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Loving Yourself as Your Neighbor: a Critique and Some Friendly Suggestions for Eleonore Stump's Neo-Thomistic Account of Love

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Abstract Many Christian theorists notice that love should contain, in additional to benevolence, some kind of interpersonal or unitive component. The difficulty comes in trying to provide an account of this unitive component that is sufficiently interpersonal in other-love and yet is also compatible with self-love. Eleonore Stump is one of the few Christian theorists who directly addresses this issue. Building upon the work of Thomas Aquinas, Stump argues that love is constituted by two desires: the desire for an individual's good and the desire to be united to that individual. Stump further develops the desire for union within this Thomistic understanding of love, and she maintains that her developed account not only captures the robustly interpersonal nature of one's love of another but is also compatible with the love of oneself. Unfortunately, Stump's way of making sense of this latter claim introduces a significant inconsistency in her analyses of the desire for union in self-love and other-love. Nevertheless, the most important features of Stump's Neo-Thomistic account are salvageable. For there is a way of understanding love's desire for union that emerges out of Thomas's views on love and is compatible with the desiderata suggested by Stump, only does not have the same difficulties that beset Stump's account. What is offered, then, is a modification of Stump's account that might better serve her purposes. The resulting view of love, however, is one not only relevant to Stump. Rather, the view that emerges is a broadly Thomistic conception of love that is plausible in its own right and captures a certain biblical emphasis on the relational or interpersonal nature of love.

Keywords Nature of Christian Love · Eleonore Stump · Thomas Aquinas · Self-love

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Christian theologians and philosophers recently have produced a number of accounts of love. Central to most of these accounts is the idea that love must include benevolence, understood as willing or desiring a person's good for her own sake.[1] From a Christian point of view, this is to be expected. If nothing else, benevolence explains God's self-sacrificial death in Christ, which is a model for human love (e.g. Jn. 3:16, 15:9–12; Eph. 5:1–2; 1 Jn. 4:11). In relying on benevolence, however, those theorizing about the nature of love must take care to provide an account that is sufficiently personal or relational. For it seems that one can desire someone's good from 'afar', without wanting to be personally related to that individual—as in the case of the philanthropist who writes checks for the homeless but would not dream of inviting a homeless man to dinner. Yet, such an impersonal form of love is hardly the Christian ideal. The limited glimpses we see of the love between the Father and Son, for example, contains a life of glory (Jn. 17:5), sharing (Jn. 17:1–10), joy (Jn. 15:1–11), communion (1 Jn. 4:4–21), and unity (Jn. 17:20–25), but it is doubtful that the richness of these features is best captured *exclusively* by the desire for someone's good. The same could be said of God's deification of humans (e.g. 2 Pet. 1:4; Jn. 17:26), Christ's preparation of the church as his bride (Eph. 5:25–27), or Paul's admonition to the church to live in harmonious love (e.g. Phil. 2:1–2). Hence, Christian love appears to contain some kind of relational or interpersonal component alongside benevolence.[2]

Recognition of this relational component has led many Christian theorists to suppose that love must contain some kind of desire for union.[3] A challenge, however, is to make sense of this desire in a manner that both fulfills this relational component and is compatible with self-love. Karl Barth, for example, claims that love 'is concerned with a seeking and creation of fellowship for its own sake' (1957, 276),[4] while certain philosophers speak of love involving the formation of a kind of 'we'.[5] Though such ways of understanding the desire for union may succeed in rendering one's account of love sufficiently relational, it is tremendously difficult to see how one can desire fellowship or the formation of a 'we' with oneself in any natural and psychologically healthy sense.[6] But this is problematic for the Christian who wants to provide an account of love's union that is compatible with Jesus' command to love one's neighbor as oneself, since this command seems to presuppose the legitimacy of at least a certain form of self-love (e.g. Mark 12:31). Perhaps the most thorough and direct attempt by a recent Christian author to meet the challenge of providing an account of union that is richly relational yet also consistent with self-love comes from the insightful Roman

[1] Recent examples of those who maintain the centrality of benevolence include Creel (1986, 117–21), Dodds (2008, ch. 4), Jackson (1999, 15), McCabe (1987, 29–51), Nygren (1953, ix), Oord (2010, 19–30), Vanhoozer (2010, 171–4), and Weinandy (2000, 160). For a rather long list of philosophers that hold to some version of the benevolence account, see Vellemen (1999, 351–3).

[2] For a defense of this claim, see Adams (1980, 83–99).

[3] Contemporary examples include Adams (1980), Barth (1957, 272–85), Pruss (2012, ch. 2), Sarot (1992, 80–91), Scrutton (2011, ch. 6), and Stump (2010, Chaps. 5–6).

[4] In fairness to Barth, he grants that we do not have a complete understanding of love (1957, 276). So, in attributing the desire for fellowship to love, he could take himself to be offering a helpful description of love, not a necessary condition.

[5] See, for example, Fisher (1990), Solomon (1988), and Nozick (1989, 68–86).

[6] For Barth, the fellowship that love moves one to create is modeled after the fellowship of the divine persons within the Godhead. But, it is difficult to see how one can love oneself in a manner that is comparable to the person-to-person fellowship within God, where the persons are 'with and for' another (1957, 275).

