2013

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WOLTERSTORFF ON LOVE AND JUSTICE
An Augustinian Response

Joseph Clair

ABSTRACT

In *Justice in Love*, Nicholas Wolterstorff argues for a unique ethical orientation called “care-agapism.” He offers it as an alternative to theories of benevolence-agapism found in Christian ethics on the one hand and to the philosophical orientations of egoism, utilitarianism, and eudaimonism on the other. The purported uniqueness and superiority of his theory lies in its ability to account for the conceptual compatibility of love and justice while also positively incorporating self-love. Yet in attempting to articulate a “bestowed worth” account of human dignity—in which dignity is given by divine love and respected in acts of justice—Wolterstorff leans on an unstable characterization of how love and the good are conceptually interwoven. As a result, his reader cannot be sure about the theoretical superiority of care-agapism. Moreover, Wolterstorff’s attempt to value self-love and at the same time reject eudaimonism depends on a dubious interpretation of Augustine carried over from *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*, which itself further depends on a mischaracterization of the possible varieties of eudaimonism. This mistake is unfortunate because, on a closer reading of Augustine, one finds an agapistic account of eudaimonism that could have significantly helped Wolterstorff’s overall account of the complementary relation of love and justice.

KEY WORDS: love and justice, the good, human dignity, agapism, eudaimonism, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Augustine of Hippo

1. Introduction

Love and justice pervade Western intellectual culture and have histories that run all the way back to ancient Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome. The concepts deal, in different ways, with the enduring and difficult question of one’s concern for the well-being of others. Yet the imperatives to do justice and love your neighbor have often been portrayed as standing
in fundamental conflict: one seen as prudential and austere and the other as always generous and forgiving. Nicholas Wolterstorff’s thesis in *Justice in Love* is simple: any apparent conceptual conflict between the requirements of justice and the requirement to love is precisely that—a merely *apparent* conflict (2011, 1). Wolterstorff’s goal is twofold: to diffuse the notion that these concepts are mutually exclusive and, indeed, to elucidate their profound compatibility. Still, the book’s title testifies to Wolterstorff’s conviction that love ultimately takes priority. He argues that love both can and should incorporate justice, and that justice must be seen as an essential aspect of acting lovingly (2011, 93). He calls this incorporative conception of justice in love “care.” Hence Wolterstorff designates a unique ethical orientation: “care-agapism.”

The compatibility of love and justice is of more than theoretical interest to Wolterstorff. In the preface to *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (*Justice in Love*’s predecessor and companion volume), Wolterstorff regrets that his discussion of justice as inherent human rights became so expansive in that book that “there was no room left to discuss the relation between love and justice” (2008b, xiii). He promises to provide such an account and claims that doing so is critical because “large swaths of American Christians”—people within his own religious tradition—“believe that in the New Testament love supplanted justice” and point to the fact that, “Jesus did not teach that we are to treat people justly; he taught that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves” (2008b, 1). Insofar as “Americans continue to be a religious people, dominantly Christian,” this popular notion of love supplanting justice has pernicious “consequences for our culture and society as a whole” (2008b, 1). Of particular concern to Wolterstorff is the phenomenon of domination disguising itself as love. Wolterstorff reports one particularly vivid example of this phenomenon drawn from his experience of the effects of apartheid in South Africa in 1976. Wolterstorff’s fear is that severing the commanded love of scripture

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1 Although the term care-agapism is unique to Wolterstorff, the attempt to demonstrate the compatibility of love and justice is far from novel. One weakness in the text is Wolterstorff’s failure to consider other Christian ethicists who have also perceived the need to show the compatibility of these concepts. Paul Tillich’s presentation of agapic love as “creative justice” in *Morality and Beyond* is complementary to Wolterstorff’s account of care-love and provides a nice counterpoint to the incompatibility accounts found in the work of Anders Nygren and Reinhold Niebuhr (two authors Wolterstorff considers). More recent work by Gene Outka (1972), Margaret Farley (2006), and Timothy P. Jackson (2003) defends the view that agapic love and justice must conceptually work hand-in-hand in the construction of a distinctively Christian social and political ethics. Although Wolterstorff’s care-agapism rests on a different argument for the compatibility of love and justice than these authors, nevertheless, the uniqueness of his position, and the force of his argument, could have been significantly strengthened by some engagement with other compatibility accounts in Christian ethics. (Outka’s work is mentioned only in passing on pages 21 and 25.)
from the language of justice (especially justice as rights) diminishes Christians’ capacity to distinguish appeals to love from tools of domination.2

Wolterstorff has two groups of interlocutors in view in Justice in Love: philosophical and theological ethicists. To the former, he presents his version of agapism as yet another alternative to what he takes to be the three dominant “ethical orientations most commonly discussed by philosophers [today]: namely, egoism, eudaimonism, and utilitarianism” (2011, 1).3 To the latter group, he presents his care-agapism as a superior alternative to rival versions of agapism. In sections one and two of the book, he distinguishes care-agapism from what he sees as the prominent twentieth-century alternative, “benevolence-agapism,” represented in the writings of Anders Nygren and Reinhold Niebuhr. Whereas Wolterstorff’s care-agapism attempts to reveal justice and love as compatible with one another, benevolence-agapism emphasizes the inherent incompatibility of the two.4 In section three, Wolterstorff analyzes cases of perceived conflict between love and justice in order to allay the worry that an ethical orientation of love invites and legitimates certain modes of domination or victimization. In anticipating such concerns, he considers three particular cases of perceived conflict: forgiveness, generosity, and benevolent paternalism. In the fourth and final section of the book, Wolterstorff provides

2 For a detailed account of the biographical and personal dimension of Wolterstorff’s work on love and justice, see Wolterstorff 2008a. Wolterstorff claims that his recent two-volume project is an attempt to give theoretical expression to a concept of justice that he took for granted and applied to concrete social issues almost thirty years ago in Until Justice and Peace Embrace (Wolterstorff 1983). See Wolterstorff 2008b, ix.

3 It is striking that a Kantian position does not make Wolterstorff’s list of alternatives. In what sense does Wolterstorff understand the ethical imperatives to do justice and love your neighbor to be obligations akin to the Kantian sense of duty? Wolterstorff argues that in Søren Kierkegaard’s treatment of the love command in Works of Love—a canonical text for the whole agapist tradition—one hears “unmistakable echoes of Kant,” but pursues the matter no further (2011, 27n10). For this reason, to pursue the question of Wolterstorff’s deontological presentation of the love command is beyond the scope of this present essay.

4 Another weakness in the text is the lack of attention given to the development of agapism after Nygren and Niebuhr. According to Wolterstorff, the “benevolence-agapism” of Nygren and Niebuhr is representative of modern day agapism as a whole. Although a few other modern day agapists make the list (for example, Søren Kierkegaard, Karl Barth, Paul Ramsey), Wolterstorff claims that they all, ultimately, offer incompatibility accounts of the relation between love and justice. Indeed, he makes the stronger claim that “modern day agapism is incapable of giving a satisfactory account of how justice fits into an agapist framework” (2011, 104, emphasis mine). This identification of modern day agapism with the views of Nygren and Niebuhr, and the stronger claim about agapism’s incapability, raises questions about Wolterstorff’s characterization of the movement. Wolterstorff’s book may give the false impression that the modern day agapism of Nygren and Niebuhr is representative of the movement as a whole. This works as a foil for his own position, yet it ignores a number of authors laboring in the field of Christian love ethics who explicitly reject Nygren and Niebuhr.
a novel interpretation of the Apostle Paul’s doctrine of justification in the book of Romans, arguing that Paul’s overarching theme is actually the justice of God’s generosity toward humankind. In this essay, I focus on the theoretical framework of Wolterstorff’s care-agapism as it is laid out in the first two sections of the book.

Wolterstorff argues that his care-agapism differs from benevolence-agapism in several theoretically advantageous ways. Chief among these are (a) its account of the compatibility of love and justice as ethical concepts and (b) its ability to incorporate self-love into a conception of care-love. In the first section of this review, I will assess Wolterstorff’s account of the compatibility of love and justice, paying particular attention to the notion of the good presupposed therein. That account is ultimately rooted in a “bestowed worth” account of human dignity, which he first articulated in *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*. His elaborate theistic account of human dignity is based on a description of the relationship between love and the good that is more perplexing than illuminating; for this reason a verdict on the theoretical superiority of Wolterstorff’s vision is, in the end, divided and uncertain. In the second section, I will consider Wolterstorff’s twofold attempt both to incorporate self-love into care-agapism and reject eudaimonism. The potential success of this twofold maneuver is directly connected to his perplexing description of the relationship between love and the good, and I suggest that Wolterstorff has mischaracterized the possible varieties of eudaimonism through a misleading interpretation of a key historical figure, Augustine of Hippo. This interpretation is problematic and unfortunate because, contrary to Wolterstorff’s suggestion, Augustine’s Christian Platonism is a eudaimonistic resource within Wolterstorff’s own tradition that could have actually strengthened his overall account of the complementary relationship between love and justice.

