

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331828894>

# The Waters of Love: A course of introductory lectures on love, sexuality, marriage, and friendship

Book · January 2003

---

CITATIONS

2

READS

112

1 author:



**Stephen Palmquist**

Hong Kong Baptist University

233 PUBLICATIONS 270 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Articles on Kant and Chinese philosophy [View project](#)



Comprehensive Commentary on Kant's Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason [View project](#)

member, or as part of a small group of people who can share their progress with each other in an atmosphere of trust. Spend an hour or two each week thinking about and/or discussing the questions/topics provided for that purpose. These suggestions may seem silly; but following them is the best way to infuse the reading of this book with the power to promote significant philosophical insight and personal growth. Taking this slower, 12-week approach will give the reader's insights a chance to mature and deepen *in interaction* with the topics discussed in the text. Reading ahead or rushing through the book too quickly is sure to limit the benefits this book may have for the reader's own experience and understanding of love.

### A Note on References

The Bibliography (pp.280-282) provides full details of the works quoted in these lectures, specifying an abbreviation for each. References in the text normally use only the abbreviation, followed by the page number (unless some other means of referencing is specified in the bibliographical entry). Consecutive references to the same work give only the page number, without the abbreviation. Most quotations refer to one of the eight works listed in the "Recommended Readings" section at the end of each week's text. Works mentioned only once in the text or Recommended Readings are not included in the Bibliography.

### Acknowledgments

I would like to give special thanks to my parents, Richard and Dolores, who recently celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> year of married love with their five children and 22 grandchildren, and to Dwight Small, for first introducing me to the study of love as an academic discipline. Thanks also to the countless students and friends who have discussed these lectures with me, many of whom have also read and commented on earlier drafts of the text, providing helpful suggestions for improvements. Of these, the most substantial contributions have come from Stephen Peplow, Frances Wong, and Richard Mapplebeckpalmer. Deepest thanks go to my wife and three children, Dorothy, Daniel, Joy, and Jonathan, whose tenderness, commitment, and friendship have been a frequent inspiration to my never-ending quest to understand love over the past 25 years.

19 August 2003

## PART ONE: H<sub>2</sub>O OCEANS

# THE METAPHYSICS OF LOVE



## II. The Dream of Persons in Relation

### 1. What is Love?

What is love? Nearly everyone thinks about this question at some point in life, because we all have deep personal experiences associated with loving. These experiences tend to be among the most pleasurable and the most painful of a person's life; perhaps this is why we spend so long reflecting on what love is all about.

Some of you may have already taken one or both of the classes I've taught in this series. In any case, let me assure you that this class will be unique: even if you have not yet studied how philosophy can improve your capacity for insight (see *The Tree of Philosophy*; hereafter referred to as *The Tree*) or how psychology and dream interpretation can assist you in the lifelong process of personal growth (see *Dreams of Wholeness*; hereafter referred to as *Dreams*), you're going to love this class!

**Students.** Hmm.

The question I'm asking you to answer right now is big—so big that in one sense we have no hope of coming up with a complete answer. Indeed, if we were able to decide on a "final answer" today, we could simply forget about coming to class for the rest of the semester! To avoid this (hopefully) undesirable result, I'd like to invite you to share your own views on the nature or characteristics of love. Any ideas?

**Student A.** Love is a gift. It's a way of giving yourself to another person, or freely accepting another person into your life.

Interesting answer. Rather than commenting now on this way of thinking about love (a view we shall consider at length next week), I'd like to point out that your answer treats "love" as both a noun and a verb: it is not only a way of acting towards another person, but also in some sense an object or thing (like a box of chocolates) that has its own independent existence, once our actions bring it into existence.

Who else has a suggestion?

**Student B.** I think love is selfish.

Really? That's an unusual answer. Can you explain your reason for believing this?

**Student B.** Yes. The real reason for loving someone is that we want to be loved in return. Love is the desire to possess someone or something. It's just a selfish game!

Your explanation raises an important question: must love be

## I. The Dream of Persons in Relation

mutual in order to be genuine? Many expressions of love certainly do include a strong dose of self-interest. But is this a universal rule of all love?

