THE FOURFOLD PRAXIS OF LOVE

Neighbourly love in context

WERNER G. JEANROND

THE CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL tradition knows plenty of attempts to divide love into different strands while, at the same time, acknowledging God as the sole origin and fullness of love. This is strange. Why do theologians wish to separate human and divine love from each other? Is it in order to affirm God's sovereignty and divinity over and against the fallibility and weakness of human love? Or might there be a wish to preserve a human domain of love which does not depend on God? Does the separation of human and divine love, then, serve to protect God's freedom, on the one hand, and human freedom, on the other?

Unlike other languages that only know one word for love, the English language can differentiate between *love* and *charity*, that is between a larger complex of loving relations that is not to be confused with particular acts of charity in response to various human needs. Hence, in English there is love as such and there is a praxis of generous giving to people in need.

Moreover, in Christian tradition we can observe a tendency to separate between human expressions of love that include physical relations to other human beings (erotic and sexual love) and mere spiritual expressions of love that are seen to represent divinely willed forms of love (*agape*). Underlying such trends is often a fundamental suspicion of human desire for love affected by the Fall of Adam and Eve, i.e., by human sinfulness. Ultimately, human love cannot be trusted; only divine love is pure and good.[1]

Some Christian thinkers have even affirmed that, ultimately, human beings really cannot love. God alone is capable of loving, and any genuine love emerging from human action is in truth an act of God.[2]

In this article, I wish to restore and affirm the human ability to love in its wider human and divine context. My thesis is that there is only one praxis of love, and that God has bestowed the gift of love to all human beings. What is the potential of this divine gift of love when taken up by humanity?

However, even theologians who affirm the unity of love and who acknowledge the divine nature of the gift of love at times feel a need to subordinate this gift of love to the gift of faith. Love, they argue, requires constant control and ongoing monitoring by faith. Here, love is subordinated to theological schemes and dogmatic systems. It appears that, for many women and men, love was too dynamic a gift, too risky a prospect and too adventurous a move, thus causing them to look for ways to domesticate love with the help of theological moves, catechisms, and doctrines. Is love a praxis too big for us humans to be engaged in? Is that the reason why we might prefer to reflect upon God as love rather than considering the human potential to love?

I wish to rehabilitate the divine gift of love and the human praxis of love in three moves: first, I offer arguments for the unity of love. Second, I consider neighbourly love within the network of mutually interdependent loving relationships. Third and finally, I explore the unity of love and charity.

The unity of love

Phenomenologically speaking, all instances of being loved and of loving include an experience of otherness and difference. Love always involves an other—the human other, the divine other, the universe in all its forms as other, and my own self as other. Love involves relating to other subjects or to other objects. Hence, it is evident that love presupposes some level of freedom to relate to otherness in the first place. However, there is no need for *full* presence in love: we human beings are able even to relate to others who are not or no longer present. We can love somebody whose bodiliness is beyond our reach and grasp. We can love the dead, the departed, the distant. Moreover, we can even participate in emerging bodies of love, in loving communities.

On this side of death, human acts of love always involve bodies and have implications for the understanding of our respective body.[3]

Here is not the place to reflect in any detail upon the love of objects. We can say that we love cars, colours, movies, music, the sun, and the seasons, etc. We can also meaningfully state that we love values and achievements, such as freedom, truth, justice, power, virtues, etc. Whatever we claim to love, we always experience love as transitive: we love some thing or some body. Even grammatically, love presupposes an other. Love always extends to some manifestation of otherness.

We can distinguish four possible directions in the human praxis of love (to be clarified further as we go along in our exploration): we can love other human beings—dead or alive; we can love God; we can love the universe as a whole or any aspect of the universe; and we can love our own emerging selves. However, all of these directions of love presuppose a human subject in the making, though not any full or total subjectivity. Rather, love affects the process of our very becoming a subject. Those who addressed us when we were still babies, first opened our ears, eyes, hands and brains for language, and they welcomed us to the web of human communication and interaction.[4] Love is never a neutral action on behalf of an isolated agent. Instead, every act of love represents a step into a new or emerging relation and relational network with incalculable consequences. Love in all its forms is potentially transformative. Loving attention to the other affects both the self and the other.

