

Universal Love in *Fratelli Tutti*, and in Economics
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1 Immigration Policy and *Fratelli Tutti*

Nothing brings into focus the tension between local love and universal love as clearly as immigration policy. Hence, I begin with a discussion of Catholic Social Teaching on immigration, and immigration policy in the US.

We may describe Catholic social teaching on immigration with three principles:¹

1. There is a right to migrate.²
2. The right to migrate is not absolute. Host countries may restrict immigration if immigration threaten a nation's common good.³
3. The right to migrate is strongest for the poor and for refugees. Nations should not restrict this right lightly.⁴

The second principle brings economic analysis into the policy conversation. National Academy studies in 1997 and 2017 came to a similar conclusion about the economic effects of immigration on the native population:⁵ immigration has aggregate net positive benefits for natives, although the native poor may experience modest net losses.

In spite of the large benefits to immigrants, there are two reasons to restrict immigration that are relevant to this paper.⁶ First, a large immigration might be a threat to US culture. I do not believe that culture has much purchase on the immigration debate in the US, since the US has a

¹ Andrew M. Yuengert, *Inhabiting the Land: The Case for the Right to Migrate*, Christian Social Thought Series, no. 6, Acton Institute; Grand Rapids, MI, 2004), ch. 2.

² John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris* (11 April 1963), para. 21; Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio* (26 March 1967), para. 69; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens* (14 September 1981), para. 23.

³ John Paul II. "Message for World Day of Migration 1993" (6 August 1993); Benedict XVI, "Message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees (2011)" (27 September 2010).

⁴ Benedict XVI, "Message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2013" (12 October 2012); Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), para. 210.

⁵ James Smith and Barry Edmonston, eds., *The New Americans: Economic, Demographic, and Fiscal Effects of Immigration* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 1997); Francine Blau and Christopher Mackie, eds., *The Economic and Fiscal Consequences of Immigration* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2017).

⁶ I will not examine national security concerns, or rule-of-law concerns about the chaotic immigration system.

history of assimilating large immigrations from different cultures into the American experiment. Concerns about culture are more pressing in the more homogeneous nations of Europe.

It is worth noting, however, that economists have not found a way to integrate culture as a well-specified good into policy deliberations. I think this is because culture is a constellation of social goods, not individually-consumed goods that fit easily into individual utility functions. For this reason culture lives somewhere outside of economic analysis proper. Culture is the background from which preferences and the conception of the good life emerge. If it is taken into account at all, it is an ad hoc, arbitrarily imposed constraint on optimization and efficiency, never fully specified as a good traded off against other goods. For this reason, economists often ignore culture in favor of individually-experienced goods, and efficiency defined in terms of those goods.

A second potential argument against a large immigration, even one that has net benefits for US natives on aggregate, is that it may impose economic costs on the US poor who compete most directly with immigrant labor. Recent research suggests that poor US natives have not done very well over the last forty years.⁷ The large benefits to immigrants, and the net aggregate benefits to natives, suggest that immigration meets the Hicks-Kaldor criterion for efficiency; in theory the (immigrant and native) gainers can fully compensate the (native) losers from immigration. However possible this compensation is in theory, the side payments do not seem to have materialized, or have been ineffective.

To justify restrictions on immigration to protect the native poor, we must assign a larger weight on each dollar cost to the native poor than the weight on each dollar of immigrant gains.⁸

⁷ Charles Murray, *Coming Apart: The State of White America 1960-2010* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2012); Robert Putnam, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015); Anne Case and Angus Deaton, *Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020).

⁸ Yuengert, *Inhabiting the Land*, p. 33.

The assignment of large weights to native poor welfare and smaller weights to immigrant welfare is somewhat arbitrary – coming from outside of economic analysis proper. We might assume that US natives *just happen to* care about the struggles of their fellow poor citizens, but we cannot explain how this care arises. This is similar to the ad hoc response to cultural concerns.

Skeptical about the claims of culture, and trained to identify the efficiency gains that are possible when dollar gains and losses have equal weight, most economists favor freer flows of labor and are skeptical of immigration restrictions.⁹ The arguments for the free flow of labor are compelling on their own narrow terms, but we should ask what economists are missing in the arguments above. Primarily, they overlook (or are incapable of incorporating) the social goods at stake for natives in immigration. In economics, we encounter persons unconnected to us through a distinct but abstract medium: economic modelling. Economic models describe the interdependence of abstract individuals. These individuals tend to be radically individualist – they have no relationships, or their relationships are purely self-serving, fitting neatly into a well-behaved utility function. Within this framework, the social goods of families, churches, and nations have no existence or goodness apart from the aggregation of goods accruing to individuals. The culture of a nation and the well-being of its native poor are components of the national common good. Economic models often overlook these goods, but these goods are not arbitrary; they are a crucial component of human happiness.