2. The Compatibility of Love and Justice

According to Wolterstorff, the worrisome Christian perception of love supplanting justice finds sophisticated theoretical expression in the agapism of Nygren and Niebuhr. For both authors, the commanded love of the New Testament, *agapê*, is “the love of pure impartial benevolence,” akin only to God’s own love (2008b, 1). Both conceive of agapic love as radically altruistic, benevolent, beneficent, charitable, self-sacrificial, and as being isolated from other forms of love like friendship and romantic love, which are summarily construed as “natural” or “preferential” and in distinct conflict with the radically benevolent requirements of agapic “neighbor-love” (2011, 23–27). Both portray the gentle benevolence of the agapic love taught and embodied by Jesus as incompatible with the sometimes rough, prudential, austere, and often self-protective
requirements of justice and both claim, in different ways, that wherever agapic love is found, “the order of justice is obsolete and invalidated” (Nygren 1953, 90). The salient difference between Nygren’s and Niebuhr’s agapism only emerges in terms of the practical conclusions that each draw from this inherent incompatibility.

When justice and love are seen to be in conflict, Nygren proposes that one should prefer love to justice. By contrast, Niebuhr proposes that one prefer justice to love, accepting the tragic hue of life in the here and now. The alternative, says Niebuhr, is to run the unacceptable risk of inviting and legitimating modes of domination and victimization in the name of agapic love. Nygren and Niebuhr share the assumption that justice and love may be in conflict even when love is completely well-formed, though they endorse differing practical ethics. “Nygren instructs one to remain faithful to love in situations of conflict, even at the cost of injustice; Niebuhr instructs one to remain faithful to justice in situations of conflict, even at the cost of love,” but for Wolterstorff, “[b]oth positions prove untenable” (2011, 72).

Wolterstorff, then, presents an “understanding of love such that the imperative to act justly is not in conflict with the law of love, not a restriction thereon, not even a supplement, but such that doing justice is an example of love” (2011, 84). “Care,” Wolterstorff argues, joins the two aspects of love that Nygren and Niebuhr separate (2011, 101). Love as “care” both seeks to enhance someone else’s well-being and to secure her just treatment (2011, 101).

5 Citation is found in Wolterstorff 2008b, 1.
6 Throughout the text Wolterstorff calls Nygren’s position “classical modern day agapism” claiming that it is more representative of the tradition as a whole. Niebuhr’s practical emphasis on remaining faithful to justice over love in the meantime stands outside of the mainstream of the tradition. See chapter five: “Niebuhr’s Non-Classical Agapism.” This practical difference between Nygren and Niebuhr turns out to be insignificant, for Wolterstorff, insofar as both offer incompatibility accounts of the two concepts. One way to respond to Wolterstorff’s strong claim that modern day agapism is incapable of providing a satisfactory account of the relation between love and justice is to challenge his reading of key figures like Nygren and Niebuhr. Wolterstorff’s approach is less promising with Nygren who is forthrightly an incompatibilist. The case of Reinhold Niebuhr is more complicated. Niebuhr’s dialectical account of the eschatological relation between the ideal of agapic love (for the individual) and social justice (at the group-level) found in Moral Man and Immoral Society (1932) is not—or at least is not straightforwardly—an incompatibility account. Nor is it Niebuhr’s mature account of love’s relation to justice. See Flescher 2000. I will not pursue an interpretive response to Wolterstorff’s reading of Niebuhr here. My point is to highlight that both Wolterstorff’s selection of interlocutors and his reading of key texts raises questions about his claim that all modern day agapists offer straightforward incompatibility accounts.

7 Wolterstorff notes that his appeal to the concept of love as care has no theoretical relationship to the relevant literature in the field commonly known as care ethics. See 2011, 103–4. Here is another case where Wolterstorff’s position could have been clarified and strengthened by some encounter with other Christian ethicists who have engaged the
Defining love as care promises the best possibility of a defensible agapism, Wolterstorff argues, because its rule of application encompasses the broadest range of love-objects and also identifies one’s varying responsibilities to others within that range. Its rule of application therefore can aid one in identifying whose well-being one is responsible for promoting and under what conditions (2011, 104). Certainly, agapic love can, for Wolterstorff, drive one to more extravagant and selfless displays of promoting the well-being of a neighbor (even a foreigner, stranger, enemy, or previously unknown neighbor, as in the case of the Good Samaritan), but it does not do so without providing an account of the worth and dignity of every human individual and their basic rights. To respect these qualities of a human being, as one does in love, is primary justice. Thus, for Wolterstorff, love does justly.

2.1 Love, justice, and the good

In the fourteenth chapter of Justice in Love, entitled “Love, Justice, and the Good,” Wolterstorff notes a key distinction between care-love and benevolence-love (2011, 142). While each form of love represents a concern to promote the well-being of another as an end in itself, care-love also seeks to fulfill the requirements of justice—that is, it also ensures that others be treated in a manner commensurate with their worth. This further entailment of love as justice restrictively conditions how one may promote the good. And in doing so, it abates injustice wreaked in the name of malformed love.

“Much of the vagueness and confusion that one finds in discussions about love,” Wolterstorff says, “has its source in failure to get clear on just which sort of love is under consideration” (2011, 142). Thus, in order to gain clarity on the relationship between love and justice, he provides a short list of the basic types or forms of love. In addition to benevolence-love and care-love, he introduces attraction-love, attachment-love, advantage-love (self-love), and friendship-love. This list is not intended to

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8 Wolterstorff's interpretations of Jesus’s Parable of the Good Samaritan sprinkled throughout the text are highly nuanced and insightful meditations on the Pharisee's question: “Who then is my neighbor?” See, for example, Wolterstorff 2011, 131–33.

9 In chapter seven of Justice in Love, entitled “What Is Justice?,” Wolterstorff provides an account of primary justice as respect for inherent human rights, which is a condensed version of his argument in Justice: Rights and Wrongs. The account in chapter seven of Justice in Love emphasizes the relationship between primary justice as respect for inherent human rights and love as “care.”
be exhaustive but rather to illustrate a more primary point about the relationship between love and the good: all forms of love are manifestations of one or more of “three fundamental orientations toward the good” (2011, 142). These orientations are benefaction, acknowledgment, and investment (2011, 142–45).

The first orientation, benefaction, consists in seeking to promote, enhance, or to bring about the good of another. Seeking to promote or enhance the good of another “with no consideration of whether or not justice requires [it]” is most closely associated with benevolence-love. It is this manifestation of love “that the modern day agapist movement mistakenly identified with New Testament agape,” which explains why Wolterstorff labels the modern day agapism expressed by Nygren and Niebuhr “benevolence-agapism” (2011, 143).

The second orientation toward the good, acknowledgment, is closely associated with attraction-love insofar as one’s attention or interest is often a form of acknowledging the good in someone or something (2011, 143–44). The third and final orientation, investment, is integrally linked to attachment-love. It speaks to the vulnerable and contingent nature of one’s relationship toward the good in general and to the dangerous vulnerability the lover experiences when emotional investment in the good of another person is particular and deep (2011, 144–45). “The emotional investment lying at the heart of attachment is what makes one susceptible to worry, sorrow, grief, and the like—and open to elation. When the life of the person to whom one is attached seems threatened, one worries; when he dies, one grieves” (2011, 144–45).10

Wolterstorff then illustrates the potential unity of these orientations and thereby elucidates the compatibility of love and justice in “care-love”:

> Rendering to someone what justice requires because justice requires it is at one and the same time a manifestation of that orientation toward the good that is benefaction and of that orientation toward the good that is acknowledgment. To treat the other justly is to advance her life-good in some respect; that is benefaction. It is also to pay her what due respect for her worth requires; that is acknowledgment. In doing justice, benefaction and acknowledgment are united. And because care incorporates acting justly, care likewise unites benefaction with acknowledgment. (2011, 144)

Thus does Wolterstorff argue that the various orientations within love can be united. This conception of *agapē* as care-love decidedly parts ways with both Nygren’s and Niebuhr’s benevolence-agapism, where all varieties of *erōs* (for example, attraction-love, admiration-love, etc.) are sharply

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10 Wolterstorff’s profound meditation on grief after losing his son comes to mind. See Wolterstorff 1987.
opposed to *agapē*. “By incorporating justice, care joins with *eros* as a manifestation of that orientation toward the good which is acknowledgment” (2011, 144).