Love, then, is not an action by fully self-present subjects; rather, love is co-constitutive of the emergence of subjectivity and subjects. The mysterious nature of love, therefore, can never be completely planned, strategically calculated, or phenomenologically exhausted. The dynamics of love can be entered into, love can be discovered and experienced, but it cannot be made or controlled—or, rather, it can be controlled but only at the cost of killing it.

Hence, it makes good sense to refer to love in terms of a *praxis*—an entire network of interdependent relations. Every aspect of this praxis affects all other aspects. The love of God and the love between human

beings are interrelated. They can and must be distinguished, but since they are capable of affecting each other, they must not be separated. The same can be said, of course, about evil acts which human beings perform against each other. Hatred, war, neglect, lack of attention and of care, patriarchal and colonial behaviour, all such actions affect the entire network of human relationships. The human desire for love always develops within larger networks of dynamic relationships. However, loving relationships need not necessarily be symmetrical. The relationship between parents and children, teachers and pupils, God and human beings, for example, are not symmetrical, but, at best, mutual. Love can even be one-sided: we can love even those who have treated us badly or who have ignored us. In principle, actions of love always remain possible, even when circumstances do not easily facilitate or promote initiatives of love. The story of love, thus, will never end as long as agents persist in the praxis of loving.

We human beings can grow in love. For such growth in love, we depend on networks of love—even beyond the immediate family. The experience of difference and otherness allows love to flourish and loving subjects to grow. For its growth, love does not require harmony. Rather, the challenge of otherness and even of conflicts provides the ground for the dynamic praxis of love. What is required to trigger the emergence of love is first of all attention to the other, curiosity to find out more about the other, while, at the same time, being prepared to discover ever new dimensions and possibilities even of one's own self in the process. This is not always easy. Hence, it makes good sense to speak with Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) of the "works of love" (*Kjerlighedens gjerninger*, 1847).[5] The Danish philosopher suggested not to approach and understand love as such, but through its concrete works.[6] As has become clear by now, love has nothing much to do with romanticizing feelings or harmonious celebrations of unity. Love can be hard work, precisely because the confrontation with otherness may make demands on us. In that sense, love is always much more than emotion or sentiment.

In both Jewish and Christian traditions, love is understood also in terms of a commandment. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the

LORD alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:4–5), and "you shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18).[7] In the Gospel of Matthew, for instance, Jesus combines these commandments: "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37–40).

These biblical traditions strongly affirm the interdependent network of loving relationships. Attitudes and emotions, attention and commitment, commandment and law, beneficence and gifts, devotion and admiration, and respect and recognition are among the ingredients that may enter into our experience of love. However, none of them alone, nor all of them together can ever exhaust the dynamics of love. "Rather than looking on love as an attitude which might issue in a relationship, we could also look on love as a relationship which involves partners adopting a complex set of attitudes towards each other."[8] Only as a network of interdependent relationships does love disclose its complex, incalculable and surprising dynamics.

For the Apostle Paul, love was the most important of the three God-given virtues of faith, hope and love. In his famous hymn to love in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul leaves no doubt that love is the greatest of these three (v. 13). It never ends (v. 8). "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (v. 4–7).

Theologian Karl Rahner (1904–1984) further explores Paul's theology of love.[9] He emphasizes that genuine love constitutes a radically new community of human beings. This new community of love allows the reign of God to begin in secret; it is the miracle of the birth of eternity in our midst—"love never ends" as Paul had put it. However, this miracle of love must not be confused with social planning; love cannot be produced, as it were, but it can be entered into. Looking

more closely at the relationship between love of neighbour and love of God, Rahner distinguishes between love as a reflected and explicit mode of action, on the one hand, and love as an as yet not conceptualized transcendental horizon of action, on the other hand. Rahner thus confirms both the agency and subjectivity of the one who loves and the subjectivity of the one who is loved. However, *that* I can love my neighbour is already the result of God's gift of love, and thus not separated from God's love.[10]