This brings us to Pope Francis. In his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, the Pope exhorts us to a universal charity that loves those who are unconnected to us by culture or nation as

⁹ See, for example, John Kennan, “Open Borders,” *Review of Economic Dynamics* 16, no. 2 (April 2013): L1-L13; Michael Clemens, “Economics and Emigration: Trillion-dollar Bills on the Sidewalk?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 25, no. 3 (2011): 83–106; B. Powell, ed., *The Economics of Immigration: Market-based Approaches, Social Policy, and Public Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). For an examination of the conditions in which free immigration benefit natives, see Joao Guerriero, Sergio Rebelo, and Pedro Teles, “What is the Optimal Immigration Policy? Migration, Jobs, and Welfare,” *Journal of Monetary Economics* 113 (August 2020): 61-87.

much as fellow citizens and those who share our culture. This radical generosity undergirds a similarly generous immigration policy. Unlike economists, Pope Francis arrives at this conclusion in a framework that acknowledges in theory the social goods of nations and cultures. His skepticism of arguments against immigration that invoke culture and the plight of the native poor does not arise from an inability to recognize social goods. He explicitly acknowledges the goods of local culture and nation, and advocates a balance between universal charity and the love for local communities.¹⁰

Nevertheless, Pope Francis does not offer a clear account of how we might balance love for our own culture and people on the one hand, and the imperative of universal charity on the other. Because of this, his emphasis on universal charity tends to overwhelm any weight we might place on national culture or fellow citizens. He is dismissive of *cultural* and *native poor* arguments for immigration restriction, attributing them to xenophobia and racism. This leaves unaddressed urgent questions of the appropriate weighting of these social goods in our deliberations.

Fratelli Tutti places the Christian call to universal love front and center. Pope Francis does not help us to integrate universal charity toward immigrants with love of nation, of fellow citizens, and of the cultures within which we live our lives, even though he acknowledges these as potentially good. In the next section I will lay out Francis's argument, and discuss where I think it is incomplete.

¹⁰ Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (3 October 2020), para. 142.

2 Universal Charity and Local Loves

At the beginning of the Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis takes as his theme a quotation from St. Francis of Assisi:

Of the counsels Francis offered, I would like to select the one in which he calls for a love that transcends the barriers of geography and distance, and declares blessed all those who love their brother “as much when he is far away from him as when he is with him.”¹¹ In his simple and direct way, Saint Francis expressed the essence of a fraternal openness that allows us to acknowledge, appreciate and love each person, regardless of physical proximity, regardless of where he or she was born or lives.¹²

Pope Francis reflects in this encyclical on the theme of “universal fraternity” – charity “open to every man and women” (para. 6), regardless of their relationship to us.

Pope Francis subtly distorts St. Francis’s meaning here. He implies that St. Francis exhorted his followers to love the *distinct person* who is far away as much as the *distinct person* who is near to us: love X as much as Y, even though X is far away (and perhaps someone you do not know), and Y is a nearby brother.

This is not what Saint Francis of Assisi is saying. The full quotation from St. Francis is:

Blessed is the servant who loves and respects his brother as much when he is far away from him as when he is with him, and who would not say anything behind his back that he would not say with charity in his presence.¹³

St. Francis exhorts his followers to love the *same person* as much when he is near as when he is far away: love Y as much when he is close by as when he is far away. In other words, St. Francis is talking about someone you are already *in relationship with* – a brother in the Franciscan order. It is not an exhortation to universal charity – to love those unconnected to us. It is an admonition to love well those who are already socially connected to us.

¹¹ Francis is quoting St. Francis, *Admonitions* 25:1.

¹² Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, para. 1.

¹³ St. Francis, *Admonitions* 25:1.

I do not doubt that St. Francis practiced universal charity, and that he loved those he did not know. Moreover, I do not deny the call to universal charity in Scripture. In *Fratelli Tutti*, chapter 2, Pope Francis reflects at length on the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10: 25-37), in which Jesus defines *neighbor* as someone in need, not someone connected to us by bonds of kinship, religion, or nation. It is this broadly-defined neighbor whom we are to love as ourselves. In the Great Commission, Jesus commands his disciples to “make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28.19). St. Francis’s mission to the Sultan was to bring the light of faith to people he did not know: the Muslims, beginning with the Sultan.

Like St. Francis, Pope Francis does not denigrate love for family, friends, fellow citizens, and co-religionists, but exhorts us also to love the poor and the marginalized who are outside of the communities we inhabit. Members of families, churches, cultures, and nations should share a love within their community, but should also love those outside these communities. Pope Francis argues that universal love will give rise to what he calls a *culture of encounter* that will not threaten established communities, but will instead enrich them.¹⁴

The challenge raised by Francis, and by extension the Christian tradition, is to combine and reconcile a genuinely radical *universal charity* – love for every person, no matter their social or geographic distance from us – with what I will call our *local loves*: love for family, friends, fellow citizens, and co-religionists. How does social connection matter to Christian love? Should it matter at all? Moreover, what does this have to do with economics?

The difficulty of squaring universal love with our other loves arises from our nature as materially-embodied finite beings. Humans are not pure souls entrapped in a body; nor are we purely material bodies without spiritual souls. We are embodied souls in a material universe.