Catholic philosopher, Eleonore Stump. Drawing from Thomas Aquinas, Stump argues that there is a significant sense in which love is defined by two desires: the desire for the loved one's good, plus the desire for union with her. Stump further develops the desire for union within this understanding of love, and she maintains that her developed account is compatible with a person's love of self.

In this article, we examine Stump's Neo-Thomistic definition of love. We shall find that, though her treatment of love is insightful in several respects, it fails to meet the standard that Stump sets for it. In particular, there appears to be a significant inconsistency in the way that she explicates the desire for union in the love of self and the other. Fortunately, all is not lost. Rather, there is a way of understanding love's desire for union that emerges out of Thomas's views on love and is in harmony with many of the ideas expressed by Stump, only does not have the same difficulties that beset Stump's account. What I offer, then, is a modification of Stump's view that might better serve her purposes. More important than assisting Stump, however, we gain an account of love that arguably captures the noted biblical emphasis on love's relational nature, but is also compatible with self-love. For this reason, the resulting account of love merits serious consideration.

Stump's Neo-Thomistic Account of Love

Stump explains that Thomas Aquinas has four words for love, each of which has a corresponding meaning: *amor*, *dilectio*, *amicitia*, and *caritas*. Since Thomas privileges *caritas* as love 'in its real or complete sense' (2010, 91), Stump focuses on that conception of love in the exposition of her account. Here, we find that love in its truest sense is directed toward persons, and we are told that this person-directed love should be defined as that which contains both the desire for the beloved's good as well as the desire for union with her.[7] To understand the theory, we must say something about the nature of these two desires and how they relate to each other.

Consider, first, the desire for the beloved's good—or, as noted, simply 'benevolence'.[8] The good that the lover seeks, says Stump, should be understood broadly, as that which encompasses beauty, elegance, or efficiency, metaphysical as well as moral goodness. The good is also objective, and it comprises that which contributes to the individual's flourishing.[9]

Unlike the attention that Thomas gives to benevolence, Stump claims that Thomas never sufficiently develops the notion of union within love. She therefore takes it upon herself to do the relevant conceptual construction. Stump explains,

[7] For an argument that person-directed love is the fullest sense of love, see Helm (2013).

[8] The term 'beloved' is often used to denote the person that one loves romantically. In order to enable more succinct expression (and thereby avoid repetitive phrases such as 'the loved one' or 'the beloved individual'), I will here use the term more broadly to refer to any person that is loved, even when the love in question is by no means romantic. Something similar applies to my use of the term 'lover': It designates any person that loves someone, romantically or otherwise.

[9] There are a myriad of questions that could be raised about how one knows what is in fact good for the beloved. Stump lightly touches on some of these issues (e.g. 2010, 92–3, 134), but we do not have the space to discuss them presently. Relevant here, however, is Stump (2005, Chaps. 7–8) and Mooney and Nowacki (2017, especially 320–28).

> [O]n Aquinas's account, love for another person includes two desires: a desire for the good of the beloved and a desire for union with the beloved. […] I want to explore this account of love further by focusing on the notion of union. Aquinas himself makes considerable use of this notion, especially in his biblical commentaries; but he does not offer any extensive philosophical treatment of it. […] I will develop a part of Aquinas's account of love that he himself relied on but left relatively unexamined (2010, 109).

To fill this perceived lacuna, Stump argues that, when it comes to 'mentally fully functional adult human beings' (2010, 117), there are two necessary conditions included within love's desire for union. These are (i) the desire for personal presence and (ii) the desire for mutual closeness. Stump's exposition of these two components of union is lengthy and intricate. At present, we will have to content ourselves with only the most general summary.

Stump argues that personal presence involves both second-person experience and shared attention. She explains second-person experience as 'a matter of one person's attending to another person and being aware of him as a person when that other person is conscious and functioning, however minimally, as a person' (2010, 112). Very roughly, Stump believes that shared attention is exhibited when two or more individuals have second-person awareness of each other and they are simultaneously aware of their mutual awareness. When Paula and Jerome are experiencing shared attention, 'the object of awareness for Paula is simultaneously Jerome and their mutual awareness—Jerome's awareness of her awareness of his awareness and so on—and the object of awareness for Jerome is simultaneously Paula and their mutual awareness' (2010, 116). When romantic lovers gaze at each other or when two friends are deep in conversation, they often exhibit shared attention. Presumably, Stump's motivation for including both second-person experience and shared attention within love's union is the idea that any relationship that is completely devoid of these elements (carried out, for example, entirely by email) would fall significantly short of the ideal. There would remain a lack of connection and a desire unfulfilled.

The second feature of union is mutual closeness. Someone desires to be close with another only if he wants this other person intentionally to share the thoughts and feelings that this other person cares about with him. Two persons are mutually close only if they both intentionally reveal their important thoughts and feelings to one another, and both parties care about what is revealed to them (if not the content of revelation itself, then the fact that the content of revelation matters to the revealer).