Hence, for Rahner this basic human act of loving attention to and recognition of the neighbour is always already related to the God of eternal life, even though we may not always be aware of this relationship. This love of the other person, then, is the fulfilment of the total and hence also spiritually transcendent nature of the human being, and it opens us human beings to the immediacy of the God who communicates himself under the form of grace. All genuine love is always grace, and genuine grace is love.[11] And Rahner can conclude: the act of love of neighbour is the only categorical and original act in which the human being attains the whole of the given reality, fulfils his or her own self and *thus* experiences God's transcendental and gracious self-communication.[12]

For Rahner, the relationship between love of neighbour and love of God has thus become clearer: the categorical and explicit love of neighbour is the primary act of loving God. It is not the total love of God, but it is the beginning of an opening towards God. Love is *the* New Testament word to bring to expression "what God is and what the human being is to be".[13] Love can only be described; it cannot be defined. It is the total act in which a person gains the right and full relationship to another person through recognizing and affirming the totality of the other in her or his goodness and dignity. Hence, love is genuinely dialogical in so far as the loving subject and the loved subject are related to each other in their respective selfhood, dignity and irreplaceable otherness.[14] Otherness, for Rahner, is and remains an essential aspect of any love relation. Therefore, God and the human person always remain mysteries, mysteries best to be approached through love.

Although Rahner stresses the link between love of God and love of neighbour, he also warns against any human claim to have grasped or understood the mystery of God. While interpersonal love gives us a hint of our relationship to God, it remains true "that only in the act of resigned and self-forsaking surrender of the subject to the incomprehensibility of God as such (which then ceases to be a limitation and becomes the very content of our relationship to God) does the most fundamental nature of love really dawn upon us, of which interpersonal love is merely a creaturely reflection".[15]

Rahner never tires emphasizing the intimate relationship between our love of God and our love of neighbour, while at the same time also underlining the difference between both loves. Both God and the human person have their own dignity, and the respective dignity must be recognized in our human acts of love. With regard to human dignity, Rahner also affirms the significance of the human body for any consideration of human love. He rejects any attempt to split the human person in bodily and spiritual love. Instead, he invites reflection upon the love of "the *whole* person" (*den ganzen Menschen*).[16]

The love of neighbour within the network of loving relationships

I suggest that we extend Rahner's attention to the interconnection between love of God and love of neighbour by including both the love of the universe (in its many dimensions) and the love of the human self in this multidimensional network of love. All four forms of love occur within the larger context of love, which Rahner identified as the universe of grace. All love points to God, the origin and fullness of love. Explicitly or implicitly, all acts of love are related to this divine ground of love. Moreover, acknowledging the universe as God's good creation always links our human acts of love of the universe to its creator.

Although most Christian traditions have understood the universe as God's good creation, not all have called for loving care for and action on behalf of the universe. Care for the material universe, including environment, climate, sustainability, etc., involves works of love, too. In some branches of Christianity, an exclusive focus on lov-

ing God has eclipsed attention to the love of nature, of the world, of beauty, etc. At times, soteriology and corresponding acts of love concentrated solely on the spiritual rescue of human souls, while material aspects of human life and of the universe were excluded from the orbit of love and hope.[17]

For many an understanding of salvation from human depravity, the clue to hope lies in the past *before* the Fall of Adam and Eve, *before* the crime of Cain against his brother Abel, *before* the onset of human discovery, science, development and the resulting destruction of a supposedly originally clean and innocent environment. However, such a desire for innocence thinks pessimistically about God's invitation to all human beings to become agents of love in God's continuing project of creation that is shaped at once by evolution, human development and God's transforming presence in our physical universe. The longing for a past paradise romanticizes God's original act of creation and infantilizes human agency, subjectivity and participation in this project. God loves us and invites us to become friends and collaborators in his grand project of creation and reconciliation.[18] Hence, we need not escape into the role of mere spectators hoping for a cosmic drama staged in front of us though without our direct involvement, participation and commitment. The focal point of God's project lies in future fulfilment and glory—not in the past. And this promised future affects us already here and now by soliciting our participation in its dynamic movement.[19] If we must speak in terms of salvation, it would be more appropriate anyway to speak about salvation *for* rather than salvation *from*.[20] Narrating the past and remembering God's acts in history are of course important aspects for understanding and approaching the future of God's project and of human involvement in it. However, the chief perspective for the Christian praxis of love remains God's future and our divine vocation to participate in this unfolding orbit of love.