¹⁴ Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, paras. 30, 215-217.

Thus even our virtues, including our loves, are not purely spiritual; they are mediated through matter. We love others by means of gifts, through spoken and written words, via our material presence. This is not a denial of our spiritual nature. In this life, however, even deep spiritual union requires physical expression. Even God, who can communicate directly with our spiritual souls, chose to enter our world through the incarnation, and communicates to us through word and sacrament.

Because we are at the same time social beings and materially embodied, each of our social relationships also has a concrete, material expression. Blood ties bind families; churches exist through time as structured organizations with liturgies and traditions; local communities organize themselves to embody and promote the values their members pursue together; nations have boundaries and governments. These material institutions and expressions are necessary for communion among embodied souls. Admittedly, sin and corruption often impede and even destroy communion within institutions, but the alternative to human love expressed materially within institutions is not some abstract, pure, but unachievable spiritual communion.

Love for those whom we do not know or encounter directly is mediated differently from the loves of those who are connected to us through social ties. In modern culture, we encounter those whom we do not know through the media: through stories, pictures, videos. We might wish to meet these persons, but the stories, pictures, and videos are abstractions compared to the persons we encounter concretely in families and communities.¹⁵

Love for people we do not know, or with whom we do not share connections of family, faith, or nation, tends to be abstract and vague compared to the love for a spouse, a brother or sister in the faith, or a fellow citizen. Even the love for a needy stranger we encounter on the

¹⁵ Pope Francis warns against seeking the love of those you do not know as an escape from the difficult task of loving those more closely connected to you. He calls this a “false universalism” (*Fratelli Tutti*, para. 99).

road is not abstract. If universal love remains vague and undefined – unreconciled with more local loves – the call to universal love will fail in one of two ways. It may be simply ineffective – dismissed whenever it conflicts with local loves, and receding into a feeling of compassion without practical effect (virtue signaling). Alternatively, if we commit to universal love but fail to reflect on the connections between it and local loves, universal love might displace or distort the local loves of those who are more concretely connected to us.

The danger of universal charity towards those unconnected to us is that we will give insufficient weight (or no weight at all) to the concrete social bonds that play a crucial role in human happiness. I am not accusing Pope Francis of making this mistake: at various points in *Fratelli Tutti*, he acknowledges the importance of *social friendship* – his term for the shared love of those within a social group or nation – even as he urges the addition of universal charity.¹⁶ Nevertheless, Pope Francis does not present us with an integrated treatment of the relationship between local and universal love; consequently, it is easy to come away from his analysis with the sense that universal love is paramount. Indeed, his own exhortations dismiss or downplay local loves whenever they conflict with universal fraternity.

Francis implicitly erodes the imperatives of local loves by his appeal to universal love in two ways:

1. The wide application of the family metaphor.

The Pope often employs for the metaphor of family when describing the desired attitude of the global community:

“Let us dream together, then, as a single human family ...” (para. 8).

“Yet we need to think of ourselves more and more as a single family dwelling in a common home” (para. 17).

¹⁶ Ibid., para. 142.

“Love enables us to create one great family, where all of us can feel at home” (para. 62).

The application of the family metaphor to global human relations is quite common today, and is not unique to Pope Francis. The Scriptures are more likely to invoke metaphors of brother and sister than family. In the New Testament, Jesus claims as brother, sister, and mother anyone “who does the will of my heavenly Father” (Mt 12:50). Paul repeatedly refers to his fellow Christians as “brothers.”¹⁷ Nevertheless, the universal *family* metaphor is distinct from the *brother and sister* metaphor. In place of a global order in which individuals relate to each other through (and as members of) nations, families, and other communities, the family metaphor substitutes the image of one institution which connects to each individual directly.¹⁸ It is socially monistic, not pluralistic.¹⁹

2. Reflexive suspicion of national identity and culture.

Catholic Social Teaching is clear that the rights of immigrants are not absolute, and that in theory nations may restrict immigration to protect their common goods.²⁰ In practice, however, the Popes (including Francis) are unfailingly skeptical of the motives for any restrictions on immigration, even large migrations. Like his predecessors, Francis is swift to warn against a “xenophobic mentality” (para. 39), “ancestral” fears” (para. 27), an “instinct for self-defense” (para. 41), and “local narcissism” (para. 146). The Popes have not yet

¹⁷ See, for example, Rom. 1:7, 1 Cor 1:10, 1 Cor 1:8, Phil 1:16. As we have already seen, St. Francis uses the term brother for his fellow Franciscan friars.

¹⁸ Pope Francis stretches the metaphor of “neighbor” to cover relations among nations in a similar way (*Fratelli Tutti*, para. 152), and similarly stretches the term “citizen” to embrace “citizenship of the world” (*Ibid.*, para. 66).

¹⁹ Pope Francis in one place makes the point that “global society” is a communion among countries, not individuals unconnected to countries, but he contrasts this with the notion that global society is simply an aggregate of countries (*Ibid.*, para. 149). He does not expound on this insight, or invoke it to refute the idea that global society is simply an aggregation of individuals without respect to their nations and communities.

