

BRADFORD MCCALL*

THOMISTIC PERSONALISM IN DIALOGUE WITH MODERN DEPICTIONS OF KENOSIS

Introduction

“Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it... In this dimension [of love] man finds again the greatness, dignity and value that belong to his humanity”¹.

John Paul II recounts in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, “As a young priest, I learned to love human love. This has been one of the fundamental themes of my priesthood... If one loves human love, there naturally arises the need to commit oneself completely to the service of ‘fair love,’ because love is fair, it is beautiful”². Karol Wojtyła committed himself intellectually to this task in his important work, *Love and Responsibility*, in which he presents a holistic vision of love based upon a personalist framework. Love cannot exist but between two self-possessing persons; only if one is in possession of himself can he give himself away. For this reason, in committing himself to “the service of fair love”, Wojtyła simultaneously committed himself anew to the study of the person, albeit in another, further dimension. Ultimately, Wojtyła believed, one must attempt to understand the human person in terms of love, because it is love alone that reveals the meaning of the person.

That “love reveals the meaning of the person” can be understood in a couple of different ways. On the one hand, we can begin with the experience of love and

* Bradford McCall – MDiv in biblical studies; MA in Church History and Doctrine; MA in Systematic Philosophy; a doctoral student of Systematic Theology at Regent University; e-mail: bradfordlmccall@gmail.com

¹ John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1979), § 10.

² John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 123.

investigate it in all its fullness, and thereby come to know all those aspects of man that are truly defining of his personhood. According to Wojtyła, “the experience of love, properly understood, remains a simple and universal gateway through which everyone can pass in order to gain an awareness of what makes a person a human being: reason, affection and freedom”³. In this way, love can serve as the basis for coming to understand the full meaning of the person. On the other hand, we can first endeavor to develop a comprehensive anthropology of humanity as both metaphysical and personal subject, and from there work our way to the level of love as the highest end and good of humanity, that which most perfectly fulfills him and most fully reveals who he is. As Wojtyła states elsewhere, “Love is the fullest realization of the possibilities inherent in man... The person finds in love the greatest possible fullness of being, of objective existence. Love is an activity, a deed which develops the existence of the person to its fullest”⁴. Love can and does serve, then, in a double capacity, as both the source and summit of our understanding of the human person.

In the following paper, one will find five distinct parts. In the first section, I depict Thomistic Personalism as expressed in Karol Wojtyła’s *Love and Responsibility*. In that particular work, Wojtyła characterized love as the inherent affirmation of the value of the person. One can notice the influence of Thomistic Personalism on Wojtyła’s thought in part in the objectivism of his ethics, which held that people are to pursue things and activities as means of fulfillment, and not simply subjective pleasures. Yet, there is a form of love that is pre-eminent, which Wojtyła refers to herein as betrothed love, the defining characteristic of which is self-donation.

In the second part of this essay, I build on Wojtyła’s characterization of betrothed love as self-donation, noting that the bible gives good grounds for illustrating the Spirit as the active agent of God in the world, particularly regarding the Spirit as *life-giver* and *animator* of all creation through self-donation (or self-giving). In this section, I note that the Spirit is the effectual arm of the Trinity that was active as the Son spoke each word in the primal creating moments. The Spirit, I postulate, is ultimately responsible for both the conditions for life, as well as life itself. I note further that the Greek verb *kenown*, from which the term kenosis is derived, can mean either “to empty”, or “to pour out”, and contend that the Spirit’s “pouring himself out” into creation enables the derivation of life itself.

In section three of this essay, I correlate Thomas Jay Oord’s essential kenosis theology and Wojtyła’s depiction of love as self-donation. I note that in various works over the last decade, Oord has sought to supplement the recent resur-

³ John Paul II, *Address to Members of the Pontifical John Paul Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family, May 31, 2001*, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20010531_istituto-jp-ii_en.html, § 2 (access: September 28, 2016).

⁴ K. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 82.

gence in the natural sciences upon the import of “love”. Fundamental to all of the titles therein surveyed, with slight variation, is Oord’s definition of love – to love is to act intentionally, in sympathetic/empathetic response to others (including God), to promote *overall* well-being. I note that Oord highlights how love is depicted in the biological sciences, where it is often encompassed under the heading of altruism, which pictures love, in effect, as self-donation. The picturing of altruism as a form of love is significant because it highlights the import of cooperation, even at the most fundamental levels of creation.

