

but why not take a more positive view? Within Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism and progressive Christianity, there are surely those who could cooperate with religious naturalists in a wholehearted manner. Such persons will find Hogue's work to be of invaluable assistance in comprehending the scope and promise of religious naturalism.

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*Defining Love: A Philosophical, Scientific, and Theological Engagement.* Thomas Jay Oord. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010. 225 + xii pp. \$29.99 paper. And *The Nature of Love: A Theology.* Thomas Jay Oord. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2010. 195 + xii pp. \$24.99 paper. (Reviewed by Rem B. Edwards, Lindsay Young Professor of Philosophy, Emeritus, The University of Tennessee. E-mail: remb@knology.net)

These two remarkable books, both published in 2010, share many themes but differ in significant ways, and each is very much worth reading and pondering. Oord's *The Nature of Love* concentrates primarily on conceptual and theological themes relating to the very nature of love itself and what influential theologians have had to say about love. His *Defining Love* focuses on how the social and physical sciences impact our understanding of human and divine love. Both books presuppose and express many themes that are prominent in process theology such as: freedom is universally present (by degrees) in all creatures, especially us; predestination is abhorrent and untenable; God exists necessarily and everlastingly but not timelessly; God foreknows what is knowable but does not know future free decisions that have not yet been made; God's general character or attributes do not change, yet God's experiences and actions change as God interacts with creatures in time and history; God has real feelings, including his central attributes of genuine love and compassion; and God created our universe out of the ashes of some preceding universe (and ultimately out of an infinite series or strand of expanding and collapsing quantum universes). Personally, I disagree only with the last of these because I defend creation ex nihilo.

Significantly, unlike many who use the term without heedful attention to what it means, Oord recognizes that the very concept of "love" requires careful analysis and refinement. He is concerned primarily with "love" as biblically grounded and with what it ought to mean for theology today. His approach to love is historical, critical, analytic, and prescriptive, as developed through the many pages of his books. Let's begin with his final formal prescriptive definition of the term in *The Nature of Love*. He gives it in bold as: "To love is to act

intentionally, in sympathetic/empathetic response to God and others, to promote overall well being" (17). His emphasis is first of all upon objective acting. No one really loves unless they are willing to put it into practice, to "do something beneficial" (18). The subjective aspects of love—intentionality, sympathy, and empathy—are also stressed (21–22, 30–31), as is the ultimate objective of love, promoting overall well being, by which he seems to mean what many philosophers call "maximizing the good," not just for the few, but for "the good of the whole" or "the common good" (19–21). Given this understanding of the nature of love, Oord is equipped to do battle with such giants of love-theology as Anders Nygren, St. Augustine, and contemporary "Open Theology" as represented mainly by Clark H. Pinnock.

In his chapter on Nygren, Oord argues that no matter how immensely influential he has been, what Nygren says about "*agape*" almost completely misrepresents the biblical understanding of "love." Nygren holds that only God can love, *agape* style, and that although we sinful creatures of the world have no intrinsic value whatsoever to motivate it, God loves us anyway. With Luther, Nygren agrees that we human beings are so depraved that we have no inherent intrinsic worth, and that we are utterly incapable of *agape* love, though God is able to squirt some of it into us as through "a tube" (36–37). Oord maintains, to the contrary, that there actually is an intrinsic goodness in us for God to love, and the Bible assumes that we really are perfectly capable of loving in the proper biblical understanding of the term. He further argues that Biblical love, as applied to both God and us, contains elements of sacrificial *agape*, of desiring *eros*, and of communal *philia* (38–39, 49); and he thoroughly and convincingly documents this claim (38–53). These themes are also developed in the second chapter of *Defining Love*.

Oord's chapter on St. Augustine in *The Nature of Love* takes issue with the two Latin words that Augustine used to express his understanding of the nature of love, "Charity (*caritas*) desires something or someone for God's sake; cupidity (*cupiditas*) desires for the sake of something else" (61). Augustine held that we should love only God for his own sake, and that people (others and self) should be loved (used) only for God's sake, which means that people have no intrinsic worth, only God does. Anything should be loved in its proper order, and that is the right order, as Augustine understood it (63–65). Augustine's main problem (among several minor ones), Oord indicates, is that he obfuscates the real meaning of Jesus's second commandment, which really means it when it says we should love others as ourselves—both ourselves and others as ends, as well as for God's sake. "Contrary to Augustine we should love others for their own sakes. After all, the dominant biblical witness says love for other creatures does not function solely as a means to a divine end" (65–67). One of the most

theologically offensive things about Augustine's position, Oord maintains, is his claim that "God Does Not Enjoy Us, But Makes Use of Us" (67). This means that God does not value us as ends (as intrinsically good) but only as means (as extrinsically good), and we should value one another accordingly. We will probably want to agree with Oord rather than with Augustine on this one.

