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Making and Mending Our Selves: A Practical Proposal

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Abstract: Theological anthropology has tended to view human flourishing as consisting in the loving communion of our selves with God. Recently, Natalia Marandiuc has brought the tools of attachment theory to theological anthropology to argue that a self is not inherent to human persons but rather is co-created through our loving relationships with one another and with God. In this paper I argue for the introduction of narrative, particularly as understood through the work of Eleonore Stump, to Marandiuc's account as a practical means by which healing love might be communicated, particularly through Scriptural narratives. In evidence of narrative's usefulness, I offer a brief exegesis of the Gospel of John's account of the Woman at the well. This synthesis fills a gap in our understanding of the self's flourishing by not only adopting a model demonstrating its emergence but also by providing a method by which the model can be applied.

Keywords: Self, Attachment, Narrative, Knowledge, Flourishing.

1. Introduction

In his 1988 Aquinas Lecture Anthony Kenny observes both the great frequency with which philosophers concern themselves with discussions of the self and the tendency of various poets and dramatists to base, at least in part, their portrayals of the human self on the opinions of said philosophers. The bold claim of his lecture is that "the self of the philosophers is a mythical entity, and so likewise is the self of the poets and dramatists to the extent to which it is modelled on the philosophers' myth" (1988, 3). Kenny clarifies that what he means to call mythical is "the concept of the self which . . . urges us to look within for that which is most fundamental in ourselves" (1988, 32). While the bulk of his case is negative, he does make the positive claim that, in his view, the self "is the human being with all the parts and passions of a man" (1988, 32). This is a complicated self which is in some sense

emergent; that is to say, this is a self which is not simply there within us somewhere waiting to be discovered, but rather one which must actually be formed in a person over time. Kenny notes that an exploration of this sense of selfhood "would itself be a topic for a whole lecture" (1988, 33) and Natalia Marandiuc has more than proved him right through her recent theological anthropology of the self.

Her account argues that "since we are creatures of both need and desire, love precedes the formation of the human self, is needed for one's own actualization, and is also essential for mending subjectivity when it has been harmed" (2018, 6). Through attachment theory Marandiuc shows that the human self is indeed not of the kind Kenny tears down; it is instead a self owing its existence to the co-creative activity of human and divine loves operating in tandem (2018, 15). Such means that the self is "an inchoate gift" (2018, 98) that is actualized over time in co-operation with God and with other human persons. While Marandiuc's thesis is compellingly presented in her *The Goodness of Home*, it seems to me that there is something within it that deserves further elaboration, namely, the means by which the kind of loving attachments that serve to create a self might be mended and reenabled when they have been damaged or malformed in some way. To be sure, she does quite clearly present her case *that* this sort of repair is eminently possible with God's help, but what is less clearly stated are particular and practical means *how* said repair occurs. This is understandable given that *The Goodness of Home* is a new venture in theological anthropology (rather than pastoral or practical theology), which presents an opportunity to grow a new thing in freshly tiled soil, an opportunity I take advantage of here.

Particularly, I propose that Marandiuc's concept of the self as co-creation be synthesized with the extensive work of Eleonore Stump on the role narrative plays in conveying what she has called "Franciscan knowledge:" knowledge that "requires acquaintance with stories and persons" (2010, 41) in order to be had. While Stump's efforts have been to show the usefulness of narrative in addressing the problem of suffering, the concept of Franciscan knowledge can also be used to supplement Marandiuc's account of loving attachments as formational for selves. Narrative can assist us to both form the kind of attachments necessary for us to participate in co-creating our selves with God and in mending those attachments that hinder our development of a self. In evidence of said usefulness, I undertake a brief exegetical exercise to apply this synthesis to the narrative of the Woman at the Well from the Fourth Gospel. In understanding the character in the context of Marandiuc's work on the formation of selves, so joined with Stump's elucidation of knowledge qua narrative, we can explore the manner in which this Scriptural story invites the reader into a second-personal experience with Christ. The development

and demonstration of this synthesis's usefulness seeks to fill a gap in contemporary discussions of humanity and selfhood. This will be accomplished by describing the nature of a human self and the mechanism for its development, while also providing a clear method by which the mechanism might be readily applied in a manner beneficial both theoretically and practically.[1]

2. Making Selves

The core of Marandiuc's theological anthropological understanding of the self is that a self is not something with which human persons are simply born. Selves are creatively formed over time through interpersonal relationships. In fact, she contends that "the very notion of the human self only becomes coherent against the backdrop of formative and sustaining embeddedness in a community of love and significance" (2018, 28). Marandiuc writes that "the human self is worked out through both participation in human love attachments . . . and that they are the 'temple' of divine indwelling, which solidifies as well as elevates them" (2018, 16–17). That is to say, the human self not only grows out of our interconnectivity with other *human* persons but also, and crucially, out of our interconnectivity with the *divine* persons of the Triune God. This interconnectivity is understood within her constructive efforts chiefly through attachments, not in a generic sense of the term but rather in the technical sense in which they are conceived in attachment theory.