In part four of this paper, I take note of a collection of essays written several years ago, edited by John Polkinghorne, which pictured divine action and love as kenotic self-donation. Therein, kenosis is pictured as an affirmation of God’s voluntary self-limitation, a limitation that allows creatures to enjoy their own power and freedom, which results in the kenotic Creator *interacting* with creatures. While I find much value in that collection of essays, my own view departs from theirs, as the kenotic theology set forth in this paper maintains that the Spirit is completely *imparted into* creation. The Spirit of God, thereby, *in-spirits* formless and chaotic matter, and “nothing” thereby becomes “something” – that is, as a result of this *breath* of God imparted, nature eventually gives birth to life.

A Characterization of Thomistic Personalism as Expressed in Wojtyla’s *Love and Responsibility*

If one looks at Wojtyla’s *Love and Responsibility*, they can see a number of different ways that he applies Thomistic Personalism. To begin with, one can observe with Wojtyla that, “In dealings between persons of different sexes, and especially in the sexual relationship, the woman is always the object of activity on the part of a man, and the man the object of activity on the part of the woman”⁵. Man-as-person is not simply an object in the world but above all a subject, and as such is *dominus sui*, or master of himself. Each of us is in possession of free will and therefore capable of self-determination. Because a human is self-determining, he can never be used as a mere means to another’s end, for as Wojtyla says, “This is precluded by the very nature of personhood, by what any person is”⁶.

According to Wojtyla, the personalistic value intrinsic in each of us reveals a deeper personalistic norm which should always govern our actions with others: “This norm, in its negative aspect, states that the person is the kind of good which does not admit of use and cannot be treated as an object of use and as such the means to an end. In its positive form the personalistic norm confirms this: the person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate attitude

⁵ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 24.

⁶ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 26.

is love”⁷. One preliminary way in which one might understand love, then, is as the opposite of use. Conversely, one might say that love is the affirmation of the value of the person: “love for a person must consist in affirmation that the person has a value higher than that of an object for consumption or use”⁸.

In order to prevent objectification, Wojtyla believes the individuals involved must seek joint fulfillment in a common good, for “when two different people consciously choose a common aim this puts them on a footing of equality, and precludes the possibility that one of them might be subordinated to the other”, since both are “subordinated to that good which constitutes their common end”⁹. One can notice the influence of Thomism on Wojtyla’s thought in the strict objectivism of his ethics in that people are to pursue real goods as means of fulfillment, and not simply subjective pleasures, which will never make one truly happy.

According to Wojtyla, sexual attraction between man and woman points to the value of unity and complementarity: “Sexual attraction makes obvious the fact that the attributes of the two sexes are complementary, so that a man and a woman can complete each other... The urge to mutual completion which accompanies this division [of the sexes] indicates that the attributes of each sex possess some specific value for the other”¹⁰. There are two aspects essential to true love according to Wojtyla, namely the willingness to never make the other an object of use, and the affirmation of the essential value of the other.

In *Person and Being*, W. Norris Clarke makes the insightful observation that one interacts with others not only because they are limited and contingent, and thus in need of the goods which they possess, but also because they have goods which they naturally desire to share:

For Aquinas, finite, created being pours over naturally into action for two reasons: (1) because it is poor, i.e., lacking the fullness of existence, and so strives to enrich itself as much as its nature allows from the richness of those around it; but (2) even more profoundly because it is rich, endowed with its own richness of existence, however slight this may be, which it tends naturally to communicate and share with others¹¹.

At the level of the person, this desire to communicate the good manifests itself as good will, which is an essential aspect of personal love.

Like the person, true personal love must include both an objective and a subjective dimension. Indeed, it needs to be grounded in the practice of virtue and the choosing of real goods; yet, it must also be grounded in the concrete subject-hood of the person with all of his physical and emotional aspects. Experiences teaches us that if either dimension is lacking, so too is love, for love

⁷ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 41.

⁸ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 42.

⁹ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 28-29.

¹⁰ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 48.

