the aforementioned task, i.e. St. Thomas is

² Cf. the same author's *The Foundations of Belief*, New York, 1969 : Herder and Herder.

not altogether absolvable of the charge of hedonism (pp. 31-32). Fourthly, St. Thomas is seen to have been also an advocate of truly Christian views, but this was only by virtue of inconsistency (pp. 32-33).

I will deal first, then, with Dewart's argument about the inadequacy of the distinction between happiness and delight to save the doctrine of St. Thomas from a charge of hedonism. After that, the charge of inconsistency will be faced.

Dewart's criticism of the distinction between happiness and delight moves through several phases. We will look first at what he puts second. He says :

Moreover, the distinction implies that there would be nothing basically wrong (though there would be something Christianly imperfect) with seeking ultimate delight for its own sake. This must be admitted not only in deference to common sense, but also theoretically. The delight taken in the acquisition of the object of happiness is a *necessary* concomitant of happiness. One *cannot* avoid taking delight in the attainment of self-fulfillment. It is *natural* for man to seek happiness with all his might (p. 31, his italics).

There is in this passage a preliminary difficulty of interpretation to be faced. What is meant by "delight in the attainment of self-fulfillment"? Is the delight taken in attainment, or in the thing which is attained through the self-fulfilling act? The self-fulfillment under discussion is seeing God. Are we delighted with the seeing or delighted with God?

There is no doubt that St. Thomas, in the passage to which Dewart refers us concerning the "concomitant delight" (at p. 31, n. 22)³ is speaking about being delighted with God. There is also no doubt that there would also be present a delight in the seeing, in the attaining, since it too, i.e. the seeing, is a loved and longed-for good which has now been attained. But just as the love by which we love the seeing is a secondary sort of love, so the corresponding delight will be secondary⁴.

However, Dewart, in his previous discussion, has moved from the uncreated object of happiness, namely God (p. 30), to the very essence of happiness as something created (*ibid.*), and on to a discussion of delight as "the delight we take in happiness" (p. 31), seeming to mean by "happiness", in this last expression, the created operation. This meaning also seems indicated by the formula, cited above, "delight taken in the acquisition of the object of happiness". There is then a very real question as to whether he has succeeded in envisaging what St. Thomas would call "ultimate delight" at all.

Still, it may not matter all that much which delight Dewart is talking about, in view of the sort of argument he presents. Let us reserve judgment.

³ The reference is to *Summa Theologiae, Ia IIae, q. 4, a. 1*. Since all references to St. Thomas in the present essay are to the *Summa Theologiae*, we will henceforth simply cite part, question, and article.

⁴ Cf. *Ia IIae, q. 25, a. 2*, where St. Thomas speaks about the sort of love we ought to have *vis-à-vis* charity, beatitude (meaning the created operation, the act of seeing), and the virtues. On the two joys or delights, cf. *ibid.*, q. 28, a. 1, ad 3. The two loves are sharply contrasted at q. 180, a. 1.

The procedure being considered is "seeking ultimate delight for its own sake". Dewart says that in the light of St. Thomas' doctrine such a course of conduct would not be "basically wrong". However, it would be "Christianly imperfect".

The supporting argument stresses the inevitability of having the delight. And one might think that, on that basis, there could be *nothing* wrong with it. One can hardly be blamed, however slightly, for the inevitable. The point, rather, is that there would be something less than perfect in seeking the ultimate delight, not as something secondary and concomitant, but "for its own sake".

What does St. Thomas say about "seeking delight for its own sake"? In the very same series of questions to which Dewart is referring for his information about St. Thomas, i.e. at *Summa Theologiae, Ia IIae*, q. 2, a. 6, St. Thomas shows that the beatitude of man cannot consist in pleasure (*voluptas*), whether this word is being used in an extended sense to mean delight in intelligible goods or in its primary (bodily) sense. The very first objection is as follows :

It seems that the beatitude of man might consist in pleasure :

1. for beatitude, since it is the ultimate goal, is not sought after because of something else, but other things because of it. This, however, belongs most of all to delight : "for it is ridiculous to ask someone because of what he wanted to be delighted", as is said in *Ethics*, Book X. Thus, beatitude consists, most of all, in pleasure and delight.