Stump maintains that particular kinds of person-to-person relations determine the way in which love's desire for union should be expressed. These relations, which Stump calls 'offices of love', shape 'the sort of sharing and closeness suitable in that relationship' and thereby govern 'the kind of union appropriate to desire in love' (2010, 97–98). For example, the same person can be related to a spouse, a child, and a friend (to name but a few such relations), and each of these persons fills a particular office for the lover that in turn delimits the kind of union appropriate. Because a young girl fills the office of daughter to her father, he can discipline her, hold her, and largely dictate her schedule. It would be inappropriate, however, for this father to try to engage in similar activities with a mostly unknown neighbor's daughter. Since it is difficult to delineate the precise nature of the offices of love, Stump prefers to 'rely on our intuitive

understanding of the nature of particular relationships' (2010, 97), rather than attempt a neat characterization of these offices.

Altogether, then, Stump believes that one desires union with a ('fully functional adult') person only if one desires both mutual closeness and person presence, where the latter contains both second-person experience and shared attention. If one lacks this multifaceted desire for some ('fully functional adult') individual, she does not love that individual since the desire for union is necessary for love. Finally, the offices of love determine the way in which personal presence and closeness should be expressed.

Someone might suppose that the proposed desires of love sometimes contradict one another. Ostensibly, anyway, the desire for another's good sometimes demands disunion, and, conversely, the desire to be united with another can lead one to act in ways that are not for the best of that other person. Stump's Thomistic response to this worry is to appeal to a certain teleological structure built into creation, whereby both of love's desires are ultimately fulfilled in God. On this view, the ultimate good of the creature is union with God, and the only way one human can be fully and securely united with another is by a joint union with God. Thus, while one might find herself in a circumstance in which it appears that her desire for another's good and union with Him are in conflict, the conflict is merely apparent, or at most proximate. Hence, whether the lover is aware of it or not, and regardless of whether the lover possesses an explicit desire for God, 'if real love has its way and is not somehow driven off course, it will eventuate in shared union with God' (2010, 91).[10]

Summary

Stump's Neo-Thomistic account of love may be summarized as follows. One loves an individual if and only if she both desires that person's good and desires to be united to him. She desires his good by desiring that which is in his interest and conducive to his flourishing, and she desires union with him only if she desires personal presence and mutual closeness. Finally, God provides the way of harmonizing love's twin desires, as the good for every human is a shareable union with God.

Stump's Neo-Thomistic Account and Christian Love Relationships

There is much to appreciate about Stump's account of love. First, by upholding the love directed at persons as love's truest form, Stump proposes a plausible domain for analysis that might sidestep an often expressed worry that, since we direct love at both persons and that which are not, it is a fool's errand to seek to delineate the essence of a singular conception of love.[11] Furthermore, Stump's offices of love can perhaps be used to explain the various manifestations of a singular kind of person-directed love: One loves each person by desiring his good and union with him, but the offices of love determine the numerous ways in which this love should be expressed. This is beneficial

[10] Stump also suggests a number of ways in which the twin desires of love serve to interlock the expressions of love within Jesus' command to God and to love one's neighbor as oneself (e.g. Matt. 22:34–40). See Stump (2010, 101).

[11] See, for example, the following: Brunner (1949, 185–88), De Sousa (1996, 189–207), Hall (2005, 308), Nussbaum (1997, 1–22), Soble (1989, xix-xxiv), and Vanhoozer (2002, 71, 94–5).

insofar as we think that there is ultimately only one kind of person-directed love, despite its many expressions.

Second, and relatedly, Stump's offices of love helpfully set certain parameters on how union between individuals should be sought. They intuitively explain, for example, why certain forms of intimacy and vulnerability are permitted or even required in some kinds of relationships, while not required or even inappropriate in others.[12] To be sure, there remains further work to be done on the nature of these offices, but Stump is to be thanked for providing a fruitful framework that merits further examination.[13]

Third, the way in which Stump expounds love's union sidesteps a significant objection to unitive accounts of love, namely, that such accounts inappropriately limit the autonomy of those involved in love relationships. The objection is raised specifically against those philosophers who speak of love in terms the formation of a kind of 'we',[14] a 'federation' of selves,[15] a 'joint pool' of interests and well-being,[16] or a '"fusion" of two souls'.[17] The worry with such conceptualizations is that they preclude participants in relationships of deep love from having their own identities (e.g. interests, values, and self-concepts) and from being free to carve out life paths that are unique and special to them.[18] No such problem emerges on Stump's view, however. On her model, love's union concerns the desire for second-person experience and shared attention as dictated by the relevant office of love. Since Stump's account prizes attending to the other as another, there is nothing within her view that would lead one to believe that union takes place only when the distinction between the lovers' identities and interests is blurred or erased.[19]

Fourth, Stump provides an insightful, theistic way of harmonizing the twin desires of love when they appear to compete. The manner of harmonization will be attractive to theists who have a teleological perspective of creation and believe that all human relationships are ultimately fulfilled in loving union with God.

Finally, and important for the purposes of the present paper, Stump's explication of the desire for union in terms of personal presence and mutual closeness does enhance the relational or personal nature of her account of love. Unlike mere benevolence, which is ostensibly 'one-way' and can be impersonal, the individual who desires personal presence and mutual closeness with another desires a rich form of interpersonal interaction.

