The Second-Person Account of the Problem of Evil

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Throughout her distinguished career, Eleonore Stump has neatly combined the traditional with the innovative. So, it is not surprising that she roots a novel approach to the problem of evil in the work of Thomas Aquinas. Unlike many other philosophical writers, Stump does not treat the problem of evil simply as an intellectual problem.[1] For many, believers and nonbelievers alike, the question of why there is so much suffering—and why it is distributed so incomprehensibly— is a deeply personal one. Although I believe that it is beyond human powers to give a fully satisfactory answer to this question, Stump takes an important new tack based on personal relations of love, both human and divine, and of obstacles in the way of love.

This paper has two main parts: In Part I, I sketch out Stump's view, beginning with her discussion of what makes the problem of evil a problem, and how it should be approached. Her treatment of the problem of evil—or, more accurately, of the problem of suffering—is rooted in her account of second-person experience and the narratives needed to communicate second-person experience. Within this framework, Stump interprets familiar Biblical narratives about suffering and God's relation to it.   In Part II, I comment on some of the strengths that I see in Stump's treatment of the problem of evil.

Part I

Stump's Second-Person View

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[1] Marilyn McCord Adams also is sensitive to the personal aspects of the problem of evil. See her *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

The Problem of Evil. The purely logical problem addressed by analytic philosophers as a metaphysical puzzle is too narrowly-gauged to be fully satisfying. Solutions that address only the logical problem simply do not begin to suggest an appropriate response to evil and suffering.

In her forthcoming book, *Wandering in Darkness*, Stump casts the problem of evil, not merely as a logical puzzle, but as a problem of interpersonal relations that are understood in terms of second-person experience and second-person Biblical accounts.[2] The main relations in question are those between an omnipotent and provident God and his creatures who are allowed to suffer without apparent reason. The question is this: How can an omniscient, omnipotent, perfectly good God allow the suffering that exists in the world? Although I doubt that the question has a complete and satisfying answer that we can understand, Stump looks for a (perhaps partial) answer in the relations between God and human beings.

The logical problem of evil may be understood as an argument from suffering that takes as a premise the existence of suffering and concludes that an all-powerful, all-good God does not exist. Although she does address the logical problem, Stump's treatment departs from standard treatments in several ways: First, she focuses on the sufferers of evil, human persons, rather than on the causes of evil. Second, she emphasizes encounters between persons, "second-person experiences" as she calls such encounters. Third, since second-person experiences are incommunicable in standard expository prose, she appeals to narratives to communicate the knowledge gained by second-person experiences.

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[2] Stump has generously allowed me to quote from a draft of her manuscript. *Wandering in Darkness* will be published by Oxford University Press.

More particularly, Stump sets out Aquinas's worldview and theodicy, together with an interpretation of biblical narratives, and takes the result to be a description of a *possible* world. So, Stump's response to the logical problem is to describe a possible world in which suffering and God co-exist.[3] We have reason to believe that the co-existence of God and suffering is possible, because "religious experience, reason, and the testimony of authoritative narratives about God converge on the conclusion that God is good; and if he is good, then he does not break his promises."[4] And if he keeps his promises, then our faith that his goodness is compatible with human suffering is not misplaced.

The description of the relevant possible world focuses on a description of interpersonal relations. Understanding the will is central to understanding interpersonal relations. The relevant knowledge of another person is second-person experiential knowledge that is not knowledge-that; Stump calls such knowledge "Franciscan." There is also third-person knowledge that is knowledge-that; Stump calls such knowledge-that, the knowledge yielded by expository prose, "Dominican."[5] Although there are some "Franciscan" elements in Stump's analysis of the will, Stump's discussion of the will is largely in "Dominican" terms. [6]

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[3] Although she thinks that the actual world is such a world, Stump is not arguing for the stronger claim.

[4] "Faith and the Problem of Evil," in *Seeking Understanding: The Stob Lectures, 1986-1998* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001): 549. (494-550)

[5] Stump introduces these terms in her 2000 article in the *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* (citation?). "Dominican" is shorthand for the analytic philosopher's discursive, propositional approach to all knowledge, and "Franciscan" is shorthand for Stump's alternative. Franciscan knowledge is based on the claim that there is some philosophically significant knowledge is difficult or impossible to express in non-narrative form.   Dominican knowledge is propositional, and Franciscan knowledge is narrative.

[6] These suggestive uses of the terms 'Franciscan' and 'Dominican' knowledge exemplify Stump's use of tradition in an innovative way. Another example is Stump's uses of the names 'Jerome' and 'Paula.' St. Jerome and Paula are historical characters who had a correspondence.

The suffering relevant to the problem of evil cannot be equated with physical pain: the pain voluntarily undergone by women who choose natural childbirth does not raise issues about evil. Although physical pain (when it is gratuitously inflicted, say) may sometimes raise the problem of evil, the suffering relevant to the problem of evil is more complex than mere physical pain.[7] Suffering has an objective and a subjective side. What will make a human being flourish is an objective matter. Objectively, anything that diminishes one's flourishing is an evil that one suffers. Subjectively, anything that interferes with what one values—the desires of one's heart—is an evil that one suffers. On both the objective and subjective sides, one may suffer without realizing it—just as one may be in ill health without feeling bad. What needs justification is suffering, where suffering is understood as something that diminishes one's flourishing or keeps one from having the desires of her heart, or both.