To this St. Thomas replies :

... it belongs to the same intelligibility that the good be sought after and that delight be sought after, [delight] being nothing else than the appetite's repose in the good : just as it is from the same natural force that the heavy thing is borne towards the lower place, and that it remains at rest there. Thus, just as the good is sought after by virtue of itself, so also delight is sought after because of itself, and not because of something else, if the "because of" expresses the final cause. But if it expresses the formal cause, or, better, the moving cause, in that way delight is seekable "because of" something else, i.e. because of the good, which is the object of delight, and consequently is its origin and gives it form : for it is by virtue of this that delight has [the role of] being sought after, viz. that it is rest in the desired good.

The point here is that the good, and delight in the good, are diverse intelligible features of one intelligible goal. There is only one act of seeking by which they are sought. Hence, the delight is not sought "for the sake of something else", as though it were a step on the way to a further goal. It is sought "for its own sake", inasmuch as it is an aspect of the goal which, necessarily, is sought for its own sake. Since, however, the goal is not simple but composite, including as it does the good and delight in the good, it is the good which gives to the delight the quality of "belonging to the goal" and so the quality of being "something sought after for its own sake".

In accordance with this doctrine, if Dewart means by the expression : "seeking ultimate delight for its own sake" a seeking of that delight as a goal, then such a formula does not and cannot imply any diminution of the truth that the good (which is other than the delight) is being sought after for its own sake and not for the sake of something else. If one were to attempt somehow to desire the ultimate delight in any sort of preference over the ultimate good, and if one actually proceeded to desire a delight in this attempt, though of course one would desire it under the intelligibility "ultimate delight", still of necessity one would fail to desire the true ultimate delight, since this latter, by definition, is "rest in the desired (ultimate) good".

For St. Thomas, then, "seeking the ultimate delight for its own sake" is not merely not basically wrong. Rather, it is Christianly perfect. Nor does this convict St. Thomas of any sort of "hedonism".

It might be added that it does not really matter whether Dewart is speaking of the higher or the lower of the two delights mentioned earlier, as long as the true hierarchy of values is preserved. Delight in the very act of seeing God is not the ultimate delight, but it will be a thoroughly good delight to the extent that it corresponds to the sort of self-love which pertains to charity, or to the sort of self-love which is not at odds with charity⁵. To the extent that what is not absolutely ultimate, whether a good or a corresponding delight, is "sought for its own sake", it will necessarily be so sought.

Let us look now at the first phase of Dewart's criticism of the distinction between happiness and delight. He says :

One can understand the philosophical distinction between "happiness" and its "concomitant delight" and nevertheless sympathize with those who have to translate it into pastoral advice. This sympathy would have nothing to do with anyone's lack of subtlety or with anyone's excess of it. It is simply that, if nothing else, the concomitance of happiness and delight logically implies that the attainment of delight (of the right sort, to be sure) can provide a practical criterion for the moral conduct of life. The adequacy of man's endeavor towards acquiring his due perfection and self-fulfillment can always in practice be judged by the adequacy of his search for ultimate and true bliss (p. 31).

It will be noted that Dewart in some way takes into account the fact that there are various sorts of delight, some "right" and others not. He acknowledges that a delight would have to be of the right sort in order to provide an adequate moral criterion. Nevertheless, he clearly regards this as a questionable approach to the problems of moral life.

The sort of thing he suggests seems to be quite in accord with the doctrine of St. Thomas. That man is good and virtuous who rejoices in virtuous activity⁶.

Of course, understood in one way, the doctrine that the attainment of delight in a task could provide a moral criterion would be ludicrous. If "delight" were

⁵ On the relation of charity to self-love, cf. *Ila Ilae*, q. 19, a. 6.