²⁰ Yuengert, *Inhabiting the Land*, ch. 2.

given much guidance on how to balance the needs of poor migrants with the common good of local culture, national identity, and care for the native poor. Francis goes so far as to invoke the universal destiny of goods to assert that “we can then say that each country also belongs to the foreigner.”²¹ This suggests that, at least in part, the imperatives of universal charity swamp consideration of the goods of national and local society.

The mistake of Pope Francis and the mistake of the economist differ in important ways. Pope Francis acknowledges the social importance of both local and universal love, but he emphasizes universal love without an account of the relationship between universal and local. Absent the context of this account, he effectively undermines local loves. In contrast, the economist undermines local loves through the modelling assumption of individualism, in which society is purely instrumental and therefore unintelligible apart from individual interests. To an economist the call to universal love is nothing more than a call to reassign weights arbitrarily to individually-defined interests in a social welfare analysis.

The consequence of treating individuals abstracted from social context (as units in a social welfare function) is that economics undervalues sociality itself (fraternity, or love) as an important human good. Francis does not deny the existence of social goods, but as a practical matter he attributes restrictions on movement across national borders to social *bads* – to xenophobia and racism – not to any social *good* the nation or community seeks to protect. Economists are equally skeptical of borders, although they attribute existing barriers to rent seeking among natives. In economics there are no social goods of nation and culture to weigh against the economic inefficiencies of borders; consequently, economists tend to favor freer cross-border flows of labor, capital, and goods.

²¹ Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, para. 124.

3 Resources for Integrating Local and Universal Loves

The challenge of universal charity (to both economics and theology) is its abstraction compared to the concrete local loves. How can we situate our account of universal charity within the human person's social nature and finitude, to avoid universal charity as a kind of vague, ineffective love for others, and at the same time give appropriate weight to local loves? I want to suggest two resources for this integration. First, the Catholic account of society as an overlapping tangle of embedded communities, each with a common good but open to broader communities, gives an integrated account of the social goods often overlooked by economists and others. Second, Thomas Aquinas, in his treatise on charity, explores the order of charity across these various communities, and toward those outside of our communities.

The first resource for integration – the Catholic account of social goods and the fraternity that arises because of social goods – is most relevant for economists, whose individualistic premises blind them to social goods and fellow feeling. The second resource – the order of charity – offers a structure on which we might build an integrated account of local and universal loves.

Before I go any further, I should define “love.” To love someone is to will that person's good.²² Love is closely related to friendship in the Catholic tradition. Friends share a common good: husbands and wives share the goods of marriage (including the good of their mutual love); co-workers in a business or non-profit share a commitment to the common goods of the institution; citizens share a commitment to the common good of the nation. Chief among the goods that are shared is the fellow-feeling among those who share a common project.

²² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1948), I-II, 26.4. Hereafter cited as *S.T.*

Even the love of God (the theological virtue of charity) is defined by Aquinas as friendship with God.²³ God infuses Divine charity into the soul – pours it into the Christian’s heart through the Holy Spirit – and this divine charity overflows into love for other human beings.²⁴ Charity does not obliterate the more natural loves of human beings, but it does reorder them significantly, and adds to them love for those who are not directly connected to us: universal fraternity, in Francis’s term.

3.1 Where the Social Goods are: the Catholic Account of Society

Our relationships with others take the form of what Catholic social thought calls *societies*. The Catholic account of society begins with the individual person, love and redeemed by God. Infused charity allows the person to share in the Divine life through his or her vocation in the world. The Catholic account cannot stop there, though; God created human beings for community with each other as well as with Him.

In the Catholic personalist account, human beings are attracted to community by virtue of both their needs and their dignity.²⁵ Each person stands in need of material help from others – for care and formation when he is young, in cooperative endeavors, in exchange, and for aid in times of distress or poverty. Nevertheless, although communities of all sorts provide material benefits to their members, they exist for another reason: the friendship and sociality that arise in communities are natural to human beings, a part of their dignity and flourishing.

²³ *S.T.* II-II, 23.1.

²⁴ “... And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us” (Rom 5:5); “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34).

²⁵ Jacques Maritain, *Person and the Common Good*, pp. 47-48.

Catholic social teaching's analysis of the nature of human communities, as both practical responses to human need and as arenas for communion, is a distinct contribution to social theory. From Leo XIII until today, Catholic social teaching has relied on the concept of *society* as an organizing framework. A *society*, according to Russell Hittinger's analysis of Pope Leo XIII's thought, is a *plural person*, a group of people working together intentionally toward some end.²⁶ The internal order by which the group pursues its purposes is itself one of the ends of the society. Even if a society produces *external* goods which can be divided among its members, this *internal order itself* is not divisible; for example, after a divorce each spouse cannot walk away with half of the marriage.