Not only may one suffer without being aware that one is suffering, but so too, may one have benefits that somehow defeat the suffering without knowing it. Such a benefit would enhance flourishing or contribute to the satisfaction of one's heart's desires. It would be a morally sufficient reason for God to allow the suffering. Even if God has morally sufficient reasons for allowing suffering, we cannot really expect to know (many of) them. So, Stump does not aim to give a theodicy. Her aim is only to give a defense, which will show only a *possible* morally sufficient reason for God to allow suffering generally.

If the explanation for why God allows sentient creatures to suffer could lie in the interpersonal relations between God and human

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[7] Physical pain itself is extremely complex, and little understood by philosophers or physicians.

persons, Stump must explore the nature of knowledge of persons.[8] Many philosophers would not see knowledge of persons as a special topic; isn't it just another case of propositional knowledge, knowledge that such-and-such is the case? No, argues Stump vigorously. Some knowledge ("Franciscan") cannot be reduced to knowledge-that: If we say, "She already knew the melody," it is difficult or impossible to express what she knew in propositional terms. You may also know a face without knowing any identifying description of it. And, argues Stump, what you know in a certain way about particular persons cannot be translated without loss into propositional terms.

Stump has a wonderful thought-experiment that is a variation on Frank Jackson's famous story about Mary. The story about Mary concerns what it's like to see red, but Stump shows that the lessons to be learned need not be confined to qualia. Suppose that Mary, isolated, learns language by means of a computer-program. She subsequently reads all the science books, from physics to sociology, and learns everything can be transmitted by expository prose. However, she has never had a conversation with anyone, never had a face-to-face encounter with anyone. When Mary is finally released from her isolation, she meets her mother, who loves her dearly. Although Mary knew propositionally that her mother loved her, she had never been hugged by anyone, or surprised by anyone; she had never detected anyone else's mood. What Mary learned when she met her mother concerns "personal interaction with another person," the "complex give-and-take of interpersonal interactions."[9]

Stump concludes that Mary acquired nonpropositional knowledge that she did not have before her second-person experience of her mother. She could not have acquired that knowledge by means

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[8] It is unclear to me how Stump's account applies to the suffering of nonhuman animals.
[9] Stump, Ch. 3, p. 18-19.

of expository prose in science books. We have second-person knowledge when we see anxiety on a student's face or hear a giggle or a groan, and this knowledge is fundamentally different from knowledge-that.[10] Moreover, without this kind of nonpropositional ("Franciscan") knowledge of persons, "we miss something crucial in our understanding of persons."[11]

Stump garners empirical support for these conclusions from psychological studies of autistic children, who, though quite able to acquire knowledge-that, differ from normally-developing children precisely in their inability to have experiential knowledge of the mental states of others. The deficits of autistic children point to the importance of second-person experience. Further empirical support comes from neurobiological work on mirror neurons that "allow us to directly understand the meaning of the actions and emotions of others by internally replicating ('simulating') them."[12] Second-person experience affords us direct experiential grasp of another that is not mediated by reflection.

Stump discussses neurobiologists who claim that the knowledge of persons that the mirror-neuron system subserves is based on a distinctive second-person experience in which one person is directly and immediately aware of another person as a person. In first-person experience, I'm directly and immediately aware of a person, but only myself. In third-person experience, I can be directly and immediately aware of a person, without being aware of her as a person. (Suppose that you are a neurosurgeon attending closely to a patient's brain, without being aware of her as a person.)   Second-person experience

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[10] It would be misleading to call this kind of knowledge 'non-conceptual.' If I know that you are grateful by seeing gratitude on your face, I must have the concept *gratitude*.
[11] Stump, Ch. 3, p. 26.
[12] Stump, Ch. 4, p. 9.

of a person is both different from first- and third-person experience and important.

Stump gives three necessary conditions for a second-person experience:[13]

> Paula has a seond-person experience of Jerome only if:
> > (1) Paula is aware of Jerome as a person. (Call this 'personal interaction'.);
> > (2) Paula's personal interaction with Jerome is of a direct and immediate sort; and
> > (3) Jerome is conscious.

Since a second-person experience does not yield knowledge-that, it cannot be communicated by means of expository prose. However, we can share it with others to some extent by telling stories. Narratives can be second-person accounts of second-person experiences. And that is exactly what we find in biblical narratives, like God's speeches to Job, which re-create a picture of God's relation to his creatures.   In short, Stump's methodology rests in important ways on second-person experience and second-person accounts (biblical narratives).

<u>Love and Impediments to Love</u>. The possible world that Stump develops to show that God and suffering can co-exist is a world in which Aquinas's worldview is embedded. (Remember that Stump is not asking us to believe that Aquinas's worldview is true, only that it is possible.) Central to Aquinas's worldview is an account of love as what we do and should care about, along with the obstacles to loving relations.

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[13] See "Faith and the Problem of Evil," in *Seeking Understanding: The Stob Lectures, 1986-1998* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001): 501. (494-550)

I cannot begin to do justice to Stump's delicate and nuanced account of love here; I can only recommend her book when it appears. What follows is only a skeleton. According to Aquinas, the ultimate proper object of love (*caritas*) is God. On the doctrine of simplicity, God is identical to God's goodness. God's goodness, and hence God himself, is reflected in every human person. So the proper object of love includes human persons. "Love is primarily love of persons."[14] Love—both between human persons and between God and human persons—consists of two interconnected desires: (1) desire for the good of the beloved, and (2) desire for union with the beloved.

