Contents

Acknowledgments ix
Preface xiii

1. Love and the Science-and-Theology Symbiosis 1
2. Love’s Diverse Forms and Multiple Recipients 31
3. Love and the Social Sciences 65
4. Love and the Biological Sciences 97
5. Love and Cosmology 137
6. A Theology of Love Informed by the Sciences 173

Author Index 213
Subject Index 219
Preface

Portions of this book, in different form, have appeared previously in a number of venues. The author is grateful for permission to adapt material for parts of this book from the following:


Thomas Jay Oord,
Defining Love: A Philosophical, Scientific, and Theological Engagement,
Love and the Science-and-Theology Symbiosis

1

The Love Racket

In 1974, the National Science Foundation awarded Ellen Berscheid and a colleague eighty-four thousand dollars to better answer the question “What is love?” Berscheid convinced the foundation to award the grant by arguing, “We already understand the mating habits of the stickleback fish. It is time to turn to a new species.” The species she had in mind was human.

Berscheid’s research might have gone unnoticed if not for the response of Wisconsin senator William Proxmire. “I’m strongly against this,” exclaimed Proxmire, “not only because no one—not even the National Science Foundation—can argue that falling in love is a science; not only because I am sure that even if they spend eighty-four million or eighty-four billion they wouldn’t get an answer that anyone would believe. I’m also against it because I don’t want to know the answer!” Apparently, ignorance really is bliss.

Proxmire presented Berscheid the first of his “Golden Fleece” awards. He considered the study of love a supreme example of wasteful government spending. Better to spend money on national defense or other such big-ticket matters. Proxmire’s advice to those who funded the grant was simple: “National Science Foundation, get out of the love racket!”
Defining Love

A few came to Berscheid’s defense. New York Times writer James Reston replied that funding grants to study love “would be the best investment of federal money since Jefferson made the Louisiana Purchase.”1 Apparently, Reston’s retort fell on deaf ears. Financial resources for the studies of love like the one Berscheid envisioned remained meager. Few scholars would assume the label “love researcher” after the incident.

The idea that scientists ought to study love—not so much love in its romantic sense, but love in its deepest, ultimate sense—found a strong twentieth-century voice in Pitirim A. Sorokin. In addition to his contributions to love research, Sorokin is considered by many the father of modern sociology. He initially came to his convictions about the importance of studying love when jailed as a Russian political prisoner early in the century. After escaping prison, Sorokin immigrated to the United States and eventually accepted a professorship at Harvard University. In 1949, Sorokin founded the Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism with financial help from Eli Lilly and the Lilly Endowment.

Sorokin published many books. His major contribution to love research is The Ways and Power of Love: Types, Factors, and Techniques of Moral Transformation. In the preface he defends the importance of studying love:

At the present juncture of human history an increase in our knowledge of the grace of love has become the paramount need of humanity, and an intensive research in this field should take precedence over almost all other studies and research. . . . Considering the immensity of this task, [my] contribution is very modest in comparison with the total sum of the necessary studies. Since, however, the better brains are busy with other problems, including the invention of means of extermination of human beings . . . [and] many a religious leader is absorbed in the intertribal crusades against various enemies—under these conditions somebody, somehow, must devote himself to a study of the miracle of love.2


Thomas Jay Oord,
Defining Love: A Philosophical, Scientific, and Theological Engagement,
Love and the Science-and-Theology Symbiosis

Sorokin offers insights into the power of love, suggestions about how love research might be done, and uncannily accurate predictions about what would occur should society neglect love studies. Sorokin’s work continues to inspire, and *The Ways and Power of Love* is now considered a classic.3

Unfortunately, however, Sorokin’s love research faded by the end of the 1950s. He retired from teaching, and his center ran out of funding. Although his own contribution was exemplary, he inspired no immediate followers to carry his love research mantle.4 The public was still interested in love, of course, but organized research on love from a perspective that integrated science, religion, and philosophy all but vanished.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, organized research on love reemerged. With funding from the John E. Fetzer Institute and the John Templeton Foundation, biologists, ethicists, sociologists, theologians, psychologists, neurologists, philosophers, and medical caregivers conferred at an MIT conference titled “Empathy, Altruism, and Agape.” Of course, a few independent scholars had been doing research on and writing about love in the latter half of the twentieth century. Here for the first time, however, scholars from widely diverse disciplines deliberated together on issues and challenges surrounding the study of love.

One outcome of the conference was the establishment of the Institute for Research on Unlimited Love. Stephen G. Post, professor of bioethics, was named the institute’s president, and the John Templeton Foundation provided multimillion dollar funding. President Post set several goals for the fledgling institute. He pledged to fund high-level scientific research on altruism and unlimited love. Post set about to sustain a dialogue between science and religion.

3. For a brief explanation of the importance that *The Ways and Power of Love* has for the contemporary conversation on love research, see Stephen G. Post’s introduction to the Templeton Foundation Press reprint edition.

4. Barry Johnston, in his authoritative biography of Sorokin, tells of an anonymous note found in the records kept by Eli Lilly. The note, apparently written by Lilly, reads: “One of the constantly interesting things about Sorokin is that he is an intellectual genius, who has arrived at truth about love and altruism via this route and has wound up his life a bitter old man with no young disciples. His interpreters are all old men, and as he once told me, ‘Sorokin will be rediscovered a 100 years hence’” (*Pitirim A. Sorokin: An Intellectual Biography* [Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995], 268).

Thomas Jay Oord,
Defining Love

on love’s meaning and significance. The institute endeavored to disseminate true stories of love as it manifests in the helping behaviors of those whose lives are devoted to serving others. And, finally, Post pledged to enhance the practical manifestations of love across the full spectrum of human experience.5

Many find the label “Unlimited Love” in the title of Post’s organization odd. Post uses the phrase to refer to three related ideas. First and foremost, unlimited love refers to the promotion of well-being for all others in an enduring, intense, effective, and pure manner. “The ultimate expression of love is love for all humanity,” says Post, “and for all that is.”6 Love should be expressed to those who are near and dear and also to those who are enemies. It should also be expressed to the cognitively and physically impaired. No one exists beyond the limits of love.

Unlimited love refers, second, to a hidden reality or energy that underlies all that is good in the universe. Post follows Sorokin in speaking of love as energy, although he sometimes calls this energy the “ultimate environment.”7 This environment provides integration, meaning, and purpose to life. The energy of love, suggests Post, should be studied by science and religion.