### 2.2 The role of bestowed worth in Wolterstorff’s account of the compatibility of love and justice

To treat someone justly in the mode of care-love, for Wolterstorff, is both to advance an individual’s well-being (benefaction) and also “to pay her what due respect for her worth requires; that is acknowledgment” (2011, 144). Yet one must ask what this “worth” consists in as a predicate of humanity and determine who exactly are its bearers. Is it rooted in a unique property of human nature—that is, in a certain human capacity or possibly a resemblance to the divine (as expressed in the traditional formulation, *imago dei*)? Wolterstorff’s answer is that human worth is rooted in neither of these things but instead in the unconditional love of God for humankind. Therefore, in order to complete his account of care-love (acting justly) in chapter fourteen of *Justice in Love*, Wolterstorff offers a reprise of his unique “bestowed worth” account of human dignity found in chapter sixteen of *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (2008b, chap. 16; 2011, see also 145–57) In both texts Wolterstorff argues that “the conviction that God loves each and every human being equally and forever provides those who hold that conviction with a distinct way of grounding natural human rights” in human dignity (2011, 145; see also 2008b, chap. 14.).

In chapter fourteen of *Justice in Love* Wolterstorff brings his bestowed worth account of human dignity together with his account of the varieties of love (and their underlying unity as manifestations of one or more of the three fundamental orientations toward the good) in order to give a precise definition of the nature of the divine love that bestows special worth on human beings. In bringing these elements together, an important difference between Wolterstorff’s care-agapism and benevolence-agapism emerges with regard to the definition of the nature of divine love for humankind and the orientation(s) toward the good that it manifests.

As mentioned above, for Nygren and Niebuhr, divine love is pure benevolence-love, unadulterated benefaction. Against this view, Wolterstorff claims that the God portrayed in scripture exhibits all three of the fundamental orientations (benefaction, acknowledgment, and investment) toward the goodness of creation (2011, 143–45). In particular, Wolterstorff emphasizes God’s admiration of creation’s inherent goodness in the opening chapter of Genesis (2011, 143). This scriptural depiction of divine love is meant to distinguish his view from that found in modern agapism:

[T]here is in the modern day agapists an unmistakable reluctance to say much about God’s creative activity. The picture that emerges from Nygren’s
Agape and Eros is that of human beings somehow already on the scene, lacking all worth, doing wrong, and of God then forgiving them for their wrongdoing and thereby creating in them the worth of being loved by God in the mode of forgiveness. A curious picture indeed! Escaping from the conundrum and paradoxes of modern day agapism require[s] rejecting the assumption that all divine love is to be understood on the model of God’s forgiveness of the sinner. God’s forgiveness of the sinner is but one manifestation of God’s care; God’s care is but one manifestation of God’s benefaction; and God’s benefaction is but one mode of God’s orientation toward the good. (2011, 143)

Nygren’s picture of divine love on the model of forgiveness presupposes no worth in the individual to be enhanced—it posits the creation of worth ex nihilo. The key distinction between agapé and erōs is that the latter manifests exclusively as an orientation toward the acquisitive goods of appraisal whereas the former manifests as pure bestowal. On this account, God’s love is distinguished from all modes of acquisitive appraisal: as agapé it remains unadulterated in its creative activity of value-bestowal. Wolterstorff’s depiction of divine love therefore certainly takes more into account than does Nygren’s. Still, one may ask which form or type of divine love is responsible for bestowing the requisite worth on human beings that is to be acknowledged in care-love.

Love as attraction will not do the work required since, rather than bestowing worth, such love acknowledges the worth already there. Love as benevolence or benefaction fares no better. Such love may well bring about the enhancement of the worth of its object. But what we are looking for is not a form of love that causes or brings about enhancement of worth but one that as such bestows worth on its object. It’s the being loved that gives one the worth, not what the love causes. (2011, 153)

It turns out that attachment-love, a manifestation of the third orientation toward the good which Wolterstorff calls investment, is the divine love that “bestows worth” on human beings. This bestowed worth alone is the source and ground of ineradicable human dignity, for Wolterstorff. And it is precisely this worth that is to be acknowledged by other human beings in the activity of care. Care, then, names the activity and attitude that reflects the deep compatibility of love as bestowal and justice as appraisal.

This third orientation toward the good of investment—in the form of attachment-love—distinguishes Wolterstorff’s account from Nygren’s.

11 For Nygren agapé always bestows or creates worth in its object whereas erōs only recognizes worth and acquisitively desires it. See Nygren 1953, 208–10. It is Nygren’s view of the nature of divine love, and not Niebuhr’s, that receives all the attention in chapter fourteen and serves as the foil for Wolterstorff’s own bestowed worth account of human dignity.
Nygren has no third orientation toward the good beyond appraisal and bestowal. The question becomes: what is the relationship between Nygren’s category of worth-bestowal and Wolterstorff’s investment orientation toward the good? One obvious difference is that Nygren’s worth-bestowal is modeled after divine forgiveness in a way that Wolterstorff’s “investment” is not. On the other hand, there is this important similarity: Wolterstorff’s account of divine attachment-love does not presuppose or require any preexisting worth on the part of the beloved to be acknowledged or enhanced. The act of love is itself what vests worth in the other and establishes the rubric for all acts of justice. In this important sense, Wolterstorff’s investment can be as free and spontaneous as Nygren’s bestowal.

As an alternative to the forgiveness model of divine, worth-bestowing love, Wolterstorff offers an analogy to illustrate the investment orientation of divine attachment-love: the relationship between a monarch and his/her friends. In a crucial passage in *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* that summarizes his argument for bestowed worth, Wolterstorff first introduces this analogy:

In short, if love bestows worth, it has to be love as attachment that does this . . . let us suppose that [a Queen] befriends someone in her realm, becomes attached to her. This quite clearly bestows a certain worth on the one befriended . . . others will be envious; they regard the mere status of being a friend of the queen as enviable . . . I conclude that if God loves a human being with the love of attachment, that love bestows great worth on that human being. . . . And I conclude that if God loves, in the mode of attachment, each and every human being equally and permanently, then natural inherent human rights inhere in the worth bestowed on human beings by that love. (2008b, 359–60)\(^{12}\)

This account of bestowed worth results in two sorts of unanswered critical questions. First, in what sense does the goodness of this bestowed worth inhere in the human individual herself—that is, does bestowed worth actually ground an account of human dignity and its corresponding rights or does it ground divine rights with respect to human beings?\(^{13}\) To use the language of the analogy, by honoring the Queen’s friend, does one respect the inherent worth of the friend, or simply the worth of the Queen? Second, if a viable account of human dignity can make no appeal

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\(^{12}\) I leave to the side Wolterstorff’s detailed account of the various “natural inherent human rights” in *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* and focus, in this case, on his general account of the worth bestowed on human beings by divine attachment-love that accounts for human dignity.

\(^{13}\) Paul Weithman articulates this first sort of critical question for Wolterstorff’s “theistic account” of human dignity in Weithman 2009, 259. Wolterstorff replies to Weithman’s critique at Wolterstorff 2009, 274–75.
to human capacities\textsuperscript{14}—that is, if only an account of bestowed, relational worth, granted solely through something on the model of God’s unconditional attachment-love for humankind can ground human dignity, as Wolterstorff argues—then might this bestowed worth be arbitrary?\textsuperscript{15} That would be a “curious picture indeed!” To reply, Wolterstorff notes that, “Most secular attempts at grounding [human rights] . . . are dignity-based approaches; and most of these, in turn, locate human dignity in certain capacities” (2011b, 340). It is this appeal to fragile, degradable capacities that is the fatal flaw in most secular accounts of human dignity, he thinks. “What one needs for a theistic account of human dignity,” by contrast, “is some worth-imparting relation of human beings to God that does not in any way involve reference to human capacities. Being loved by God is such a relation” (2011, 352). Wolterstorff’s rigorous attempt to provide a secure account of human dignity that avoids the pitfalls of capacities-based approaches, however, also makes it vulnerable to the threat of arbitrariness.