A key idea in the account of love and the impediments to love in human beings is the idea of 'internal integration around the good.' To elucidate this idea, Stump draws on Harry Frankfurt's hierarchical view of the will and on Thomas Aquinas's view of the good. Following Frankfurt, Stump distinguishes between a desire for something and a desire to have that desire, and between willing something and willing to will it. To care about something is not only to desire it, but to be committed to desiring it. Internal integration—wholeheartedness—is structural harmony in the will among first- and second-order desires and volitions. An internally integrated person is not divided against herself; she wills and desires what she wants to will and desire, and does not have incompatible volitions or desires.

Although Frankfurt holds that one's will can be integrated around any sort of desires, Aquinas held that one's will can be integrated only around the good. Here's why: Aquinas held that there are objective moral standards that can be known by reason, and hence that no one can be wholly ignorant of the good. Anyone who wills evil must have a conflicted set of desires and volitions; such a person is double-minded, hiding a part of one's mind from oneself.

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[14] Stump, Ch. 5, p. 10.

"[I]nternal integation is possible only for a person single-mindedly understanding and wholeheartedly desiring the good."[15] So, on Aquinas's view, internal integration can only be around the good.

Only a person internally integrated around the good can truly love. Let me canvass some of the reasons that for Stump gives for holding (with Aquinas) that only those who are internally integrated around the good can truly love:

(1) Consider "self-love," understood as a desire for internal integration. On Aquinas's view, a human person cannot love God or anyone else unless she loves herself. That is, she must desire the (objective) good for herself, and she desire union with herself. Stump elucidates the relevant desires in terms of internal integration around the good: For a person to desire the (objective) good for herself is for her to desire union with God or what contributes to union with God, and union with God (as we shall see) requires internal integration around the good. For a person to desire to have union with herself is to desire to be internally integrated by willing what she wants to will and by not willing anything incompatible with what she wants to will. She must be wholehearted, and, according to Aquinas, to be wholehearted is to be internally integrated around the good.

(2) Consider a human person's love of God. For a human person to love God, she must desire the good of God, and she must desire union with God.   Although there is no good that God lacks, a human person can desire the good of God by desiring what God desires as good. God desires union with his creatures, and (as I mentioned) union with God requires internal integration around the good.

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[15] Stump, Ch. 6, p. 24. On Aquinas's view, the will is an appetite for the good and cannot choose anything that is not presented as good by the intellect.

(3) In the case of God's love of human persons, the two desires collapse into one: Since the ultimate good of every human person is union with God, God's desire for the good of his beloved is a desire for union with his beloved.[16] This has implications for forgiveness. Forgiveness requires some kind of love for the one who needs forgiveness. God can unilaterally forgive a wrongdoer. But the desire to be united with the wrongdoer is "inefficacious" unless the wrongdoes has "at least enough repentance to be willing to accept forgiveness. Even the love and forgiveness of God, then, have to be responsive to the beloved."[17] (I shall comment on this point later.) So, a divided self is an obstacle to God's love and forgiveness.

Friendship is the genus of personal love: friendship encompasses all the various kinds of love between persons. (Stump confines her discussion of love among human beings to love among normally-functioning adult friends.) The appropriate union requires significant personal presence and mutual closeness; and these both require internal integration around the good.

Minimal personal presence is the result of a second-person experience and shared attention. First, consider shared attention. Again, Stump considers the psychological literature. With respect to joint attention, again, autistic children are impaired.   In dyadic shared attention, the object of Paula's awareness is simultaneously Jerome and their mutual awareness (Jerome's awareness of Paula's awareness and so on). So, second-person experience is an ingredient in personal presence, which in turn is a condition for the union of friends. Significant personal presence includes mutual closeness.[18]

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[16] I believe that God's desire for union with his creatures is more closely connect to the Franciscan than to the Dominican tradition.

[17] Stump, Ch. 5, pp. 26-7.

[18] So, as Stump points out, to say that union is the product of significant personal presence and mutual closeness is pleonastic, since significant personal presence entails mutual closeness. Stump, Ch. 6, p. 25.

Next, consider closeness. Unsurprisingly, propinquity, even with conversation and general benevolence, does not suffice. (Think of a cocktail party.) If Paula is close to Jerome, then (1) Jerome shares with Paula the thoughts and feelings that he cares about and that are particularly revelatory of him; and (2) Paula is willing to receive his self-revelation and is comprehending of it.

Closeness also requires a kind of need on the part of the person to whom one is close. The kind of need in question is not rooted in any inadequacy or defect.   Paula is close to Jerome only if Jerome needs Paula, where Jerome's needing Paula is "a matter of Jerome's having a great desire for Paul and Paula's being necessary for Jerome's fulfilling his desire for Paula but not for anything else lacking to Jerome."[19] (Even God can need his creatures in this way.) This kind of need makes for vulnerability: Paula is close to Jerome only if Jerome makes himself vulnerable to Paula. Closeness requires internal integration around the good. Paula is close to Jerome only if Jerome reveals himself to Paula. If Jerome is alienated from himself, part of him is hidden from himself; and he is in no position to reveal himself. So, Paula's ability to be close to Jerome depends in part on Jerome's integration around goodness.