Finally, unlimited love refers to divine benevolence. “Unlimited Love is God’s love for us all,” says Post. It is “the ultimate reality that underlies all that is, and which can transform our limited and broken lives into journeys of remarkable generous service.”8 Given that many consider God both supremely loving and unlimited in many ways, it is natural for believers to connect the phrase “unlimited love” with deity. Some even identify unlimited love with agape, an identification that will be explored later in this book.

Research supported by the Institute for Research on Unlimited Love, the Fetzer Institute, and various smaller programs has generated remarkable scholarship in recent years. More than fifty major scientific research projects have been funded. Various conferences on love research and research centers have been sponsored. Several important monographs, anthologies, and handbooks on love have

6. Ibid., 16.
7. Ibid., 72.
8. Ibid., 11.
been published. And the institutes have funded course competition programs to encourage teaching of love from religious and scientific perspectives.

Post reports on recent social and medical science related to love in his book Why Good Things Happen to Good People. He cites research indicating that giving to others can result in good physical and mental health, increase longevity, and reduce the risk of adolescent depression and suicide. Post identifies ten ways that the gift of love promotes well-being: celebration, generativity, forgiveness, courage, humor, respect, compassion, loyalty, listening, and creativity. Drawing from research in the sciences and insights from the humanities, he prescribes love as a course of action for promoting the good life.

I call this newly emergent field of scholarship the “love, science, and theology symbiosis.” Exactly how scholars involved in this budding field think that love, science, and theology should relate and/or be integrated varies greatly. What they share in common is the belief that issues of love are of paramount importance. Love really matters. And scholars in the field believe that various research disciplines—whether natural sciences, social sciences, or religion—must be brought to bear upon how best to understand love.

The love research program involves the core belief that the world in general and individuals in particular, all things considered, can become better. A type of progress can be made. Through research and exploration we can come to understand better what love is, what it entails, and which creatures are capable of expressing it. Those who express love consistently will develop the kind of virtues that we associate with saints, sages, and mentors. We should imitate these loving people. Communities and societies that in various ways support love should also be supported and replicated. Religious practices and ideas that promote love should be emphasized. In many and diverse ways, we must pursue research into what love means and how we might best express it.


Defining Love

A great deal of conceptual work must be done at this important stage of the love, science, and theology symbiosis. This work should help both insiders and outsiders conceptualize the issues central to love research programs. Part of that conceptual work has to do with definitions. After all, if one asks a crowd what science is, a variety of answers most likely will be given. Ask that same group what love is, and the variety swells. Before exploring research and proposals in the love, science, and theology symbiosis, we should become clear about what we mean by the key terms, science and love.

What Is Science?

Defining science is more difficult than most imagine. The field of philosophy of science contains diverse proposals, and scholars disagree about how science should best be understood. In addition, the reaction that many people have when hearing about the scientific study of love is similar to Senator Proxmire’s: what does love have to do with science? It is widely assumed that love pertains to values, feelings, and emotions. The popular view is that science limits itself to cold hard facts. Facts and values—like water and oil—do not mix.

A close look at science, however, reveals that values play a significant role in the scientific enterprise. In fact, values shape the interpretation of what counts as good science. Values also shape what we think the proper goals of science might be. Values even shape what scientists regard as the best understanding of research results.

Although there are many ways to speak about and define science, at its bare bones science entails perception and reflection. Scientists perceive an object or objects and subsequently reflect upon what they have perceived. This perceiving and reflecting typically motivates scientists to conduct additional experiments, make predictions about further perceptions, and construct theories or explanations based on predictions fulfilled by or requiring further research.

The perception aspect of science incorporates various techniques and methods for observing the created world. Sometimes what counts as scientific observation arises from fairly random surveys of...
data; sometimes scientists rely on the observations of others. Most often what counts as rigorous scientific activity is the process of setting up experiments and observing their outcomes. Taking note of the outcomes—commonly called “collecting data”—provides information for the reflection aspect of science.

A number of different factors shape the scientist’s perception of observed phenomena. At the most basic level, a scientist’s sensory organs—eyes, ears, nose, and so on—are tools by which he or she observes data. Sensory organs are somewhat unique to each scientist. A color blind scientist, for instance, will see somewhat differently from the scientist who is not color blind. A scientist with acute hearing may perceive the unique patterns of birdsong better than a scientist with less-acute hearing.

Perhaps more important, however, is what the scientist expects to perceive. This can influence his or her research. The scientist’s emotions, habits, education, personal and communal experiences, and other variables influence the scientist’s perceiving activity. In short, factors other than the observed objects significantly shape scientific observation and, therefore, science itself. Additional observations by other scientists can balance the particular perspective that each scientist possesses, but the perspectives that scientists bring to their research inevitably influence their work.

Turning to the reflective aspect of science, we find a number of factors at play. To begin, reflection on what has been perceived involves interpretation. Assorted factors influence the scientist’s interpretations, and scientists are not conscious of many of those factors. One of the most important contributions of contemporary philosophy of science is the idea that culture, biology, and other matters shape the scientist’s interpretations of the phenomena perceived. Scientists are not wholly objective. Factors other than the objects observed influence the reflective activity of scientists.

It is widely acknowledged that a single scientist cannot ascertain all facts of a given object or collection of objects. He or she can

11. The view that the scientist’s own perspective influences the interpretation of scientific work is a view championed by those who research postmodernism and science. Postmodern science challenges the view that scientists are neutral and completely objective. See Stephen Toulmin, *The Return to Cosmology: Postmodern Science and the Theology of Nature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).
never know all truths, and perhaps not even the most important truths, about a particular phenomenon. Even the collective observations of scientists are unlikely to grasp all that might be true about a particular aspect of existence. No scientist or group of scientists has an unlimited or all-encompassing perspective.

The reflective aspect of science involves analysis, comparison, and systematization. This work typically involves constructing hypotheses or explanations to account for the apprehended phenomena. Explanations involve linguistic or mathematical attempts to construe the world in some way similar to how scientists believe the world to be. Explanations generally are considered good when they are simple, adequate to what is observed, and/or fruitful for future work.