**Student C.** No. The highest expression of love is self-sacrifice.

This view is backed up not only by the huge number of romantic stories that involve one partner sacrificing for the other, but also by religious traditions such as Christianity, where God's own self-sacrifice is viewed as the greatest possible expression of love. Later on we'll look at some of these stories more closely. When doing so, we should be sure to inquire whether such sacrificial love can ever be "pure", or whether it always has a selfish side to it.

What else can we say about love, other than that it involves, at least in some situations, selfish longing and/or self-giving sacrifice?

**Student D.** Love is an emotion. It gives us good feelings towards the loved object.

While I agree that our experiences of love are often accompanied by strong feelings, I'm not so sure whether love can be *defined* as an emotion. If it is an emotion, it's certainly more complex than simple emotions such as anger or happiness. The problem is that some experiences of love seem to be detached, requiring little or no emotional involvement. So your answer points us, once again, to another aspect of love that will need to be treated in more detail later on.

Any other characteristics of love?

**Student E.** It never changes.

This is a crucial point. Another common way of expressing the same idea is to say love is "eternal". In one sense, this term refers to the belief that love is a commitment that should last forever. If someone claims to love someone or something today, but then tomorrow tells us their love no longer exists, we tend to assume they never really experienced genuine love in the first place. However, in a deeper sense love's "eternal" nature means that a person who experiences true love feels as if he or she has been transported into a "timeless" realm, where change (by definition) simply cannot happen. To admit today that I do not love someone whom I claimed to love yesterday seems to imply that I never really touched eternity with that person. But does it? Does this second sense of "eternal love" imply that love must actually last forever?

In any case, these two senses of love's eternal nature provide us with a clue as to the special type of feeling normally associated with love. When lovers are deeply committed to each other, their mutual feeling could be described as a sense of devotion. "Devotion" is a term

used frequently in religious contexts, to refer to the proper attitude a believer should have towards God. Clearly, our study of love is going to return again and again to the relation between love and religion.

**Student F.** Aren't you ignoring the fact that we are human beings?

Not intentionally. What do you mean?

**Student F.** We have bodies. The feeling of pleasure we get from loving someone is not just some religious flight into a spiritual world. More than anything else, it is characterized by *fleshly* enjoyment!

Ah, yes. This aspect of love is absolutely essential. That's why the entire second part of this class will be about sexuality. I'll argue that sex is as important to the philosophy of love as logic is to philosophy in general. But on the other hand, just as philosophy is much more than merely logical argumentation, physical pleasure by itself is not the same as love. Many animals exchange sexual pleasures without ever feeling any commitment to their partner. For the human animal, by contrast, the joy of "making love" is much more than the exchange of fleshly enjoyment gained by "having sex". The physical and eternal dimensions must both be activated in order for sex to be part of the "dedicated enjoyment" we call love.

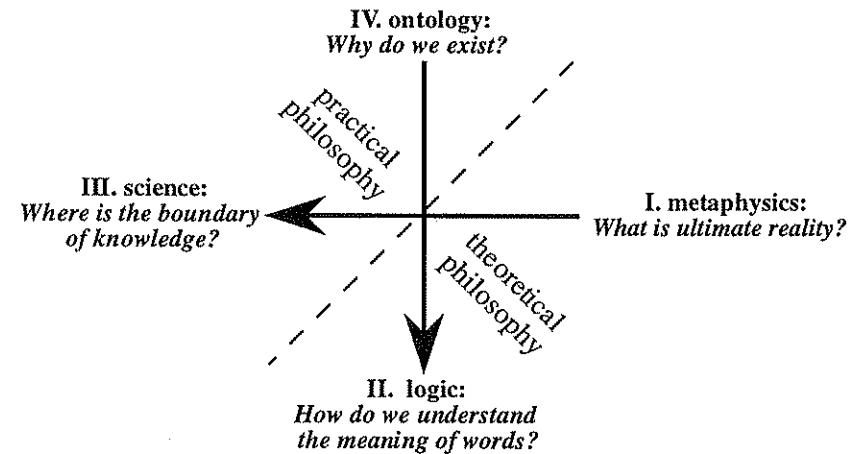
In a few minutes I'll give you a brief overview of the main issues we'll be covering this semester, then conclude this first lecture by telling you a story that I hope will serve as a "myth" to guide our thinking about love throughout the semester. But we still have time for one more response to the "What is love?" question. Is anyone dissatisfied with all the answers given so far?