So, we have two necessary conditions for closeness. Putting these conditions in the characteristic way of an analytic (and "Dominican") philosopher:

> x is close to y only if:
> > (i) y shares his particularly revealing thoughts and
> > > feelings with x; and
> >
> > (ii) x willingly and comprehendingly receives y's self-
> > > revelation.

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[19] Stump, Ch. 6, p. 11.

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(i) and (ii) are spelled out in terms of three necessary conditions for them. (i) and (ii) hold only if:

> (a) y needs x, where need indicates no inadequacy;
> (b) y is vulnerable to x;[20]
> (c) y is internally integrated around the good.

The union desired in love requires mutual closeness as set by these conditions. It also requires significant personal presence which is a product of a second-person experience and shared attention, together with mutual closeness. Union is possible only between two beings, each of whom is internally integrated around the good.[21]

One noteworthy feature of this account is that x does not have sole control over whether or not she is close to y. This is so, because x's being close to y entails that y reveal himself to x and that y be internally integrated around the good. Let me mention two of Stump's comments: (i) "[A]lthough it is entirely up to Paula whether or not she loves, it is not entirely up to Paula whether she has what she desires in love"—i.e., union with the beloved.[22] (ii) Similarly, for God. "[I]f Jerome is not integrated within himself, then [God's] ability to be close to him is limited or inefficacious, no matter what [God] chooses to do." Or again: "To the extent to which a human person is not integrated in the good, to that extent even God *cannot* be close to him, or consequently, significantly present to him."[23]

What is worse is that we fallen creatures prefer power and pleasure to greater goods, and so we do not will to be internally

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[20] Stump points out that in the incarnation, God made himself vulnerable to human beings. Stump, Ch. 6, p. 31, note 44.

[21] Stump, Ch. 6, p. 26.

[22] Stump, Ch. 7, p. 26. In Ch. 7, Stump distinguishes between love, union, closeness and freedom "in the ordinary mode" and "in the strenuous mode." The strenuous mode requires internal integration around the good. I am eliding the distinction here, and just assuming that the strenuous mode is the relevant mode.

[23] Stump, Ch. 6, p. 12; p. 26. Emphasis mine..

integrated around the good. As Stump puts it, "the post-Fall human condition carries with it a kind of willed loneliness."[24] Since the greatest obstacle to love is to fail to be internally integrated around the good, the question of how to achieve internal integration around the good is acute.

Redemption. The Christian answer to the question of how to achieve internal integration around the good involves redemption.   Internal alienation results in a propensity for wrongdoing. Aquinas took the propensity for wrongdoing to be a universal, post-Fall defect in the will, and the remedy is to alleviate the internal fragmentation.[25] One cannot simply choose to have a will integrated around the good: "If Paula could successfully choose to be integrated in will, she would already be whole-hearted; her lack of internal integration is just her inability to unify herself in will."[26] Paula cannot achieve internal integration on her own.   The remedy, on the standard Christian view, is justification and sanctification.

Stump's discussion of sanctification precedes her discussion of justification.[27] She appeals to cooperative grace, whereby "God is cooperating with the human being's own higher-order desires." Even if a person cannot bring her first-order volitions under the control of her second-order desires, she may be able to form a first-order

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[24] Stump, Ch. 6, p. 26. As Stump points out, we do not have to believe in original sin to recognize the propensity of human beings to moral wrongdoing. There are plenty of secular accounts of the unhappy propensity—evolutionary, genetic, sociological. Ch. 8, p. 5.

[25] Stump, Ch. 8, p. 7. Stump further points out that the alleviation of the human propensity to moral wrongdoing also is an antidote to shame. Insofar as shame and the propensity to moral wrongdoing "are the only obstacles to love in the strenuous mode between God and a human person, alleviating the human propensity to moral wrongdoing is therefore also sufficient for love in the strenuous mode, on Aquinas's worldview."

[26] Stump, Ch. 8, p. 10.

[27] The order of her presetnation suggests that in fact sanctification precedes justification. I was brought up to think that justification precedes sanctification in the order of salvation.

volition to ask God to strengthen her will.   And God may respond by altering her first-order volitions to bring them in accord with her second-order desires. To operate on a will when the person had a second-order volition that God do so "does not undermine free will but instead enhances or evokes it."[28] The process "in which God cooperates with a human person's higher-order desires for a will which wills one or another particular good is the process of sanctification."[29] The process of sanctification that aims at full integration of a will around moral goodness is a lengthy one, extending into the afterlife, according to Christian doctrine accepted by Aquinas.

Stump points out the anti-Pelagian cast of Aquinas's views on sanctification: The person "abandons the attempt by strength of her own will to make her will be what she wants it to be. Instead, she recognizes her own impairment in will and her need for help. Rather than striving for what she wants, she in fact lets go of the struggle and seeks God's aid."[30]

But sanctification is not the whole story of redemption; it is only the second part, predicated on a still-higher-order general will to have a will that wills the good.[31] Where does this global higher-order will come from?   If one cannot just will the good, or even will to will the good, then how could one will to have a will that wills the good?   The answer lies in the doctrine of justification. Although justification is a highly contested doctrine, Aquinas (along with many Christians) holds that we are justified by faith alone. As Stump puts it, "Aquinas takes faith to consist in a free act of will, in which a person hates his own moral wrong and desires the goodness which is God's .....[I]t is a

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[28] Stump, Ch. 8, p. 13.
[29] Stump, Ch. 8, p. 12.
[30] Stump, Ch. 8, p. 15.
[31] Stump, Ch. 8, p. 15.

desire, of one degree or another, for God to aid the will be making it good."[32] The will of faith, the global second-order desire for God to help one have a will that wills the good, is accompanied by the belief of faith, the belief that God will help if one does not resist.