⁶ Cf. *Ia Ilae*, q. 34, a. 4.

taken in the sense of "feeling good", i.e. in the sense of some bodily pleasure, then it is obvious that some people derive delight from the most unjust and inhuman sorts of activities. So taken, "delight" signifies a particular corporeal thing which remains somewhat the same though experienced in conjunction with a variety of undertakings. Thus, it provides no clear principle for the judgment of the moral worth of those undertakings⁷.

However, if we understand "delight" as applicable to the acts of intellectual appetite, the types of delight will vary in accordance with the good which the intellect apprehends. And thus there is no danger of mistaking good delight for bad or indifferent delight. And then it is true that the delight constitutes a moral criterion. Good delight is recognizably good, because to be good it must be possessed intelligibly, that is, understood in relation to some apprehended good thing.

This point is made, as regards its fundamental principle, by St. Thomas at *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 87, a. 4. There he asks whether the intellect of man understands the act of the human will. In answer he says that the act of the will is nothing other than an inclination accompanying understood form, just as natural appetite is an inclination accompanying natural form. Secondly, he says that a thing's own inclination is present in the thing itself whose inclination it is, and present there in accordance with the conditions of being proper to that thing. From these points he concludes that natural inclination is naturally in the natural thing; and, again, that the inclination proper to the sensitive appetite is sensibly present in the sentient thing as such; and, thus, similarly, that the intelligible inclination, which is called the act of the will, is present intelligibly in the one who understands, as in its principle and as in its proper subject. The conclusion is thus that, since what is intelligibly present in someone understanding is, as a result, understood by that someone, it follows that the act of the will is understood by the intellect. And we may add that, since delight is an act of the will, the good man understands the goodness of his delight.

We might add that, as regards our supernatural life, we can never be certain of ourselves, since our supernatural life has to do with objects of love which lie beyond our clear vision. But even to form a conjecture of our situation in the spiritual life, we rightly consider whether we find "delight in God"⁸.

In this phase, then, of his criticism, Dewart seems to do nothing more than look askance at delight as a moral criterion. He seems to take into consideration the notion of "sorts" of delight, and yet this evidently does not satisfy him. Nevertheless he insists that his criticism is not merely as regards practical difficulties. But where is the theoretical difficulty? It would seem that, for Dewart, to make delight a moral criterion is to fall into a kind of "hedonism". But is that so?

In the other phase of his criticism, which we examined earlier, he was seen to suppose it possible, according to the doctrine of St. Thomas, not to seek the

⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

⁸ Cf. *Ia IIae*, q. 112, a. 4.

ultimate delight for its own sake. Seeking the ultimate delight for its own sake, on Dewart's reading of St. Thomas, would be "Christianly imperfect".

I believe we are now in a position to suggest a flaw in Dewart's thinking. First of all, he shows skepticism, it would seem, as regards the possibility of identifying the right sort of delight. That would be a healthy skepticism if by "delight" one meant bodily delight, "feeling good". Secondly, he sees it as a real possibility that a person might show a preference for the delight experienced in the ultimate end, in comparison with the ultimate end itself; indeed, someone might seek that delight for its own sake — by which Dewart clearly means: seek it without considering the concomitant good. This too would be possible if the delight under consideration were bodily delight.

My suggestion is, then, that Dewart makes use of a notion of delight which restricts it to acts of sense-appetite. It is peculiar to the order of sense-appetite that activities have as their goal a delight aimed at while there is obliviousness to the associated good. This arrangement is quite understandable inasmuch as sense-cognition grasps particular goods, not the intelligibility "goodness" itself; the particular good which sense grasps is the delightful. To the extent that one conceives of the role of delight in activities according to this plan, one will tend to regard the delight as pursuable in relative independence of the *de facto* goodness in being which may result. Thus, for example, the child may pursue the sweet because it is sweet, and by this action will in fact be nourished by the honey.

Professor Dewart seems to be saying St. Thomas' doctrine implies that it is possible to pursue the sweetness for its own sake, and that this is not totally unacceptable, but that it is the property of the perfect to pursue the goal, not for its sweetness but for its goodness. This is why I say Dewart is conceiving of delight on the model of sense-appetite.

