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Erotic Love Essay

**Introduction.** I believe that Aquinas’ theory of love is correct because of the two desires Stump examines. I believe the both desires are correct because they can provide an explanation to what love should be like and because they can provide solutions to the three accounts Stump addresses in her paper.

**Background.** According to Stump, there are three accounts of love. The responsiveness account states that love is a response of the lover to the qualities he values in the beloved.[[1]](#footnote-1) According to the volitional account says that the beloved has great value for the lover. That value derives from and is dependent on the lover’s love for the beloved.[[2]](#footnote-2) And finally, love consists in valuing a person, the interactions with them, and one’s relationship with them, according to the relational account.[[3]](#footnote-3) And all three accounts have problems.[[4]](#footnote-4) Stump then focuses on a theory she believes can provide solutions for the three accounts. She focuses on the nature of Aquinas’ account of love. Aquinas was a medieval philosopher and theologian.[[5]](#footnote-5) He believed that love requires two interconnected desires. The desire for the good of the beloved and the desire for union with the beloved.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Main Arguments**

***For the Good of the Beloved.*** The first part of Aquinas’ theory is the desire for the good of the beloved. When Aquinas describes the good of the beloved, according to Stump, he is describing goodness in a broader sense. In this case, one should desire what will cause the beloved to flourish.[[7]](#footnote-7) In this I believe Aquinas is correct because it is not love if you wish harm to your beloved. When you love someone, you want them to be happy, hence you want what is good for them and will make them happy. Stump points out an ‘aspect’ of this first desire. The desire for the good of the beloved does not rely on the beloved themselves at all.[[8]](#footnote-8) In other words, the characteristics of the beloved cannot change the constancy of the desire by the lover. Only the lover can change this. This concept makes sense to me because the desire is dependent on how you yourself feel. For example, you can have anger towards and wish malice on someone. However, that someone volunteers on the weekends, donates to the homeless, and is seen as a good citizen in the eyes of society. The characteristics of the someone does not change anything about what your desire for them. It all depends on how you feel and what you are willing to feel towards the other person.

***For the Union with the Beloved.*** The next desire Stump examines is the desire for union with the beloved. It can be better understood as the desire for a common life or a sort of harmony with another person; it does not necessarily include being in the presence of the beloved.[[9]](#footnote-9) The desire for union, unlike the desire for the good of the beloved, depends on the characteristics of the beloved, both relational and intrinsic.[[10]](#footnote-10) I think this is correct because an agreement works best if you make it with someone that has characteristics that you desire. You cannot achieve harmony with someone if they possess qualities that you despise. In my opinion, the beloved themselves is what determines the success of a union and the beloved themselves should determine if you desire a union with them or not. Also, each characteristic of the beloved determines something about the union possible between the beloved and the lover.[[11]](#footnote-11)Stump says that the relational characteristics of the beloved determine what kind of union is appropriate to seek. The intrinsic characteristics affect the character and extent of the union.[[12]](#footnote-12) This is why the beloved determines the success of the union.

***The Solutions.*** According to Stump, Aquinas’ theory can solve the problems presented by the three accounts she mentions earlier in her paper.[[13]](#footnote-13) For the responsiveness account, the problem is that another could possess the intrinsic characteristics of the beloved, making the beloved replaceable.[[14]](#footnote-14) But Stump says that the desire for union overcomes this problem. The desire for union depends on both the intrinsic and the relational characteristics of the beloved.[[15]](#footnote-15) You desire one particular person with these features, which also provides a solution to the volitional account. For the volitional account, there is no reason for love that is rooted in the beloved. So, it is just as easy for the lover to love someone else.[[16]](#footnote-16) But because in Aquinas’ theory the reason for the desire is rooted in the beloved, the volitional account becomes invalid.[[17]](#footnote-17) For the relational account, one can have a “relationship” with someone and not actually have desire or love for the other person.[[18]](#footnote-18) The desire for the good of the beloved can provide a solution to this account. Because the lover wishes for the good of the beloved, he has an interest in the beloved. This shows that the lover has a sort of desire and perhaps even love for the beloved. And the desire for a union with the beloved proves that a relationship is actually wanted. Stump shows that Aquinas’ theory can provide the solution to all three of these accounts.

1. Love, By All Accounts, Page 25 (Stump) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Love, By All Accounts, Page 26 (Stump) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Love, By All Accounts, Page 26 (Stump) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Love, By All Accounts, Pages 25-27 (Stump) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Biography.com Editors. “Saint Thomas Aquinas.” *Biography.com*, A&E Networks Television, 2 Aug. 2019, www.biography.com/religious-figure/saint-thomas-aquinas. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Love, By All Accounts, Page 27 (Stump) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Love, By All Accounts, Page 28 (Stump) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Love, By All Accounts, Page 30 (Stump) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Love, By All Accounts, Pages 27-28 (Stump) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Love, By All Accounts, Page 30 (Stump) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Love, By All Accounts, Page 32 (Stump) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Love, By All Accounts, Page 32 (Stump) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Love, By All Accounts, Pages 34-35 (Stump) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Love, By All Accounts, Page 25 (Stump) [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Love, By All Accounts, Page 30 (Stump) [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Love, By All Accounts, Page 26 (Stump) [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Love, By All Accounts, Page 30 (Stump) [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Love, By All Accounts, Pages 26-27 (Stump) [↑](#footnote-ref-18)