Initially, we are in a state of refusing God's help. We are impotent to move our own wills from refusal to acceptance. However, according to Stump, there are three possible states of the will, not only refusal and acceptance, but also quiescence. Our state of will can change from active resistance to inactivity or quiescence. "When and only when the will is quiescent in this way, God infuses grace into the will."[33] On this interpretation of Aquinas on justification, "the will of faith is brought about in a human willer by God; but the human willer is still ultimately in control of her will, because it is up to her either to refuse grace or to fail to refuse grace, and God's giving of grace depends on the state of her will." Stump points out that there is probably greater disagreement on how to understand free will in Aquinas than on any of his other views. (In the last section, I'll discuss free will further.)

With this account of justification and sanctification, we can see how one can be in a process of internally integrating his will around the good—and thus of removing the obstacles to love and to union with God. On Aquinas's view, love, as we have seen, requires internal integration around the good. Such integration is acquired only with difficulty—"and never without surrender to the care of God."[34] Both justification and sanctification require a passivity, a letting go. In sanctification, one stops striving to have the will she wants to have by her own efforts; in justification, one lets go of activity in the will altogether. "She abandons her resistance to divine grace by lapsing

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[32] Stump, Ch. 8, p. 16.
[33] Stump, Ch. 8, p. 19.
[34] Stump, Ch. 8, p. 23.

into quiescence in the will, so that God can reform her will without breaking it."[35]

The Story of Job. Stump's plan is to weave together Aquinas's theodicy with her interpretation of biblical narratives—the stories of Job, of Samson, of Abraham and Isaac—into a defense against the argument from suffering. I cannot begin to do justice to the delicacy of Stump's interpretations; so I will just give a taste of Stump's interpretation of the book of Job, and urge the reader to read the interpretations himself.

Stump sees the book of Job as a set of nested second-person accounts—an account of God's interactions with non-human parts of creation, nested in God's dialogue with Job, which is part of a dialogue between God and Satan on God's relations with Job, which in turn is nested in a framing story about God and Satan.   If we see the book of Job in this light, we see that Job actually got what he wanted: reassurance of God's goodness. Job had "wanted bare justice, but his face-to-face experience with God goes past justice to love," to which Job responds appropriately: "So I recant and repent in dust and ashes."[36]   "*How* Job knows what he knows—that his suffering is at the hands of a good and loving God—is hard to explain to someone who was not part of the same second-person experience."[37] All that can be done is to turn the second-person experience into a second-person account by means of a story.

God's speeches to Job make no theological claims about creation; rather, they are story-like, conveying impressions of God in personal interaction with non-human parts of creation. God controls the sea by addressing it in personal terms "as if the sea were a

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[35] Stump, Ch. 8, p. 23.
[36] Stump, Ch. 9, p. 23.
[37] Stump, Ch. 9, p. 58.

rambunctious and exuberant child of his … who can understand and respond to him."[38] The reporting of the speeches are second-person accounts that invite us to participate, to see what the sons of God were rejoicing about when they saw the morning stars singing together. The implication, says Stump, "is that if we see it, we also will be inclined to rejoice."[39] It is a mistake, Stump tells us, to think of God's speeches to Job as merely demonstrating his power. Rather, they show God in personal interaction with his creatures.

We can infer from God's speech about non-human parts of creation that, if an innocent person suffers, God will produce from the suffering a good for the sufferer which the sufferer would not have had without the suffering. But Job, being a righteous man who is addressed by God, has a more direct, second-person experience, in which God is present to him, as if face-to-face. This second-person experience shows Job that he, too, is encompassed by God's love.

The framing story, which shows God and Satan in their second-person relations, suggests a further explanation of Job's suffering—a third-person explanation not available to Job. The framing story suggests that, in the nesting story, Job is the primary beneficiary of his suffering, which makes him a great person.   Moreover, in the framing story itself, Satan is the primary beneficiary, as God aims at Satan's good and keeps the distance between himself and Satan as small as Satan will allow.[40]

Stump remarks that the book of Job is to second-person accounts what a fractal is to mathematics. The fractal pattern allows us to make sense of, say, the suffering of Job's children: Yes, they are a means to an end in Job's story, but there will be another story in

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[38] Stump, Ch. 9, p. 15.
[39] Stump, Ch. 9, p. 15.
[40] Stump, Ch. 9, p. 52.

which they are the primary beneficiaries.[41] In the narrative of Job, Stump concludes, "divine providence succeeds in its aims not by determining what creatures do, but by outsmarting them."[42]

Putting the interpretation of biblical narratives in the context of Aquinas's worldview and theodicy, we do not just have the logical compatibility of God and suffering; we can see in detail how it is possible that God and suffering can co-exist.   For this purpose of defense, we need not actually endorse any Christian doctrines or Aquinas's worldview. However, Stump leaves such endorsement as open to the reader.

Part II

Strengths of Stump's View

<u>Libertarianism Not Required.</u> The main feature that I take to be a strength of Stump's account—and there will be disagreement that it is a strength—is this: Although Stump herself is a libertarian about free will, her theory, I believe, does not require libertarianism. Since it is controversial whether one should be a libertarian or a compatibilist about free will, I want to discuss this (as I think) strength at some length.