**Student G.** Love is irrational. It's really just an illusion, so it seems hopeless to attempt to construct a "philosophy" of love.

Actually, quite a few writers have portrayed love in exactly this way, as a "divine madness", the arch-enemy of reason. Nevertheless, this did not prevent them from writing sometimes lengthy books that included a great deal of *reasoning* about love. If we have a broad enough conception of what counts as "philosophy", then the tendency of love to resist being tied down to a neat, logically consistent system need not be a problem. For anyone who thinks philosophy's goal is to reach a single, clear and final answer to the questions it examines, a messy topic such as love will indeed pose insurmountable problems. But for those who see philosophy as a lifelong exploration along the path that leads to wisdom, sometimes giving rise to more questions than it answers along the way, love's irrationality will not be an obstacle but a challenge. Illusions, after

all, can be the occasion for deep insight if, instead of allowing ourselves to be fooled, we seek to understand their source.

With this in mind, I'd like to summarize what I regard as the four fundamental building-blocks of good philosophy. This will serve a dual purpose. First, it will provide a working example of an approach to philosophy that is broad enough to encompass a philosophy of love. Second, it will clarify the "architectonic" (i.e., logically systematic) relationship between the four main issues to be examined in this class and the philosophical terms I shall employ to distinguish them from each other.



**Figure I.1: Four Branches of Philosophy**

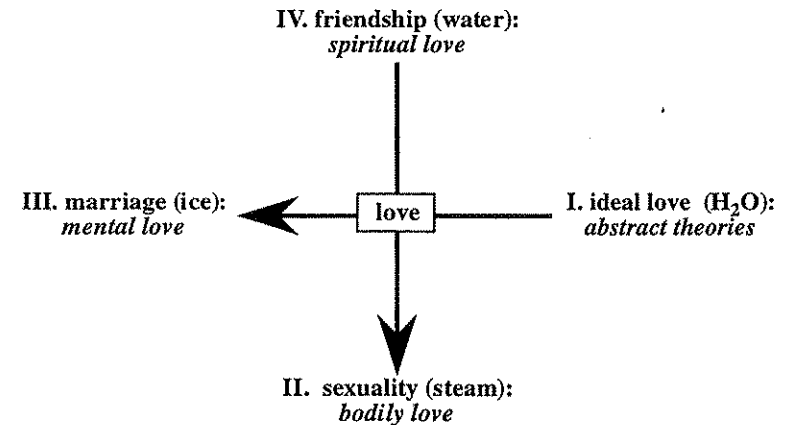
Figure I.1 maps onto a cross the main branches of philosophy, as examined in the four parts of *The Tree*. (For an explanation of the logical structure of the cross and of the other simple geometrical maps I use to clarify the logical relationships implicit in various theories, see Lectures 13 and 14 of *The Tree*.) The map also specifies the key question each branch of philosophy tries to answer. In that class, students are often surprised to learn that the foundation of good philosophizing (as established by our failure to answer the question of metaphysics) is the *recognition of ignorance*. Once our illegitimate, overly simplistic answers to the question of ultimate reality are peeled away, we are free to examine more insightfully how words get their meanings. Distinguishing between two basic types of logic provides us with a clear guideline: analytic logic (the logic that avoids all contradiction) should be employed when using words to describe empirical reality, whereas synthetic logic (the logic that welcomes meaningful contradictions) may be employed when using words to describe the metaphysical reality that lies beyond the

realm of human knowledge. Science (legitimate empirical knowledge) depends on establishing a clear boundary line between what is and is not possible to know, and resolving to stay within the boundary. Ontology (the philosophical study of being), by contrast, attempts to establish what makes life meaningful (i.e., why we exist) by focusing on what lies beyond the boundary of scientific knowledge.