In response to the first question, Wolterstorff attempts to explain how bestowed worth is imparted to human individuals in such a way that it inheres in them and becomes uniquely their own and thus grounds inherent natural human rights from within, as it were. In order to clarify the nature of this impartation, he reprises the story of the monarch, now in *Justice in Love*:

> [I]magine a monarch. He’s a good monarch, loved by all his subjects; he bestows on all of them the great good of a just political order that serves the common good. But he’s rather lonely. So in addition to being a benefactor to all his subjects, he decides to choose a few of his subjects as people that he would like to be friends with . . . to be chosen as one with whom the king would like to be a friend is an honor . . . And now for the crucial point. To be honored is to have worth bestowed on one. (2011, 154–55)

Wolterstorff uses the honor bestowed in being the monarch’s friend to depict the intangible, yet no less real, property imparted through attachment-love to the beloved object in such a way that the value imparted becomes the object’s very own possession—it inheres in the relationship. This revised version of the analogy, however, immediately invites the second question: in this case, is the monarch’s decision to select certain friends purely arbitrary? Wolterstorff argues that it is not. Although “the monarch’s choice of a few subjects as those he would like to

\textsuperscript{14} Wolterstorff argues that all “secular capacities accounts” of human dignity have the same problem in accounting for the ongoing worth of deeply incapacitated or malformed human beings. For the details of his argument see, Wolterstorff 2008b, 323–41; for a condensed version, Wolterstorff 2011, 148–52.

\textsuperscript{15} Wolterstorff anticipates this second sort of question in his account of bestowed worth found in 2011, 155.
be friends with is not his way of declaring that these are the most estimable of his subjects,’’ he must nevertheless detect in them ‘‘some potential for friendship’’ (2011, 155). It turns out, then, that there is one qualification placed on freely bestowed worth in this description. Bestowal begins by some attraction to an antecedently desirable property in the beloved: potentiality for friendship. In this way the monarch’s attachment to his friends is not purely arbitrary.

Here, then, is the analogy to Wolterstorff’s theory of bestowed worth: God is the monarch and ‘‘every human being has the honor of being chosen by God as someone with whom God wants to be friends . . . every human being has the worth that being so honored bestows on one’’ (2011, 155). Might God have chosen crocodiles instead? ‘‘No . . . [c]rocodiles lack the potential for being friends with God. It’s incompatible with crocodile nature. To be a friend with God one has to have the nature of a person. Crocodiles at their best cannot be persons. Of all the animals, it’s only human animals that can function as persons’’ (2011, 155). Although human nature and its unique capacities, or what Wolterstorff refers to as personhood, does not provide the worth sufficient to ground human dignity and its corresponding rights, it is not, however, ‘‘irrelevant to a full account of human dignity’’ (2011, 156). Personhood is not an ‘‘explanation of God’s desire for friendship with human beings’’ but it does ‘‘make it understandable that God would choose human beings for friendship and not the non-human animals’’ (2011, 156). Is dignity then diminished if the capacities associated with personhood are degraded? No, says Wolterstorff, dignity remains intact, upheld somehow in God’s attachment-love.

The capacities that seem to define ‘‘personhood’’ and ‘‘potentiality for friendship’’ are introduced into the revised version of bestowed worth in Justice in Love in order to explain, at least partially, why the divine love that bestows worth is not arbitrary. But this creates two problems. First, it seems to contradict his non-capacities account of human dignity and weaken the force of his rejection of all secular capacities-accounts found in Justice: Rights and Wrongs, where he argues that ‘‘the secularist cannot account’’ for human dignity (2008b, 361). Cannot a secularist argue that personhood is uniquely associated with members of the human species and that it is membership in this species that grounds dignity? In that case, it would be species-membership, rather than divine attachment-love, that does the work of securing dignity even in the face of the radical impairment of capacities.

Second, and directly related to his argument in Justice in Love, the introduction of capacities into his account of bestowed worth reveals an internal division between divine acknowledgment of an already existent good and investment in the good of an otherwise value-neutral object. This tension results in a confusing picture of the relationship between love and
the good to which it tends. This, in turn, affects Wolterstorff’s account of
the compatibility of love and justice in human care-love.

The divine love requisite for understanding human value, on Wolter-
storff’s description, manifests both orientations toward the good of invest-
ment and acknowledgment. The bestowed worth that grounds human
dignity is portrayed as being rooted solely in attachment-love, a mode of
investment. On further inspection, though, one finds that it is unintelli-
gible apart from its origin in acknowledgment. So, why separate the two
for an account of human dignity that can escape capacities problems only
to reunite them later? On this description, Wolterstorff seems to have it
both ways: the divine love that bestows worth is totally unprompted and
unconditional, and is therefore a secure ground for human dignity all on
its own; yet on the other hand, divine love is as selective as the befriend-
ing monarch, favoring certain potentialities in the manner of a preferen-
tial love that Nygren would associate with *erōs*:

> The explanation for God’s wanting to be friends with us is presumably much
> like the explanation for why we want to be friends with some fellow human
> being. We seek to become friends with someone not because we think he
> merits it, not because his worth requires it, but because we anticipate that
> our friendship will be a significant good in the lives of both of us. So too for
> God’s desire to be friends with us. (2011, 156)

Wolterstorff appeals to the variation of acknowledgment involved in
friendship-love as the final description for his account of bestowed worth.
Capacities reappear in the qualification of personhood (used to ward off
the arbitrariness charge), yet they play a subordinate role to the ulti-
mately inscrutable nature of God’s preference for human friendship—
understood as something like a perceived good in both God’s life and
humankind’s.16

The human potential for friendship with the divine and the divine
desire for human friendship seems like a suitable basis for human dignity

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16 For a complementary account of the nature and reasons of divine love for humankind
see Adams 1999, 131–49. For Adams, desire for relationship stands in its own category,
beyond the dichotomy of benevolence and self-interest. The difference between their accounts
is that for Adams, the reasons for relationship need not include the belief that it will be a
significant good in the lives of either or both parties: “Even in a more beneficial relationship,
lovers prize the relationship for its own sake and not just because they believe it would be
good for one or both of them” (139). For Adams, relationship-love exhibits an orientation
toward the good that transcends (or at least is not reducible to) self-love and benevolence-
love. Adams’s relationship-love exhibits the same orientation as Wolterstorff’s attachment-
love (what Wolterstorff calls investment). When applied to God’s love for humanity, Adams’s
account of the reasons for divine desire raises the same issues as Wolterstorff’s. The key
difference is that Adams does not attempt to ground human dignity solely in the worth
bestowed by divine love. For Adams’s account of the “sacred value” of human persons see
and also a prominent theme in the Christian tradition, as Wolterstorff suggests in *Justice in Love* (2011, 156–57). Yet I am not sure why Wolterstorff is unwilling to say that the capacities connected to this human potential for friendship with the divine—what distinguishes human nature from crocodile nature, or what Wolterstorff calls personhood—are not enough to ground human dignity on their own. Why must divine attachment-love do the essential work? It is unclear how bestowed worth inheres in the human individual and how this worth is related to the goodness of the specifically *human* nature given by God in creation. Wolterstorff’s theory assumes that God loves all human creatures in the same way and does not cease loving human creatures. Yet what, then, is one to make of the various depictions of God’s love and enmity in scripture? The qualification of personhood makes the divine desire for friendship intelligible yet it also seems to clarify why God might cease bestowing his favor and friendship when humans grossly misuse their freedom. To root human dignity solely in divine love, rather than in the ineradicable goodness of creation, requires too much knowledge about God’s loves and friendships. This move, I would submit, creates a vague theological account of what makes justice and love compatible, or concentric for practical life. Furthermore, it results in a puzzling description of the manifestations of love and their relationship to the good.17

At the level of human love, one is left to puzzle about what sort of acknowledgment is even involved in care-love. On the one hand, acknowledgment could consist in a theistic article of faith stating that God actively loves every human individual and thereby grounds a worth that incomprehensibly becomes their own. Or on the other, it could be a manifestation of attraction-love—or another close variant of *erōs* involving admiration of something on account of its worth—that makes justice a proper predicate of care-love. “By incorporating justice, care joins with *eros* as a manifestation of that orientation toward the good which is acknowledgment” (2011, 144). How, precisely, do these two senses of acknowledgment of bestowed worth come together in care-love, for Wolterstorff? The same ambiguity found in his account of divine love for

17 In his attempt to move beyond modern day agapism by appealing to a more fulsome picture of divine love, and by explicating the relationship between love and the good, Wolterstorff’s account has strong parallels with Vacek 1994. For each author, the final explanation of *agapē* (and of all the various loves) is the good. This move simultaneously distances them from modern agapists who display non-teleological assumptions about the self (for example, Nygren, Niebuhr, and for Vacek, Gene Outka), and moves them closer to classical Christian authors such as Augustine and Aquinas. This *ressourcement* leads Vacek to a rich ontological conception of God as the good—and of the ordering of human love toward that good—that is much different than Wolterstorff’s position. Although Wolterstorff posits a necessary, explanatory relationship between love and the good, he does not entertain any classical theological conception of God as the good. I will say more on this in section 3 below.
humankind reappears in his account of the human acknowledgment of bestowed worth involved in care.