I'll take libertarianism to be the view that we have *originative* power over our free actions or decisions. This originative power requires that our choices and actions (at least those for which we are morally responsible) not have their source or origin in anything beyond the agent's control: No outside agency can bring about a free action or decision; a free action or decision is not the result of

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[41] Stump, Ch. 9, p. 54.
[42] Stump, Ch. 9, p. 60.

anything originating outside the agent.[43] To put it another way, on the libertarian conception, an act or decision is free if and only if it has no sufficient condition that is beyond the agent's control. I'll call this construal of freedom 'libertarian free will'.[44] According to libertarians, free will is incompatible with determinism. I'll take determinism to be the view that, at any moment, there is only one causally possible future.

The alternative to libertarian free will that is relevant here is the view that free will is compatible with determinism.[45] I'll call a conception of free will that holds that free will is compatible with determinism 'compatibilist free will.' It is important to remember two things about compatibilism: First, compatibilists agree that we deliberate, choose and have free will; they just have different accounts of free will from libertarians;[46] and second, compatibilists

[43] This is a standard construal of libertarianism. For example, Roderick Chisholm says: "If we are responsible, and if what I have been trying to say is true, then we have a prerogative which some would attribute only to God: each of us, when we act is *a prime mover unmoved*. In doing what we do, we cause certain events to happen, and nothing—or no one—causes us to cause those events to happen." See Chisholm's "Freedom and Action," in *Freedom and Determinism*, Keith Lehrer, ed. (New York: Random House, 1966): 11-44. Robert Kane says, "[T]o will freely…is to be the ultimate creator (prime mover, so to speak) of your own purposes." See Kane, The Significance of Free Will (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998): 4.

[44] 'Libertarian free will' is shorthand for 'a libertarian conception of free will', just as 'Newtonian simultaneity' is shorthand for 'a Newtonian conception of simultaneity'. Peter van Inwagen has complained vehemently about my use of a term like 'libertarian free will'; so, I am stipulating what 'libertarian free will' is to denote. Since 'free will' is a term of philosophical art, it does not (*pace* van Inwagen) have an unambiguous pre-theoretical meaning. 'Libertarian free will' and 'compatibilist free will' are as innocent as 'Newtonian simultaneity' and 'Einsteinian simultaneity.' All these terms are clear and unambiguous.

[45] There are a variety of ways to spell out what free will is, so that it is compatible with determinism. Some interpret Aquinas as a compatibilist. See Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Ch. 7.4; also see Thomas J. Loughran, "Aquinas, Compatibility" in *Divine and Human Agency: Anglican, Catholic and Lutheran Perspectives*, F. Michael McLain and W. Mark Richardson, eds. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999): 1-40.

[46] An important secular source of resistance to this view comes from the influential Consequence Argument, formulated by Peter van Inwagen. But see my "The Irrelevance of the Consequence Argument" in *Analysis* 68-1 (2008): 13-22.

need not be determinists.[47] Libertarianism and compatibilism are different theories or conceptions of free will. I'll use the unmodified 'free will' to mean the phenomenon that libertarianism and compatibilism are theories or conceptions of.[48]

Eleonore Stump and Robert Pasnau are two of the most sophisticated contemporary commentators (by standards of analytic philosophy) on Aquinas. They agree on the importance of the will in Aquinas, and they agree that Aquinas appealed to higher-order volitions. Yet they disagree about whether Aquinas was a compatibilist about freedom and determinism. Pasnau says yes; Stump says no.[49]   I am not in a position to take sides on the interpretation of Aquinas, but I do want to argue for two claims: (i) the views that Stump presents in her book on second-person accounts do not require libertarianism; (ii) not requiring libertarianism is a strength of her views.

(i) I want to show that even if libertarianism is false (as I think it is), Stump's account stays afloat. In the first place, Stump explicitly characterizes ordinary freedom without regard to libertarianism: Even if Paula is internally divided, she is free in the ordinary way if she "performs some act of her own will, without any external coercion." To underscore that ordinary freedom is compatible with causal determinism, Stump includes as a footnote: "Libertarians may add here 'and which is not causally determined'."[50]   So on Stump's view, ordinary freedom is compatible with compatibilist free will.

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[47] For example, I am a compatibilist who is not a determinist. Indeterminism is not sufficient for libertarianism.

[48] 'Free will' is to 'libertarian free will' as 'simultaneity' is to 'Newtonian simultaneity'. The former in each case denotes the phenomenon; the latter denotes a particular conception or theory of the phenomenon.

[49] See Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Ch. 7.4; and Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (Oxford: Routledge, 2003), Ch. 9.

[50] Stump, Ch. 7, p. 8; p. 28, note 9.

But in addition to (compatibilist) ordinary freedom, Stump appeals to "freedom in the strenuous mode." Freedom in the strenuous mode is freedom with the obstacles to pursuing one's true good removed.[51] In other words, one has freedom in the strenous mode only if one is internally integrated around the good. Similarly, for love in the strenuous mode, closeness in the strenuous mode and union in the strenuous mode—all these come in two modes, and only beings whose desires are nonconflicting and harmonious are capable of anything in the strenuous mode. The strenuous mode is necessary for what we yearn for in freedom, as well as in love, union and closeness,.[52]

Now, does freedom in the strenuous mode require libertarianism, any more than ordinary freedom does? The answer depends on whether internal integration around the good requires libertarianism. Internal integration around the good is the ultimate end of the process of sanctification, which is not complete in this life. Freedom in the strenuous mode does not require libertarianism if and only if it is possible for someone to get started on the process of being internally integrated around the good in a world in which libertarianism is false. Getting started on the process is a matter of justification.