On the basis of a good explanation, scientists can predict with relative accuracy what will happen should a similar set of circumstances arise in the future. We regard as adequate explanations that scientists give when further experimentation and observation verify the explanation’s descriptive and predictive power. If an explanation holds up to additional experimentation, the scientist is warranted in believing that he or she generally understands at least some part of the universe. And understanding the universe, at least to some degree, is a major goal of science.

12. In this book I assume that a version of what is commonly called “critical realism” best accounts for the way we relate to the world epistemically. By “critical realism,” I mean the view that our knowledge of the world refers in some way to how things really are, but this knowledge is partial and will need to be revised as we accumulate additional data. See Thomas Jay Oord, The Polkinghorne Reader (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2010).

13. Answering the question “What is science?” can also be done by simply referring to the practices of scientists. The practice of scientists concerns things such as quantifying outcomes, acting in ways that the scientific community endorses or criticizes, proposing novel theories to account for observations for which standard theories do not account, and, perhaps most commonly, conducting experiments to confirm widely held or one’s own pet theories.

14. It has long been customary to divide science by referring to some fields of science as “natural” and others as “social.” Natural science has been said to include domains such as chemistry, astronomy, and geology; social sciences typically included fields such as psychology, sociology, and politics. This customary bifurcation is increasingly under criticism, however, as the entities studied in the natural sciences seem more and more analogous to complex organisms studied in the social sciences. And unified theories of evolution have made it more difficult to draw a sharp line between what was once referred to as “animate” and “inanimate”
This brief excursion into the nature of science can help dissolve the skepticism that some express when they hear that love can be studied scientifically. We will explore later in the book some ways that science explores love. At this point, however, we briefly note three ways in particular that understanding science as described helps us appreciate the importance of love and science aspects of the research symbiosis.

First, science is a value-laden enterprise and its practitioners—scientists—are valuing agents. When we say that some scientific practice is good—an explanation is better because it is simple or because it accounts for more data—we are making value judgments. Scientists reveal in their actions (even though they may occasionally deny it verbally) their belief that there are better or worse ways of doing science or arriving at scientific explanations. Philosopher of science and theologian David Ray Griffin says, “We all presuppose in practice that some modes of behavior and intended outcomes are inherently better than others and that some states of affairs, whether internal or external, are more beautiful, pleasing, fitting, tasteful, or what have you, than others. We may differ in our judgments and even our criteria; but that a distinction between better and worse exists we all presuppose.” If science is value-laden and scientists are valuing agents, research on value-inherent actions, outcomes, or experiences labeled “loving” need not entail inventing a whole new kind of science. Science is already chock-full of value.

Second, science reflects, at least in part, the subjective beliefs and explanatory trends of history. Although some of these explanations have not proven adequate to the research data, the power of these widely known but inadequate explanations continues. For instance, the early notion that the survival of the fittest is the driving force of evolution has been replaced by the notion objects. Added to all of this is the peculiar fact that scientists have very similar views about the composition and nature of objects least like humans (e.g., rocks) and very different views about how best to describe creatures most like themselves. It seems to be a principle that the more complex the phenomena, the less likely any single explanation will sufficiently account for what the scientist observes.

that an organism’s ultimate goal is the propagation of its genetic heritage. Many sociobiologists today consider the propagation of genetic heritage, rather than survival, a creature’s ultimate purpose. Creatures apparently sometimes choose death rather than survival if death better propels their genetic heritage into future generations. The sacrificial death of parents on behalf of their children illustrates this. And yet the commonly held view continues that evolution is primarily a battle for survival among those most fit, not the propagation of genetic heritage.

Even the currently dominant explanation of evolutionary biology—fit organisms propagate their genetic heritage—cannot fully account for the altruistic actions of complex creatures such as prairie dogs, fish, swallows, dolphins, and, especially, humans. The explanations that only the fittest survive or that organisms inevitably act for their genetic self-interest are so powerful that they can blind us to the extensive data suggesting that many animals, both human and nonhuman, act unselfishly. We will explore this line of argumentation more fully in chapters 3 and 4.

When sacrificial love is rejected out of hand as impossible, it becomes difficult for the data to speak for itself. Prejudgments sometimes determine results. In cases like this, it becomes evident that new theories—or new paradigms, to use the language of Thomas Kuhn—with concomitant research programs are needed. The love, science, and theology symbiosis aims, in part, to provide a more adequate explanation of existence. That explanation includes accounting for love and altruism.

Third, the scientific quest to understand the universe through perception and reflection must account for the fact that the beings we know best in that universe—ourselves—are ethical and spiritual beings. Some scientists have attempted to “explain away” this fact. While many in the prescientific age were unjustified in reading complex human ethics and religion onto nonhumans, present-day scholars likewise are unjustified in denying human characteristics presumed absent in nonhumans. Ironically, some of the most widely known scientists (e.g., Charles Darwin) argued that a measure of morality exists among nonhumans.

A good example of the importance of affirming irreducible aspects of human experience is the issue of purposiveness. Some scholars cannot imagine that nonhuman organisms, let alone
very small organisms, act with purpose. Consequently, they claim that humans, who have evolved from such small organisms, also do not act with genuine purpose. This claim, however, flies in the face of what we know from experience: we know ourselves to be purposive beings. If understanding the universe is a major goal of science, and if humans are significant organisms in that universe—in fact, the organisms we know best—the study of human existence must at least be part of and shape the scientific enterprise.

As the practice of perceiving phenomena, reflecting on what has been perceived, and conducting experiments in light of this, science has much to offer the study of love. The scientific quest to understand the universe more fully would be woefully stunted if we neglected what many people consider the most important aspect of life: love. In chapters 3 through 5 we will examine recent scientific research on love. These chapters demonstrate not only that good science has a role to play in our understanding of love but also that theories of love, including theologies of love, need science to provide an adequate explanation of the world as we know it. In the final chapter we will turn to integrating the theories and research in the natural and social sciences with theology.

What Is Love?

Important conceptual work must be done before we explore recent scientific research on love. We have seen that part of the work revolves around a more-adequate notion of what science is and what it can do. The greatest amount of conceptual work, however, involves getting a clear idea of what we should mean by love.