However, it may be helpful to make clear near the outset of this appraisal that Marandiuc does not understand attachment theory to be a kind of theory of everything for self-making. Though she writes that "attachment theory, together with its neuroscience background, is one of the most extensively researched and practically deployed conceptual frameworks in contemporary psychology, with rich, albeit underexplored, valences for theology," (2018, 74) her intent is not in any way to put forward the claim that an exhaustive model for the emergent self can be located *entirely* within a theological anthropological reading of attachment theory. Rather, to my understanding of it, Marandiuc's thesis is that there is great explanatory power available within the deliverances of developmental psychology regarding attachment theory that ought to be brought into the sort of interdisciplinary dialogue she takes up throughout *The Goodness of Home*. To put the matter another way, her claims may be bold and novel ones, but they are not intellectually immodest in what they purport to reveal.

[1] My thanks to the participants in Union Presbyterian Seminary's winter 2020 theology colloquium (particularly its organizer, Dawn DeVries) at which an earlier version of this paper was presented and to its anonymous reviewers for their contributions to its betterment.

Lee Kirkpatrick observes that "since the publication of Bowlby's seminal 1969 volume . . . attachment theory has steadily developed into one of the most successful theories in psychological science" (2005, 25).[2] He summarizes that

> the attachment system Bowlby postulated is, in line with control systems theory, a goal-corrected, or homeostatic system. Instead of a thermostat monitoring ambient temperature (i.e., a *set point*), the system instead monitors proximity to the primary caregiver and compares it to a set point representing desired level of proximity . . . The system is more complex than a simple homeostatic system, however, because the set point itself is variable. Other mechanisms are designed to monitor a variety of both external and internal cues and adjust the set point . . . accordingly. It is also important to note . . . that the *set point* of the system tends to change over the course of development as well. Infants and very young children are typically comforted after a scare only by physical contact, but as they grow older are reassured by the caregiver being close by, or even simply by vocal or visual contact . . . If, compared to the current system set point, the attachment figure is regarded as insufficiently proximal and available, a suite of behavioral options is activated . . . If the attachment figure is indeed sufficiently available, however, no further care-seeking action is immediately required (2005, 28–30).

On Marandiuc's use of this psychological lens, "attachment theory frames an understanding of the human person as constitutively existing in interconnective communion with other human selves, with God indwelling the relational space of attachment and fortifying it through grace" (2018, 75). This interconnective communion is, from a young age, created through what Marandiuc refers to as a "'borrowing' of another's mind" (2018, 76), which I will refer to with a more specific term: mindreading.

The language of mindreading might at first bring to mind images of a magician scrying with a crystal ball or of a supernatural ability to hear the thoughts of others. However, the term is here deployed in its technical sense within contemporary psychology. In this sense, it refers to the way that individuals typically[3] come to an understanding of the mental states of others whom they perceive, and are able to

[2] By "Bowlby's seminal 1969 volume" Kirkpatrick means to refer to: (Bowlby 1969, particularly 177–230). For a helpful review of the impact of attachment theory upon studies in the psychology of religion, see: (Rose and Exline 2012, 88–90).

[3] I say "typically" because difficulty mindreading is a hallmark of conditions such as autism spectrum disorders (ASDs). For a helpful discussion of ASDs in a theologically-informed context, see: (Macaskill 2019, Ch. 1, particularly 33–38).

attribute to them particular desires, attitudes, emotions, and so forth.[4] Put another way, when we read the mind of another person, we come to know something of their mind without their having strictly communicated it to us as such (e.g. knowing *that* a person is sad and knowing *their* sadness just by looking at them).[5] We acquire this knowledge through our mental connection with them, and our relationships with others are fundamentally formed through mindreading (Bohl 2015, 675–676). Further, in some cases what is conveyed in mindreading might be difficult, or even impossible, to properly convey in any other way than by the reading of another's mind (Stump 2010, 67–71). This is an important point to which I will return, but for now what should be focused on is the way in which attachment theory shows us how we, quite literally, *make our selves* with others.