Even though he seems to be taking into account precisions about "the right sort" of delight, even though he seems to be keeping in view the object of the delight, as when he speaks of "the delight taken in the acquisition of the object of happiness", nevertheless the type of difficulty he then goes on to suggest clearly shows that his conception of delight is formed according to the notion of sensual delight, not intelligible delight.

It is little wonder, then, that Professor Dewart can accuse St. Thomas of covert hedonism. The reason is that Dewart never allows into the discussion any notion of "the sweetness" of beatitude other than a sensual one. I.e., he projects the hedonism into the doctrine by restricting the notion of delight to a hedonistic one⁹.

Let us come now to Dewart's charge that though St. Thomas also proposed truly Christian views, these could not be reconciled with the ethical views expressed in his more fundamental speculative work, i.e. the charge of inconsistency. At this stage of his discussion (pp. 32-33), the complaint against St. Thomas seems

⁹ Cf. *Ia IIae*, q. 4, a. 2, ad 2.

to be not merely that his doctrine is hedonistic, but that it is *selfish*. He focusses on the statement that "to desire happiness is nothing else than to desire that one's will be satisfied" (p. 32).¹⁰ In reflecting on this, Dewart says that this is not the whole of St. Thomas' doctrine and is thoroughly qualified by much else :

But I am not aware of any other doctrine of St. Thomas which retracts this position, nor indeed, of any other doctrine which he offers under the guise of a *theoretically* more basic nature. The last point is to be emphasized, because there is no reason to believe that in his own personal life St. Thomas, any more than those who have agreed with him, actually abided by this hedonism. One can only suppose that he *lived* an integrally Christian conception of morality, the sort "which seeketh not her own" (p. 33, his italics).

If I understand Dewart, he is saying that the doctrine that happiness is the satisfaction of one's own will is incompatible with the doctrine that the Christian must not seek his own. Does the doctrine of happiness as satisfaction of one's own will require "retraction" in the face of the doctrine that charity seeks not her own? Is there any other doctrine of St. Thomas theoretically more basic than this doctrine of the primacy in human action of happiness as satisfaction of one's own will?

I would suggest that it is too much of an understatement to say that the doctrines of self-satisfaction and selflessness are "compatible" as explained by St. Thomas; the truth rather is that he has a thoroughly uniform or unitary doctrine in which both thoroughgoing selflessness and thoroughgoing self-satisfaction are quite at home.

In order really to examine an expression such as "to desire that one's will be satisfied", one must consider such questions as who "one" is¹¹, and what a "will" is. We will focus more on this latter question. The will of the creature is presented in the *Summa Theologiae* for the first time (in any detail) at *Ia*, q. 59-60. In q. 59, will is seen to be found in angels, inasmuch as they are inclined towards goodness considered in its very goodness (a. 1). In q. 60 the act or motion of the will is investigated, and it is there we will find the solution to our problem.

The basic motion of the will is called "love". This love is found in two modes, natural (a. 1) and elective. However, the natural love is primary and original, the elective secondary and derivative (a. 2). Subsequently, then, St. Thomas exposes the natural love which is the primary motion of the will, by considering it in relation to its various objects. How does this natural love stand with respect to one's own self, one's fellow, and God? (aa. 3, 4, 5) Thus, in these five articles of q. 60, we are presented with a doctrine of the primary operation of the will of the creature (angelic and human)¹².

¹⁰ He is quoting *Ia IIae*, q. 5, a. 8.

¹¹ Cf. e.g. the discussion of self-love at *Ia IIae*, q. 25, a. 7.

¹² At *Ia IIae*, q. 10, a. 1, ad 1, St. Thomas speaks of this natural love as the will's participation in the motion which properly belongs to the thing's nature; it is a manifestation, through the creature's willing (*velle*), of its very being (*esse*).