Virtually all people act, and often talk, as if they have some awareness of love. People talk about loving food, falling in love, loving God, feeling loved, and loving a type of music. They say that love hurts, love waits, love stinks, and love means never having to say you are sorry. Love talk abounds. The fact that people talk of love in such varied ways prompted Sigmund Freud to note that “‘love’ is employed in language” in an “undifferentiated
Defining Love

way.” Theologian Mildred Bangs Wynkoop concurs, calling love a “weasel-word” because of its diverse meanings and frequent ambiguity.

Although we often talk about love, few spell out what we really mean by the word. Love goes largely undefined. It may be that resources for love research have been scanty and researchers generally reluctant to pursue love studies in part because so few have given time and energy to provide love an adequate definition. It makes little sense to focus scholarship on or be financially supportive of something deliberately left vague, bewildering, and unspecified. Defining love is crucial.

When we take time to reflect on love, a number of questions typically come to mind:

Is love a decision or a feeling?
Is love blind or universally aware?
Is love sexual, nonsexual, or asexual?
Is love self-sacrificial or self-authenticating?
Is love unconditional or object-specific?
Is love best understood as *agape*, *eros*, *philia*, something else, or all of these and more?
Is love something that only God expresses?
Can we truly comprehend anything about love?

These questions suggest that offering an adequate definition of love can be daunting, and the issues to be addressed are diverse.

Judging by the literature, even scholars find defining love difficult. “Those who write best about love,” notes Jules Toner, “devote very little space to considering what love is.” The lack of clarity prompts Edward Vacek to observe that “most philosophical and

---

theological writing, when it speaks of ‘love,’ does not analyze what love is, but rather assumes it has an evident meaning.” 20 Irving Singer argues that “the analysis of love has been neglected more than almost any other subject in philosophy.” 21 A dearth of definitions remains.

Some philosophers abandon any attempt to provide love a normative definition. 22 They rest content in simply trying to figure out what love means given the context or language game in which it is used. This practice is important because love has so many meanings and context largely determines these precise meanings. But refusing to identify a general definition leaves central assumptions about the nature of love unacknowledged. This in turn leads to incoherence and further ambiguity. In the extreme, love might be indistinguishable from hate if a normative definition is not offered.

One need not think that love has an absolute, for-all-time meaning. But some definitions of love are superior. A good general definition could become the conceptual mooring to which researchers might tie other, more-specific types of love. Researchers need a good general definition to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding and incoherence. Otherwise, confusion reigns.

It would be foolish, of course, to think that even the best definition of love can capture fully love’s richness. We should be skeptical of any claim that language corresponds perfectly to diverse experiences. Language is at least one step removed. Postmodernisms of virtually every type have shown that words themselves, even when not narrowly associated with experience, have multiple meanings. Words are inherently ambiguous. 23

But the inherent limitations of language do not negate the central importance of offering and defending a definition of love. We should not expect any definition to be perfect in all ways and for all

---

22. See, for example, John Armstrong, Conditions of Love: The Philosophy of Intimacy (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002), 12.
23. Many postmodern philosophers and theologians express this concern with the ambiguity of language. Jacques Derrida perhaps expresses it best in his work. See, for instance, the critical reader of his work, Derrida: A Critical Reader, ed. David Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), and Derrida’s other writings.
times, but some definitions are better than others. And progress in understanding and promoting love can be made if we gain clarity about love’s nature. We need an adequate definition of love now more than ever.

A growing number of scholars offer hypotheses pertaining to love as it relates to particular fields of inquiry. For instance, psychologists and sociologists consider what kind of person is capable of love and what social conditions are conducive to love. They explore the fundamental drives and relationships characteristic of altruistic, prosocial, and loving behavior. Biologists explore the social interaction of species and suggest hypotheses about the altruism driving such interaction. They offer theories to account for altruism, such as kin-selection theory, reciprocal-altruism theory, group-selection theory, and game theory. Cosmologists speculate about the kind of universe required for free and loving creatures to emerge. Religious scholars in the theistic traditions suggest hypotheses and creeds about divine action and human responses as these pertain to love. And a few philosophers classify various types of love according to their motivations and/or objects.

If researchers fail to affirm a clear definition of love, the present surge in love studies will not produce the positive results that it otherwise might. When we are not relatively lucid about love, it becomes difficult to judge the value or contribution of any particular love investigation. It becomes difficult to compare the theories and research of one discipline with another when researchers employ widely divergent definitions. And the absence of a clear definition of love can undermine the work of those who call us all to express and promote love.

In light of the need for a definition of love, the major concern of the remainder of this chapter is to provide and defend a definition of love adequate for those doing research in the love, science, and theology symbiosis. This definition is meant to be adequate for a wide swath of academic disciplines, including the natural sciences, social sciences, and theological sciences. It has already proven beneficial for both those inside and outside the research academy. The proffered love definition might be regarded as preferable to the relatively few other definitions offered and preferable to no definition at all.

My own definition of love, and the one I will employ in various ways throughout the book, is this:
To love is to act intentionally, in sympathetic response to others (including God), to promote overall well-being.

To say this differently: loving actions are influenced by the previous actions of others, oneself, and God, and these actions are purposefully executed in the hope of encouraging flourishing.

To explain better what this simple definition entails, I explore its three main phrases. This definition will arise from time to time in later chapters on research in natural and social sciences. It will play a role in the final chapter, which offers a theology of love consonant with research on love in the natural and social sciences. The first phrase in the love definition is . . .

To Act Intentionally

*Intention* is a multifaceted and multivalent word. I use the word *intentionally* to refer to three facets of love: deliberateness, motive, and self-determination. The three facets overlap, but each one offers something distinctive to a robust notion of intentionality.

With regard to deliberateness, I mean that love involves a decisional aspect. This decisional aspect need not entail long, drawn-out contemplation. We often express love in split-second decisions. Philosopher Robert Kane notes that deliberateness is present in an instant when he says that we should accept “the possibility of impulsive, spur-of-the-moment, or snap decisions, which also settle conditions of indecision.” The decisionality of deliberating suggests that a degree of mentality accompanies action that we should regard as loving, but this mentality need not be complex or deep.

The decisional aspect does not mean that those who love repeatedly step back to survey thoroughly the wide range of pos-

24. I use the word *deliberateness* rather than *deliberation* because the latter carries connotations of a long, drawn-out process of reflection. Although love sometimes may involve such deliberation, more often love emerges from fleeting decisions.