The concept of a *society* (more commonly called *intermediate communities* in Catholic social teaching) captures the social nature of rational human beings, who not only pursue the divisible private goods of common projects, but who also find fulfillment in pursuing common projects *together*. These common projects can persist through time, and need an accepted structure of authority in order to orient and coordinate common action. Hittinger characterizes societies both by their united action (unity of order) and by their intrinsic common good: "Wherever there are plural rational agents, aiming at common ends, through united action, *and where the unity is one of the intrinsic goods aimed at*, we have a society – something distinct in dignity."²⁷ Societies inhabit a middle ground in social thought, between "society as a kind of super-individual having a single mind or a single body like a biological organism," and "society as a purely accidental unity ensuing upon the choices and actions of individuals who follow their

²⁶ Russell Hittinger, "The Coherence of the Four Basic Principles of Catholic Social Doctrine: An Interpretation," in *Pursuing the Common Good: How Solidarity and Subsidiarity can Work Together*, eds. Margaret Archer and Pierpaolo Donati (Rome: Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, 2008), pp. 75-123. See also Russell Hittinger, "Divisible Goods and Common Good: Reflections on *Caritas in Veritate*," *Faith & Economics* 58 (Fall 2011): 31-46.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

own preferences.”²⁸ These extremes are incapable of capturing what John Paul II called “the subjectivity of society”²⁹: the existence of moral agency and personal communion in human groups and institutions. This moral agency prompts us to expect more than unintended order from groups – societies can be held accountable, and are vehicles by which individual agency is expressed to society’s benefit.

The family and the state are societies, but they do not exhaust the list of human societies. Human beings organize themselves into other kinds of communities – businesses, clubs, charitable organizations – each with its own common good, and each in need of organization, maintenance, and reform. Leo XIII calls these intermediary communities “private societies.” They are subject to regulation by the state, but Leo XIII justifies the respect that public authorities should show them, since they are expressions of “the natural tendency of man to dwell in society.”³⁰ These private societies, along with the family, constitute the subsidiary communities between the individual and the state. An insistence on their importance in the pursuit of social goods and in the formation of human character are a foundational insight of Catholic social teaching, and a counterweight to more abstract, technocratic accounts of society.

Where there are socially produced common goods, it is natural that those who coordinate their activity toward those goods (who produce them together) develop friendship for one another. We might not use the word *love* for the fellow-feeling between members of a local charity or a local school, opting instead for the *fraternity*. Fraternity has received attention in

²⁸ Ibid., p. 81.

²⁹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* (1 May 1991), para. 13. Cited by Hittinger, “Coherence of the Four Basic Principles,” p. 88.

³⁰ Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum* (15 May 1891), para. 51. Not every private society was worthy of state protection, according to Leo; see para. 53.

economics, in the work of Luigino Bruni and Robert Sugden,³¹ who emphasize that market relationships can give rise to and foster reciprocity.

3.2 The Order of Charity

If we take the Catholic account of society as a framework for the kinds of connections that give rise to human love and friendship, the next step is to describe the consequences of these networks of friendship for universal love. I will draw on Thomas Aquinas's treatise on charity³² from the *Summa Theologica* to discuss these consequences.³³

Aquinas explores the nature of charity *the theological virtue*, infused into the hearts of Christian believers. It is not the same as the more natural loves common to all human beings, for family, friends, and fellow citizens. The infusion of charity and its implications for love of others is genuinely radical – the call to love others as God has loved us is a *New Commandment*. The infusion of divine charity does not abolish the order among our more natural loves, however, but orients them toward the source of all love and truth, the God who loves and seeks communion with each person.

Aquinas tackles the order of charity in a set of questions of the form “whether X ought in charity to be loved more than Y?” What does it mean to love person X in charity more than person Y? Aquinas derives the order in two ways: first, from the *object* of charity – *what* we love through charity – and second, from the *subject* of charity – the one *who loves*. Supernatural

³¹ Luigino Bruni and Robert Sugden, “Fraternity: Why the Market Need not be a Morally Free Zone,” *Economics and Philosophy* 24 (2008): 35-64.

³² *S.T.* II-II, 23-27. For a comprehensive overview of the Treatise on Charity, see Paul J. Wadel, “Charity: How Friendship with God Unfolds in Love for Others,” in *Virtues and Their Vices*, edited by Kevin Timpe and Craig A. Boyd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 369-392.

³³ Aquinas is not alone in tracing out an order of charity. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, eds. D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1982 [1776]), pp. 219-237, explores a very similarly structured order of human affections, based upon naturalistic premises, in which nature endows us with sentiments which fit our needs for receiving and giving care.

charity is the gift of friendship with God; it has as its principal object God himself, who is love itself, the source of all happiness, and the end of all our longings. We can distinguish the various species of charity by the closeness of their object to God. Thus, we should love God above all things, since He is himself the principle of happiness.³⁴ We should each love our own soul (but not necessarily our bodies) more than our neighbor, since the good of fellowship in God that we share with our neighbor is surpassed by our directly experienced participation in God.³⁵

Having established this basic order in charity – love God, love your soul, love your neighbor, love your own body³⁶ – Aquinas then explores the order *within* the category of *neighbor*. Should we love some neighbors more than others? Aquinas answers in the affirmative, and establishes this order of loves based on the *subject* of charity – on the one who loves. The intensity of love – the strength of affection, and the number and quality of favors and goods bestowed on the beloved – will depend on the relationship of the person loved to the lover. Because this intensity of love is natural – the intensity of our love tends to diminish as we move out from family through colleagues in various social enterprises to the nation to the world – we might dismiss it as something fully superseded by divine charity reigning in our hearts. Aquinas does not diminish the radical nature of the soul’s encounter with divine grace and charity, but he insists that grace perfects nature – not replacing natural human loves, but re-orienting them.