In a. 1, we should note especially that we are dealing with a natural inclination, which nevertheless is an act of the will : "in the intellectual nature, the natural inclination is found as a willing (*secundum voluntatem*)". We should also be careful to note the priority of nature over intellect. This is important as establishing the primacy of this whole discussion for an understanding of human *willing*. This is brought out more fully in a. 2, wherein we see that the natural willing we do is the principle of the willing we do through choice.

In a. 3 ("whether the angel loves itself by natural love?"), we have, first of all, another distinction of meanings of "to love". This is necessary in order to make clear what is meant by "to love oneself", and it also establishes the nature of the act which is being investigated primarily in this whole series of articles ; i.e. we are speaking about being "friendly" with ourselves, with our fellows, and with God ; we are not speaking of "loving" things merely in the sense of seeking to annex their goodness for our benefit. This is a doctrine of the primacy of natural friendship.

Secondly, *à propos* a. 3, we should note that what is in question here is not whether angels and men love themselves. It is rather manifest that men love themselves. The question is, rather, whether self-love has the intelligible status of something *natural* and thus primary. Here in a. 3, St. Thomas merely says that it is clear that in things which lack the perfection of knowing, each one naturally seeks to attain to that which is good for itself : as fire seeks the higher place. And from this he concludes that men and angels, when they seek their own good and their own perfection, are *acting naturally*.

St. Thomas is very brief in this article on self-love, probably considering that the naturalness of self-love stands in minimal need of demonstration. He says more about his general procedure in a. 5, in arguing the more subtle point that to love God more than oneself is natural. He reports that some people have actually held that to love God more than oneself is not natural, and he then counters :

But the falseness of this opinion is manifestly apparent if one considers, in natural things, towards what a thing is naturally moved : for natural inclination, in those things which are without [the power of] reason, points to the natural inclination in the will of the intellectual nature.

The general method, then, is to use the creatures which lack the power of knowing as a means of discerning, among the great variety of activities performed by intellectual creatures, which are to be attributed to nature and which to other principles¹³.

Taking aa. 3-4-5 as a group, a. 3 appears to have the status of a principle, in the order of our learning ; i.e. that one wills good things for oneself surely shows the *naturalness* of the will, nature being a principle of *self-perfection*. Thus, "nature", "one's self", and "will" are rather readily linked together. When we

¹³ Cf. *Ia*, q. 60, a. 4, *sed contra*.

come (a. 4) to “loving our fellows”, this is less evidently natural because it involves a more intrinsically intelligible meaning of “one’s self”. And this is all the more true in the case of God. A careful reading of these articles leads one, not merely to an elaborated vision of “will”, but to an elaborated vision of “one’s self”.

The fourth article asks : “whether one angel loves another as itself, by virtue of natural love ?” It might be as well to point out, as a preliminary, that St. Thomas understands the formula : “love another as oneself” not as signifying *equality* of love, but as signifying *likeness* in the way one loves both, i.e. that just as one wishes one’s own perfection for oneself, so one wishes their perfection for one’s fellows. The formula thus means that we treat others as friends¹⁴. Also by way of preliminary, we should note that here, as in the other articles, the discussion is a general one, applying to *men* as well as to angels, indeed seen by us in men and applied generally to “intellectual creatures”.

If we come then to a. 4, we find that our basis is what has already been established, viz. that “the angel and the human being naturally love themselves”. We now explore the implications of this : “However, that which is *one* with a thing *is* that thing”. And the immediate conclusion is : “And so each thing loves that which is one with itself”. To bring out the implications of this, various modes of unity are considered, it being taken for granted that *natural* unity (which itself has many modes) is the primary instance of unity. Thus we read :

And if, indeed, [that which is one with the thing] is one with it by natural union, it will love that with natural love ; but if it is one with it by a union which is not natural, it will love it with a love that is not natural.

For example, a man loves his fellow-citizen with a love that pertains to political virtue ; but he loves his blood-relative by a natural love, inasmuch as he is one with him as regards the natural generative source.

Now this doctrine is applied to things which are *one in species* :

Now it is manifest that that which is one with something by genus or by species is one [with it] by nature.