Defining Love

possible alternatives before deciding what action to take. Although those who love reflect occasionally on a wide array of options, most often they decide between only a few options of which they are aware. One or more of those options may seem more compelling than others. Creatures need not be omniscient to express love.

The decisional aspect in my definition of love opposes the idea that a person loves when, by coincidence, a positive outcome results from that person’s actions. Action without any judgment whatsoever, even when that action results in good, should not be regarded as loving. Love is not accidental. Of course, the good that results from accidental or inadvertent activity is still valuable, and unintentional good can be appreciated. I reserve the label “loving action,” however, for deeds purposefully done to promote well-being. Like John B. Cobb Jr., I affirm that love requires “conscious psychic activity.”26 Love is intentional.

With regard to the motive aspect of intentional action, love requires a noble purpose to do good. We should not say that a person has acted lovingly when a positive outcome results from actions that the person meant for harm.27 Motives matter, even though actions done with good motives sometimes can produce ill-being, and actions done with evil motives can inadvertently produce well-being. Ill will is incompatible with actions that we should deem loving.

By emphasizing the importance of motives, I reject ethical theories that judge actions as good or evil solely by their consequences. Consequences matter and may or may not be indicators of love, but lovers cannot entirely control the consequences of their actions. The aspirations of those who love are fundamental, and lovers have some end or purpose in mind. Love assesses prospectively what actions promise to do rather than retrospectively whether actions have actually yielded the greatest good.28

27. It also makes little sense to say that someone loves whose motives are neutral.
Admittedly, we cannot be absolutely certain of someone else’s motives. In fact, discerning our own true motives can be tricky. Harry Frankfurt, for instance, has suggested that we can have multiple levels of motivations, with one or some dominant. The weight of scientific research on love, however, does not depend on discerning motives flawlessly. The claim that love requires good motives simply reminds us of what seems obvious: actions done with negative motives should not be considered acts of love.

I use the phrase “to act intentionally,” third, to account for the self-determination, or freedom, inherent in love. To say it another way: love is meaningless if individuals are not free to choose one action rather than others. In philosophical circles, this understanding of self-determination fits best in the libertarian or incompatibilist traditions. To be free is to make choices that are not entirely dependent on external conditions that make it the case that one cannot do otherwise. Free choices entail that choosers are in some sense genuinely responsible for their actions. Coercion, in the sense of the unilateral determination of the chooser, is antithetical to love.

Freedom does not, however, involve total spontaneity and completely random choice. Concrete circumstances limit what is genuinely possible as options for action. Libertarian freedom should not be equated with unconstrained freedom. Unfortunately, the freewill tradition sometimes has been thought to require unfettered personal autonomy. Theologian Daniel Day Williams helps when he says that “freedom is never absent from love, [but] neither is it ever unconditional freedom.”


31. This claim is developed in terms of neurology in Nancey C. Murphy and Warren S. Brown, Did My Neurons Make Me Do It? Philosophical and Neurobiological Perspectives on Moral Responsibility and Free Will (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

32. Daniel Day Williams, The Spirit and the Forms of Love (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 116. Williams was influenced by Alfred North Whitehead, who argued that “there is no such fact as absolute freedom; every actual entity
Defining Love

impelled to choose between a limited number of possibilities that pertain to the chooser’s immediate context. We might best call this “limited freedom.”

To call love an action is not to claim that love always entails an imposition, interference, or intervention into the affairs of others. Sometimes love entails acting in ways that do not directly impact others. Nor does calling love an action mean that love always entails deeds perceptible to our five senses. Thinking and praying, for instance, can be acts of love. Deciding to remain calm is an action; listening is acting.33 I use the word *act* to cover a broad range of activities, both seen and unseen, both proactive and restrained.

Earlier in our brief exploration of science, we noted that many factors influence our perception of and reflection on the world. These factors influence but do not entirely determine intentional actions. For instance, one’s bodily characteristics, emotions, neural substrates, hormonal constitution, dispositions, genetic framework, and other factors influence greatly but, I argue, do not entirely control one’s intentional actions. Environmental dynamics beyond the lover’s own body, such as political, communal, and ecological relationships, also greatly shape intentional activity. The claim that agents feel a variety of influences and yet remain genuinely free suggests that intentional action occurs in a context and with constraints.

In the chapters that follow, we examine scientific research that strengthens the claim that the expressions of love possible for any particular individual are partly dependent on physical and emotional factors both within and beyond a lover’s body. This idea is presented concisely in the second phrase of the definition of love I offer, however, and an introduction to it is now required. The second phrase in my definition of love is . . .

possesses only such freedom as is inherent in the primary phase ‘given’ by its standpoint of relativity to its actual universe. Freedom, givenness, potentiality, are notions which presuppose each other and limit each other” (*Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, corrected ed. [1929; repr., New York: Free Press, 1978], 133).

Love and the Science-and-Theology Symbiosis

In Sympathetic Response to Others (Including God)

Love requires actual relations with others. Entirely isolated individuals, if such existed, could not love. To say that love involves sympathetic response is to presuppose that individuals are mutually influencing. It is to assume that others—people, nonhumans, one’s own past actions, entities in the environment, or God—influence the one who loves. No one expresses love in a vacuum. The relations of love are more than merely logical. They are causal in that they involve genuine sway or effect of one agent on another. Real, not just relative, influence occurs.

I use the word *sympathy* in my definition as a technical word to refer to the internal, constituting influence of one or more objects or individuals on the loving actor. Many twentieth-century American and British philosophers use the word in this way. It derives from the Greek word *sympatheō* (*syn*, “with” or “together”; *patheō*, “feel” or “suffer”).

The process philosophical tradition has been especially powerful in describing the philosophical and theological dimensions of real relatedness in sympathy. Philosopher Charles Hartshorne, for instance, explains what sympathy entails by saying that “the doctrine of sympathy . . . is that all feeling feels other feeling, all reaction has an object which itself is reactive, [and] that we have objects at all is due entirely to the . . . immanent sociality of experience.”

Alfred North Whitehead refers to sympathy as “prehension,” and other philosophers, such as George Herbert Mead and Herbert Spencer, call it “fellow feeling.” Because of this sympathy, or what Hartshorne also calls “the social nature of reality,” the very being of each lover is partly decided by others.