Aquinas acknowledges that in charity we should love all people; since each person has the potential to share in the divine happiness of friendship with God, we should will this great good, at least, to each person.³⁷ This love in charity for each person (including those unconnected to us)

³⁴ *S.T.* II-II, 26.2, 26.3.

³⁵ *S.T.* II-II, 26.4, 26.5. The body’s share in the soul’s friendship with God is an “overflow” from the happiness of the soul, but the fellowship in happiness with our neighbor in the soul’s communion surpasses the good of this overflow to the body.

³⁶ *S.T.* II-II, 25.12.

³⁷ *S.T.* II-II, 26.7.

does not mean that we can love each person equally, however. We may will the good to each person, but we will good more intensely for those who are connected to us in some way. Because we can do more good to those more closely connected to us (our family, friends, fellow parishioners, fellow citizens) the intensity of our love for them is greater. We can love those whom we do not know with charity – wishing them friendship with God – but we can love those connected to us in more concrete ways, and thus love them more intensely.³⁸

Is this more intense love on the part of a person for those who are closer to him fitting for a Christian, or are local loves instead human faults, attributable to original sin? Sin can distort and corrupt human loves, but Aquinas argues that the infusion of charity preserves the natural order of our loves, for two reasons. First, grace perfects nature: “the affection of charity, which is the inclination of grace, is not less orderly than the inclination of nature, for both inclinations flow from Divine wisdom.”³⁹ Second, since we human beings are finite creatures, we simply cannot do material favors for everyone: “we cannot do good to all.”⁴⁰ There is an inescapable scarcity principle at work in our finite material natures. Since we finite creatures cannot do concretely good things for everyone, it is fitting that human beings shower the concrete favors of love (material goods and time) on those within their practical orbit – both those socially connected to them, and those strangers in need whom they can help (neighbors, as defined by the parable of the good Samaritan).⁴¹

Although kinship ties occupy an understandably important place in the order of charity, the order of charity is not rigidly nested. Family ties do not necessarily trump other social ties, or even beneficence to strangers in need. In “natural matters,” kinship is primary; in “civic

³⁸ *S.T.* II-II, 26.7.

³⁹ *S.T.* II-II, 26.6.

⁴⁰ *S.T.* II-II, 26.6.

⁴¹ *S.T.* II-II, 26.5.

matters,” ties of citizenship are primary; in “spiritual matters” we owe duties to our brothers and sisters in the faith.⁴² Thus, the order of charity depends on context. For example, one should obey one’s superior in battle, and not one’s father. One might choose to give aid to a fellow parishioner in need over a similarly needy family member. The order of charity is not an exhaustive, hierarchical categorization of the extent of charity. Much depends on the deliberations of the virtue of practical wisdom in discerning context and possibilities.

This importance of context makes our love for each human being practical, in spite of our finitude. The love of charity extends to all, “but according as time and place require; because all acts of virtue must be modified with a view to their due circumstances.”⁴³ Even though in praying for all we do them a real spiritual service, we should be “prepared in mind” to do good to any person whom circumstances places in our path: “it is true of each individual that one may be bound to do good to him in some particular case.”⁴⁴ Circumstances might transform any unconnected stranger whom we can only love abstractly into a person whose presence demands our attention.

4 Immigration Policy, Universal Love, and Local Loves

Concerns about immigration’s effect on culture, and its effects on the native poor, should bring to our attention the social goods of nations – goods that must be balanced against the substantial benefits of immigration to poor immigrants. Goods of culture – a people’s way of life which knits together history, religion, the concrete way a culture answers the deepest questions of life and passes those answers on to the next generation⁴⁵ – are a shared common good, and give rise

⁴² *S.T.*, II-II 31.3.

⁴³ *S.T.*, II-II 31.2.

⁴⁴ *S.T.*, II-II 31.2.

⁴⁵ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, paras. 24, 36.

to a sense of belonging and fraternity between those who share in the good. Pope Francis expresses skepticism that immigration poses any risk to the goods of culture, and expresses confidence that openness and dialogue between cultures will dynamically enrich both.⁴⁶ Consequently, he does not acknowledge any danger to a nation's culture – its way of life – from immigration, and dismisses concerns about such dangers as xenophobic – a desire make a nation a static “museum of local folklore.”⁴⁷

Because Pope Francis is relentlessly optimistic about the encounter of cultures in immigration, his concern for universal charity pushes aside any local loves that conflict with universal charity – particularly fraternity among citizens. For their part, economists place a larger weight on what they can measure – the aggregate of individual costs and benefits of immigration to natives and immigrants – and will find it more difficult to recognize the common good of national culture as a counterweight to economic efficiency.