Oord's commitments to process theology (as described in the first paragraph above) come out most clearly in the last two chapters of *The Nature of Love*. Oord focuses mainly, though not exclusively, on the theological position taken by Clark H. Pinnock, who shares most of the process assumptions that Oord accepts (90). Oord's central objection to Pinnock's position is his claim that God voluntarily limits the exercise of his own power in creating free creatures and out of respect for that freedom (93). *Defining Love* recognizes that other theological cosmologists like Nancy Murphy, George F. R. Ellis, and John Polkinghorne share this "voluntary self-limitation" position (149–55). Oord advances a number of powerful arguments against it. First and foremost, the voluntary self-limitation position cannot deal adequately with the problem of evil because it conceives of God as having immense yet unused power to prevent evil, which seriously calls into question God's loving goodness (*The Nature of Love*, 96, 98–99). The same objections are raised in *Defining Love*, as explained later.

Closely related to the power issue is the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. If God had the power to create the world out of nothing, he would also have the power to prevent all evils, which he does not do, so the "voluntary self-limitation" position implies that "God must not care enough to prevent them" (*The Nature of Love*, 124). To avoid this, God's power, the voluntariness of God's love, and *creatio ex nihilo* have to go, if God is truly loving. Creation out of nothing would be coercive, Oord maintains, in agreement with David Griffin, but a loving God would never coerce (97–98, 106–7, 114). Also, creation out of nothing is not the view of Genesis or the Bible, as Oord correctly maintains (*The Nature of Love*, 102–4; *Defining Love*, 155–59); instead, it originated in Gnosticism (*The Nature of Love*, 105–6).

Oord's alternative to Pinnock's theory of God's voluntary but loving self-limitation in creating free creatures is that love is a necessary attribute of God, so we must think of God's loving creation of the world (some world) as necessary, involuntary, and unavoidable (*The Nature of Love*, 107–11, 114; *Defining Love*, 211). God is simply not free to choose to act in unloving ways; and overriding freedom would always be unloving. God must always respect the creaturely freedom; he could not do otherwise. In fact, God is not free to act at all except through persuasion, the lure of goodness itself, for God lacks the power to influence others in any other way. This is the heart of Oord's theory

of “Essential (as opposed to Voluntary) Kenosis,” as developed in the final chapters of *The Nature of Love* (117–57) and *Defining Love* (200–211).

Few details of “Essential Kenosis” can be given here, but Oord’s final theory incorporates the mainstream process view that God simply lacks the power to prevent evil (*The Nature of Love*, 141–44; *Defining Love*, 202–11). God is not culpable for evil in the world because he simply can’t do anything about it. Also, God created our universe *persuasively* (*Defining Love*, 162) out of antecedent universes (*The Nature of Love*, 134–37; *Defining Love*, 160–66) rather than out of nothing. The details of this are most developed in Oord’s chapter on “Love and Cosmology” in *Defining Love* (137–72). There Oord adopts the widespread process view that a loving God must always have *some* world to love, though not necessarily ours; thus, “God is love” counts in favor of God’s creating universes persuasively out of antecedent universes, *ad infinitum*. Much contemporary cosmological speculation also supports the creation of our universe out of preceding universes (166–72).

Oord’s *Defining Love*, the most philosophical and detailed of his two books, deals astutely and distinctively with “science and religion” issues as they have a bearing on love, both Divine and human. Its first chapter (1–30) deals with the nature of science and the nature of love (largely as explained earlier in connection with *The Nature of Love*, though in more depth and detail). His second chapter again critiques Nygren’s analysis of “*agape*” (31–52), much as was done in his other book, but it also explores the possibility and significance of self-love in relation to loving others (53–63).

The third chapter of *Defining Love*, “Love and the Social Sciences,” deals astutely with affirmations and critiques of love in recent developments in psychology and sociology. Oord’s own definition of “love” is normative and prescriptive, but in this chapter he discusses more empirical or descriptive approaches to defining “love,” and he finds that they give unclear and unsatisfying results (66–69). Positive psychology and attachment theory (69–74) give better results that “support well an understanding of love as intentional response that promotes over-all well-being” (74). Studies of why people do not usually respond to emergency situations involving strangers do not necessarily show that people are callous, indifferent, irresponsible, and unloving; they may show only that people expect others to intervene, are confused about their own proper roles, do not know how to help, or afraid of being seriously harmed themselves (74–79). Some social scientists, e.g., C. Daniel Batson, take the possibility of genuine altruism, compassion, and self-sacrifice seriously, even if people are primarily self-interested, and they have performed ingenious experiments to show that this is so. They find that these virtues may vary greatly from person to person

and by degrees, depending largely on perceived risks to themselves (79–85). However, some people, like those who helped many Jews to escape the Nazis, are willing to assume extreme risks to themselves out of genuinely altruistic or unselfish motivation (85–90). And moral values and virtues, including genuine empathy and compassion, can be effectively encouraged and taught (90–96).