In his 2015 encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis connects the love for the earth with neighbourly love when, with reference to Saint Francis, he writes that Francis shows us "just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment

to society, and interior peace" (LS 10).[21] Francis of Assisi helps us "to see that an integral ecology calls for openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology, and take us to the heart of what it is to be human" (LS 11).

Love of the universe is thus intimately related to the love of our neighbours. Attention to our social conditions will draw us immediately to our natural conditions and vice versa. "The social dimensions of global change include the effects of technological innovations on employment, social exclusion, an inequitable distribution and consumption of energy and other services, social breakdown, increased violence and a rise in new forms of social aggression, drug trafficking, growing drug use by young people, and the loss of identity." (LS 46) Furthermore, "when media and the digital world become omnipresent, their influence can stop people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously" (LS 47). The point here is not to demonize either the media or modern technological development. Rather, the point is to review the human use of all means and media in terms of how they advance a culture of love. "Today's media do enable us to communicate and to share our knowledge and affections. Yet at times they also shield us from direct contact with the pain, the fears and the joys of others and the complexity of their personal experiences." (LS 47) Everybody who has suffered through the necessary yet painful COVID-19 restrictions and thus has experience of the ambivalence of mediated life, might be minded to agree.

Once more Pope Francis affirms the link between love, justice and truth, to which some theologians have drawn attention before,[22] when he realizes "that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*" (LS 49).[23]

The orbit of love is universal: love of the world involves social love and the love of God. Moreover, it also challenges us to review the extent to which we love our own emerging selves and how a genuine self-love intersects with the other forms of love. "Disregard for the duty to cultivate and maintain a proper relationship with my neighbour,

for whose care and custody I am responsible, ruins my relationship with my own self, with others, with God and with the earth." (LS 70) Everything is interconnected. Genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature cannot be separated from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others, including our own selves. Hence, a new spirituality is needed that includes a conversion for achieving reconciliation with creation (cf. LS 218). However, conversion applies not merely to individual persons, but to all humanity. "Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, and encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption." (LS 222)

This papal encyclical letter thus does not advocate a moralizing approach to love and life; rather, it wishes to support both happiness and the common good. "Happiness means knowing how to limit some needs which only diminish us, and being open to the many different possibilities which life can offer." (LS 223) The joy of our hope will sustain us in our struggles and concern for this planet (cf. LS 244).

How, then, do love of neighbour and love of self relate? I am not analysing egoistic tendencies in human love, tendencies well known to each and every human being. Rather, I wish to explore the necessity of a genuine love of self in which the self remains the other to which I am also called to relate. Here it is important to recall the difference between *loving* oneself and *liking* oneself.[24] In my understanding of the complex biblical love commandment, all are called to love their emerging selves in the light of God's love, even when they do not like themselves or aspects of themselves. Ultimately, it is the knowledge and experience of God's prior love that makes self-love possible in the first place—notwithstanding any like or dislike of one's self.

To love one's own self can be hard work, especially at times of dramatic personal development when one's very self appears as a threatening other, such as, for instance, in puberty, illness, trauma, disappointment, dying and mourning. Maybe self-love is the trickiest of all forms of love, since illusion and delusion can be such powerful presences in this particular relation of love. Genuine love of self can only develop through the many struggles with otherness—both with-

out and within. Self-love only has a chance to emerge within the context of social love. Even linguistically, we depend on others in order to gain any awareness of our own emerging selves. However strange it may sound, self-love only grows through intersubjective forms of recognition.[25] Thus, we need social institutions of love for our own growth as loving subjects: family, friendship, marriage and partnership, schools and other educational establishments, churches and religious bodies, human association, clubs, assemblies, etc.[26] Since self-love (like all forms of love) is necessarily dynamic, on this side of death the work of loving one's own self remains unending. Hence, it would be presumptuous to argue for the perfect love of self (or other).