¹¹ W. Norris Clarke, *Person and Being*, (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2006), 10.

must be an integrated whole. As worthy a love as integrated friendship is, according to Wojtyła, it is not the highest form of love. True love between persons must include elements of affirmation, attraction, desire and goodwill. Yet, there exists a level of love beyond all these that Wojtyła refers to as betrothed love. The defining characteristic of betrothed love is self-donation: “Betrothed love differs from all the aspects or forms of love analyzed hitherto. Its decisive character is the giving of one’s own person (to another). The essence of betrothed love is self-giving, the surrender of one’s ‘I’”¹².

At first glance, this notion of self-donation or self-gift seems rather incomprehensible in light of the incommunicable nature of the person. The person, as an intrinsically self-possessing being, cannot be reduced to an object for another. For this reason, “in the natural order it makes no sense to speak of a person giving himself or herself to another... The person as such cannot be someone else’s property, as though it were a thing”¹³. Yet, “what is impossible and illegitimate in the natural order... can come about in the order of love”¹⁴. This statement concerns a real mystery in the order of being, but one which Christ gave voice to when he said, “Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will gain it” (Luke 17:33). Christ here indicates the mysterious nature of the gift of self: it is mysterious not only in that it is a real possibility for the human person, but even more so because it is a necessity in order to attain the fullness of life. Self-donation is thus “doubly paradoxical: first in that it is possible to step outside one’s own ‘I’ in this way, and secondly in that the ‘I’ far from being destroyed or impaired as a result is enlarged and enriched”¹⁵. Wojtyła refers to this mystery as “the law of ekstasis”, according to which the lover “‘goes outside’ the self to find a fuller existence in another”¹⁶.

A Characterization of Kenosis as Self-Donation

Picking up on Wojtyła’s characterization of betrothed love as self-donation, the bible gives good grounds for illustrating the Spirit as the active agent of God in the world, particularly regarding the Spirit as *life-giver* and *animator* of all creation through self-donation (or self-giving)¹⁷. Indeed, just as the Spirit kenotically entered into the chaotic seas through which the Jews passed in their exodus and parted them (Exodus 14:21), so too was the Spirit of God parting the chaos of the primordial waters¹⁸, thereby preparing creation to

¹² Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 96.

¹³ Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 96.

¹⁴ Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 96.

¹⁵ Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 97.

¹⁶ Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 126.

¹⁷ Cf. Paul’s assertion that the Spirit “gives life” in 2 Corinthians 3:6.

¹⁸ D. J. Goergen asserts, quite rightly in my opinion, that without and apart from the Spirit, there would be absolute chaos in the material world (Donald J. Goergen, *Fire of Love: Encountering the Holy Spirit*, [New York: Paulist, 2006], 108).

progress through the long processes of evolution thereafter. The Spirit of life hovered over the primordial waters and transformed the *chaos* into the *cosmos*. In Genesis 1:2, the Spirit moved upon the face of the waters, which constitutes an obvious creative act. The verb used in Genesis 1:2 depicts the Spirit hovering mysteriously over the waters, preparing for the acts of creation to follow. It is interesting to note that the Hebrew verb, *פָּרַח*, has been translated “hovering” (as a bird over her young; see Deuteronomy 32:11), whereas the Syriac cognate term means “to brood over” or “to incubate”. That the Spirit was hovering like a mother stork might hover over her nest is a portent of life to come from the dark, murky depths of the chaos below. The Spirit, one may postulate, is ultimately responsible for both the conditions for life, as well as life itself. The Spirit is the effectual arm of the Trinity that was active as the Son spoke each word in the primal creating moments.

The Greek verb *kenown*, from which the term *kenosis* is derived, can mean either “to empty”, or “to pour out”. In the literal sense its Hebrew equivalent is used, for example, in Isaiah 32:15: “Until a spirit from on high is *poured out* on us...”. The various cognates of the verb translated in the Septuagint (LXX) by *kenosis* appear fourteen times in biblical Hebrew. In its original sense, the verb *פָּרַח* refers to a cause of movement leading to a mass being poured out of a container. Thus, the word means, “to pour out” in reference to Rebekah’s *pouring out* water from her pitcher *into* the trough (Genesis 24:20; the verb in the LXX is *exekenōsen*). Whereas the pitcher was emptied, the trough was made full (which, in a sense, is *addition*) by the emptying of the pitcher. It is therefore a fruitful approach to understand the verb *kenown* as also meaning, “to pour out”. I posit that the *kenosis* of the Spirit *into* creation had a similar effect as the Rebekah’s pouring out water *into* the trough.