A similar outline governs the psychology text that complements *The Tree*. Whereas the latter makes use of the metaphor of a tree, with the roots, trunk, branches, and leaves representing the four main divisions, *Dreams* makes use of the metaphor of the four stages in a butterfly's life-cycle as a way of simplifying the fourfold approach to personal growth adopted there. In that class, the "egg" represented the historical origins of psychology; the "caterpillar" stage involved a study of Jung's approach to dream interpretation; the "cocoon" included a more in-depth look at the Self, psychological types, and the role of evil in personal growth; and the "butterfly" stage examined how a well-balanced "whole person" can enjoy life to its fullest through love, psychologically healthy forms of religion, and spirituality.

The lecture outline in this third class in the series follows the same fourfold pattern adopted in *The Tree* and *Dreams*. This time, for reasons that will become clear after I tell you a story in a few minutes, I shall use water as the guiding metaphor. Just as water has a fixed molecular structure (H<sub>2</sub>O) and yet appears in nature in three distinct forms (steam, ice, and liquid water), so also we shall examine one topic in this class (love) and yet, following a general examination of its nature here in Part One, most of our discussion will revolve around its three distinct manifestations: love as it exists in the steamy form of sexual relations; love as it is solidified in the ice-like form of marriage; and love in its most common (and, I shall argue, most important) liquid form, as friendship. The correspondence between the four issues to be discussed in this class (love, sexuality, marriage, and friendship), as shown in Figure I.2, and the four branches on the tree of philosophy (see Fig. I.1) may seem uninformative at this point. But as we proceed through the semester, each of these connections will, I hope, become more meaningful.

As a first attempt to establish the relevance of water to the philosophy of love, I'd now like to tell you a story that will provide clues to the nature of love throughout the semester. The story is based on the ancient Greek mythical character named Tantalus. Even if you do not see the relevance of the story immediately, I hope you will keep it in mind as we proceed, treating it as the "myth" for this class (i.e., as a



**Figure I.2: Transformations of the Waters of Love**

fundamental, unquestionable belief—the definition of “myth” given in Lecture 3 of *The Tree*).

Tantalus was a half-breed: born from the union of the highest Greek god, Zeus, with a mortal woman. Mortality was passed on to him by his mother; yet unlike ordinary human beings, he found special favor with the gods. Indeed, so highly did the gods admire this god-man that they would invite Tantalus to dine with them on Mount Olympus. But Tantalus betrayed the trust given to him by the gods. Two versions of this betrayal exist, both relevant to the metaphorical significance of the story. In one version, Tantalus stole the nectar of the gods and fed it to other human beings. Since the nectar contained the secret of immortality with it, passing it on to mortals was strictly forbidden. In the other version, when Tantalus' son died, he cooked the body and fed the meat to the gods. The gods thoroughly enjoyed the taste of this delicacy—until they realized that they had been tricked into consuming the very flesh of mortality!

When Tantalus' crime was discovered, the gods sentenced him to an eternal punishment: he was forced to stand in a pool of water, submersed up to his neck. In the first version of the story, he is made to be eternally thirsty. Every time the water level was nearly high enough for him to stretch his tongue down to lap up some of the water, the level would suddenly recede and he would be unable to drink. In the second version, as befits the nature of his crime, he was made to be eternally hungry. A branch of a fruit tree is hung directly over his head, heavy with fruit. But every time the branch dips low enough to be within his reach, a strong wind blows the fruit just beyond his reach.

In both cases, the significance of the punishment is clear: Tantalus pays for his attempt to mix the immortal (the food and drink of the gods) with the mortal (the food and drink of human beings) by being forced to endure unending hunger and thirst in the very presence of the object that would satisfy his longing. The English word “tantalize” comes directly from this myth.