In an attachment relationship, as seen through Kirkpatrick's summary, there is both a dependent and an attachment figure to whom the dependent is attached. Marandiuc, now firmly within the bounds of a project altogether different to one such as his,[6] lays the foundation for a theological analysis of attachment theory by delineating four attachment styles which are seen in infants but can also be applied to adult relationships as follows:[7]

> (1) Secure attachment: "The prototypical adult attachment style is that between lovers engaged in a romantic or spousal relationship. The lover with a *secure* attachment style finds it easy to depend on the beloved and to be depended upon, values close attachment, speaks objectively about negative attachment experiences as much as positive ones, does not routinely experience abandonment anxiety, and does not worry about emotional closeness – which she desires" (2018, 88).

[4] The inverse of this ability would be "mindblindness;" that is, the inability to intuit such things as, for example, the emotional states of others. Though the term is used under a few different definitions I have in mind the contrast drawn by Simon Baron-Cohen in the following seminal work: (1995, particularly Ch. 1, 3, and 8). C.f., (Macaskill 2019, Ch. 1).

[5] This is, of course, a very basic example of face-to-face mindreading but it serves present purposes here without requiring a lengthy digression. For a deeper discussion see: (Smith 2015, 277–290). See also: (Stump 2017, 177–178).

[6] Which is simply to say that, though Kirkpatrick's analyses are useful here, his enterprise is an altogether secular one into which the possibility of God *actually existing* as one to whom human persons might actually be attached plays no real part. As such, Marandiuc's theological work with attachment theory is related to but fundamentally distinct from what he offers. E.g., (Kirkpatrick 2005, Ch. 3 and 6). See also: (Kirkpatrick 2006, 71–75).

[7] For an in-depth treatment of adult attachments, see: (Mikulincer and Shaver 2007, particularly Parts II and III).

> (2) Avoidant-dismissive attachment: "The *avoidant* or *dismissive* person . . . tends to downplay the importance of attachment and cannot desire intimate closeness without envisioning difficulties associated with it" (2018, 88)
> (3) Anxious-preoccupied attachment: "The *preoccupied* or *anxious* adult is very eager to engage in close attachment yet fears that her partner would not sustain the relationship for too long or would not desire sufficient closeness" (2018, 88).
> (4) Disorganized-disoriented attachment: "Adults with a *disorganized* or *disoriented* attachment style often combine traits from all the other ones, especially the two insecure ones; thus such persons are both avoidant and preoccupied yet without an organizing principle to make these two coherent (2018, 89).

It is (1) that is most conducive to the formation of a self and better still is when (1) is represented symmetrically between the parties involved; that is to say that the dependent is viewed by the attachment figure as an attachment figure themselves (2018, 91–92). However, (2), (3), and (4) can all be become (1) "by bringing to cognition those linkages that are made automatically and subreflectively at the level of behavior and repatterning . . . emotional attunement so as to enter into mutual resonance with the attachment partner" (2018, 93). In other words, any of the three sub-optimal attachment styles can be transformed into a relationship of secure attachment by intentionally reshaping our connection to a chosen attachment figure internally. When we engage in such reshaping we acquire new states of mind which "become both engrained in neural pathways and constitutive of core identity traits of the human self" (2018, 93). While an attachment relationship's requirement of another party makes it vulnerable to disordering due to the inherent variability in all interpersonal relationships, the plasticity of the human brain and mind mean that secure attachments always remain a possibility.

This openness to transformation is an innate part of human persons, and "we are especially transformable by the highest power that comes into contact with us, Christ. Attachment to Christ transforms our lives so as to image Christ's life. Human flesh becomes God's own in the hypostatic union . . . and human lives further become Christ's own through attachment to him" (2018, 97). To borrow and elaborate upon an analogy of Oliver Crisp's (2019, 125–126), we might think of Christ as a bit like a Wi-Fi router; the router provides a means by which the human nature becomes united to his own divine nature such that attributes, which would otherwise have been incommunicable to the former, are able to be attained similarly to the way in which a laptop computer is enabled to download files from another device connected to it via the router. The router acts as a go-between, passing the internet connection from a modem onward to devices which would otherwise have been unconnected to it.