Christ poured himself *into* humanity so that it could be reconciled to the Father and that it might become acceptable to him (Philippians 2:5-11). God the Son enters *into* the limited, finite situation of mankind, descending *into* it, thereby embracing the whole of human existence in his being¹⁹. The *kenosis* of the Son referred to in Philippians 2:5-11 should not be understood as a mere subtraction of deity, but also as the *addition* of humanity. Indeed, in the Philippians passage, the verb often translated as “emptied” is explained, expanded, and extrapolated by three participles that directly follow it: 1) *taking* the form of a servant, 2) *becoming* in the likeness of humans, and 3) *being found* in fashion as a human²⁰. This reference to Christological *kenosis*, then, has the net effect of addition.

¹⁹ J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 176.

²⁰ One can discern, then, that I do not hold to the notion that Christ “emptied” himself of his divinity on the cross, as popularly understood. Rather, I perceive him to have “poured it out”. This position challenges the prevailing interpretation of the Christological *kenosis*.

Furthermore, the Philippians usage of the term kenosis resembles that which is found in Isaiah 53:12, which reads that the righteous one “poured out himself to death” (NRSV). What God does particularly and punctiliously by the kenosis of the Son into human form, I posit, God does generally and continually by the kenosis of the Spirit into creation. The Spirit is the *breath of life*, the very giver of life, and is thus the creative power of the Father. The Spirit, then, is the vital energy that enlivens, as well as the potent force that enervates innovation. The kenosis of the Spirit *into* creation, the pouring out of life, makes possible not only otherness as properly conceived, but also its actualization, which amounts to betrothed love through self-donation. So then, a principle that one may draw from the usage of kenosis in reference to God the Son is illustrative of kenosis in reference to God the Spirit²¹. There is an inherent others’-centeredness in kenosis, as one can see in Rebekah’s case, as well as in Christ’s kenosis. It may be extrapolated, further, that the same others’-centeredness is present with the Spirit’s kenosis *into* creation.

A Correlation Between Oord’s Essential Kenosis and Love as Self-Donation

Thomas Jay Oord’s intention in *Defining Love: A Philosophical, Scientific, and Theological Engagement* and in *The Nature of Love: A Theology* is to supplement the recent resurgence in the natural sciences upon the import of “love”. Fundamental to both titles, with slight variation, is Oord’s definition of love: to love is to act intentionally, in sympathetic/empathetic response to others (including God), to promote *overall* well-being²². In *Defining Love*, Oord looks at the general forms of love – historically speaking – and thereby attempts to decide what love requires. He then explores how love is depicted in the biological sciences, where it is often encompassed under the heading of altruism, which pictures love, in effect, as self-donation. In the final chapter of *Defining Love*, Oord offers his constructive proposal of a theology of love informed by the sciences, which he terms an “essential kenosis” theology²³.

Oord expands his “essential kenosis” theology in *The Nature of Love*, first by asserting – and defending – the primacy of love, which is followed by a depiction of *agape*, *eros* and *philia* love in the bible. In order to flesh-out his theology of love, Oord explores Augustinian love theology, noting its positive contributions as well as its deficiencies. *The Nature of Love* reaches its apex in the last chapter, wherein Oord proposes his promising “essential kenosis”

²¹ This kenosis of the Spirit can also be seen, for example, in his descent upon Jesus at his baptism. Indeed, the Spirit was *poured into* Jesus so as to *empower* Jesus for his crucial ministry of imparting life to the masses, which resulted in Jesus’ own temporal and bodily death.

²² See T. J. Oord, *Defining Love: A Philosophical, Scientific, and Theological Engagement*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010), 29; and T. J. Oord, *The Nature of Love: A Theology*, (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2010), 17.

²³ Oord, *Defining Love*, 199.

theology, a theology that presents God as steadfastly loving²⁴. Throughout both texts, Oord highlights the relational nature of God – to love is to be mutually related. Love is depicted as multiform, multiexpressive, multivarious, and multifaceted, which provides both the promise of (expansionality) and the problem with (ambiguity, lack of precision) of the research regarding love. Noting the often overlooked characteristics of *philia* love, Oord intentionally promotes the importance – perhaps even primacy – of it, as *philia* is essentially the form of love that requires *cooperative* relations between two things to promote what is good. In my opinion, *philia* love is the most important in dialogue with the natural sciences; *philia* is the love of co-laborment, so to speak. Oord’s essential kenosis theology, as well as his recovery of the import of *philia* love, has potent application to picturing love as self-donation.

