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What Is Love and Pure Unlimited Love?

In June of 2001, I sat down with a lawyer in the old Caribou Coffee House on Coventry Road in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, to discuss founding an institute that would nurture new scientific research and spiritual-philosophical reflection on the topic of love. Not any kind of love, mind you. Not giddy romantic love or love of chocolate or designer shoes. The Institute for Research on Unlimited Love (www.unlimitedloveinstitute.org, so named by our initial benefactor, Sir John Templeton, was incorporated as a non-profit 501(c)3 public charity several months later. It is now recognized worldwide.

Our Definition of (1) Love and of (2) Unlimited Love

Definitions matter, ones that can connect with the wider world rather than only with some small clique of analytic philosophers or other academic specialists. Here is what we settled on:

(1) LOVE: When the happiness, security, and well-being of another feels as meaningful and real to you as our own, or perhaps more so, you love that person. This seems to work for the young couple looking over the crib of their sleeping newborn; it works for those old friends sharing a moment of mirthful reminiscence and companionship; it works for that empathic nurse who has a feeling for the suffering of her patient; it works for the social activist who cannot rest until the basic needs of refugees are met. This definition avoids the particularities of any single religious or cultural tradition, and is therefore of universal appeal. It goes beyond the more casual concept of “care,” which contrasts with indifference. Instead, it touches on those deeper dimensions of the heart and mind where another person is recognized and felt to be of profound value.

Love is like the hub of a wheel with spokes that extend outward in ten modulations:



(2) PURE UNLIMITED LOVE: So where does spirituality come into play? In other words, what do we mean by Pure Unlimited Love? Here we have in mind this same love as defined above (1) but expressed for all human beings without exception, and even towards nonhuman species. This elevated love is perfectly *extensive* or all-inclusive: everyone matters a lot. It has no myopic nearsightedness, but focuses instead on our shared humanity and beyond. Such elevated love is perfectly *wise* and effective, always working for growth and flourishing, rather than overindulging and even destroying in the name of love. It is *pure* without a trace of manipulation or self-interest. It is *enduring* and constant, rather than turning on and off like a flickering bulb. It is *bright* rather than dull.

Thus, *Pure Unlimited Love is a love that goes beyond the human physical-material substrate to that drop of the eternal Supreme that lies deeply within us all.* Such perfect love is divine love by definition. We humans are not its origin, and it would be arrogant to assume so. Human nature is a very mixed bag. But through spiritual practices we can connect with it and participate in Pure Unlimited Love. Often, such love seems to invade our consciousness in a transformative and unexpected way. Suddenly everyone we encounter is joyfully loved, and not just the near and dear. Unlimited Love is a response to our shared Oneness, not as material decaying beings of cells and tissue, but as creatures who each possess the eternal gift of the Infinite Mind and are thus its sacred carrier.

For those of us who are secular, this ideal can be rationally defended. For those who are spiritually or religiously inclined, Pure Unlimited Love is deemed to be a Creative Presence or Ultimate Reality underlying the universe, preceding the Big Bang, and sustaining the material world. The awareness of Unlimited Love leads to inner peace and expanded benevolence. Whether we define ourselves as secular, religious, or spiritual, we can generally agree that such love constitutes the greatest imaginable leap forward in human consciousness and behaviour.

Our Institute Mission

We seek to increase public awareness of the growing dialogue on Unlimited Love that is taking place at the interface of (1) new scientific investigations (e.g., in the health sciences, psychology, sociology, neuroscience, physics, and mathematics); (2) insights of the world's great philosophical, spiritual and theological traditions; and (3) inspiring works of love by exemplars across the world.

Our Guiding Love (1-3) and Pure Unlimited Love (4-7) Questions

You have read this far because you are asking the same kinds of questions that the Institute has become known for, such as:

1. Does the unselfish love of others contribute to the happiness, health and resilience of those who give it?
2. How does such love prevent illness and contribute to the art of healing?
3. How can parents and communities raise children who flourish in such love?
4. Can the spirituality and practice of Unlimited Love enhance the workplace & philanthropy?

5. What do people mean when they self-report a spiritual experience of Unlimited Love, how common is this, and is this experience objectively associated with emotional healing and expanded benevolence?
6. Do physics and mathematics point to an “Ultimate Reality” or “Ground of Being” that underlies reality (the laws and constants of the universe, as well as energy and matter), and if so, might this be described in terms of creative mind and love, as mystics, philosophers, and theologians suggest, and as some leading quantum theorists and cosmologists assert is at least plausible?
7. How can the major spiritualities and religions of the world come to abide in their various conceptualizations of Unlimited Love, and practice love for all humanity rather than merely for those who adhere to a particular set of beliefs?

Five Spiritual Principles for the Human Future

1. There is one original and creative Infinite Mind of Pure Unlimited Love, beyond time and space, nonmaterial, preceding the Big Bang, and unceasingly sustaining the universe it created;
2. Each human mind (or “consciousness”) is but a small drop of the nonmaterial Infinite Mind, a drop given that we might all return joy to that Infinite Mind and to one another as well as self through freely creative actions of Pure Unlimited Love;
3. Our oneness with the Infinite Mind allows for sublime spiritual experience and inspired creativity, moving us beyond the limits of linear reason and logical analysis;
4. All worthy religions, in their historical and symbolic uniqueness, have at their underlying core the common idea of an Infinite Mind of Pure Unlimited Love;
5. Having within us a small drop of the Infinite Mind, we are each therefore “in the image of the divine” and thus possess a sacred dignity that is the basis of all ethics as best expressed by the perennial Golden Rule in its positive form, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Furthermore, the Infinite Mind can only be responsive to prayers consistent with dignity, love and the Golden Rule.

Endorsements

You are leading one of the most significant initiatives of this generation. The connection between research and application cannot be over-emphasized. Thank you!”
 --Pastor Otis Moss, Jr., Chairman Emeritus of the Board of Trustees, Morehouse College

“I am a great admirer of Stephen Post’s work on the science of love, altruism, health, and longevity. This connection can touch us all. **This work is pioneering, inspiring and could change people’s lives.**”
 --George E. Vaillant, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School

“Stephen Post has contributed more than anyone else to the dialogue concerning the scientific and health implications of altruistic and generous behavior. **His leadership has**

spearheaded an exciting new area of research. The field has the strong potential to change people's lives in a healthy way."

--Gregory L. Fricchione, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School and Director of the Benson-Henry Mind-Body Institute at Massachusetts General Hospital