Although Stump's account possesses these and other benefits, there is a question as to whether her account is consistent with all that she demands of it. In particular, Stump

[12] One application of Stump's offices of love is that this framework explains the presence of certain 'no-go' areas within caring relationships, i.e., areas where respect for autonomy and privacy is required. On the importance of such 'no-go' areas, see Mooney and Williams (2017, 73–4).

[13] For articles that might help fill-out the idea of the offices of love, specifically as this relates to the development of moral virtues, see Badhwar (1996), Flanagan (1993, 270–5), and Mooney and Williams (2017).

[14] Nozick (1989, 72); cf. Delaney (1996, 346).

[15] Friedman (1998, 165).

[16] Nozick (1989, 71); cf. Frankfurt (1988, pp. 61–62).

[17] Solomon (1988, 24).

[18] See, e.g., Singer (2010, 23–30, cf. 134–139) and Soble (1997).

[19] Moreover, Stump maintains that what is sought in each of the twin desires of love must ultimately converge. Thus, insofar as union with the beloved limits his autonomy in a manner that is incompatible with his flourishing, this limitation is incompatible with genuine love. (See, in particular, Stump 2010, 95–6).

realizes that it may initially appear that her Neo-Thomistic account is incompatible with God's love of a human, a human's love of God, and a human's love of herself (2010, 100). Here, we only have space to consider the last of these.

According to Stump's proposal, self-love must include a desire for one's own good as well as a desire to be united with oneself. Presumably it is easy enough to understand what it means to desire one's own good; it is difficult, however, to understand what it means to desire union with oneself. Stump considers a hypothetical objector saying that union can take part only between two distinct objects, but one cannot be distinct from oneself. Therefore, one cannot be unified with oneself (2010, 100).

Stump responds to her own proposed objection as follows.

> This objection […] fails to take account of the fact that a person can be divided against herself. She can lack internal integration in her mind, and the result will be that she is, as we say, double-minded. She can also lack whole-heartedness or integration in the will. Aquinas describes a person who lacks internal integration in the will as someone who wills and does not will the same thing, in virtue of willing incompatible things, or in virtue of failing to will what she wills to will. There is no union with herself for such a person (2010, 100).[20]

From this, Stump concludes that 'the desire for union […] does have a role to play in self-love, if we understand it as a desire for internal integration' (2010, 100).

Notice, however, that the desire for internal integration is at odds with what Stump elsewhere says about love's desire for union. Necessary to the desire for union, we were told, is the desire for personal presence and mutual closeness (2010, 109, 127–8). But, when it comes to self-love, Stump drops these conditions altogether and replaces them with a fundamentally different concept: the desire for internal integration. This is problematic because Stump means to define love (of persons) in terms of the noted desires. As such, the definition should share core conceptual content across all its apt predications. Instead, we find that the desire for union takes on dramatically different forms depending on whether it is self-directed or other-directed. Given this variance, it begins to look as if 'the desire for union' is merely a placeholder in which divergent content is conveniently placed depending upon the circumstance.

A moment's reflection reveals why Stump must analyze the desire for union in self-love and other-love quite differently. It is said that the desire for union must contain the desire for personal presence, which includes shared attention. But, while one may be able to concoct scenarios where it is possible for a person to desire shared attention with oneself (perhaps one temporal part of a time traveler desires shared attention with an earlier temporal part), I submit that most who love themselves have never had the

[20] To unpack Thomas's understanding of internal integration, Stump draws from Harry Frankfurt, asserting that he 'has done more than anyone else in contemporary philosophy to call our attention to the importance of internal integration in the will' (2010, 125). She explains that for Frankfurt, internal integration concerns harmony among one's 'hierarchically ordered desires and volitions', such that one cares about or is committed to that which one desires (or has a first-order desire for). Interestingly, Stump believes that Thomas shares Frankfurt's basic framework, save a few important differences. (For example, Aquinas, unlike Frankfurt, believes that one only can be integrated around that which is objectively good, and Aquinas involves the mind of agent in a more direct fashion than does Frankfurt, since 'Aquinas supposes that desires and volitions are responsive to the willer's states of mind' (2010, 126; cf. 133–40))

desire—either explicitly or implicitly—to be engaged in this bizarre self-referential desire. (Even the legendary Narcissus only fell in love with his reflection because he thought that his reflection was another person!) Stump also tells us that the desire for union must include a desire for (mutual) closeness (2010, 109, 127–8). Yet, she makes it clear that the 'relation *being close to* … is irreflexive,' and as such 'a person cannot be close to himself' (2010, 120) (although Stump later suggests a way in which the relation *being close* can be reflexive 'in some analogous or extended sense' and thus can be included in self-love [2010, 124]). So, Stump must propose a way of understanding self-union that includes neither shared attention nor mutual closeness (at least, with the latter, not in the relevant non-analogous or non-extended sense). But then, it looks as if Stump, despite her intentions, must provide radically different, or inconsistent, analyses of the love of self and other.