Wolterstorff’s way of uniting love and justice rests on his account of bestowed worth. In human care-love there is both benefaction (well-being-promotion) and acknowledgment of the good—a fusion of the attitudes traditionally associated with love and justice respectively in agapist literature. Yet in order to understand the human acknowledgment of goodness involved in the just acts of care-love, one must first understand the relationship between bestowed worth and the original goodness of human nature given in creation. Wolterstorff must clarify this relationship in order for his account of the compatibility of love and justice to be successful. Another example of how Wolterstorff’s account of bestowed worth affects his account of agapē as care appears in his account of self-love.

In a manner similar to the way that the property of human nature (and its capacities) is somehow both constitutive and not constitutive of human dignity for Wolterstorff, he also claims that agapism prescribes that an agent’s own well-being is to be both pursued in care-love of another and also to be forgotten, or at least not brought into consideration as a condition placed on the rule for deciding when and how to act in promotion of another’s well-being. In the next section, I turn to Wolterstorff’s opposition of care-agapism to eudaimonism, specifically to a consideration of his rejection of eudaimonism and his incorporation of self-love into care-agapism.

3. Self-Love in Care-Agapism

Common to all the ethical positions under consideration in Justice in Love, according to Wolterstorff, is both a conception of human well-being and some principle(s) for promoting the well-being of others. Love names the ethical phenomenon of actively “seeking to promote some well-being-good of someone or other as end in itself” (2011, 4). And the question that must be asked of each ethical system, then, is: what principles are available for deciding “which well-being-goods of which persons one may or should seek to bring about, and under what conditions” (2011, 4). Wolterstorff offers an assessment of these principles as they are expressed in egoism, utilitarianism, and eudaimonism in order to contrast them with

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18 Although Wolterstorff promises an account of divine love in terms of creation’s goodness that goes beyond Nygren, he ultimately fails to explicate the moral status of nature vis-à-vis the doctrine of creation. In the end he relies on an understanding of divine desire and bestowed worth that includes a strong dose of arbitrariness. One way to deal with this problem would be to yoke the notion of divine love to an ontological conception of God as the good—an option Wolterstorff does not consider. This move is made, in different ways, in Vacek 1994 and Adams 1999.
agapism. I leave to the side the details of Wolterstorff’s rejection of egoism and utilitarianism in order to focus on his opposition to eudaimonism.

Wolterstorff rejects eudaimonism in favor of agapism on the basis of the differing “rules of application” or “principles” found in the two ethical systems for how to promote the well-being-goods of others as ends in themselves (2011, 12). Eudaimonism, according to Wolterstorff, provides principles for promoting the well-being of another as an end in itself, yet it places a condition on them: that the promotion of another’s well-being also be a constitutive component of the agent’s own well-being (2011, 5). The attention to one’s own well-being expressed in that condition is what Wolterstorff calls the “agent-orientation” of eudaimonism. This condition disqualifies eudaimonism’s principles for promoting the well-being of another, on Wolterstorff’s account. Agapism, he argues, rejects the agent-well-being condition of eudaimonism and maintains that one should seek to promote the life-goods19 of “everyone who is one’s neighbor as ends in themselves, in the sense of ‘neighbor’ that Jesus gave to the term” (2011, 16). And everyone is such a “neighbor,” according to Wolterstorff.

As mentioned in the introduction above, another of the key features that Wolterstorff suggests makes his care-agapism theoretically preferable to benevolence-agapism is its ability to positively incorporate self-love. And Wolterstorff presents the legitimacy of self-love in direct opposition to Nygren’s claim that agapē roots out and destroys all natural self-love and to Niebuhr’s claim that agapē is an impractical, self-sacrificial ideal that risks victimization if applied at the group-level (2011, 94–97). 20 The legitimate self-love presupposed in care-agapism comes to full expression in Wolterstorff’s second “rule of application” for care-love: “One should seek

19 “Life-goods,” for Wolterstorff, name a more expansive concept of what constitutes a good for a human person than do “well-being-goods.” He thinks this distinction is important because it provides a way of naming those “goods” which are “overall goods” in a person’s life—even though they may momentarily diminish one’s well-being. Life-goods also provide a way of naming those goods—such as rights—which do not necessarily promote or diminish one’s well-being but are nonetheless constitutive of one’s total flourishing (for example, one’s right to privacy). Human “flourishing” names the sort of well-being that includes these more expansive “life-goods” on Wolterstorff’s account. See Wolterstorff 2008b, 14–15. More on this below.

20 Wolterstorff fails to recognize a number of agapists (post-Nygren and Niebuhr) who have also sensed the need to provide an account of proper self-love to help mitigate the unchecked permissiveness that an emphasis on self-sacrifice might invite. Gene Outka provides a detailed account of agapē as “impartiality” toward self and other on account their “equal worth.” See Gene Outka 1992. See also Edward Vacek’s insistence that agapē must always be bounded by a vivid sense of the dignity of others, including oneself in Vacek 1994. The difference between these accounts of self-love hinges on their various ontological accounts of human dignity.
to promote one’s own good and secure justice for oneself as ends in
themselves, though never at the cost of wronging someone” (2011, 119;
italics in original).21

Given the prominence in the modern day agapist movement of the claim that
New Testament agape is self-sacrificial, the second rule may seem surprising
coming from someone who locates himself in the agapist tradition, as I do. . . .
Note that this second rule does not merely say that it is acceptable to care
about oneself; it says one should care about oneself . . . the person who does
not care about herself thereby wrongs herself. (2011, 119–120)

Yet how does the legitimate self-love presupposed in care-agapism’s
second rule of application differ precisely from the agent-well-being clause
of the eudaimonist, which Wolterstorff rejects? To gain clarity on this
question one must have the two competing conceptions of well-being in
view. In Justice in Love, Wolterstorff dispatches eudaimonism, without
clearly defining it, on the apparent assumption that his readers will
remember how he characterized that theory’s conception of well-being in
Justice: Rights and Wrongs.

In part two of that text Wolterstorff explains how he understands
Christ’s command to love one’s neighbor as oneself to imply a total
rejection of the agent-orientation of eudaimonism: “I do not doubt that
eudaimonism is compatible with the demand to love one’s neighbor. . . .
[M]y argument is that it is not compatible with the demand to love one’s
neighbor as one loves oneself” (2008b, 208n1).

Obeying [Christ’s] command requires rejecting the agent-orientation intrin-
sic to eudaimonism. Though eudaimonism is not egoism in the usual sense,
nonetheless intrinsic to it is a definite “me”-ism. The condition on my
performing any action is that I judge it will enhance my eudaimonia. As long
as I continue to accept that condition on my choices, I am not loving my
neighbor as I do myself. In my choices I am not giving enhancement of my
neighbor’s well-being the same status as enhancement of my own. Only
when I give your well-being the same status in my selection of ends as my
well-being will I be loving you as I do myself. (2008b, 210–11)

On this account, the crucial difference between eudaimonism’s agent-
orientation and agapism resides in the love command’s requirement to put
the enhancement of the well-being of another on the same level as one’s
own.22 The eudaimonist, by contrast, must always subordinate the

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21 “Wronging” in this rule refers to Wolterstorff’s specific conception of treating someone
in a way not commensurate with her bestowed worth—with a lack of respect for her dignity.
22 If Wolterstorff’s care-agapism actually requires that one put the enhancement of the
well-being of another on the same level as one’s own and give the neighbor’s well-being the
same status in one’s selection of ends as one’s own, he does not provide the relevant criteria
for deciding between the promotion of one’s well-being or the neighbor’s in situations of
enhancement of another’s well-being to the enhancement of one’s own. “Eudaimonism allows love of other into one’s life, but only if that love passes the test of contributing to one’s own life being well-lived” (2008b, 210).