Returning to the love of neighbour, we can conclude that it remains intricately related to the love of God, to the love of the universe and to the love of self. The different attentions in love must, of course, be distinguished, but they ought never to be separated. Ultimately, the biblical love commandment concerns the development of right relationships between persons and communities and between all the respective others. In so far as human beings are understood as persons defined by their love relationships, any reference to human beings as loving "individuals" would remove them from the social orbit of love and thus make them loveless. From the perspective of love, it makes good sense to speak of persons and communities, but it makes no sense to speak of individuals and collectives.

Love, as discussed above, requires and desires otherness. Hence, it would be absurd to long for a love outside of any context of otherness and conflict. Conflict must not be a threat to love. On the contrary, in conflict love properly comes into its own. Here, otherness emerges often in radical forms provoking the broad imagination of love to respond. Even hatred cannot be called an enemy of love since it preserves some sort of relationship to another—however warped and confused. The real enemy of love is not hatred but indifference of the sort "I could not care less". Hatred, however bizarrely, cares about the other and reacts to otherness. Indifference does not.

The unity of love and charity

For some Christian thinkers, charity defines the ethics of love. Here, the biblical love commandments are interpreted as the foundation of Christian ethics.[27] While this is an understandable move, nevertheless it runs the risk of instrumentalizing the divine gift of love for human moral projects. In this case, our respective charitable projects could lose their transcendental connection to God who is love. Therefore, I am not arguing *against* an ethics of love; rather, I am arguing *for* an understanding of love that transcends the horizon of any particular human moral project. If love is accepted both as a gift emerging from divine grace and as a call to participate in God's project, there is no need for a specific ethics of love.[28] Instead, all works of love are performed within the much larger horizon of conversion and transformation opened up by the fourfold praxis of love. What is needed, then, is a culture of love.

Neighbourly love, as we have seen above, is not a separate project of attention to the human other, motivated by whatever ethical reasoning, Christian or otherwise. Rather, it is one of the four dimensions of love besides attention to God, to God's universe and to our own emerging selves. Moreover, in such an economy of love it does not matter where one begins to love, since any such beginning will automatically draw one's attention also to the other dimensions of love. John of the Cross, it is reported, once was asked where one should begin with love—with loving God or with loving the neighbour in need. John answered that it was of no importance where one begins to love as long as one begins. If we begin with loving God, we will automatically be directed also to the needs of God's creatures, and if we begin with loving God's creatures, we will eventually be drawn also to love God the creator.[29]

According to the logic of *Laudato Si'*, any genuine attempt to love the neighbour or God will automatically also invite the love for God's good creation and the appropriate attention to its precarious ecological condition. And in line with the philosophical approach of Paul Ricœur (1913–2005), we can state that any honest attention to my own self will demand genuine attention to all the others around me.

For without them I can neither develop my own character nor my praxis of love.[30] We are in this together.

The human other thus must not be reduced to some helpful occasion for my own development. Rather, the human other and I are both part of love's dynamic movement. The decision in front of me is to join this dynamic and transformative praxis or not. If I understand the parables and sermons in the gospels appropriately, Jesus encouraged his followers to join this way or praxis of love rather than developing distinct ethical norms and laws.