What I have described as sympathy—“feeling with”—is in some scientific disciplines called “empathy.” Especially in the disciplines of psychology and sociology, sympathy carries overtones of pity and condescension rather than the philosophical idea of feeling the feelings of others. Sociologists Pearl and Samuel Oliner, for


Defining Love

instance, suggest that sympathy “means pity or commiseration for another’s condition.” Sympathy implies looking at another person “at a distance.” By contrast, say the Oliners, “empathy means feeling with the other person.”

Some social psychologists, such as L. G. Wispe, dissect the two words even further. Wispe suggests that “sympathy refers to the heightened awareness of the suffering of another person,” while “empathy, on the other hand, refers to the attempt by one self-aware self to comprehend unjudgmentally the positive and negative experiences of another self.” Wispe concludes that in empathy we substitute ourselves for others, but in sympathy we substitute others for ourselves.

My use of “sympathy” is not meant to be equated with looking at others from afar, as if detached. Nor do I mean for sympathy to connote an absolute substitution of oneself for another (if this were even possible). Rather, to sympathize is to be internally influenced by the other such that one’s own experience is partially constituted by the one or ones perceived. A creature’s sympathetic response to others entails reaction to what has occurred in both the immediate and distant past. The one who loves is internally related to what has happened in the past, as past actions influence

38. I find Whitehead’s thought on internal and external relations most helpful when proposing a theory of relatedness. “Every actual entity is what it is and is with its definite status in the universe,” says Whitehead, because “its internal relations to other actual entities” shape it (Process and Reality, 59). Each experiential organism begins with an openness to the past, and this open window makes possible the organism’s internal relations. Once the influence from the past has entered in, the window closes. Whitehead likes to explain external relations as an organism’s influence on future others by saying that “it belongs to the nature of a ‘being’ that it is a potential for every ‘becoming’” (ibid., 22). Just as each organism, through its internal relations, drew on its relations with others as it came into existence, each organism subsequently becomes datum for future organisms as they come into being. See also my own work on the importance of internal and external relations (Thomas Jay Oord, “Morals, Love, and Relations in Evolutionary Theory,” in Evolution and Ethics: Human Morality in Biological and Religious Perspective, ed. Philip Clayton and Jeffrey Schloss [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004], 287–301).
that individual’s moment-by-moment identity. The interdependence of sympathy—or empathy, if you prefer—is essential to what it means to love.

Just as many factors influence one’s intentional actions, many factors also influence the nature of one’s sympathetic response. Our responses to our environment are partly dependent on the makeup of our brains, our bodies, and causes beyond ourselves. Just as bodily and environmental factors greatly shape our intentions, these same factors also greatly shape our sympathetic responses. This shaping is addressed frequently in contemporary discussions of emotions, biological constraints, and affect. This shaping will also be discussed in later chapters.

An important feature of the phrase “in sympathetic response to others (including God)” is the parenthetical acknowledgment of divine influence. The final chapter offers a proposal for how best to conceive of the causal role that God plays in love. I simply note here that I consider God an actual, causal agent to whose inspiration, or “call,” creatures respond appropriately when expressing love. I will claim that this causal influence does not violate the dominant methods of science, which rely primarily on observation through sense perception.\textsuperscript{39} Rightly understood, science and theology can be complementary.

The phrases of my love definition explored thus far—“to act intentionally” and “in sympathetic response”—reflect two dominant ways that philosophers, theologians, scientists, and even poets have thought about the nature of love. Philosopher Robert Hazo, in his classic study \textit{The Idea of Love}, refers to these two ways as “tendency” and “judgment.”

Those who understand love primarily or exclusively as tendency identify love with feeling or emotion. They use words such as \textit{instinct} and \textit{impulse}. Lovers might say that they “fell in love,” that they feel as though they have been “overwhelmed by love,” or that some object or person is “just so lovable.”\textsuperscript{40} Neurologist Antonio Damasio argues for this understanding of love, and he endorses

\textsuperscript{39} Thomas Jay Oord, “Love as a Methodological and Metaphysical Source for Science and Theology,” \textit{Wesleyan Theological Journal} 45, no. 1 (Spring 2010).

\textsuperscript{40} For an analytic look at love as an emotion, see Robert C. Roberts, \textit{Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
proposals that philosopher Baruch Spinoza offered centuries ago.\textsuperscript{41} I account for this and what Hazo calls the “tendency” aspect of love in my phrase “sympathetic response.”

Those who understand love primarily or exclusively as judgment typically use the words \textit{will}, \textit{choice}, or \textit{cognition} when talking about love. Love is a decision, they say. We must choose to love no matter what emotions we feel. This claim typically gains traction when coupled with the claim that one should love despite experiencing negative feelings or emotions. Reflecting the idea that love is a matter of the will, psychologists Robert Hemfelt, Frank Minirth, and Paul Meier give their best-selling book the title \textit{Love Is a Choice}. They argue that one must choose to break free from addictive or unhealthy codependent relationships if they are to love.\textsuperscript{42} I account for this choice, or what Hazo calls the “judgment” aspect of love, in my phrase “act intentionally.”

I argue that love necessarily involves both spheres: tendential and judgmental. Or, as I prefer, love involves both sympathetic and intentional aspects. Martha Nussbaum gets at this when she argues that emotions are essential elements of human intelligence and choice when humans love.\textsuperscript{43} Theologians John B. Cobb Jr. and David Ray Griffin use the label “creative-responsive love” to account for both of these necessary dimensions.\textsuperscript{44} I join these scholars by claiming that love has both passive and active elements. Both sympathy and intentionality are necessarily present in an act of love.

As I see it, sympathetic feeling logically but not temporally precedes decisional intentionality. An act of love logically begins with an individual’s feeling of or being influenced by past others and the relevant possibilities arising from that past. The love act is consummated, however, by the lover’s decision about how that past will be appropriated in light of an expected contribution to the future. The initial feeling requires subsequent decision.


\textsuperscript{43} Martha C. Nussbaum, \textit{Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

This progression is only logical, however, not temporal. Lovers do not simply feel in one moment and then simply choose in the next. Both aspects are present in each moment, although one may dominate. This way of understanding the relation between feeling and decision is consonant with Stephen Post’s proposal that “an even balance or co-primacy between emotion and reason is the fitting alternative to those who would diminish the importance of either capacity.” But I afford feeling—the sympathetic response to factors and agents in one’s environment—a logical priority.