The second objection to immigration – its burdens on the native poor – brings social goods and the order of charity more directly into focus. If native unskilled workers bear net costs from immigration, and if the benefits to immigrants are significantly greater than those net costs, then this argument for immigration restriction requires us to weight each dollar of losses to the native poor more heavily than each dollar gained by poor immigrants. In other word, it requires that we love *our poor* more than the *immigrant poor*, simply because they are fellow citizens.

In the order of charity, is fitting that our love for fellow citizens is more intense than our love toward immigrants. We share with fellow citizens a common culture – a deeply ingrained way of life, not simply preferences for food and local folklore. The reminder that our local loves (including love for country) are an important part of human flourishing does not resolve the

⁴⁶ Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, para. 148.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 142.

question of immigration, of course; it simply allows the common good of a country to have legitimate weight in its deliberations. It is not necessarily xenophobic or racist to care about your common good and your fellow citizens. Francis's frequently-expressed suspicion that invocations of local loves are smokescreens for xenophobia has the effect of rendering all local loves illegitimate in political deliberations.

The Church's suspicion of unhealthy nationalism is not unjustified,⁴⁸ but Francis's instinctive rejection of all claims of the importance of nationhood and patriotism leaves these social goods undefined and undefended from political opportunists who might misuse and distort them. The Church should engage, challenge and encourage anyone making reasoned, humane arguments in favor of the autonomy of the nation state and for particular obligations towards fellow citizens.⁴⁹ Such people are claiming intellectual ground from autocratic populists who appeal to nationalism and the bonds of citizenship for illiberal and inhumane ends. If the appeals of the autocrats are not balanced by reflection on a healthier respect for the nation, the autocrats may continue to gain strength. Catholic social teaching should weigh in on this debate.

5 Thoughts for Economics: Can We Do Good to All?

One of Aquinas's limits on the intensity of universal charity is scarcity: "We cannot do good to all."⁵⁰ To this statement an economist might answer "yes, we can do good to all!" Economics was born amid reflection on the "nature and causes of the wealth of nations." By advocating for

⁴⁸ For a discussion of why the Catholic Church is suspicious of the modern nation-state, see Andrew M. Yuengert, "The Right to Migrate and the Common Good," in *Catholic Social Thought and the Market Economy*, ed. Phillip Booth (Institute for Economic Analysis, forthcoming). The chapter is accessible at https://catholicsocialthought.org.uk/course_unit/unit-3-the-right-to-migrate-and-the-common-good/.

⁴⁹ Yoram Hazony, *The Virtue of Nationalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2018). Oren Cass, *The Once and Future Worker: A Vision for the Renewal of Work in America* (New York: Encounter Books, 2018). R.R. Reno, *The Return of the Strong Gods: Nationalism, Populism, and the Future of the West* (New York: Regnery Gateway, 2019).

⁵⁰ S.T. II-II, 26.6.

better policies, institutional reforms, and free trade, economists can benefit many people unconnected to them. They can concretely love (will good for) people they do not know. In the era of social science, universal love receives concrete content through social science analysis.

This confidence that human beings can discern the structures and institutions of society, and can evaluate and modify them, is the foundation for economic policy, and for Catholic social teaching. The central place of systemic analysis in social ethics and Catholic social teaching is all the more reason for economists to be aware of the shortcomings of their models, so that in their policy advice they do not overlook the social goods that are foundational to human happiness, both of people they know intimately and of those to whom they are unconnected. After all, loving others requires us to respect the truth of human flourishing.⁵¹

How might economists incorporate an understanding of social goods, socially produced, generating fraternity, into their models? In this section, I examine four areas in which economists might modify their models to incorporate social goods and the order of charity. The first group of models are those already used to examine the effects of immigration on natives: immigration surplus models. The second class of models examines altruistic contributions to public goods: impure altruism. The third class examines the implications of fraternity and reciprocity in economic exchange. The fourth class are simulations of the evolution of cooperation. My treatment here will be brief and suggestive: I have gone into more depth in other work.⁵²

⁵¹ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (29 June 2009).

⁵² Andrew M. Yuengert, "Modelling the Order of Charity in Normative Economics," manuscript, Pepperdine University, June 2023.

5.1 Social Welfare Functions

In a review of the literature on social welfare functions, John Weymark notes that the first step in defining a social welfare function is to define a *society*, a fixed number of persons whose utility or preferences are arguments in the social welfare function.⁵³ Consequently, whenever an economist writes down a social welfare function, she institutes a strong order of charity in favor of those whose preferences she includes in it.