We might here think of the Spirit as that which is[8] passed on to us through the incarnate Christ as it is Christ who renders humanity capable of being indwelled in love by God. To return the matter to Marandiuc's terms, there is an indwelling of human nature through Christ's incarnation that enables secure attachment to the transcendent Trinity for fleshy human persons. But there is also a habitation of human attachments by the Holy Spirit, which enlivens these attachments beyond the interconnectivity of the human persons involved into a rich connection with Divinity. This habitation by the Spirit takes place in the middle space (Marandiuc 2018, 150) between the attachment figure and the dependent. There God takes up residence and we find that "this middle space of attachment between lovers is both anthropological and pneumatological and constitutes the self's *home*" (2018, 182). A flourishing human self, then, is not only something that we do not find readymade within us, waiting for discovery but something that can only be formed in its fullness through interconnectivity with other human persons and the persons of the Trinity.[9]

The notion of the self as emergent in Marandiuc's sense is a powerful one on which Jesus "is the climax of love's possibilities both in terms of God's expression of love for what is not God and in terms of a maximally flourishing human self, a self in whose model we are to be shaped as creatures of love" (2018, 181).[10] It handily imports useful resources from developmental psychology such that we are able to better conceptualize what it is to be a healthily formed self and, moreover, the connection between such a self and our Creator. However, more could be said as to *how* it is that an insecure attachment style such as (2), (3), or (4) might be transformed into (1), particularly as regards attachment to Christ. It is not the effort of Marandiuc's *The Goodness of Home* to provide such practicalities, and such is not noted here as a matter of fault on her part. After all, one can only do so much in a given volume, and it is already a novel and constructive task that she has

[8] Or, perhaps, "him who is" or "she who is" if a different personal pronoun would be more palatable.

[9] Though she does not mean to say that the formation of the self via inhabitation of the middle space in attachment relationships by the Spirit requires specific theological beliefs. On her understanding of the matter, to love God is to love others and to love others is to love God. This is a point on which I demur somewhat (though not entirely) as regards the soteriological implications of such indwelling, but a further digression on this topic is not relevant enough to the task at hand to warrant consuming additional space and so it will be set to the side for now. For Marandiuc's view, see: (2018, 175–180). For my own view, see: (Davis 2021, particularly 166–169).

[10] Though she is clear that "we do not repeat or replicate the incarnation. While we live in the effects of its power, we do not enter hypostatic union with God. Instead, our earthly loves enter the embracing flow of God's love pneumatologically as God the Holy Spirit indwells the relational space between those attached by human loves." (Marandiuc 2018, 181). C.f., (Bouteneff 2008, 103–105).

accomplished. Instead, I raise this point in order to highlight my intended destination here: a practical example of a way that one might find themselves in the sort of personal contact with Jesus which is conducive to attachment style (1). To arrive at this destination requires first that we consider the nature of narrative, particularly narrative as understood by Eleonore Stump and in connection with what she calls "Franciscan knowledge."

3. Narrative and Franciscan Knowledge

At centerstage in Stump's eminent *Wandering in Darkness* is the way in which narrative can provide human persons access to knowledge. Therein, she delineates two different sorts of knowledge that might be gained by a given person through narrative: Dominican knowledge, and Franciscan knowledge. She articulates that, "categorizing on the basis of sets of abstract properties and abstract designations can itself be thought of as Dominican; categorizing on the basis of typology, which requires acquaintance with stories and persons, can be taken as Franciscan" (2010, 41). It is Franciscan knowledge that matters most for my purposes here, and we can broadly think of this kind of knowledge as pertains to persons as that knowledge which is not reducible to statements *that*. It is also knowledge that needs to be conveyed in a second-personal experience or account in which the person acquiring the knowledge encounters the person to whom the knowledge pertains in an I-You fashion (2010, 77–80). Elsewhere she elaborates that the narratives considered in this volume should be thought to "function in a way analogous to the way in which travel to a foreign country shapes one's understanding of that country. The as-it-were experience provided by a narrative will deepen one's perceptions and judgements of things, altering them in subtle ways and not-so-subtle ways, just as travel to a foreign country will enrich in countless inexpressible ways one's insights into that country" (2012, 198–199). While Stump admits that it is quite difficult to give a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for Franciscan knowledge (2010, 47), she helpfully redeploys the classic "Mary's room" thought experiment, with some adjustments, so that we are able to see the *kind* of thing in which Franciscan knowledge consists.

She asks that we here imagine a woman named Mary who has been imprisoned by an appropriately demented scientist since shortly after her birth:

> Imagine then that Mary in her imprisonment has had access to any and all information about the world as long as that information is *only* in the form of third-person accounts giving her knowledge *that* . . . In short, Mary has been kept from

> anything that could count as a second-person experience, in which one can say 'you' to another person. And then suppose that Mary is finally rescued from her imprisonment and united for the first time with her mother, who loves her deeply. When Mary is first united with her mother, it seems indisputable that Mary will know things she did not know before, even if she knew everything about her mother that could be made available to her in non-narrative propositional form, including her mother's psychological states. Although Mary knew that her mother loved her before she met her, when she is united with her mother, Mary will learn what is like to be loved (2010, 52).