In her *Wandering in Darkness*, as well as in *Aquinas*, Stump tries to avoid the compatibilist reading by showing that the will has three, not two, possibilities with respect to grace: not only may the will accept or refuse grace, but also it may move from refusal into a state of quiescence. Quiescence is a state of neither rejecting nor accepting. We all begin in a state of rejection of God. There are two

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[51] This reminds me of Martin Luther in *On the Bondage of the Will*: We are able (free) to pursue the good only by the grace of God, who removes the obstacle to our pursuit of the good.

[52] Stump, Ch. 7, p. 12.

steps to justification. The first step is the movement of the will from a state of rejection to a state of quiescence; the second step is the movement of the will from a state of quiescence to a state of acceptance. I shall argue that libertarianism is not required (indeed, it is precluded) from both the first and second steps.[53]

Step One: I do not doubt that there is a state of quiescence of the will, and I agree that refraining from willing does not require an act of will. What I doubt is that getting into a state of quiescence as regards justification can have any libertarian element whatever.[54] Either one gets into a state of quiescence by an act of will or not.[55] Suppose that one gets into a state of quiescence by an act of will. In that case, the act of will is not an act of libertarian free will.   Here's why: An act of libertarian free will does not have its ultimate source outside the agent's control. Libertarian free wills, by definition, operate on their own. Nothing, not even God, cannot turn a libertarian free will one way or another.[56] But the will with which one stops refusing grace manifestly does not operate on its own, on pain of the Pelagian heresy. No one with a fallen will can arise from her bed of sin apart from God's grace. It follows that no act of will with

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[53] Stump may well go so far as to say that libertarianism is not required for her account of justification. She may hold that no act of will (and hence no act of libertarian free will) is required for the step from rejection to quiescence. Although she thinks that Aquinas is a libertarian, she argues only that it is *possible* to interpret Aquinas as a libertarian—thus leaving open the possibility of theological compatibilism. Stump, *Aquinas*, p. 389.

[54] In ,"Grace and Controlling What We Do Not Cause" (*Faith and Philosophy* 24.3 (2007): 284-299), Kevin Timpe has a clever argument that aims to avoid both Pelagianism and theological determinism. He holds that one has control over getting into a state of quiescence in an indirect way. His view requires that there be an act of libertarian free will that interferes with "the natural disposition to choose contrary to God." Such interference, which is independent of God's grace, sounds too Pelagian to me. See Timke, p. 294.

[55] Kevin Timpe's excellent article defends the view that being in a state of quiesence is a result of an act of will. See Kevin Timpe,"Grace and Controlling What We Do Not Cause."

[56] According to Molina, libertarian free wills are beyond God's reach altogether. This is so because, according to Molina, although counterfactuals of freedom are contingent, God has no control whatsoever over which ones are true.

which one moves from rejection to quiescence is an act of libertarian free will, if an act of will is involved at all.

So, suppose that moving from a state of rejection to a state of quiescence does *not* require an act of will.[57] In that case, God's grace alone suffices for the change of state, which is outside the person's control altogether. If moving from a state of rejection to a state of quiescence does not require any act of will, then it cannot require an act of libertarian free will. So, whether the move from rejection to quiesence requires an act of will or not, libertarian free will is excluded from Step One of justification.

Step Two: When the will is quiescent, it stops actively resisting God. A person whose will is in a quiescent state neither accepts nor rejects God's offer of saving grace. God's saving grace, offered to all, produces in the quiescent person the will of faith. "When and only when the will is quiescent … God infuses grace into the will."[58] At that time, the human person forms the global higher-order desire for a will that wills the good.

In her magesterial *Aquinas*, Stump says: "According to Aquinas, the second-order act of free will in justifying faith is produced in a person by the divine infusion of operating grace; the will does not cooperate with God in this act but is simply moved by him."[59] This view rules out libertarianism.   If the "second-order act of free will in justifying faith is *produced* in a person by the divine infusion of operating grace," and if "the will does not cooperate with God in this act but is simply moved by him," then the second-order act of free will is not an act of *libertarian* free will by definition. The person is not the ultimate source or originator of an act of will produced by God.

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[57] I believe that both Aquinas and Stump take this alternative. See Timpe.
[58] Stump, Ch. 8, p. 19.,
[59] Stump, *Aquinas*, p. 389.

Indeed, there is a sufficient condition (God's grace) for the act beyond the control of the person, whose will is "simply moved by [God]." If the will is simply moved by God without any cooperation from the will, then the movement of the will logically cannot involve an act of libertarian free will.

So, the act of will that moves one, having been infused by grace, from quiescence to acceptance is not a libertarian act of will; it has grace as sufficient cause. This latter point is explicitly affirmed by the Lutheran-Catholic Concordat, which has been officially endorsed both by the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches and seems compatibilist throughout: "When Catholics say that persons 'co-operate' in preparing for and accepting justification by consenting to God's justifying action, they see such personal consent as itself an effect of grace, not as an action arising from innate human abilities."[60]

Thus, Pelagianism is avoided since the acceptance of faith is produced by God's grace itself, not by the person on her own. Not only is Pelagianism avoided, but so is libertarianism: the quiescent will, for which the person bears no responsibility, is caused by God's saving grace to move from quiescence to acceptance. So, Step Two also does not require any acts of libertarian free will.