My suggestion is that we take this story as a description of the human situation with respect to love. We all start out, like Tantalus, as half-breeds, with one foot in the “heaven” of love’s spiritual nature and the other foot firmly planted on the “earth” of love’s physical nature. Anyone who neglects the significance of this key distinction will end up living a life of insatiable frustration: unable to satisfy either the spiritual thirst for the eternal nature of love or the physical hunger for fleshly satisfaction. The story contains more meaning than this, as we shall see later on in the semester. But for now this much explanation should suffice to suggest how an examination of the various transformations of “the waters of love” will provide an effective strategy for carrying out a philosophically sound (i.e., *watertight*) and psychologically fruitful examination of this important topic.

That the myth of Tantalus can be effectively applied to love was confirmed to me when I was browsing the web recently in search of information about the story. I came across an interesting poem, written by an Arabic poet, Abdel-Rahman Semman:

#### Torment of Tantalus

Sometimes when all my days get dark,  
When all is grim, and time crawls by,  
The thrill is gone, and things seem stark,  
And life itself is just a sigh.  
All I want then is you around,  
To wrap me tightly with your arms,  
To help me feel the love I found,  
To bathe me with your seeping charms.  
Your eyes alone give me emotion;  
In them I see the world I miss.  
Your lips caress me with affection;  
Those lips that I wish I could kiss.

Your hair that flows with vivid grace,  
Flutters behind you like a mane,  
And wraps itself around your face,  
Expunging all my deepest pain.  
Your cheeks on sight drive me insane,  
And strip me of my manly might.  
Forbidden Fruits beside them wane,  
The Serpent too would take a bite.  
For now all my dreams cannot be,  
For you my dear are not yet mine.  
If I can have your memory,  
Torment of Tantalus is fine.

I have to confess that reading this poem, where the inevitably tantalizing nature of love is so movingly expressed, filled me with a sense of apprehension about the whole project of teaching this class. “We’re doomed to fail!” I thought. “Love is a lived experience, not an object to be comprehended with philosophical or psychological theories;

so how can I be foolish enough even to attempt to accomplish such a hopeless task, to answer a question theoretically that can only be answered through a lifelong struggle?” But here I am, inviting you to join me in the pool of Tantalus, yearning to quench our mutual thirst for a deeper understanding of love. My warning, for those of you who choose to enter the pool, is that to do so will require you to treat this class as more than just another academic exercise; instead, you must be prepared to treat it as an integral part of your life, so that each theory we examine becomes not merely something new to think about, but something to inform the way you live. In this way, my hope is that those of you who are willing to “get wet” with me during this course of lectures might gain enough wisdom in the process of trying to understand love so that by the end of the semester you, too, can exclaim: “Torment of Tantalus is just fine!”

## 2. Dreamtime, Knowledge, and the Origin of Love

As part of my effort to root this class in lived experience rather than merely in abstract theories, I’ll read poetry or tell personal stories from time to time. Here is a poem I wrote about love many years ago, just a few years after I started teaching in Hong Kong. To help me cope with the fast pace of life here, I used to make a habit of stopping at a country park in Shatin on my way to work at least once or twice a month. I would climb about halfway up a path to Lion Rock, to the point where a stream crosses the path. I would then walk along the stream to a place where I could sit all alone for an hour or so. One day during my meditations, the following poem came to me:

#### This Place

This place has water  
A calm stream flowing within  
With healing powers that spring  
From depths unknown.  
Between the stones the water winds  
As the wind blows gently  
Through the leaves:  
Cool in summer and warm in winter.  
Over my feet, between my toes,  
Flows the cool water of love

Into the depths of my heart  
Where it pours out again for you.  
Even the hungry mosquitoes  
Are messengers of love,  
Of blood spilled from one  
That others might live.  
This place is water,  
Is stone set free;  
This place is able  
To lead me to Me.