To save her account, what Stump needs to do is specify some unitive impulse that leads to internal integration in self-love and shared attention and mutual closeness in the love of the other. Unfortunately, this is not something Stump attempts to do, and nothing that she does say about love clearly suggests what the relevant impulse might be. But here, we can be of help. In what follows, we will briefly sketch a way of understanding love's desire for union that gets the results that Stump wants—namely, personal presence and mutual closeness in other-love and internal integration in self-love—yet does not suffer from the noted inconsistency.

Friendly Suggestions for Stump's Neo-Thomistic Account

Stump, we have seen, states that Thomas never develops a systematic account of love's desire for union. This assessment is fair enough.[21] Nevertheless, Thomas does provide us with resources for a profound understanding of this desire. In this section, I will highlight just a few such resources from which we may extract a way of thinking about the desire for union that addresses the worry raised with Stump's account. I do not claim that Thomas would endorse the final analysis of the desire for union that emerges, though I do think that much of what shall be said is compatible with the spirit, if not the letter, of Thomas's work. Furthermore, while resourcing Thomas for my constructive purposes, I will also draw from Stump where I can. The hope, then, is that the account of love's desire for union that materializes within this section is broadly Thomistic, consonant with the primary features of Stump's conception of love, and applicable both to the love of another and oneself.

An Account of the Desire for Union

In her analysis of other-love (i.e. personal presence and mutual closeness), Stump places a premium on the role of the lover's mind within union. Here, one sees the influence of Thomas. He maintains that the one who loves is disposed to think about and seek intimate knowledge of the beloved. Thus, Thomas writes that 'the person loved, Y, is said to dwell in the lover, X, in the sense that [Y] is constantly present in

[21] Helpful resources on Thomas's view of love include Sherwin (2011), Silverman (2010), and Dodds (2008, ch. 4).

X's thoughts.' Thomas also explains that '[Y] is cognitively present in [X] in the sense that [X] is not satisfied with a surface knowledge of [Y], but strives for personal insight into everything about [Y], and penetrates into [Y's] very soul' (*ST.* IaIIae., 28, 2; *ST* IaIIae., 28, 3).[22] With Thomas, then, we see that love moves one not only to think about the beloved but also to seek a certain intimate knowledge of her. Given the context in which Thomas discusses the quest for intimate knowledge, it is clear that he has in view knowledge of the beloved *as a person*.

What could it mean to seek intimate knowledge of a person? Certainly, this will involve endeavoring to master certain propositions about her, her preferences, values, hopes, dreams, fears, and so on. But, departing from anything explicitly said by Thomas, Stump maintains that there is another kind of knowledge to be had, a kind of knowledge that 'cannot be reduced to knowledge *that*' (Stump 2010, 51).[23] For reasons that we need not dive into presently, Stump calls this extra-propositional knowledge 'Franciscan knowledge', and in her mind, one does not love unless one seeks this Franciscan knowledge of the person loved (see 2010, Chaps. 3–4).

Stump states that because Franciscan knowledge is impossible to reduce to propositional knowledge, she cannot, on pain of incoherence, give a precise propositional characterization of this kind of knowledge (2010, 51).[24] But, she does think that thought experiments show the reality of Franciscan knowledge *of persons*. One such thought experiment comes from a revision of Frank Jackson's famous 'knowledge argument' (1982, 127–136). In Stump's version, Mary is an exceptionally intelligent individual that has spent her entire life in a room without any contact with another person. (We may add that Mary has never seen a picture of a person, nor seen her own reflection.) Yet Mary's room is filled with books that grant her 'access to any and all information about the world as long as that information is *only* in the form of third-person accounts giving her knowledge *that*' (Stump 2010, 52). This information includes, of course, exhaustive third-person descriptions of persons, their behaviors, and so on. As an exceedingly intelligent person, Mary masters this knowledge; that is, she comes to know all propositional, third-person descriptions of persons. (For simplicity, we may limit the domain of knowledge to human persons.) After the mastery of knowledge is complete, Mary is freed from her room and meets her preeminently gracious and loving mother for the first time. Does Mary learn anything new from this encounter with her mother?

Stump hopes that others will share her intuition that 'it seems indisputable that Mary will know things that she did not know before' (2010, 52). What Mary learns, in particular, is what it is like to have second-person experience with her mother as well as shared attention. 'Mary will be surprised by the nature of second-person experience,' no matter how excellent her mastery of third-person descriptions, as 'Mary's mind is opened to all that we learn and experience in face-to-face contact, the complex give-and-take of interpersonal interactions' (2010, 53).

[22] For the present purposes, the details of Thomas's distinction between the love-of-friendship and love-of-desire can be left aside.

[23] In other places, Stump appears to hedge her bets by saying that Franciscan knowledge is '*difficult* or impossible to formulate in terms of knowing *that*' (2010, 53, first emphasis mine). For ease of expression, I will follow Stump's stronger statements.

[24] It is an interesting question as to whether this would in fact lead to incoherence.