This discussion of intentionality and sympathy is primarily an analysis of the necessary conditions for the possibility for deeming any particular activity an expression of love. But these conditions themselves are not love. In fact, I would argue that intentionality and sympathy are also necessary conditions for hate and indifference. The final phrase in my definition of love points to the element required for deeming some intentional responses as loving and others as not. The final phrase of my love definition is . . .

To Promote Overall Well-Being

The first thing to notice in my definition’s last phrase is the positive character of love’s aim. This positive character is captured in the label “well-being.” To say that love promotes well-being requires an explanation of what well-being entails. Moral philosopher James Griffin defines well-being minimally as “the level to which basic needs are met.” Philosopher Partha Dasgupta, however, says that what we regard as well-being exceeds the bare minimum of meeting basic needs. Well-being pertains to a quality of life. In other contexts, well-being denotes health, happiness, wholeness, and flourishing. Aristotle called it eudaimonia. Theistic traditions have sometimes spoken of it as “blessedness” or “shalom.” Jesus called it “abundant life.”

46. Others also define love so as to make this orientation toward well-being love’s central aspect. For instance, Gary Chartier defines love as “a positive orientation on the other” (The Analogy of Love: Divine and Human Love at the Center of Christian Theology [Charlottesville, VA: Imprint Academic, 2007], 1).
Defining Love

Promoting well-being involves enhancing the mental and physical aspects of reality. It may involve acting to attain sufficient food, clean air and water, adequate clothing and living conditions, personal security, and the opportunity for intellectual development. It may involve attaining the satisfaction of being cared for and the sense of belonging, diversity of life forms and cultural expressions, an appropriate level of leisure and entertainment, and economic stability. Promoting well-being may involve acting responsively to secure a feeling of worth, medical soundness and physical fitness, deep personal relationships, social and political harmony, and the opportunity to develop spiritual/religious sensibilities and practices. Acting responsively to increase well-being may involve acting in ways that develop a person’s virtuous dispositions, habits, and character. To promote well-being is to act to increase flourishing in at least one but often many of these dimensions of existence.49

Love takes into account, to varying degrees, the life of the individual, local community, and global community. As far as they apply, acting to promote overall well-being includes considering the flourishing of nonhuman organisms and ecological systems. It even includes intensifying God’s own happiness. Acting to promote overall well-being can pertain to any dimension of life. I affirm what Dasgupta calls a “pluralist outlook,” insofar as I acknowledge that love can pertain to the multifarious dimensions of a life well lived.50

An act of love establishes or increases well-being.

Promoting overall well-being is roughly the same as promoting the common good. Of course, determining how to calculate what the common good requires and the various dimensions that compose it is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. A recent Princeton University think tank consisting of scholars from various academic disciplines discovered that a comprehensive definition, let alone calculation, was beyond their grasp.51 Nevertheless, a deep com-

49. For strategies and research in promoting well-being in humans, see Margaret Schneider Jamner and Daniel Stokols, eds., Promoting Human Wellness: New Frontiers for Research, Practice, and Policy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).


51. See the product of the Princeton three-year discussion, Patrick D. Miller and Dennis P. McCann, eds., In Search of the Common Good (New York: T&T Clark, 2005).
mitment to promoting the common good or overall well-being in the various dimensions of life and for the good of the whole persists among scholars and religious leaders today. A recent papal encyclical underscores the Christian commitment to promoting the common good. Love demands that we pay attention to concerns beyond those near and relatively few. Love’s vision is deep and wide.

One factor that makes defining love so difficult is that at least three divergent linguistic traditions influence our love vocabulary. The reference to “well-being” requires that we address the love vocabulary of these traditions. By “love vocabulary” I mean the actual way people use the word love in their communication. I identify these three linguistic traditions as (1) the proper/improper tradition, (2) the mutuality tradition, and (3) the ḥesed tradition. Coming to terms with the love vocabulary of these three will help us analyze the ways we use the word love.

The proper/improper love tradition, identified initially with the ancient Greeks, has primarily affected the way some Westerners use the word love. We see its influence in the earliest Greek philosophers, a little bit in the Christian New Testament, in the Qur’an, and sometimes in common language of the West. What is distinctive about the proper/improper linguistic tradition is that the word love can describe any purposive action whatsoever. To love is to act purposively or to desire.

Thomas Aquinas, who was greatly influenced by Aristotle’s language on this issue, expresses well the purposive action aspect of the proper/improper tradition’s understanding of love. He argues that “every agent, whatever it be, does every action from love of some kind.” We see the proper/improper linguistic tradition at play in Augustine’s famous directive “Love, but see to it what

53. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981), parts I–II, q. 28, a. 6. My use of this quotation from Aquinas (and the next from Augustine) are not meant to claim that Aquinas or Augustine thought of love only as proper/improper or as will. We find the other linguistic traditions employed in their thought as well, which means that they contribute to linguistic confusion surrounding the use of the word love.
you love.”54 According to the proper/improper linguistic tradition, merely to act intentionally is to love.

Søren Kierkegaard sometimes uses the word love to express a second way some in the proper/improper tradition understand love. Instead of emphasizing love as purposive action, Kierkegaard thinks of love as first and foremost a desire or passion. He puts it succinctly when he says that “love is a passion of the emotions.”55 To desire an object or individual is to love that object or individual. Desire is love.

When someone from the proper/improper tradition uses the word love, a qualifier of some sort is or should be employed. An adjective such as “proper” and “improper,” “perfect” and “imperfect,” “appropriate” and “inappropriate,” or “fitting” and “unfitting” precedes the word love.56 Saints love properly; sinners love improperly. Wise people love objects appropriately; fools love objects inappropriately. The word love requires a qualifier if laden with moral or value connotations, because love in this linguistic tradition can refer to actions and desires that are good or evil.

One of the most common problems arising in the proper/improper tradition of love language is the tendency for those in the tradition not to use a qualifier consistently. Sometimes they mean for love to have a positive sense, but they forget to include the qualifier with the word love. Readers and listeners are unsure then how “love” is being used. They wonder if “love” is value-positive, value-negative, or value-neutral. When those in this tradition use “love” to refer to that which is value-negative, readers are confused. Bewilderment ensues.