Hence, the truth of libertarianism (if it is true) has nothing to do with either step of justification. My point here is only that the libertarian interpretation is not required for the second-person response to suffering. It is open to us to take Aquinas to be right about justification, and yet to reject libertarianism. It follows that Stump's view does not require libertarianism.

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[60] *Joint Declaration on Doctrine of Justification by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church* (1998). 4.1.20. This document, I believe, remains controversial among both Protestant and Catholic theologians.

(ii) Let me draw on what I have already argued to show that not requiring libertarianism is a strength of Stump's view.

The problem for the libertarian is to avoid various forms of Pelagianism. For example, semi-Pelagianism is characterized by Stump as follows: "God awards grace in response to the initiative...of human free will, which is sufficient of itself for initiating the process of justification that God's grace then continues."[61] There is a trilemma in the offing for libertarians: Either (1) the process of justification is initiated by an act of free will that is produced by God, or (2) the process of justification is initiated by an act of free will that is not produced by God, or (3) the process of justification is not initiated by an act of free will at all.

If (1), then semi-Pelagianism is avoided; but, an act of free will produced by God has a sufficient condition beyond the agent's control, and hence is not an act of libertarian freedom, but only of compatibilist freedom. If (2), then if we took the act of free will to be an act of libertarian free will, we would have semi-Pelagianism and a violation of the orthodox doctrine of justification. This is so, because if God required that a person stop refusing grace on her own before he offered grace, then his offer of grace would be a response to her surrender. If (3), then the agent has no control over initiating the process of justification and libertarianism plays no role at all in initiating the process of justification. So, it seems that there is no logical room for libertarianism without violating the orthodox (non-semi-Pelagian) doctrine of justification.

It seems to me that, logically speaking, the only way for an orthodox Christian to avoid the trilemma is to accept a compatibilist

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[61] Stump, "Atonement and Justification," in *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement*, Ronald Feestra and Cornelius Plantinga, eds. U of Notre Dame Press, 1989, pp. 178-209. Quote is on .p. 193.

view: God can bring about a state of will in a person without interfering with her free will. If that is so, then, by definition, libertarianism is false. And if libertarianism is false, then it is indeed a strength of Stump's view that it does not require libertarianism.[62]

<u>Other Strength's of Stump's Second-Person Account.</u> There are further strengths of Stump's Second-Person approach to the problem of suffering. In addition to compatibility with compatibilism, I want to mention three more features that are distinctive strengths of Stump's account:

The next feature of Stump's approach that I take to be a distinctive strength concerns the kind of explanation of evil that we can expect. It is only rarely (e.g., in the interpretation of the book of Job) that we can know a morally sufficient reason for suffering in a particular case; and even there, the 'morally sufficient reason' is advanced only as a possibility. Still less does Stump offer a global explanation for why God permits evil at all.[63] The kind of explanation of evil that can be expected is only a second-person experience of God that assures the sufferer of God's love and faithfulness. But this turns out to be a rich response to the problem of suffering, prized out of biblical narratives about human suffering and God's relationship to suffering human agents.

The third feature that I take to be a strength of Stump's account is that it offers a unified account of evil: it does not treat moral evil caused by human agents differently from natural evil. By shifting focus from kinds of evil (e.g., natural and moral) to the sufferer,

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[62] For further arguments, see my "Why Christians Should Not be Libertarians: An Augustinian Challenge," *Faith and Philosophy* 20 (2003): 460-478. In "Moral Responsibility Without Libertarianism," *Noûs* 40 (2006): 307-330, I argued on grounds independent of theological issues that libertarianism is false.

[63] An explanation of evil in terms of original sin would still leave suffering like Job's or a eboli victim's unexplained.

Stump opens the way to a unified response to evil. Indeed, in the case of Job, God "is at least actively collaborating in Job's suffering, not just allowing it."[64] If Stump can take care of Job's case, in which God is actively collaborating in suffering, as I think she does, then the other kinds of case—of natural evil and of moral evil—will readily fall into line.

The final strength of Stump's approach that I want to mention is that Stump does not try to domesticate evil or suffering. Nothing removes the dreadfulness of suffering—not the assurance of God's love and faithfulness to us, not anything.[65] And some evils (e.g., the Holocaust) are too vast and overwhelming to be fit subjects for academic debate. "For such evil, speech should fail," says Stump. "It is enough for me that I am a member of the the species that perpetrated this evil. Stricken awe in the face of it seems to me the only response bearable."[66] The deep mystery remains.

Conclusion

Since evil *is* a deep mystery, the best that one can do, I believe, is to show (as Stump has done) how an all-powerful and all-good God can coexist with suffering, and to show how we are to respond to evil. We are to respond to suffering with the faith that God does not break his promises, however things seem to us from our limited perspectives. This traditional Christian answer to the problem of

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[64] Stump, Ch. 9, p. 63, note 33.
[65] Perhaps the suffering of saints is transformed by the assurance of God's love and faithfulness, but the pain and awfulness of the suffering remain. cf. "Faith and the Problem of Evil," pp. 549-550.
[66] Eleonore Stump, Ch.1, p. 18.

suffering is not "bland and disappointing." On the contrary, Stump says, "it is tough, deep and comforting."[67, 68]