And the conclusion :

And so by natural love each thing loves that which is one with itself according to species, inasmuch as it loves its own species.

This is illustrated from things which lack the power of knowing, so as to leave no doubt about the naturalness of the inclination as found in knowers :

And this is also apparent in those things which lack knowing : for fire has a natural inclination that it communicate to another its own form, which is its good ; just as it is naturally inclined to seek its own good, i.e. to be above.

The point then is that fire manifests a natural inclination to convey its good to others (a love for others), and not merely to seek its own good (a love for itself).

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, ad 2.

Finally it is concluded that by natural love one angel loves another in terms of those things in which they naturally agree ; it is pointed out that they may love one another in other ways according to other modes of agreement.

This fourth article provides a kind of bridge between the angel's self-love and its love for God more than for itself.

We come now to a. 5 on the love of God, viz. whether, by natural love, the angel loves God more than itself. A look at a few of the objections will help us to enter into the heart of the doctrine.

The first objector takes his stand on the doctrine we have just seen, i.e. that natural love is established on natural union. Since the divine nature is maximally distant even from the angelic nature, he argues not merely that an angel does not love God more than itself, by virtue of natural love, but that it does not naturally love God as much as it naturally loves other angels.

The second objector cites the maxim : "That because of which, all the more !" He then argues that by natural love anyone loves another because of himself : for each one loves something inasmuch as it is something good for oneself. Thus, by natural love, he concludes, the angel does not love God more than itself.

The third objector takes as his starting-point nature as a principle of selfhood. Nature, he says, is turned back towards itself : thus we see that every agent naturally acts for the conservation of itself. This would not be so if it tended towards another more than towards itself. Thus, an angel will not love God more than itself by virtue of a *natural* love.

We can see readily enough how the very doctrine of the earlier articles is being used to formulate the problem of the naturalness of putting God first in the order of lovability. This might be a good moment to look back upon Dewart's problem : how to reconcile the primacy of self-satisfaction with the command to seek not one's own. Surely, as the second objector has said, if each one loves others only as good for oneself, it is hard to see how others can ever come first, and especially how God can come first.

Coming now to the body of the article, we are first shown that this question has caused some difficulty, and we see the many possible ways in which these love-relations can be envisaged. This has some importance, lest one get the idea that little attention was given to these problems in earlier times.

Some people have thought, St. Thomas relates, that the angel loves God by natural love more than it loves itself, if by "love" is meant concupiscence, i.e. the angel seeks to annex for its own benefit the divine good even more than it seeks what is merely its own good. Also, say these people, in a sense it can be said that the angel loves God by natural love more than itself, even taking "love" in the sense of friendship ; this is so inasmuch as the angel naturally wills that God be God, while it wills that it itself have its own proper nature. Nevertheless, these people say, speaking in an unqualified way, the angel, by natural love, loves itself more than it loves God, since it naturally loves itself more intensely and primarily than it loves God.

As I have suggested, this exposé helps us to see clearly various possible resolutions of the situation under discussion. It helps us to be sure what St. Thomas does and does *not* mean by his own solution.

In rejecting the above view, St. Thomas first of all tells us where to look for a solution and why :

The falseness of this position is manifestly apparent, if one considers among natural things that towards which the thing is naturally moved : for natural inclination in those things which are lacking [the power of] reason shows where natural inclination lies in the will of the intellectual nature.

The problem in telling what is natural in intellectual creatures is that there is in them nature plus something else. Thus, the question arises : among the inclinations one finds in them, which have the status of natural inclinations and which the status of elective inclinations ? The inclinations found in those things whose only principle of operation is nature provide the grounds for judging what in our willing is natural.

Next, then, St. Thomas points out something found in the inclinations of such natural things :

Wherever, among natural things, something is naturally constituted as belonging to another, that something is inclined more principally to that other than even to itself. This natural inclination is revealed by the actions which are naturally performed, since, as Aristotle says, as a thing naturally acts, just so is it naturally adapted to act. Now, we see that the part naturally exposes itself for the sake of the conservation of the whole body : as the hand is exposed to the spear-thrust, without deliberation, in order to save the body as a whole.