Through this account, we can see the reality of Franciscan knowledge as contrasted with the knowledge *that* of Dominican knowledge, and we can see this without having a strict set of necessary and sufficient conditions for it. When Mary is released and encounters her mother for the first time, she has the opportunity to mindread her mother and, in so doing, learn what it is like to be loved.[11] Recall my statement in the preceding section that when we read the mind of another, what is conveyed can be nigh impossible to relate in any way other than mindreading. This thought experiment captures the reality of our incapability of knowing some things outside their being transmitted via an experience of mindreading, like Franciscan knowledge. However, notice that Stump indicates that if Mary *did* have access to narratives about her mother in her imprisonment then she might have been able to learn what it is like to be loved *before* being released. This is because narratives, unlike mere propositions alone, have the capacity to transmit Franciscan knowledge of persons which can otherwise only be had through mindreading.

Indeed, Stump writes that "Franciscan knowledge garnered in real or imagined second-person experiences and preserved in narratives is communicable to those capable of exercising the cognitive capacities for Franciscan knowledge in engaging with the story" (2010, 79).[12] She focuses in particular both on the mirror neurons[13]

[11] It might be asked whether Mary, were she truly and perfectly restricted to only third-personal knowledge while in her imprisonment, would even have developed cognitive faculties capable of the experience Stump describes. It may well be the case that she would not have, though a fuller treatment of this question goes beyond what can be offered presently. As such, and in order to retain the illustrative value of this thought experiment for the time being, we can assume that either through some intervention of the scientist or miraculous causes Mary develops a mindreading system that is capable of what Stump outlines despite her captivity. My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for bringing this issue to my attention.

[12] C.f., (Benton 2018, 431–434).

[13] It is worth noting that Stump's approach to understanding mirror neuron reactivity regarding interpersonal knowledge (particularly that between human persons and the Trinity's divine persons) has recently come under fire from Joanna Leidenhag. One concern raised by Leidenhag is that Stump

which are present in our brains and the triggering of them which is possible through some narrative experiences. Mirror neurons "fire in the brain both when one does some action oneself *and also* when one sees that same action being performed by someone else" (2010, 68). Seeing, in this sense, typically means the visual observation of some action by another person[14] but it can also include second-personal experiences more broadly conceived. In a second-person experience one must be aware of the other party as a person, have a personal interaction that is direct and immediate, and the person experienced must be conscious (2010, 75–76). This sort of experience can be had firsthand in one's own interactions with another person, but it can also be had through narrative because in narratives "we can re-present the experience itself in such a way that we can share the second-person experience to some degree with others who were not part of it, so that at least some of the Franciscan knowledge garnered from experience is also available to them" (2010, 78). We can here see how it is that Mary might have been able to feel the love of her mother prior to being released from captivity had she had any access to narratives in which her mother's love for her was present (or have been able to know what it is like to be loved in a general sense had she other relevant narratives). For example, imagine that Mary was in possession of a letter in which her mother intimately described the first experience of holding her, looking upon her and sweetly singing a lullaby to calm her as she was gently rocked and tenderly kissed upon the head. In reading such a letter she could have experienced her mother second-personally as a lover of her, thereby creating within her the mental state of being loved by her mother.

However, something of a caveat is required here as the precise way in which mirror neurons play a role in the mindreading faculties of human persons is an

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contrasts a neurotypical brain's mirror neuron response with that of autistic children such that we should ask of Stump's account whether it, for example, could be construed as denying that anyone but the neurotypical are capable of personal closeness with the Holy Spirit which is sufficient for their being indwelled by the Spirit. However, Stump clarifies on this point as follows: "The impairments of autism help to highlight human cognitive capacities that we might otherwise overlook or be skeptical of; and I raise the issue of autism only for that purpose. But if autism were a main subject for me, then I would be at pains to emphasize that human beings can flourish and be in union with others in a way well worth honoring, no matter what cognitive impairments they work through" (Stump 2018, 453 n. 41). Leidenhag's justifiable concern, then, seems to be shared by Stump even if the latter has yet to provide a detailed account addressing said concern (though she has gestured towards it). For Leidenhag's fuller critique, see: (Leidenhag 2020). See also: (Leidenhag 2021). For some gesturing from Stump, see: (2018, Ch. 9).