Thus, according to Stump, there is Franciscan knowledge of persons (i.e. knowledge that is not reducible to propositions) and this can be imperfectly described in terms second-person experience and shared attention. Let us, if only for the purposes here, grant the existence of Franciscan knowledge of persons. Given the place that Stump affords to second-person experience and shared attention within love, let us also suppose that one cannot love another unless one desires rich instances of these forms of Franciscan knowledge of him as well as knowledge of key propositions concerning the individual (e.g. preferences, values, and fears), and to love well, the lover must desire this experience in a manner that is compatible with the relevant office of love. By borrowing from Stump in this way, we can accordingly refine Thomas's claim that love drives one to seek intimate knowledge of the beloved. (In the subsequent sub-section, we will further refine the nature of intimate Franciscan knowledge in order to render it compatible with self-love.)

So far, we have seen that Stump characterizes the desire for union largely in terms of a kind of cognitive contact with the beloved. Though it would certainly be unfair to say that the way in which Stump spells this out is cold and impersonal, one may still worry that the analysis given remains overly cognitive. Thomas fortunately provides resources for such an individual. He holds that in addition to trying to unite one's mind to the beloved, one links her goals and values with the beloved. This she does by intrinsically desiring the beloved's good as though it were her own: 'one wants good things for him as one does for oneself; one therefore looks on him as another self, wishing him well in the same way as one does oneself'(*ST* IaIIae., 28, 1; cf. IaIIae., 28, 2). This is different than mere benevolence, however, since the lover somehow 'identifies' herself with the beloved in such a way that the beloved can be described as 'half of [her] soul' (*ST.* IaIIae., 28, 2; IaIIae., 28, 1). It is not entirely clear what Thomas means when he claims that one identifies oneself with another, but, for our purposes, it will suffice to say that such identification takes place when the lover intentionally links her good with the beloved's *particular expression* of human flourishing. Humans, after all, can flourish in any number of ways (e.g. as a professor, or carpenter, or parent) and through life circumstances, both chosen and unchosen, concrete ways of flourishing for particular individuals emerge. The lover can identify with the beloved's concrete way of flourishing by intentionally allowing the beloved's particular manner of flourishing, or lack thereof, to impact in corresponding fashion the lover's flourishing. A father can be said to identify with his daughter's good as a lawyer, for example, when he makes his own flourishing at least partially dependent upon his daughter's successes and failures in that vocation, such that his life to some degree goes well when her professional life does and not so well when her professional life does not. Often, a person's concrete mode of human flourishing is multifaceted (spanning over careers, relationships, health, etc.), and, as such, the lover's identification with the beloved will also often be multifaceted. But, notice, this way of identifying with the beloved does not erase or substantially diminish the discrete interests or identities of those involved in union. Hence, the aforementioned worry about the manner in which unitive views of love threatened autonomy is avoided.[25]

[25] For a rich discussion of how one might identify with a person's particular way of flourishing in a manner that does not erase the lover's autonomy, see Helm (2009, 39–59).

Thomas does not end his analysis of the desire for union there. He also believes that the lover seeks to unite herself to the beloved in feeling and emotion.[26] The lover does this by generally feeling positively about the beloved (e.g. 'X feels pleasure in him or in the good things about him.' [*ST* IaIIae., 28, 2]), and by sharing in the joys and sorrows of the beloved (e.g. 'It is as if he enjoys his [beloved's] good fortune or suffers his misfortune in his own person.' [*ST* IaIIae., 28, 2]).

Finally, Thomas says that the lover wants the beloved to reciprocate the lover's described patterns of thought, desire, and feeling.[27] In other words, just as the lover wants to give her heart and mind to the beloved in the noted ways, the lover wants the beloved to do the same with her.

With these various features of Thomas's account of love's desire for union before us, we may now suggest a more systematic way of understanding this desire. In particular, we might say that one desires union with a person only if one meets the conditions outlined in the following thesis (call it 'UT,' short for *the union thesis*).[28]

> (UT) X desires union with Y only if: (i) X desires to think about Y and intimately know Y, (ii) X desires to identify Y's particular good as part of X's good, (iii) X desires to be affectively related to Y (i.e., all other things being equal, X desires to feel pleasantly about Y, and X desires to feel positively when X's interests are fulfilled and negatively when they are not),[29] and (iv) X desires Y to have the desires captured in (i)-(iii) directed at X.

It should be apparent that UT is meant to emerge out of Thomas's descriptions of love's desire for union, even if it is wrong to attribute UT to Thomas. More importantly, however, UT strengthens Stump's account in significant respects, especially in that it can be applied consistently to both self-love and other-love. We shall consider this in reverse order.

UT, Personal Presence, and Mutual Closeness

It should be fairly clear how one can desire union with another via UT. But, it is worth highlighting how UT is compatible with Stump's way of understanding union with another.

Stump claims that love of another must include personal presence and mutual closeness. The reader will recall that the desire for personal presence is constituted by the desire for second-person experience as well as the desire for shared attention.

[26] Here, we leave to one side Thomas's distinction between passions and emotions.

[27] Thomas writes, for example, 'In love-of-friendship love itself is reciprocal' (*ST.* IaIIae., 28, 2), and elsewhere he says that lovers 'seek a kind of union which is appropriate to them: viz. to be together, to talk together, to be united in other such relationships' (*ST.* IaIIae., 28, 1).

[28] Following Stump (e.g. 2010, 109), UT is only meant to concern certain necessarily conditions for the desire for union, not those which are jointly necessary and sufficient.