Although the proper/improper tradition rightly emphasizes the idea that love is an action or passion, the qualifiers prior to the word

54. Augustine, Commentaries on the Psalms 90.31.5. The following sentence reads, “Caritas says: love of God and love of neighbor; cupiditas says: love of the world and love of this age.”


love also make it rhetorically problematic. It strikes most people, including me, as odd to talk of “improper love,” “inappropriate love,” “inauthentic love,” or even “evil love.”

Although we can make some sense out of what a speaker means when using “love” in these ways, these uses more often confuse. Telling our spouses, children, or even God that we love them properly seems an odd practice. A consistent and rhetorically sensible use of “love” seems important for making progress in the study and promotion of love.

We often find the second linguistic tradition—mutuality—in the philosophies of the East. It is also evident in the West’s amorous literature. According to the mutuality tradition, to love is to engage in personal interaction or relationship. Love is relation.

The mutuality linguistic tradition says that the reciprocity inherent in any relationship is, itself, love. For instance, contemporary theologian Vincent Brümmer calls love “a reciprocal relation,” and he claims that love “must by its very nature be a relationship of free mutual give and take.”

Philosopher Charles Hartshorne offers a similar understanding of love as mutuality when he says that “love means realization in oneself of the desires and experiences of others, so that one who loves can in so far inflict suffering only by undergoing this suffering himself.” Hartshorne also uses the phrase “life sharing” to define love as mutuality. Wherever we see reciprocal relationships, says the mutuality tradition, love is present. To be mutually related is to love.

Although the mutuality tradition rightly emphasizes the importance of relationships, few of us, including me, would describe

57. One could also use the word love to speak of proper and improper relations. In this way of speaking, proper relations is correct moral response, while improper relations are morally incorrect. My objection to this relational use of “love” is the same as my objection to the proper/improper linguist tradition.


59. Charles Hartshorne, Man’s Vision of God, and the Logic of Theism (Chicago: Willett, Clark, 1941), 31. Hartshorne, like most in the mutuality (and proper/improper) tradition, is inconsistent in his use of the word love. Sometimes he uses the word to speak of simple mutuality; other times he uses the word to speak of acting for the good. And he does not believe that mutuality always promotes the good.

all relationships as loving. Some relationships generate evil. Some relationships are not healthy, and at least temporarily severing such unhealthy relationships may be the loving path one should take. Taken to its rhetorical extreme, the mutuality tradition would identify a relationship promoting evil as a relationship of love. By contrast, I suggest that we should not equate love with mutuality, despite the necessary role that mutuality plays in love. Robust research requires rhetorical consistency.

In my definition of love, the phrase “to promote overall well-being” places my understanding of love in the third linguistic tradition, ḥesed. Love is doing good. In this linguistic tradition, “love” is reserved for descriptions of ideal ethical actions or what the Hebrew authors called “righteousness.” Such loving actions promote well-being. When I use the word love, therefore, I follow the practice of the love-as-doing-good tradition and therefore refer to action that engenders well-being. This use corresponds with a widespread tendency to understand love as doing good or acting in beneficial ways.

A key word in the last phrase of my love definition is “overall.” The next chapter addresses the importance of this word in greater detail. Here I will simply say that the reference to overall well-being is meant to indicate that actions intended to benefit the self or the few at the obvious expense of the many should not be considered acts of love. In chapter 2 we will explore this notion as it pertains to loving oneself.

It will be obvious to many that my reference to well-being implicates most if not all versions of metaethics and moral theories. As is appropriate, ethicists, theologians, and moral philosophers debate the value of ethical theories when deciding how to best understand morality and the pursuit of the good life. And as is typical, a variety of approaches exist among scholars.

I mean for my definition of love to fit comfortably within most if not all the dominant metaethical frameworks and moral theories. Advocates of differing approaches should find my definition helpful, even as they employ it in differing ways. For instance, advocates of feminist ethics will appreciate the central role of sympathy/empathy in my definition of love. Advocates of divine command ethics should find my reference to divine action helpful as they consider love as the appropriate response to God’s will. Those who propose
various ethics of care should find helpful my emphasis on relation-
ality and response. Advocates of metatheories such as natural law
ethics, virtue ethics, and Kantianism should also find my definition
of love helpful in various ways for their own deliberations.61

To be adequate to a wide range of concrete activities that should
rightly be regarded as loving while also being fruitful for a wide
variety of metaethical theories, an acceptable definition of love
must be sufficiently abstract. To say it another way: a definition that
seeks to be relevant to a comprehensive set of actions and theories
requires generalization. A helpful abstraction should not be so
general, however, that it allows for any action or theory whatso-
ever. It must be able to account for those actions that, after careful
reflection, we justifiably deem loving. And yet it must exclude those
actions that we justifiably deem unloving. A good definition should
be both broadly inclusive and appropriately exclusive.

Conclusion

I suggest that my definition of love—to love is to act intentionally,
in sympathetic response to others (including God), to promote
overall well-being—can provide the practical benefit and intel-
lectual satisfaction needed of a definition helpful for the love, science,
and theology symbiosis. Scientific and theological research on love
requires more than this, but an adequate definition can be fruitful
for research in many ways. Although we can express love without
having a well-conceived definition, my hope is that this definition

61. For particularly good sources for these various metaethical theories, see,
for instance, Craig Boyd, A Shared Morality: A Narrative Defense of Natural Law
Ethics (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007); Paul M. Cooey, Sharon A. Farmer, and
Mary Ellen Ross, eds., Embodied Love: Sensuality and Relationship as Feminist
Values (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); Andrew Michael Flescher, Heroes,
Saints, and Ordinary Morality (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press,
2003); Robin Gill, ed., The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 2001); Ruth Groenhout, Connected Lives: Human
Nature and an Ethics of Care (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004); Timo-
thy Jackson, The Priority of Love: Christian Charity and Social Justice (Princeton,
NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue: A Study in
Moral Theory, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984);
Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins, eds., The Philosophy of (Ero tic)
itself can be an act that promotes well-being. My hope is that it can help those who wish to promote well-being.

Other pressing issues must still be addressed. In the next chapter we look at the forms of love and acting for one’s own good in relation to others. These issues must be carefully sorted if the love, science, and theology symbiosis is to gain necessary traction. This chapter, however, provides an important piece of the process—a definition of love—for the depth and breadth of research possible for the love, science, and theology symbiosis.