In order to persuade more fully, St. Thomas next illustrates this kind of inclination by means of political life, i.e. a derivative of nature which itself may be expected to echo nature and so help reveal and confirm our judgment about the natural :

And because reason imitates nature, we find this sort of inclination among the political virtues : for it is the property of the virtuous citizen that he expose himself to mortal peril for the preservation of the republic as a whole ; and if a man were a *natural* part of this society, that inclination would be natural for him.

Finally, we come to apply these observations to the problem of our love for God :

Therefore, because God himself is the universal good, and under this good are contained the angel, the human being, and every creature : since every creature naturally according to its very being belongs to God ; it follows that by virtue of natural love even the angel and the human being love God more than they love themselves.

And so we see that it is St. Thomas' conception of the being and goodness of creatures *vis-à-vis* the being and goodness of God which allows him to discern the fundamental nature of the love-motions of the human and angelic wills. God is the entire intelligibility of the existence and goodness of creatures. Accordingly, the natural motion of willing is an act of love for God before all else.

St. Thomas goes on to point out that if it were not as he has explained, i.e. if one naturally loved oneself more than God, it would follow that natural love is perverse, and that it would not be perfected by charity but destroyed by it.

Thus far in this exposition we may seem merely to be setting down side by side, as it were, the two doctrines that one naturally seeks one's own perfection and that one naturally loves God more than oneself. One can, of course, see in the above material on the love of God that these two doctrines fit well together, or, at any rate, show no tendency to clash. However, the replies to the previously noted objections will help us to see the integrity of the doctrine, that it is all of a piece.

The first objector argued that since natural love is based on natural union, one should naturally love oneself first, one's fellow second, and God third. St. Thomas replies that this argument, that one should love more by natural love what is more one with oneself, holds good where one is speaking about things which have the status of equals, i.e. in a situation where one is not the whole ground of being and goodness for the other. In such things (of equal status), each one naturally loves itself more than the other, inasmuch as it is more one with itself than with the other. However, among things one of which is the entire intelligibility of the existence and worth of the other, such an other naturally loves the one more than it loves itself: as the part naturally loves the whole more than itself. So also, St. Thomas adds, each singular thing naturally loves more the good of its own species rather than its own singular good. And God is not merely the good of one species — he is the unqualifiedly universal good. So that each thing, according to its own mode, naturally loves God more than itself.

The argument of the second objector was that since it is precisely our own selves which are the cause of our natural love for others, by natural love we love ourselves more than we love others. The ground for saying that in natural love it is our love for ourselves which causes our love for others is that *each thing loves something inasmuch as it is something good for oneself*.

St. Thomas' reply analyses this last allegation. Here one is saying that God is loved by the angel inasmuch as or because God is something good for the angel. This statement, says St. Thomas, can be true or false. If the "inasmuch as" or "because" relationship is meant to express a goal, then the statement is false. The angel does not love God naturally *for the sake of* its own good, because of its own good, but rather for the sake of, because of, God himself. However, if the "because" expresses the intelligible ground for the love, on the side of the one who loves, so taken the statement is true. This is to say that it would not be something ap-

propriate to the nature of a thing that it love God except for this, viz. that each thing depends on the good which is God.

It is, then, true that one loves God because God is good for one, but this in no way means that God is made a mere means to our well-being. Rather, it means that we can only love God because he has made us relevant to his goodness. We have been given a kinship with the universal good.

Again, it is only inasmuch as we derive from God, inasmuch as our goodness comes from him, that the privilege of loving him pertains to us at all. This is important for a conception, to be alluded to later, of the role of supernatural beatitude in the formation of our love for God. New derivations of divine goodness give rise to new possibilities, new ways of being able to love God.

The foregoing reply forced us to consider how it is that we have what it takes to love God. The reply to the third objection focusses our attention on the various "selves" that we have within us, and towards which we can turn. The objector contrasted "reflecting back into oneself" with "tending to another more than towards oneself". How could the inward-turnedness of *nature*, as manifested in the universal phenomenon of self-preservation, be reconciled with "loving something else more than oneself" ?