The truth of the way, which Jesus tried to outline, also opened an alternative approach to justice. At stake was not a distributive concept of justice, but a justice borne by the superabundant gift of love.[31] Such a justice could be characterized as a restorative justice in which everybody is invited back into the praxis of love in which alone we can become human beings together, notwithstanding our many and repeated aberrations from this way. The parable of the lost son (or, rather, of the merciful father) provides a telling example for such a praxis of love and the related logic of a superabundant justice (Luke 15:11–32). Accordingly, it would be more appropriate to name Jesus a teacher of love than a teacher of ethics. Jesus proclaimed God's eschatological community of love in which every human being can discover her or his natural place and vocation. No ethics and no casuistic morality can ever reach the wonderful and mysterious dynamics of the praxis of love in response to this sacred vocation. Discipleship of Christ involves a personal and communal praxis of love. It does not come about through merely devising and applying Christian or other ethical principles.[32]

The shared praxis of love in respective communities will inspire ever new particular works of love, particular forms of charitable action. In this way, all works of charity will flow from the fourfold praxis of love and thus relate to their divine origin and vocation. This direction of love's flow preserves the divine gift from being reduced to mere ethical norms and projects, and it restores the recipients of our charitable works to their rightful human dignity in God's transformative orbit of love.

A commitment to the praxis of love opens our horizon afresh to the incalculability of love. We do not have any result sheets in our hands when following the way of love. Love remains a risky journey into the unknown. Nor can we *a priori* exclude other forms of such a praxis of love that have not originated in the Christian tradition. For the point here is to join the praxis of love in this fourfold network of interrelated dimensions, and not its control by any self-appointed guardians of faith. Love is never anybody's sole invention or possession.

Hence, it does matter if one approaches love through faith or faith through love. The Christian tradition has largely done the former, and, therefore, it may have missed much of the transformative dynamics of the praxis of love, which is the superabundant logic of Christian discipleship. God alone will crown this praxis in eternity. Maybe it is this expectation which Christians have in mind when praying in the Lord's Prayer "Your kingdom come".

NOTES

1 For a discussion of different Christian approaches to love, see Jeanrond 2021.
2 Cf., for instance, Nygren 1982.
3 For a more extensive discussion of the phenomenon of love and its bodiliness, see Jeanrond 2010.
4 On this, see Irina Hron's article in this volume.
5 Kierkegaard 1995. On Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*, see Irina Hron's and Claudia Welz's articles in this volume.
6 For a discussion of Kierkegaard's approach to love, see Jeanrond 2010, pp. 106–113.
7 All biblical quotations are from the Holy Bible NRSV.
8 Brümmer 1993, p. 156.
9 For a more detailed discussion of Karl Rahner's approach to love, see Jeanrond 2010, pp. 142–152.
10 Rahner 1969a, p. 241.
11 Cf. Rahner 1969b, p. 243.
12 Cf. Rahner 1969a, p. 246.
13 Rahner 1969b, p. 236.
14 Cf. Rahner 1969b, p. 237.
15 Rahner 1984, p. 101.
16 Cf. Rahner 1961, p. 1039.
17 Cf. also Jeanrond 2020, pp. 185–190.
18 Cf. also Oord 2022, p. 217: "God's motive for creating is love. [. . .] God always creates alongside creatures who are created co-creators."
19 Cf. Jeanrond 2020, p. 185. See in this context also Ola Sigurdson's thesis that "den kristna tron alltid måste gestaltas i en praktik – den är inte en tolkning av tillvaron, om man med tolkning endast menar ett sätt att *se* på världen, utan också och framför allt en gestaltning, ett sätt att *vara* i världen. [. . .] att den kristna tron inte existerar utanför dessa partikulära och konkreta gestaltningar." (Sigurdson 1998, p. 11.)
20 Cf. Jeanrond 2023, pp. 116–118.
21 Pope Francis 2015. The figures in the

text refer to the respective paragraphs of *Laudato Si'* (LS).

22 See, for instance, Tillich 1954; Farley 2006.

23 Original italics. Cf. also LS 91: "Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society." And LS 196: "The mindset which leaves no room for sincere concern for the environment is the same mindset which lacks concern for the inclusion of the most vulnerable members of society."

24 For a more detailed discussion of the difference between *to love* and *to like* in the context of the love of enemies, see Jeanrond 2010, p. 80; 2020, pp. 116–117.