Wolterstorff’s understanding of the ancient ethical orientation called eudaimonism derives from Julia Annas’s The Morality of Happiness (1993), and this in turn shapes his overall definition of eudaimonism in both Justice: Rights and Wrongs and Justice in Love. Following Annas’s interpretive distinction between the two dominant strands of ancient eudaimonism—Stoic and Peripatetic—Wolterstorff notes that both schools ultimately define human well-being (eudaimonia) in terms of virtuous activity, no matter their debates about the role of external goods in this regard. Wolterstorff calls this view of well-being “[the] well-lived life” and characterizes the promotion of another’s well-being as subordinate to one’s own eudaimonia (2008b, 149n4).

The grip of this conception of well-being and its intrinsic agent-orientation had to be broken, according to Wolterstorff, in order for a conception of justice as natural, inherent human rights to emerge. This is a crucial turning point in his narrative in Justice: Rights and Wrongs. Augustine of Hippo turns out to be the intellectual hero who breaks “the grip” of the “agent-orientation of eudaimonism . . . on the thought of the West” and who, with the resources of the Christian tradition, articulates an alternative conception of well-being (2008b, 207–8). Wolterstorff makes the innovative claim that Augustine’s philosophical affirmation of the emotion of compassion in The City of God marks a fundamental departure from the eudaimonist character of his earlier thought (2008b, 180–226).

In The City of God 14.9, Augustine rejects the Stoic characterization of eudaimonia as a state of emotional tranquility and virtuous activity by affirming the intrinsic goodness of the emotional disturbance of compassion. By affirming the appropriateness of compassion—understood here as sorrowing with, or on behalf of, another—to a flourishing human life, Wolterstorff argues, Augustine is fully parting ways with eudaimonism, both its agent-orientation and its conception of well-being (2008b, 212–17). Augustine’s affirmation of compassion embodies the command to love the neighbor, for Wolterstorff, insofar as compassion is an emotion that

conflict or scarcity. As we have seen, for Wolterstorff, the requirements of care-love involve, at the very least, honoring the dignity (and corresponding rights) of every human individual. If one were placed in a dire situation in which honoring the worth (or some number of rights) both of oneself and the neighbor was no longer possible, potentially Wolterstorff would respond that there simply are no criteria to help in deciding between self-sacrifice (risking victimization) or self-love (risking domination). On this point, Wolterstorff’s discussion of self-love could have benefitted from conversation with Garth Hallett’s detailed account of the variety of “rules of preference” for self and other found Hallett 1989. See also Hallett 1998.
requires one to put the well-being of another on the same level of concern as one’s own. “Compassion is an alienation of the self from the self, a forgetfulness of the self and an emotional identification with the other . . . compassion is self-emptying” (2008b, 217). It is this authorization of self-alienation from one’s own pursuit of well-being in compassion that is the realization of Christ’s command to truly love one’s neighbor as one loves oneself.

Augustine’s affirmation of the emotional “disturbance” of compassion in his mature work is made possible, according to Wolterstorff, by the significance that he assigns to the role of the “natural preferables” (a basic category of “external goods”) in human well-being (2008b, 219). Whereas Stoics and Peripatetics argued about whether the lack of certain external goods could in certain cases make virtuous activity impossible, Augustine, Wolterstorff contends, increasingly came to think that external goods (like those that the natural preferables designate) were actually constitutive of human well-being and not simply instrumental to the exercise of virtuous activity. This new significance Augustine attaches to the natural preferables turns emotional disturbances like grief over one’s own misfortune and compassion for another in their misfortune into appropriate emotional dispositions in the formation of a good life. Wolterstorff argues that Augustine, by the time he wrote The City of God 14.9, had come to view the natural preferables as “genuine life-goods”—that is, as non-instrumental goods constitutive of human well-being itself and not simply instrumental to virtuous activity. Furthermore, he suggests this indicates Augustine’s fundamental break with ancient eudaimonism (2008b, 220). No longer is well-being conceived solely in terms of virtuous activity (the well-lived life), rather Augustine provides a new formulation that takes the whole human person into view—both their actions and circumstances—and conceives of well-being in terms of the life that goes well (2008b, 221). “The conception of the good life implicit in Augustine’s late thought was that of the good life as the life that goes well—what I shall call the flourishing life” (2008b, 222).

Wolterstorff conceives of the flourishing life as a proper mixture of rights, goods, and actions (2008b, 226). Certain external goods (like food and shelter) are not just instrumental to this conception of human flourishing, as mentioned above, they are constitutive of it (2008b, 226). Likewise, having one’s rights to certain goods honored is also constitutive of one’s flourishing (2008b, 226). Only in this conception of flourishing as the well-going life, according to Wolterstorff, do rights appear. The exist-

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23 In this passage Wolterstorff connects his definition of well-being to a broader “moral vision” that he labels eirenéism (from the Hebrew term shalom, translated with the Greek eirenê in the Septuagint). Although Wolterstorff’s definitions of human flourishing are identical in both volumes, the term care-agapism replaces eirenéism in Justice in Love.
ence of rights to certain goods implies a conception of the well-going life. The difficulty with such a conception of well-being, of course, is determining which goods count as the intrinsic “life-goods” that constitute a “well-going life” (2008b, 227). Some theorists, such as John Finnis and Martha Nussbaum, attempt to provide lists of the goods constitutive of human well-being, but Wolterstorff wonders whether it is possible to avoid this approach and provide instead a general characterization of those goods (2008b, 227). He considers, and ultimately rejects, two prominent philosophical strategies for arriving at such a general characterization on the way to advancing his own: the first is representative of the utilitarian tradition and the second comes from the natural law tradition (2008b, 228–34).

The utilitarian’s general characterization of well-being-goods in terms of “desire satisfaction” raises the standard problem, for Wolterstorff, of harmful human propensities. In response to this objection, some utilitarians claim that desire must first be fully “informed” if it is to count as the type of desire that produces well-being when satisfied (2008b, 229–31).24 Yet Wolterstorff finds this further qualification insufficient: “Our human condition is not that our desirings are all well formed but not all informed; our desirings are themselves malformed, deformed, fallen. We need reformation, not just information” (2008b, 231). The natural law position characterizes well-being-goods primarily in terms of proper human functioning, a view that ultimately derives from Aristotle’s teleological conception of human flourishing (eudaimonia) as the fulfillment of humankind’s essential work or function (ergon). (This work is, for Aristotle, the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue.) Yet, for Wolterstorff, this general characterization cannot account for many of the goods constitutive of a well-going life that do not directly affect one’s actions or activities (for example, the good of having one’s right to being treated in a certain way honored). “Proper functioning radically under-determines well-being. One cannot read the contents of well-being off our proper functioning” (2008b, 234).25 What one needs, then, Wolterstorff suggests, in order to give a general account of the non-instrumental, intrinsic life-goods is a conception of the well-going life as the way a life was meant to be (2008b, 234–37). The question, according to Wolterstorff, becomes: Who or what determines the way a life was meant to be? In declaring the failure of desire-satisfaction and proper-function accounts to provide a general characterization of these goods, Wolterstorff recognizes the difficulty involved in providing a satisfactory account. Nevertheless he

24 Wolterstorff considers the “informed desire” accounts of well-being offered by James Griffin and Peter Railton.

25 The natural law position under consideration in this portion of the text is the view of Mark Murphy in Murphy 2001.
ventures his own general characterization of these goods in terms of "divine desire": "the goods constitutive of a person’s well-being are what God desires for that person’s life" (2008b, 236).

Thus on one end of Wolterstorff’s account of justice one finds a general account of the intrinsic life-goods constitutive of human well-being (the goods that humans have natural inherent rights to) in terms of divine desire, and at the other end one discovers that the legitimacy of those rights which are to be honored is rooted in the worth bestowed on each individual through unconditional divine love. The explanation of this unconditional divine love is ultimately bound up in the impenetrable reasons of God’s desire for friendship with human persons. Wolterstorff’s general characterization of the human good is determined by divine desire in the same way as is his account of bestowed worth.