In reply, St. Thomas himself affirms the doctrine that *nature is reflected back into itself*, but explicates it in terms of three levels of selfhood. Nature is self-reflective, but this is not to be understood merely as regards that in it which belongs to its singular being. Rather, the inclination is even more intense as regards that in one's being which is common or universal. Each thing is inclined to the conservation not merely of its own individual being but also to the conservation of its own species. And even more does each thing have a natural inclination towards that which is without qualification the universal or common good.

This last reply shows us most clearly, it seems to me, the unity of the doctrine of the naturalness of self-love and the naturalness of loving God more than oneself. It is one natural motion of the will which encompasses ourselves and God, ourselves with a view to God ; indeed, our truest self is that which is most thoroughly ordered to and nearest to God¹⁵.

The foregoing survey of q. 60 of the first part of the *Summa Theologiae* is, of course, not meant to do anything like justice to the riches of doctrine contained therein. Some things have not been mentioned, others only touched upon. The purpose has been merely to convince the reader that in that place can be found the very doctrine about which Professor Dewart expressed ignorance. There is in St. Thomas' works a doctrine more basic with respect to the doctrine that happiness is self-satisfaction. It is the doctrine that our own self's chief love is for the divine goodness, a friendly love for the divine goodness. Moreover, this doctrine

¹⁵ On "our truest self", cf. *Ila Ilae*, q. 25, a. 7. Also to be consulted are texts on man, the image of God : e.g. *Ia*, q. 93, a. 4. *Ila Ilae*, q. 27, a. 4 : "dilectio . . . tendit in Deum primo . . ."

is not a "retraction" of happiness as self-satisfaction. It is, rather, the fulfillment of and the whole truth about self-satisfaction.

We have examined Professor Dewart's presentation of St. Thomas as a "carrier", so to speak, of spiritual hedonism. What we have found, however, is that Dewart fails to speak of the doctrine of St. Thomas as it truly is. St. Thomas simply does not exhibit the faults spoken of by Dewart. This, of course, raises questions. If the hedonism exists, what is its source? Does it really have anything to do with "hellenism"? Is there as much wrong with the "pursuit of happiness" as a schema of human and Christian living as Professor Dewart seems to think?

To conclude I wish to underline the importance of the issues which Dewart has raised. He has attempted to make subject to question the whole orientation of Christian life toward beatitude. He has presented that orientation as a form of hedonism. Now, for St. Thomas, the divine promise of supernatural beatitude is not merely no hedonism. It is that very effusion of divine goodness which makes possible the mode of loving God which we call "charity". What is meant by this may be suggested by looking just once more at the article of St. Thomas we have been considering, concerning the natural love of intellectual creatures for God. The reply to the fourth objection provides an *addendum* to the point we saw in the second reply, viz. that the question of how we love God is answered in terms of what capacity for loving him God has given us: i.e. in what way is God, who is the common good, *our* good; who are we?

The objector has complained that to say we naturally love God more than ourselves is to confuse natural love with the divine gift of charity. It is proper to charity to love God more than oneself.

Not so, says St. Thomas. There are various modes of love by which one can love God more than oneself. By natural love, God is loved by each one as the universal good upon which each natural good depends. But inasmuch as he is the good who beatifies all, by supernatural beatitude, in that way he is loved by the love of charity¹⁶.

If this is true, then Dewart's confusion of the Christian pursuit of happiness with hedonism strikes a blow at the very possibility of charity.

¹⁶ *Ia*, q. 60, a. 5, ad 4. It ought to be clear, in the light of the reply to objection #2, that this does not mean we love God because we get something from him ("because" expressing final causality). It means that he gives us a new way of being relevant to his own goodness. It might be as well to add that there is nothing wrong with loving God because we get something from him. It is simply that it is a mode of love pertaining more to hope than to charity. Cf. e.g. *Ila Ilae*, q. 17, a. 8 and q. 23, a. 6.