25 Cf. Honneth 2012; Saarinen 2016.

26 For a discussion of the need for institutions of love, see Jeanrond 2010, pp. 173–204.

27 Cf. Outka 1972; Outka 1986, pp. 357–359. See also Paul Ricœur's critique of Outka's approach to an ethics of love, in Ricœur 1991, esp. p. 191: "The commandment that precedes every law is the word that the lover addresses to the beloved: Love me!"

28 There will, of course, always be a need for critical and self-critical clarification of what the fourfold dynamic network of interdependent love relations concretely entails.

29 I have not found the exact quote by John of the Cross. However, already in the first book of the *Dark Night of the Soul*, chs. 12 and 13, John stresses the interconnection between love of God, love of self, and love of neighbour. Cf. John of the Cross 1991, pp. 385–392.

30 Cf. Ricœur 1992, esp. pp. 25, 121–122.

31 Cf. Ricœur 1991, p. 198.

32 See here also Joas 2013, p. 206.

REFERENCES

Brümmer, Vincent 1993. *The Model of Love: A Study in Philosophical Theology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Farley, Margaret 2006. *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics*, New York & London: Continuum.

Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version 2008. London: SPCK.

Honneth, Axel 2012. *Kampf um Anerkennung: Zur moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte*, 7th edn, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

Jeanrond, Werner G. 2010. *A Theology of Love*, London & New York: T&T Clark.

Jeanrond, Werner G. 2020. *Reasons to Hope*, London & New York: T&T Clark.

Jeanrond, Werner G. 2021. 'Theological reflections on "Christian" and "human" love', in Paul S. Fiddes ed., *Love as Common Ground: Essays on Love and Religion*, Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, pp. 271–286.

Jeanrond, Werner G. 2023. 'Pourquoi et comment Dieu devrait-il sauver le monde?', *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 111:1, pp. 105–118.

Joas, Hans 2013. *Glaube als Option: Zukunftsmöglichkeiten des Christentums*, 2nd edn, Freiburg, Basel & Vienna: Herder.

John of the Cross 1991. *The Collected Works of Saint John of the Cross*, trans Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. & Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D., Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications.
Kierkegaard, Søren 1995. *Works of Love*, eds and trans Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
Nygren, Anders 1982 [1932 and 1938]. *Agape and Eros: The Christian Idea of Love*, trans. Philip S. Watson, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Oord, Thomas Jay 2022. *Pluriform Love: An Open and Relational Theology of Well-Being*, Grasmere: SacraSage Press.
Outka, Gene 1972. *Agape: An Ethical Analysis*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
Outka, Gene 1986. 'Love: Contemporary discussion', in James F. Childress & John Macquarrie eds, *A New Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, London: SCM Press, pp. 357–359.
Pope Francis 2015. *Laudato Si': Our Care for Our Common Home*, Encyclical Letter, London: Catholic Truth Society.
Rahner, Karl 1961. 'Liebe. V. Heutige Problematik', in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 6, 2nd edn, Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, pp. 1038–1039.
Rahner, Karl 1969a. 'Reflections on the unity of the love of neighbour and the love of God', in Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 6, trans Karl-H. Kruger & Boniface Kruger, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, pp. 231–249.
Rahner, Karl 1969b. 'Liebe', in *Sacramentum Mundi: Theologisches Lexikon für die Praxis*, vol. 3, Freiburg, Basel & Vienna: Herder, pp. 234–252.
Rahner, Karl 1984. 'The human question of meaning in face of the absolute mystery of God', in Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 18, trans. Edward Quinn, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, pp. 89–121.
Ricœur, Paul 1991. 'Love and justice', in Werner G. Jeanrond & Jennifer L. Rike eds, *Radical Pluralism and Truth: David Tracy's Hermeneutics of Religion*, New York: Crossroad, pp. 186–202.
Ricœur, Paul 1992. *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.
Saarinen, Risto 2016. *Recognition and Religion: A Historical and Systematic Study*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Sigurdson, Ola 1998. *Kärlekens skillnad: Att gestalta kristen tro i vår tid*, Stockholm: Verbum.
Tillich, Paul 1954. *Love, Power, and Justice: Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.