In *The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Providence*, Oord offers a culmination of nearly a decades’ worth of work²⁵. Indeed, one finds herein footprints of his *Relational Holiness: Responding to the Call of Love* (2005), undertones of his *Creation Made Free: Open Theology Engaging Science* (2009), traces of his *Defining Love: A Philosophical, Scientific, and Theological Engagement* (2010), and whispers of his *The Nature of Love: A Theology* (2010). In *The Uncontrolling Love of God*, we find the pinnacle of Oord’s work thus far in an expanded notion of his “essential kenosis” theology²⁶. His depiction of “essential kenosis” herein makes numerous asseverations that are constructive for depicting love as self-donation: first, God’s uncontrolling love is preeminent, as it logically precedes any other divine attribute; second, existence teems with randomness interlaced with order; third, the most helpful definition of kenosis is “self-giving”²⁷; fourth, God necessarily loves the “other”; and fifth, God’s love is full-orbed – expressing *agape*, *philia*, and *eros*. Moreover, because God’s nature is self-giving love, he cannot prevent genuine (read random) evil. All of these aspects of essential kenosis theology, I posit, have import to a modern depiction of love as self-donation.

Picturing Divine Action and Love as Kenotic Self-Donation

Several years ago, a collection of essays by theologians and scientists explored creation as *The Work of Love*, pointing to divine action as kenosis²⁸. Therein, John Polkinghorne asserts that kenosis is an affirmation of God’s vol-

²⁴ Oord, *The Nature of Love*, 129.

²⁵ T. J. Oord, *The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Providence*, (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015).

²⁶ Oord, *The Uncontrolling Love of God*, 151.

²⁷ Oord, *The Uncontrolling Love of God*, 159.

²⁸ J. Polkinghorne, ed. *The Work of Love: Creation As Kenosis*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

untary self-limitation, a limitation that allows creatures to enjoy their own power and freedom. Classical theology, according to Polkinghorne, envisions God in total control and invulnerable such that there is no reciprocal effect of creatures upon the divine nature. According to Polkinghorne's view of kenosis, however, the kenotic Creator interacts with creatures; the word "interact" is preferable to "intervene", in this volume, apparently because intervene carries connotations of the interruption of the natural order.

I find Polkinghorne's theory of kenosis helpful, but incomplete (especially when one considers the problem of evil). The kenotic theology set forth in this paper maintains that the Spirit is completely shared and imparted *into* creation. The Spirit of God is "poured into" creation, *inspiring* formless and chaotic matter, with "nothing" thereby becoming "something", that is, a system interlaced with order. As a result of this *breath* of God imparted, after much groaning and even more time, nature eventually gives birth to life-bearing creatures billions of years later²⁹. So then, the Spirit is the life-giving force that enables creation to strive toward becoming its fullness via the long and grueling process of evolution. As such, the complexification of matter has its ontological origin in and through the agency of the Spirit of God. Creation is thus a kenotic act of *self-offering*, which affirms a depiction of love as self-donation.

A pneumatological rereading of Genesis 1 and 2 shows that creation is not a creation out of nothing, as a onetime event, but is instead a continuous creation, a transformative process of producing higher aggregate conditions from lower. There exists overwhelming evidence of a universe marked by development, which points to creation by kenosis. *Creatio continua* operates as an enabling condition for all that occurs thereafter. As Polkinghorne elsewhere writes, "Part of a notion of *creatio continua* must surely be that an evolving universe is one which is theologically understood as being allowed, within divine providence, 'to make itself'³⁰. Rather than bringing into being a ready-made world of unalterable character, the Godhead allows creation, kenotically empowered by the Spirit, to develop according to its own pace over billions of years.

I do find, however, some valuable insights in *The Work of Love*. For example, Ian Barbour contends that the Spirit usually works by *persuasion*, that is, from within, in ways that inspire, renew, and empower³¹. Moreover, Arthur Peacocke asserts that the rules within the evolution game can only be regarded as a feature that has been endowed by God. The creating Spirit's intention and purpose is actualized through the operation of chance and random events. We see God in evolution, Peacocke asserts, for "the processes themselves, as un-

²⁹ Cf. H. Rolston III, *Kenosis and Nature*, in: J. Polkinghorne, ed. *The Work of Love: Creation As Kenosis*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 58.