[29] Should one believe that divine impassibility precludes God from feeling both positively and negatively in response to creatures, such a person may drop clause (iii) from UT as a way of ensuring that God can desire union with his creatures.

The first clause of UT includes desiring to know the beloved intimately, and to understand some of what it means to know someone intimately, we have relied upon Stump's Franciscan knowledge. Yet, Franciscan knowledge of another includes attending to that person as another person, when she is conscious and functioning as a person. But, this is nothing less than the second-person experience that Stump thinks is essential to other-love.

The second condition of personal presence, shared attention, occurs when two individuals have second-person awareness of each other, and they are simultaneously aware of their mutual awareness. Given that UT's (i) makes sense of the desire for second-person experience of another, and given that other-directed instances of (iv) include the desire for the person loved to return the desire for second-person experience, it seems that those who possess the desires of UT will desire shared attention in other-love. In which case, we have precisely the results that Stump wants regarding personal presence.

We turn, finally, to the second constituent of Stump's analysis of the other-directed desire for union, mutual closeness. It will be remembered that one desires to be close with another only if he wants this other person to communicate the thoughts and feelings that she cares about with him, and one desires mutual closeness only if one desires both of the relevant parties to be involved in the appropriate forms of sharing and caring (as dictated by the relevant office of love). Such a desire appears to follow from UT. According to the first clause of UT, part of what is involved in one desiring to know another *person* in the intimate Franciscan way concerns attending to his manifold interpersonal capacities, including, presumably, his ability to share his cherished thoughts and feelings. When this is coupled with UT's (iv), which concerns reciprocity in other-love, one's desire for intimacy with another appears to entail a desire for mutual closeness.

UT and Self-Love

So, when directed at another, UT entails a robust form of 'two-way', interpersonal union. At the same time, and without equivocation, the desires described by UT can also be self-directed.

To see that UT is compatible with self-love, suppose that X and Y are identical. Given this, the first clause of UT, that is (i), can be fulfilled by desiring to think about and intimately know oneself. Said differently, a person fulfills (i) when he desires the possession of important propositional knowledge of himself as well as personal Franciscan knowledge of himself.

Someone might worry that one cannot desire to know oneself intimately in the manner so far described. For as has been noted, Stump describes Franciscan knowledge of a person in terms of second-person experience (which is 'a matter of one person's attending to *another* person' [My emphasis, Stump 2010,112]) and *shared* attention. But, as we have also seen, this is precisely where her account gets into trouble, as one cannot have these forms of Franciscan knowledge with oneself (at least in the psychologically healthy cases). Nevertheless, only a bit of refinement is here required.

It strikes me that the essence of Stump's concern regarding Franciscan knowledge of persons is that there is a kind of extra-propositional knowledge that is a matter of attending to persons as persons when they are functioning in characteristically personal

ways. When the person is another, the relevant form of knowledge will involve attending to the other *as other*, which will entail (as described) second-person experience and shared attention. Yet, Franciscan knowledge of persons does not require two or more individuals; one can certainly attend to oneself as a person when one is functioning in the relevant personal ways. This is most clearly seen in the case of introspection,[30] where one attends to the functions of one's own personhood and discovers mental states that are ostensibly impossible to formulate in terms of knowledge *that* – a phenomenon to which mental health professionals can bear witness.[31] There is also a sense in which introspective knowledge can be described as intimate, since it may be the only way of gaining knowledge that is closed off from all but one person.[32] So, it seems that Franciscan knowledge of persons (i.e. attending to a person functioning in characteristically personal ways) is compatible with self-love and may be referred to by UT's (i).

The second clause of UT is fulfilled by desiring to identify with one's own good. There is, of course, a sense in which this can be trivially accomplished simply by desiring one's own good; in desiring one's own good, that is, the lover identifies the beloved's good as her own since, in this case, the lover and beloved are identical. Yet, importantly, the fact that a clause within a self-directed application of UT can be fulfilled by self-directed benevolence hardly means that the clause is not a feature of self-love, or even not part of self-union (although, admittedly, this is not how we normally speak).

At the same time, however, there is a sense in which the fulfillment of this clause can be challenging. Both Stump and Harry Frankfurt point out that one can be divided against oneself in a way that makes the identification with a particular conception of one's own good difficult (Frankfurt 2004, Chap. 3; Stump 2010, 100–1, 125–7). To use an example of my own making, someone might perceive the moral life as in some significant sense good for her, while also viewing an unrestricted hedonism in a similar manner. Such contrary conceptions of one's good can divide a person's interests and allegiances in a way that makes impossible wholehearted identification with anything more than a merely abstract conception of one's own good. So, to identify truly with one's own good requires specifying that good and committing oneself to it. Thus, while the genuine fulfillment of the second clause of UT may at times come quite naturally, other times it might require a considerable amount of effort.

We see, furthermore, that the second clause of UT at least partially addresses a necessary condition of self-love according to Stump. This is that self-love contains the desire for internal integration. By desiring a uniform or non-contradictory conception of the good life, one desires that which is at least necessary for the possession of an integrated psychology.