At the conclusion of his discussion of well-being in *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*, Wolterstorff admits that his general “characterization of the human good implies next to nothing about an epistemology of our awareness of the human good” (2008b, 237). It is regrettable that he did not say more on precisely this point, because the divine-desire characterization of the human good leads one back to the ambiguity at the heart of his depiction of the relationship between divine love and the good discussed in the last section of this essay. In what sense does the intrinsic goodness of these life-goods inhere in the goods themselves? Can the intrinsic goodness of life-goods be recognized or discerned through reason or desire apart from revelation? At least with proper-function or desire-satisfaction accounts one knows where to begin—with either human capacity or the experience of human fulfillment.

This ambiguity in Wolterstorff’s conception of human well-being ultimately hinders his attempt simultaneously to incorporate self-love into care-agapism and to reject eudaimonism on the basis of its agent-orientation. Wolterstorff’s stark opposition to the agent-orientation of eudaimonism presupposes that the self and other compete in a zero-sum game over limited and indivisible goods. Yet Wolterstorff’s claim that care-agapism allows for the coexistence of self-love and self-alienation presupposes a non-competitive view of the promotion of another’s well-being as constitutive of one’s own (a possibility that he does not extend to eudaimonism). A non-competitive view requires some appeal to a good held in common by the self and other and of their mutual relation to it.26 Wolterstorff does not appeal to any conception of a common good and

26 This notion of a common good, and the strategy it provides for thinking about the promotion of another’s well-being as constitutive of one’s own, is particularly prevalent in Catholic social teaching. On this account the common good can be conceived of as some shared material good, some form of communion, or community, or transcendent goal of human fulfillment, or God, or some combination of these goods. See Hollenbach 2002, Porter 2005, and Stiltner 1999.
hence his attempt to dispatch eudaimonism and incorporate self-love vacillates between competitive and non-competitive views. One way to begin imagining the coexistence of self-love and self-sacrifice in the pursuit of human flourishing is to think of the self and other standing in a fundamental relation to God as the highest good. The best resources for constructing such an account can be found, I want to suggest, in the Christian eudaimonism of Augustine.

3.1 Augustine’s eudaimonism

As we have seen, Wolterstorff enlists Augustine in support of his presentation of the incompatibility of the command to love one’s neighbor as oneself and eudaimonism’s agent-orientation. However, this interpretation of Augustine’s break with the agent-orientation of eudaimonism is dubious.27 The standard account of Augustine’s mature Christian interpretation of eudaimonism places his eudaimonism as an intelligible improvisation within the tradition.28 In what follows, I want to suggest that Augustine’s writings actually present an agapistic account of eudaimonism (a possibility that Wolterstorff does not entertain) and that Wolterstorff’s interpretation of Augustine underestimates the broader potential of eudaimonism to resolve the tensions of love and justice. Furthermore, I argue that Augustine’s conception of the human good is a superior alternative to Wolterstorff’s divine desire account for thinking about human dignity and well-being.

Wolterstorff is right to emphasize that external goods come to play an increasingly significant role in Augustine’s later thought. In his final systematic treatment of happiness, found in Book 19 of The City of God, Augustine emphasizes the impossibility of achieving happiness through a proper blend of virtuous activity and external goods. Nevertheless, happiness is still presented as the goal and it is obtained in a unique way through the virtues of faith, hope, and love in temporal life—even if only fully enjoyed in the flourishing of resurrected life. This future-oriented presentation of happiness does not seem to constitute a break from eudaimonism.

For Augustine, all of the political virtues (prudence, temperance, courage, and justice) and theological virtues (faith, hope, and love)

27 Wolterstorff offers another rendition of his interpretation in Wolterstorff 2012. It follows the lines of his argument in Justice: Rights and Wrongs.

28 The standard accounts, in the English-speaking world, of the relationship of Augustine’s mature thought to ancient eudaimonism are still Burnaby 1938 and O’Donovan 1980, especially 137–159. For a recent account of Augustine’s eudaimonism in detailed conversation with agapist literature see Gregory 2008, 319–362.
ultimately cohere in just one: the love of God. In an argument about happiness in Letter 155, Augustine says:

Even in this life there is no virtue except that of loving what ought to be loved. . . . This is God; and if in loving anything else we make it preferable or equal to him, we have forgotten how to love ourselves. The nearer we approach to him, the better it is for us; for nothing is better than him. We approach him, however, not by moving, but by loving. (Ep. 155.13)

Loving God is both virtuous activity and the final end of human fulfillment. On this point, Augustine never changes his mind.

In Justice in Love, Wolterstorff identifies his care-agapism as “close to, if not perhaps quite identical with, Augustine’s” account of human concord found in The City of God:

First, that a man should harm no one, and, second that he should do good to all, so far as he can. In the first place, therefore, he must care for his own household; for the order of nature and of human society itself gives him readier access to them, and greater opportunity of caring for them. (DCD 19.14)

Wolterstorff does not mention, however, that this summary of the order of concord is part of Augustine’s larger presentation of the double commandment of love and the proper extension of self-love in the formation of human community. In the passage immediately preceding the above quotation, Augustine says: “Now God, our Master, teaches two chief precepts: that is, love of God and neighbor. In these precepts, a man finds three things which he is to love: God, himself, and his neighbor; for a man who loves God does not err in loving himself” (DCD 19.14). Throughout The City of God Augustine presents the double commandment of love as uniquely fulfilling the requirements of justice: “both the individual just man and the community and people of the just live by faith, which works by love: by that love with which a man loves God as God ought to be loved, and his neighbor as himself” (DCD 19.23).

Augustine does not call faith, hope, and love “theological virtues.” This is a later medieval development. On the Neoplatonic elements of Augustine’s unification of the virtues in love, see Dodaro 2004. Another of the disadvantages of Wolterstorff’s misreading of Augustine’s break from eudaimonism is that it cuts him off from Augustine’s conception of love and justice as virtues (and the strategy for demonstrating their potential compatibility entailed in such a conception).

All citations to Augustine’s City of God are noted by book and chapter number; translations are from Augustine 1998. I have slightly amended this translation at points. All citations to Augustine’s Epistulae are noted by letter number and section; translations are from Augustine 2001.

Wolterstorff cites this passage at 2011, 139n1.
The proper interrelation of the loves expressed in the "two chief precepts"—self-love, neighbor-love, and love of God—is a common theme in Augustine’s work.

A human being, then, ought to love God and himself and his neighbor with the love commanded by divine law. However, we were not given three commandments; he did not say, “on these three,” but all the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments, that is on the love of God, with all one’s heart and all one’s soul and all one’s mind, and of one’s neighbor as oneself: This is so that we grasp that the love with which someone loves himself is exactly the same love as that which he loves God. If he loves himself in any other way, we ought rather to say that he hates himself: for whenever someone, by turning away from a greater and more excellent good and turning towards himself, turns towards what is inferior and in need, he is deprived of the light of justice and becomes unjust. Then the very true words of scripture become true of him: Whoever loves injustice, hates his own soul [Psalm 11:5]. (Ep. 155.15)

In this passage, which is a paradigmatic instance of his eudaimonistic interpretation of the double commandment of love, Augustine designates God as the highest good and locates communion with God as the goal of human flourishing—an end from which one alienates oneself by acting unjustly.

In Augustine’s last treatment of Platonism, found in The City of God Books 8–10, he notes, in full approval: “Plato says that the true and highest good is God, and he therefore wishes the philosopher to be a lover of God; for philosophy aims at the happy life, and he who loves God is happy in the enjoyment of God” (DCD 8.8). From his earliest writings until the end, Augustine never alters his presentation of the fundamental agreement between the vision of the highest good found in Platonism and Christianity: “For . . . the Platonists . . . assert that that which all men desire—that is, a happy life—cannot be achieved by anyone who does not cling with the purity of a chaste love to that one Supreme Good which is the immutable God” (DCD 10.1).