His chapter on “Love and Biological Sciences” deals with affirmations of and threats to love coming out of evolutionary theory and sociobiology. Here Oord argues (98–103) that “the urge and struggle for ‘survival,’ ‘advantage,’ ‘profitability,’ ‘adaptation,’ and ‘improvement,’ Darwin describes” in *On the Origin of the Species* “are not essentially opposed to love” (103). He explains that Darwin’s account of the origin of morality in *The Descent of Man* allowed for the evolutionary development of a moral sense, social instincts, genuine sympathy, services to others, the golden rule, and the presence of “something like a conscience” in both human and some nonhuman animals (105). Oord further explores morality and unselfish motivation and behavior in nonhuman animals as this is defended by Mark Bekoff and Frans de Waal (106–8). Other prominent sociobiologists also acknowledge and defend degrees of cooperation, reciprocal altruism, sympathy, and self-sacrifice among animals (110–16); not all genes are selfish (116–28); and free agency extends into the nonhuman world (129–36).

Aspects of Oord’s chapter on “Love and Cosmology” were previously explored, but here Oord also discusses the “anthropic principle” (139–44) and defends the thesis that ours is a quantum universe “fine-tuned for love” (144–51).

I will offer only four critical remarks about the contents of Oord’s books, all of which should be viewed against a background of great appreciation for and massive overall agreement with what he has accomplished.

First, Oord’s definition of “love” in *The Nature of Love* as “a response to God and others” restricts his definition of “love” to creaturely love and leaves him without a definition of love that applies to God. By omitting “to God” and making it just a “response to others,” Oord could have a definition of love that covers everyone. In *Defining Love*, Oord makes just this move; there he puts “(including God)” in parentheses (15), indicating his own sensitivity to this problem.

Second, the “promote overall well-being” (maximizing goodness) aspect of his definition may set the standard of love so high, by definition, that it applies to no human beings at all, or at best only to perfected saints, if there are any. By omitting “overall,” or what has been called “optimific goodness,” perhaps this defect could be remedied.

Third, because the “promote overall well-being” aspect of his definition of “love” makes it impossible for him to say that anyone could love anything less

than the best, Oord rejects the common, useful, and illuminating distinction between “proper” and “improper” love (*The Nature of Love*, 24, 29–30, 60–61; *Defining Good*, 25–26). Many of us want to be able to say, with the New Testament, as Oord concedes (46–47), and with innumerable theologians, that people often love some things inordinately or improperly, e.g., worldly success, themselves, only their own family, kin, and kind, etc. Jonathan Edwards identified “true virtue” as love of all being as such, and he recognized that most people do not have it because they love only small parts of the total system of reality; John Wesley agreed. By dropping the “overall,” which means universal in scope as well as optimal in goodness, or by assigning “overall” only to “proper” love, Oord could also allow us to say such truthful things.

Finally, Oord goes with mainstream process theology in rejecting *creatio ex nihilo* and accepting David Griffin’s view that since God has no efficient causal power, only persuasive power, (except as persuasive influence involves efficient causation), God can neither cause nor prevent evil. Not all pantheistic or process thinkers have been convinced by Griffin, and they may not be convinced by Oord, though his arguments are very persuasive and challenging.

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*Pragmatist Metaphysics: An Essay on the Ethical Grounds of Ontology.* Sami Pihlström. Continuum Series in American Philosophy. New York: Continuum, 2009. 240 pp. \$130 cloth. (Reviewed by Megan Doherty, University of Chicago)

Pihlström’s book, *Pragmatist Metaphysics*, offers what he feels “no previous book-length study” (viii) has accomplished: as the title suggests, he sketches how metaphysics would look when done from a pragmatic perspective. This involves rejecting two assumptions: that metaphysics is necessarily “realistic” and that pragmatism is necessarily antimetaphysical. Taking his bearings from pragmatists both classic (e.g. Peirce, James, and Dewey) and contemporary (e.g. Putnam), he argues for a “pragmatic realism” that examines the basic characteristics of our *human* reality. A good primer for those with some background and interest in pragmatism and metaphysics, and who would like to see the latter tailored to the former, Pihlström’s book makes for a good resource.

Suggesting that traditional metaphysical issues (such as truth, transcendental argument, ethics, modality, and God) need to be approached pragmatically, Pihlström also insists on the necessary entanglement between metaphysics and ethics: far from being distinct, ethics actually *grounds* metaphysics since anything “reality” could be is always already constructed from valuational per-