The third clause of UT concerns a union of feelings. The components within this clause can be achieved by desiring to feel good about oneself generally speaking and by taking one's own fortunes and misfortunes 'to heart', rather than dismissing them as

[30] It is worth noting that there are hints that Stump does not count introspection as a genuine form of the Franciscan knowledge that she is concerned with (2010, 53). If this is right, then this only serves as further evidence that Stump needs to find a way of unifying self-love and other-love.

[31] See, for example, Rodgers (1961, 21).

[32] See, for example, Swinburne (1997, 6–15, 17–20).

unworthy of acknowledgement and serious consideration as the human doormat is prone to do.

The final clause of UT, (iv), initially appears the most problematic for self-love. For in this expression of the desire for union, it looks as if (iv) states that one has the odd desire for one to reciprocate the relevant desires one has for oneself. But, as we saw with our discussion of Stump's account of self-love, it is doubtful that most who love themselves have ever had such a strange self-referential desire. I submit, however, that (iv) can be read in a way that is not prohibitively odd.

Clause (iv) can be taken to refer to a certain second-order desire. So understood, one desires not only to know oneself, identify with oneself, and be affectively related to oneself, but also desires that she have these self-directed desires. Though the presence of this second-order desire may appear redundant at first blush, there is reason to suppose that it is not. For one thing, it is not terribly surprising that self-love would contain something like a second-order desire, given that self-love will be, by the very nature of the case, self-referential. More fundamentally, however, in self-love, (iv) can be seen to involve the desire to 'stand behind' the self-regarding desires referred to in (i)–(iii) that humans are naturally inclined to have. Humans come into the world with desires hard-wired into them, often including the self-directed manifestations of the desires referred to in (i)–(iii).[33] By desiring these desires, then, the human is identifying with certain aspects of herself, rather than being psychologically pulled apart by opposing desires. Thus, the desire to have the desires of (i)–(iii) can be seen as yet another instance where Stump's insistence that self-love involves internal integration is fulfilled (2010, 100–1, 125–7). In this manner, (iv) is not only a feature of self-directed benevolence but also a way of identifying with one's own particular good as described in the self-directed application of (ii).[34]

It could be argued that the presented interpretation of (iv) introduces a fundamental disparity between self-love and other-love. In other-love, one simply desires a person's good and union with her in the relevant way; the same holds in self-love, only now there is an accompanying second-order desire. Because of this, one might contend that the union involved in self-love and other-love rely, at root, upon significantly different analyses.

It is far from clear, though, that the presence of a unique second-order desire within self-love is particularly problematic. After all, it is nearly undeniable that the same attitude often takes on different expressions without compromising the attitude's internal integrity. Benevolence, for example, may be defined *as desiring someone's good* despite the fact that one desires a child's good and a spouse's good in very different ways. So too, I submit, UT retains a conceptual core when applied to the love of self and the other, even when the expressions of the desire for union vary. It might in fact be a benefit of UT that it has some differences in expression depending upon whether love is directed at another or oneself (provided that the conceptual core remains) because the way in which one expresses these two kinds of love is surely different.

[33] Relevant here is MacDonald (1990, 329–332).

[34] It should be noted that if UT's (iv) is fulfilled entirely by self-directed benevolence plus the self-directed desire picked out in (ii), this does not mean that (iv) cannot be present in self-love. It would only mean that (iv) is fulfilled via (ii) and self-directed benevolence.

Notice, though, that the differences in the way that other-love and self-love are expressed in the present analysis do not face the same problem that besets Stump's Neo-Thomistic account of love. On Stump's view, the desire for union is given equivocal conceptualizations in the two cases: Union in self-love exclusively concerns internal integration, whereas in other-love, union concerns mutual closeness and shared attention. On the present view, by contrast, the same analysis of union is given in the two cases: UT. What changes is merely the way in which the desires within UT are expressed. But, for the reasons given, a difference in expression does not entail the compromise of the internal integrity of UT.

Summary

From the forgoing, then, we see that understanding the desire for union in terms of UT gives Stump precisely what she is looking for. In other-love, UT grants Stump personal presence and mutual closeness, and in self-love, UT entails the desire for internal integration. Beyond that, UT's (iii), which comes from Thomas, has the advantage of recognizing the importance of the emotional life in union. Given the way in which UT emerges from Thomas's work, moreover, perhaps it may be said that UT is even more faithful to Stump's great mentor than the analysis of union she provides. But by far, the most significant advantage that UT affords over anything Stump proposes is a consistent analysis of self-love and other-love. With UT, therefore, we can borrow from Stump a particular way of accounting for the robustly interpersonal nature of love, yet without inheriting the implication that the love of self and the other must be analyzed in a radically different fashion.

Conclusion

I began this article by suggesting that an adequate Christian account of love must include benevolence as well as some feature that explains the apparently relational or interpersonal nature of love. Stump's Neo-Thomistic account is an admirable attempt to defend a conception of love that checks both of these boxes. The significant problem is that Stump fails to provide an account of love's union that consistently applies to self-love and other-love. The amended version of Stump's account defended here is considerably more plausible in this respect, and for this reason, all the more worthy of serious consideration as a Christian conception of love.[35]

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