[14] Including even nonmotor actions (Muthukumarsawamy and Singh 2008, 896–897).

unsettled topic in contemporary neuroscientific and psychological studies.[15] The live nature of this question can be rather understated in theological importations of research relevant to it, including in Stump's treatment of the topic here. That said, her formulation of Franciscan knowledge does not actually require so specific a mechanism be outlined as she has, at times, offered. In fact, Stump even notes elsewhere that her usage of studies into mirror neuron modulation is primarily heuristic and that her points "could be made from phenomenology alone" (2018, 453 n. 43). As such, her treatment does not actually require in-depth specification as to what neural system it is that makes the mindreading she is interested in possible. It is enough for her point to go through that there *is* a mindreading faculty typical[16] in humans through which interaction with other persons is rendered unto us as second-personal knowledge.

In any case, on Stump's view we can understand narrative as giving "a person some of what she would have had if she had had unmediated personal interaction with the characters in the story while they were conscious and interacting with each other, without actually making her a part of the story itself" (2010, 78). While not all narratives preserve Franciscan knowledge, and narratives do not give us *all* of what an enfleshed second-personal experience with another individual would, (2010, 79) it seems that there are a great deal that do in the canon of Scripture. Stump herself uses several biblical narratives in her efforts to deploy the above understanding of Franciscan knowledge and its communication in response to the problem of suffering,[17] and she acknowledges the possibility that "some readers of the Gospels come to have a second-person experience of Christ" (2010, 521 n. 98). Here I intend to go somewhat further than this acknowledgement of possibility in applying the concept of Franciscan knowledge obtained via narrative to the formation of selves in order to achieve my previously stated goal: showing *how* a person might come into sufficient second-personal contact with Christ so as to aid the nurturing of a relationship of secure attachment with him.

Narrative can here play the role of "elucidating and bringing to life virtues of manner, showing what it would be like to embody them in an array of challenging situations" (Moline 2001, 182). Recall Marandiuc's assertion that our insecure attachments can be transformed into secure attachments if we engage in an internal reshaping of our connection to a given attachment figure. While it seems *possible* that we might engage successfully in such an effort on our own through personal

[15] For a helpful reflection from a psychological scientific perspective on why such might be the case, see: (Heyes and Catmur 2022).

[16] See note 3.

[17] Such as with her reading of Job: (Stump 2010, 177–226).

reflection alone, I think it exceedingly *unlikely* that such a transformation would occur in this way. We are needful of others in transforming an attachment just as we are needful of others in forming selves, and one manner of obtaining assistance from others here is through narratives of other such transformations. The reason for this need lies in the fact that our basic attachment style tends to develop early and remain consistent as we age, barring some sort of significant intervention.[18] When virtues of manner are brought to life in a narrative conveying Franciscan knowledge, we have a second-personal experience of the virtuous person and have their activity in some way represented in our minds. It follows, then, that if we were to encounter another person narratively whose attachment relationships are transformed from insecurity to security then such an experience could aide us in doing the same. After all, it is the acquisition of new mental states regarding an attachment figure that are crucial to such a movement. For our purposes here, I believe the narrative of the Woman at the Well from the Fourth Gospel is particularly helpful.[19]

4. Mending Selves: An Example

In this narrative within John 4,[20] Jesus is portrayed as travelling through Samaria on a return trip to Galilee from Judea when he stops at Jacob's Well, "tired out by his journey" (John 4:6), to rest and refresh himself. Verse 6 indicates to us that the time is approximately noon, meaning that the sun would have been scorching those beneath it. It is at this time that a Samaritan Woman comes to the well to draw water, something that seems rather odd. Not only is it the heat of the day, but the Woman has come alone rather than in the company of other Samaritan women (as would have been more typical), perhaps indicating that she was not particularly well regarded by her peers for some reason (Keener 1993, 272)[21] or perhaps serving to contrast her with Nicodemus, who had come to Jesus in the darkness of night (Levine 2019, 311). Regardless of the reason for her being alone, Jesus, also alone (his disciples having gone to buy food, according to v. 8), asks the Woman for a drink of

[18] In fact, Marandiuc writes that "the attachment system can literally supersede other behavioral systems: when activated, it prevents their operation. When people perceive a threat, they experience fear and seek out protection by their loved ones rather than engage in exploratory, creative, or productive pursuits. Only when the need for protection is met can the person access other mental resources so as to work, give, care, and, in general, dedicate energy to nonattachment activities" (2018, 80).

[19] For an interesting pursuit of a not entirely dissimilar enterprise, the interested might turn to: (Knabb and Emerson 2013, 833–838).