³⁰ J. Polkinghorne, *Serious Talk*, (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1995), 84.

³¹ I. Barbour, *God's Power: a Process View*, in: J. Polkinghorne, ed. *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 9.

veiled by the biological sciences, are God-acting-as-Creator, God qua Creator..." "God gives existence..." "to a process that itself brings forth the new: thereby God is creating"³². However, the activity of the Spirit within creation proceeds by no assured program, but is precarious instead³³. In dialog with Polkinghorne, I suggest that the endowment of both potentiality and regularity was instituted by, and relies upon, the kenosis of the Spirit *into* creation. The Spirit, in this kenotic model, is seen as working *within* the seeming openness of nature, in conjunction with the unfolding of potentiality.

By creating in a kenotic manner, the Spirit both allows and invites the input of creatures in the activity of creation, and reacts according to that input. Thus, God has chosen to allow the other to act, and has chosen to invite creation into a *cooperative* relationship, which coalesces with Wojtyla's conception of love as self-donation. Indeed, the Spirit did not create in a manipulative, single act, but instead onset a process in which creation was allowed to develop over a large amount of time³⁴. And it should be noted that the Spirit is present "in, with, and under" the processes of biological evolution within the created world³⁵. The kenotic creating Spirit is present within the historical *contingency* of evolution, as well as its lawful *regularity*³⁶. Seen in this manner, the Spirit acts – exclusively perhaps – within the causal nexus of creation (i.e. natural law, providence, and later human action).

Polkinghorne's view of kenosis is similar to Jürgen Moltmann's view of kenosis, which notes that kenotic self-surrender is "God's Trinitarian nature, and is therefore the mark of all his works 'outward'"³⁷. Polkinghorne summarizes his view of kenosis by intimating that God allows the created other to be and to act, so that while all that happens is permitted by God's general providence, not all that happens is in accordance with God's will or brought about by divine special providence³⁸. This contention is in accord with Oord's previously highlighted view that because God's nature is self-giving love, he cannot prevent genuine (read random) evil.

³² A. Peacocke, *The Cost of New Life*, in: J. Polkinghorne, ed. *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, 23. Emphasis in the original.

³³ Peacocke, *The Cost of New Life*, 21.

³⁴ This can be seen, for example, by coalescing pneumatology with the modern Big Bang theory, whereby the Spirit can be viewed as the *Originator*, creating unformed matter, setting the Big Bang in motion, and then working with it over the billions of years of pre-biotic and biological evolution to produce complexity. Instead of creating a *finished* product by divine fiat, the Spirit allows the world to *develop* within the framework the Godhead set up.

³⁵ A. Peacocke, *Paths from Science Towards God: The End of All Our Exploring*, (Oxford: One World, 2001), 32, 86.

³⁶ J. Polkinghorne, *Kenotic Creation and Divine Action*, in: J. Polkinghorne, ed. *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 96.

³⁷ J. Moltmann, *Kenosis in the Creation and the Consummation of the World*, in: J. Polkinghorne, ed. *The Work of Love: Creation As Kenosis*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 141.

³⁸ Polkinghorne, *Kenotic Creation and Divine Action*, 106.

Conclusion

The earth is an active, empowering environment – even an empowering agent – that brings forth life by various independent processes of self-reproduction. However, the earth does not bring forth *itself*. By releasing the power of the self-directed earth, the Spirit enables – potentially – the continual production, variation, and sustenance of vegetable and animal life through self-donated betrothed love³⁹. Moreover, in order to be consistent within the causal nexus, the Spirit of God kenotically bestows causal power unto the created order, and in effect thereafter becomes the chief Cause amongst causes, a position that necessarily entails a degree of immanence within, and vulnerability to, the created order⁴⁰. However, the created world is ever docile before the Spirit, and therefore ever open to the Spirit’s causal influence.