It is noteworthy that in the analysis of immigration policy economists habitually incorporate a strong order of charity favoring citizens and permanent residents (*natives*) over potential immigrants. The default perspective of policy analysis is the welfare of natives. In “The Economic Benefits of Immigration,” Borjas defines the economic benefits of immigration as the economic surplus accruing to native workers and capital-holders.⁵⁴ More recent work, by Guerriero et al., analyzes the conditions under which an open-borders immigration policy is optimal.⁵⁵ The authors adopt a framework in which only native welfare counts without comment. The optimal policy takes into account only the welfare of natives (skilled and unskilled). When governments cannot discriminate between immigrants and natives in the tax and welfare system, the optimal policy is zero unskilled immigration and free skilled immigration. There is no universal charity here, no imperative to balance the interests of immigrants with any burdens on native workers. Free immigration is “optimal” only if it is possible to compensate unskilled natives from differential taxes and benefits for poor immigrants, free immigration is optimal.

⁵³ John Weymark, “Social Welfare Functions.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Well-Being and Public Policy*, edited by Matthew D. Adler and Marc Fleurbaey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁵⁴ George Borjas, “The Economic Benefits from Immigration,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 9, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 3-22.

⁵⁵ Joao Guerriero, Sergio Rebelo, and Pedro Teles, “What is the Optimal Immigration Policy? Migration, Jobs, and Welfare.” *Journal of Monetary Economics* 113 (August 2020): 61-87.

5.2 Incorporating Social Goods into Economic Models

In spite of the repeated charges that economic models are irredeemably individualist, and thus unable to incorporate social goods and fraternity, I can think of three types of models which already make room for social goods and fellow feeling, and which might be modified to more fully incorporate them.

1. The altruism literature can be modified to incorporate the desire of agents to pursue certain goods together. James Andreoni's "warm glow altruism" model allows for an individual's contribution to a public good to enter directly into utility, not just through its effect on the level of the public good.⁵⁶ If an individual's contributions are complementary to the contributions of others, joint contributions generate a sort of "collective warm glow" which capture the desire to do good things together.

2. The fraternity literature is a natural fit for social goods and mutual regard, although the order of charity is longer-lasting than the sorts of fraternity that arise in single exchanges. Luigino Bruni and Robert Sugden, "Fraternity: Why the Market Need not Be a Morally Free Zone," contrast the standard neoclassical account of mutually beneficial exchange in markets, in which the mutual benefit is an unintended consequence of each individual's pursuit of his own private gain, with mutually intended gain, in which both parties to an exchange *intend* the mutual benefit.⁵⁷ The fellow-feeling, or fraternity, that arises from this mutually intended mutual benefit,

⁵⁶ James Andreoni, "Impure Altruism and Donations to Public Goods: A Theory of Warm-Glow Giving," *Economic Journal* 100, no. 401 (June 1990): 464-477.

⁵⁷ Luigino Bruni and Robert Sugden, "Fraternity: Why the Market Need not Be a Morally Free Zone," *Economics and Philosophy* 24, no. 1 (2008): 35-64. See also Luigino Bruni and Robert Sugden, "Reclaiming Virtue Ethics for Economics," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 27, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 141-164, which makes a case for the virtues which result from and support this shared intention.

serves two functions. First, it escapes the limits of social preference models that constrain altruism to be only self-sacrificial. In the standard altruism model, in which the altruist's utility includes another person's utility of consumption, social preferences are a willingness to trade off one's consumption for another person's consumption. Any benefit conferred on another which also entails a benefit (not a tradeoff) to oneself can be neither altruistic nor other-regarding; it is simply self-interested. In contrast, the norm of mutual benefit creates fellow-feeling even in mutually beneficial exchanges, in both prisoners' dilemmas (in which mutual benefit is mutual cooperation) and unproblematic exchanges where there is no private incentive to defect. Second, it allows us to overcome an artificial distinction between market exchange as always self-interested and non-market exchange as authentic and altruistic. Market exchanges can be a nexus of social goods, and non-market exchanges can involve reciprocity and mutually intended benefit.

3. In the fraternity literature, mutual benefit is a norm, not a preference. How might such norm come about? What sort of forces give rise to it? The literature on the evolution of norms of cooperation⁵⁸ describes the conditions for the evolution of cooperation. The fellow feeling that arises from mutually intended mutually beneficial interaction offers another reason for the evolution and persistence of cooperative behavior, and a desire to interact repeatedly with those with whom you have produced social goods successfully in the past.

If in these models the prisoners' dilemma types "cooperator" and "defector" are replaced by "seek mutual benefit" and "seek private benefit," the analysis of the game and the dynamic rise and dominance of cooperation/mutual benefit is identical. The only difference is that there is an

⁵⁸ J. Mackenzie Alexander, *The Structural Evolution of Morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

additional benefit from successful cooperation: the fraternity that it generates. If anything, this makes the fitness of cooperative behavior more plausible. The structure of the model thus describes how the norm of mutual benefit, and any associated fellow feeling, can arise and persist.

Economics can incorporate into its models social goods and fraternity. By doing so, economists will make more plausible normative arguments in which social goods create bonds which structure the order of charity.