[20] Scriptural references in what follows are from the New Revised Standard Version.

[21] For a fuller consideration of the narrative's timing from Keener, see: (2003, 591–593).

the water she is collecting. Surprised, the Woman asks, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria" (John 4:9)? Her surprise is not unexpected given that, as Linda McKinnish Bridges notes, "she is a *Samaritan* – and that means an outcast in Jewish society. Furthermore, she is a *woman* – and that also means marginalization in first-century, patriarchal culture" (1994, 173). What proceeds from this point is one of the few examples in the Fourth Gospel of a genuine dialogue between Jesus and another party, most other seeming examples transitioning into a monologue of Jesus at some point in their progression (Gench 2004, 112).[22]

Jesus and the Woman have a rather deep and theological conversation with one another in which it is revealed that the latter has been married five times and is now in some form of relationship with a sixth man (John 4:16–18). Frances Taylor Gench points out that, though some might take these many marriages to be a sign of some sinfulness on the part of the Woman,[23] we cannot actually make such an evaluation given what is presented in the text itself. "We may discern that she has had a tragic personal history of some sort, but the details of it are not available to us" (2004, 116). Robert Kysar concurs that the Gospel's author does not "necessarily represent her as an immoral person. We are never told why she has five husbands and now lives with a man that is not her husband, and Jesus shows no interest in giving her a little lesson on proper morality" (2007, 180). Bridges suggests the following be considered regarding the Woman's marital history:

> Perhaps she was just old and had outlived all five husbands, for the text does not give her age. Then, in her later years, she gives up on legal marriage contracts and lives with a man who is not her husband. Or perhaps this so-called "paradigm of sexual excess" is more accurately interpreted as a victim of ancient oppressive patriarchy. Careful exegesis details that by law only men could divorce women in the ancient world (Deut. 24:1–4). Women were not permitted to divorce men. Later, the rabbis would expound on this marriage code and argue that a man could divorce his wife with *any* just cause, which could be faulty bread or even a lack of beauty (*m. Git.* 9:10). Maybe her five husbands had found her lacking, unsuitable, unlovely, unfit for their desires, and they simply rid themselves of responsibility and relationship. And society applauded their efforts with laws made to protect the man and abuse the woman (1994, 174).

[22] See also: (Kysar 2007, 180).

[23] Or on the part of the Samaritans as a people. In either case, many have taken this passage to be some sort of condemnation of the woman either personally or ethnically, but it is not at all clear that such a thing is actually occurring from the text. See: (Michaels 2010, 166–167), (Schneiders 2003, 138–140).

Jesus knows the Woman's past without having met her before, and through their conversation she comes to a tentative faith that Jesus is the Messiah (John 4:25–26, 28–29). Afterwards she rushes home, leaving her water jar behind,[24] saying to those around her "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he" (John 4:29)? Gench notes that "her faith is tentative, not yet mature, but she is moved by the presence of Jesus and eager to share the news" (2004, 118), and it is this response, coupled with her troubled past, that suggest to me that we can potentially view the Woman as a Scriptural character exhibiting attachment style (3), anxious-preoccupied.

Recall that those exhibiting (3) tend to be eager to engage in close attachment but fear their partner will not sustain the relationship for too long or will not desire sufficient closeness (Marandiuc 2018, 88). If one finds the suggestions of Bridges and Gench convincing, then it seems that such behavior can be aptly attributed to the Woman given her string of ended marriages and continued search for companionship, even outside matrimony. It seems she has a deep desire for the sort of secure attachment found in style (1) but has been unable to find it thus far. Perhaps, as Bridges suggests, she has been caught in a legal system, which has given her no standing and repeatedly placed her in negative attachment relationships that have made her understandably doubtful of finding loving attachment. Further, she seems initially suspicious of Christ's request for a drink despite the fact that she is all too willing to engage in rich dialogue throughout verses 11–26. The Woman wants this sort of conversation among equals, but perhaps has been made wary of those seeming to offer it due to prior mistreatment by peers or others. With attachment theory and the above in mind, I believe we can[25] read John 4:1–30 as a narrative in which we see a woman with an anxious-preoccupied attachment style that begins to be transformed by an encounter with Christ just as Marandiuc suggests is possible.

The Woman approaches the well as one with an undoubtedly troubled past who even still continues to pursue close relational attachments, perhaps fearing the outcomes but never ceasing to try in the meantime. While there, she, unlike so many others throughout the Fourth Gospel, engages in genuine theological dialogue with

[24] This action may represent a kind of "Johannine feminine counterpart to the Synoptic presentation of male disciples as leaving their nets to follow Jesus" (Gench 2004, 118).