The entire mission of the Spirit could be succinctly envisioned as one of kenosis through self-donated betrothed love⁴¹. By extrapolation, one may infer that the Spirit was *poured into* creation so that it might develop in complexity. By focusing on the Spirit as both originator and operator of creation, via kenosis *into* it, one can see that the Spirit is both *directly* and *indirectly* involved in the world from beginning to end. So then, whereas the Spirit is the *primary* cause of all things, the Spirit also works through *secondary* causes. This implies, therefore, that what may commonly be referred to as the natural processes, or even what may be termed random processes, are in reality the indirect acts of the Spirit through secondary causes. As such, distinctive, seemingly nondependent, actions are in fact Spirit-caused, though they may appear to be secondarily caused. The apparent secondary causation is due in large part to the fact that the Spirit is the agent of discovery within the various *possibilities* of God⁴². In this secondary capacity, the Spirit is the remote cause, while natural forces are proximate causes of events.

In this paper, I have noted that there are two aspects essential to true love according to Wojtyla, namely the willingness to never make the other an object of use, and the affirmation of the essential value of the other. I have also presented the biblical basis of kenosis of the Spirit *into* creation, arguing that the bible presents the Spirit as being the active agent of God in the world, particularly regarding the Spirit as life-giver and animator of all creation. In my kenotic model, the Spirit is seen as working *within* the seeming openness of nature, in conjunction with the unfolding of potentiality, allowing and inviting the input of creatures in the activity of creation. Thus, God has chosen to allow the other to act, and has chosen to invite creation into a *cooperative* relationship, which coalesces with Wojtyla’s conception of love as self-donation. I have

³⁹ Cf. M. Welker, *Creation and Reality*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), 42.

⁴⁰ Cf. J. Polkinghorne, *Kenotic Creation and Divine Action*, 104.

⁴¹ Cf. R. Lucien, *Kenosis and Creation*, (New York: Paulist. Press, 1997), 116.

⁴² D. L. Dabney, *Naming the Spirit: Towards a Pneumatology of the Cross*, in: G. Preece, S. Pickard, eds. *Starting with the Spirit*, (Adelaide: Openbook, 2001), 58.

contended that the kenosis of the Spirit *into* creation makes otherness possible and actualizes it, which amounts to betrothed love through self-donation.

I have also highlighted Oord's contentions that expand the idea of depicting love as self-donation. Indeed, his essential kenosis asserts that God's uncontrolling love is preeminent, that existence teems with randomness interlaced with order, that the most potent definition of kenosis is self-giving, that God necessarily loves the other, and that God's love is full-orbed – comprised of *agape*, *philia*, and *eros*. I have further interacted with John Polkinghorne's conception of kenosis that depicted creation as *The Work of Love*, both critiquing and building on his views. Finally, I have contended that the entire mission of the Spirit could be envisioned as kenosis through betrothed self-donated love.

Ultimately, the essence of both the person and personal love gives way to, or better yet, is transcended by, self-giving. In the final analysis, we are given the capacity of self-possession in order to be able to give ourselves away. Only in doing so can we achieve the highest form of love, and only in doing so can we truly be fulfilled. Thus, the essence of the self is to transcend the self through betrothed self-donated love.

Summary

If one looks at Wojtyła's *Love and Responsibility*, they can see a number of different ways that he applies Thomistic Personalism. According to him, true personal love must include both an objective and a subjective dimension. Wojtyła refers to the law of ekstasis, according to which the lover goes outside the self to find a fuller existence in another. Moreover, the defining characteristic of betrothed love is self-donation. Picking up on Wojtyła's characterization of betrothed love as self-donation, I argue that the bible gives good grounds for illustrating the Spirit as the active agent of God in the world, particularly regarding the Spirit as *life-giver* and *animator* of all creation through self-donation (or self-giving). The kenosis of the Spirit *into* creation amounts to betrothed love through self-donation. Thomas Jay Oord's depiction of "essential kenosis" makes numerous asseverations that are constructive for depicting love as self-donation. Several years ago, a collection of essays by theologians and scientists explored creation as *The Work of Love*, pointing to divine action as kenosis in which it is asserted that the Spirit has chosen to invite creation into a *cooperative* relationship, which also coalesces with Wojtyła's conception of love as self-donation. Ultimately, I contend, the essence of personal love is transcended by self-giving. In the final analysis, we are given the capacity of self-possession in order to be able to give ourselves away. The essence of the self, therefore, is to transcend the self through betrothed self-donated love.

Key words: self-donation; Thomas J. Oord; John Polkinghorne; Karol Wojtyła.