Throughout his mature writings Augustine uses the ontological conception of God as the highest good to provide a highly nuanced account in which self-love, neighbor-love and love of God are seen not to be in competition with one another. For Augustine, any appropriate relation of self- and neighbor-love requires first the mediation, triangulation, and purification of love for God:

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33 The “Platonism” Augustine treats in The City of God is what one today refers to as Neoplatonism. The preeminent “Platonists,” for Augustine, are Plotinus, Porphyry, and Iamblichus (DCD 8.12).
34 Darlene Fozard Weaver’s hermeneutical “account of the dynamic inter-relations of love for God, self, and neighbor” follows the broad contours of Augustine’s non-competition model.
We are taught to love this good with all our hearts, with all our mind and with all our strength. We ought to be led to this good by those who love us, and we ought to lead those whom we love to it. Thus are fulfilled those two commandments upon which hang all the Law and the prophets: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your mind and with all your soul”; and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” For in order that a man may know what it is to love himself, an end has been appointed for him to which he is to refer all that he does, so that he may be happy; for he who loves himself desires nothing else than to be happy. And this end is attained by drawing near to God. And so, when one who already knows what it is to love himself is commanded to love his neighbor as himself, what else is being commanded than that he should do all that he can to encourage his neighbor to love God? (DCD 10.3)

This passage makes clear that, for Augustine, there is no difference between the agent-orientation of eudaimonism and the self-love presupposed in the double commandment of love. To love one’s neighbors, and thereby to treat them justly, for Augustine, is both to act for the good of the neighbor and to pursue one’s own well-being. To act unjustly toward the neighbor is both to wrong the neighbor and oneself by turning away from the highest good. Compassion, on Augustine’s account, is not an alienation from the self, it is obedience to the double commandment of love wherein self-love and neighbor-love are harmonized in the pursuit of the good itself, God.

This harmonization may entail moments of genuine conflict between the promotion of one’s own well-being and the neighbor’s. Indeed, some cases of conflict may be insuperable and even tragic. For Augustine, one needs a robust account of healthy self-love in the order of creation, the contingency of servility and domination after original sin, the redemptive power of voluntary self-sacrifice, and the future possibility of eternal happiness in order to grasp the proper relation between love of self, neighbor, and God. Escaping the excesses of domination or victimization and discerning the best course of action in love requires that one view each particular case of conflict within this full theological landscape. Indeed, for Augustine, the unattainability of happiness and the persistence of insuperable conflict between the promotion of one’s own well-being and the neighbor’s are intimations of a life to come—evidence of love’s necessary relationship to faith and hope in the present age.  

(She labels her account a “contemporary ordo amoris.”) According to Weaver, this broadly Augustinian vision of the self-other relation presupposes “dialectical tensions” rather than a flattened sense of zero-sum competition. See Weaver 2002, 9.

Wolterstorff claims that all “eschatological” forms of eudaimonism entail the “implausible, even offensive” suggestion that neighbor-love is a mere means to eternal reward (2008b, 212). This claim, once again, presupposes a competitive view of the relation between the well-being of self and other—a view that Augustine does not hold.
love grows from genuine faith and hope, for Augustine, can it be freed for self-sacrifice without servility and benevolence without domination.\footnote{Indeed, for Augustine, the relationship between love and justice is unintelligible apart from faith and hope.} Elevating eudaimonism into this biblical and theological framework provides the most satisfactory account of the place of self-love and self-sacrifice within human well-being, on Augustine’s view.

Working out the full details of Augustine’s eudaimonistic argument for the compatibility of love and justice in the double commandment of love would require a separate essay. My point here is simply to challenge Wolterstorff’s account of Augustine’s break with eudaimonism and to suggest that Wolterstorff’s care-agapism is an anti-eudaimonistic variety of agapism that has little in common with Augustine’s. This, in turn, unsettles part of Wolterstorff’s harmonization of love and justice. Furthermore, it is unclear how Wolterstorff’s presentation of the incompatibility of the command to love one’s neighbor as oneself and the agent-orientation of eudaimonism in \textit{Justice: Rights and Wrongs} coheres with the legitimacy of self-love presupposed in care-agapism’s second rule of application in \textit{Justice in Love}.

Augustine has a fundamentally different general characterization of the human good than Wolterstorff. The good acknowledged in any good thing, for Augustine, is an acknowledgment of the highest good. One can begin, then, with the human experience of goodness and postulate the existence of the highest good. In Augustine’s mature thought, for example, one finds his affirmation of the innate desire for happiness that must be retrained, reshaped, and redirected back toward its source in the supreme good. Loves that manifest the orientation of acknowledgment need not be viewed as competing with one another. This ontology allows him to posit no strict separation, and no necessary competition, between love of self, God, and neighbor. If this picture is interpreted in a reductive way, or lifted out of its Platonic ontological framework, it may merely amount to something like the egoism, or “me-ism,” Wolterstorff ascribes to eudaimonism. If taken in its full Christian and Platonic register, however, it should be viewed as an innovative interpretation of eudaimonism.

Augustine’s Christian Platonism also affords him a conception of creation’s ontological participation in the good that implies a different sense of the term given or bestowed than the one Wolterstorff entertains.\footnote{For an account of Augustine’s participatory view of creation \textit{contra} Nygren, see O’Donovan 1980, 157.} And it should be noted that this conception of participation provides an alternative, clearer picture of human dignity. No unconditional divine love needs to be added on top of the property of human nature to secure a dignity-ground. The goodness of human nature, given in creation, is upheld in
existence by participation in the good itself apart from any specific knowledge of God’s various loves or enmities. The intrinsic goodness of human nature, therefore, cannot be extinguished by diminished capacities—whether moral or physical. This picture of dignity as intrinsic goodness is inclusive insofar as it does not ground human worth solely in revealed knowledge of divine love. Ontological participation in the good is the framework by which one understands the character of revealed divine love, for Augustine. The universality and inclusivity of this picture of dignity is another advantage of Augustinian eudaimonism over Wolterstorff’s ethical framework. To be sure, this alternative Augustinian account of human dignity invites its own set of questions, which unfortunately cannot be fully explored here.

Even if Wolterstorff grants me this interpretive point about Augustine, it is conceivable that he could simply go and find the “break” with eudaimonism elsewhere in another key historical figure. Although I do not have the space here to work out the ways in which an Augustinian account of the relationship between love, justice, and the good is normatively superior to Wolterstorff’s, I do want to suggest that it provides a more satisfactory conception of neighbor-love—a love that can incorporate the attitudes and actions associated with justice and self-love (contra benevolence-agapism)—than Wolterstorff provides in *Justice in Love*.

Given Wolterstorff’s invocation of Augustine in his two-volume project, he could have appealed to Augustine’s Christian Platonist account of God as the highest good. That account of ontological participation could have significantly clarified the relationship between divine love and the good in his presentation of bestowed worth. But this is a position he refuses to accept.38 This refusal forces Wolterstorff to characterize human worth and well-being as contingent on the freedom of divine desire, which, in the end, is not altogether different from the benevolence-agapism that he opposes.

Here, then, are two key problems with Wolterstorff’s account of care-agapism: First, although it promises to reveal the compatibility of love and justice, it results in a confusing picture of the relationship between love and the good—as it emerges in the ambiguous relationship between

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38 See 2008b, 21–43, especially 26–33. The overall conception of justice as natural inherent human rights found in *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* is presented by Wolterstorff as a direct rejection of the Platonist conception of justice as “right order”—that is, justice as rooted in cosmic and social order, oriented toward the good. Wolterstorff’s interpretation of Augustine as breaking with eudaimonism presupposes this overarching rejection. Wolterstorff’s rejection of Platonism in his two-volume project, therefore, cuts him off from important resources within the Christian tradition. For Wolterstorff’s brief treatment of the Christian Platonist conception of the good and the picture of human worth that emerges from it see 2008b, 352–57. Wolterstorff does not clarify the relationship of his bestowed worth account of dignity to the Christian Platonist’s conception of worth as ontological participation in the good.
bestowed worth and the goodness of creation. Second, although it promises the incorporation of self-love, it includes a conception of neighbor-love that is somehow also an “alienation of the self from the self.” Wolterstorff should revisit Augustine’s eudaimonistic agapism, for it is ideally suited to deal with these two problems.

The clarity and focus of Wolterstorff’s analytical treatment of the conceptual compatibility of love and justice should be read as a significant contribution to the agapist tradition. However, it also brings into focus the need for those, like myself, who stand in this tradition, to carefully rethink the historical and normative relationship of agapism and eudaimonism in order to provide a satisfactory account of the complementary relations between self-love and neighbor-love and love and justice. The most promising way forward for agapism is to form a new bridge, not a break, with eudaimonism.39

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39 I am grateful to Nora Clair, Andrew Henscheid, Eric Gregory, Jeffrey Stout, John Bowlin, Cornel West, David Decosimo, the members of Princeton University’s “Religion and Critical Thought Workshop,” and the editors and anonymous readers from the *Journal of Religious Ethics* for their helpful comments on drafts of this article.
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