[25] Which, I should be clear, is not to say that we *must* read it as such. I do not claim to have here unearthed something absolutely within the psyche of the Woman. Rather, and as I hope will be evident by this point, I simply think it the case that one *could* legitimately interpret this narrative as I have here and that such an interpretation might be helpful in elucidating the way Scriptural narratives can be of use to the contemporary project of holistic self-making.

Jesus and is treated as an equal partner within the conversation. The Woman, encountering the loving Christ in such a way, would likely have had something like the mental state of being valued and cherished as a partner created in her mind. Through this encounter with Christ, she is moved from a place of curious suspicion to one of genuine faith, though it may, as portrayed in the text, be tentative and still in need of maturation. The text does not indicate whether she established a relationship of secure attachment with Jesus and, moreover, if it were the case that she had done so through their (relatively) brief interaction alone then what occurred at the well would have truly been a psychological miracle! However, the Woman's experience was patently transformative, and it requires no stretch of the imagination to suggest that she did in fact find such attachment extra-textually as she continued to grow in faith with the Lord who treated her as a beloved co-laborer out under that hot noonday sun.

What is more, through this reading of the text we find the possibility that others exhibiting (3), anxious-preoccupied attachment, might see the experience of the Woman, and themselves have similarly transformative experiences upon encountering Franciscan knowledge of Christ's loving and valuing of them. After all, as Danna Nolan Fewell writes, the narratives of Scripture "inevitably hail their audiences, both ancient and modern, to position themselves as subjects in an ongoing story" (2016, 7). She continues that "stories read, heard, or witnessed literally create mental pathways that become part of our physiological makeup" (2016, 7). This is exactly the sort of thing required for the transformation of an insecure attachment style to one of security according to Marandiuc and so, with the aid of Stump and others, we can now see how well suited narrative, and particularly Scriptural narrative, is suited to enable it. Such experiences of Christ through Scripture may not immediately mend our broken relationships or snap us directly into a place of secure attachment with Jesus, but if it is true that there are certain virtues which are better caught than taught (Coakley 2015, 51) then our continual return to these stories may well facilitate profound renewal over time.

Conclusion

Through Marandiuc's work we see that the self, as Kenny suggests, is not some ideal entity to be found within a human person somewhere. A self is a robust, innately interconnected thing that is homed relationally and is itself a temple of Divine indwelling. As we connect in secure attachment with others, we find these bonds enlivened by the Holy Spirit who gives us grace to pour love from an ever-overflowing cup into our connections with others, both our few-in-number

attachment relationships and our broader neighbor love. However, there are plainly a great many persons whose attachment relationships are insecure and so, if a truly helpful account of the self is to be given, one needs to show *how* these attachments can be transformed from styles (2), (3), and (4) to style (1). My suggestion is that we connect Stump's efforts to evidence narrative's capacity for the transference of Franciscan knowledge to Marandiuc's account of the self that the former might more greatly empower the latter.

Franciscan knowledge of persons, when transmitted either through direct second-personal contact or through narrative, creates within the receiver a mental state of experiencing the other in an I-You relationship and is an example of what is needed to transform an insecure attachment to a secure one. Given that we are particularly transformable through encounters with the highest power we experience, Jesus Christ, Scriptural narratives seem all too appropriate to such a task. In evidence of this reality, I have engaged in a reading of John 4's narrative of the Samaritan Woman in which we can, with attachment theory in mind, see the Woman as one who enters the story with an insecure attachment style, which begins to be transformed to one of greater security through her encountering Jesus. Since we can acquire Franciscan knowledge from this narrative, it is possible that readings such as this might serve as great aides to the transformation of insecure attachment styles contemporarily as well given that they give us second-person experiences with Jesus wherein the characters themselves experience similar effects.

It has been my intent here to fill a gap in our conceptions of the self and its formation. While Marandiuc has provided us a strong account of the emergent self, her account's description of the transformation of insecure attachments to secure ones requires some exemplification. Through a synthesis of her work with that of Stump, and others, I hope to provide not only assistance to those concerned theoretically with the self but also to those concerned personally with being the most fully formed selves possible. We can encounter Jesus potently and second-personally through the narratives provided in the Gospels such that the cultivation of secure attachment with God is quite attainable through their help. And so, Scripture still speaks words of comfort and guidance today, aiding our flourishing as fully formed selves through its capacity for drawing us to nearer fellowship with God.

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