Sitting in that special place, all alone and yet constantly in the company of birds, mosquitoes, and various tiny inhabitants of the stream, I

often felt as if I were being transported into a different dimension of space-time—a dreamlike dimension no longer bound by the distinctions and differences that characterize the ordinary world of our daily life. I seemed to be contacting something like the “Dreamtime” many primitive cultures look back to as a “Golden Age” at (or before) the dawn of human history (see *The Tree*, Lecture 3, and *Dreams*, Lecture 34). As the name suggests, this may also be the “realm” we re-enter every night when we fall asleep and begin to dream. Without speculating on such possible connections, I shall attempt in today’s lecture to trace the development of two interrelated themes—knowledge and love—throughout human history, starting with this postulated, prehistoric Dreamtime.

Probably the best known account of a primitive Dreamtime is the biblical story of Adam and Eve (Genesis 1-4). We are told there that God’s last great creative act before resting was to form a human person, Adam, out of the “ground” (“*adamah*” in Hebrew). Placing him in the idyllic Garden of Eden, God allowed Adam to name all the living creatures that peacefully inhabited the earth, limiting his activity in only one way: he was not to eat the fruit of the tree planted in the middle of the garden, the “tree of knowledge”. After realizing it was not good for Adam to be alone, God removed a bone from this first person and shaped it into a woman. This was the origin of the male-female distinction. But soon afterwards, God’s one rule became the focus of temptation, until finally the couple ate the forbidden fruit. The moment they did this, several inevitable consequences followed. First, they realized they were naked, and made clothing to cover their embarrassment. Then, after discovering what they had done, God cast them out of their little paradise, not so much as a punishment, but because their new discovery (the capacity to know) was inconsistent with remaining in a place of undivided wholeness. From that time forward men had to suffer by working to earn a living and women had to suffer by giving birth to children.

We shall see on several occasions throughout this class that this story contains some key insights about love; so if you are not familiar with the details, please find a Bible and read the text in full. For now, the point I wish to emphasize is that the story draws a direct connection between Adam and Eve *gaining knowledge* (by eating the fruit of the tree by that name) and their separation from nature (i.e., the pure, unspoiled natural habitat of the Garden). The story implies that the act of knowing (in this case, knowing “good and evil”, as the tree’s full name indicates) only becomes possible once we are willing to see ourselves as separate from the world; seeing themselves as separate was the prerequisite for

Adam and Eve to realize they were naked. Before they became knowing beings, they were not essentially different from the other animals in the Garden: if they loved each other (or God) at all, it would have been merely as an unconscious expression of instinct, “breathed” into them as the “image of God”. But once they ate the fruit and were forced to leave behind their glorious (dreamlike) sense of being “one with God (and nature)”, they began to develop the capacity to know and to love.

This story establishes a pattern that has been reenacted over and over throughout human history, especially in relation to the development of science. (The word “science”, incidentally, means “knowledge” in Latin.) Knowing requires the knower to become separate from the object. This separation gives rise to *alienation*, a sense of not belonging to nature (or to God, or for that matter, to human society). And alienation, in turn, gives rise for the first time to the desire to *re-unite* with nature or God. This is the origin of religion—a word that comes from two Latin words, “re” and “ligare”, meaning “to tie back” or “reunite”. Interestingly, other religions have similar stories about the origin of knowledge and/or religion.

Due in large part to the widespread acceptance of the scientific theory of evolution, many people nowadays regard all such religious stories as meaningless fairy tales. To demonstrate that the lesson they convey still holds true even if the stories themselves are rejected, let me supplement the above account of the beginning of the human race with one based on this alternative, evolutionary story of how we humans “woke up” from our prehistoric sleep.

According to the theory of evolution, the universe began with a tiny, but extremely powerful explosion, as light began to escape for the first time from an infinitely dense particle of matter. As light escaped, this chunk of matter began to expand, and the universe has been growing at the speed of light ever since. After billions of years some of the expanding matter entered a range of density that enabled certain random collections of chemicals to develop into the most primitive forms of life. Scientists agree that these first life-forms probably lived in water, and may have first come to our earth on a comet or in a chunk of ice attached to a meteor. Over millions of years, these primitive life forms developed into fish, then into reptiles and birds that could survive outside the water, and finally into animals and primates with brains allowing them to perform more complex functions.

Evolutionary science believes human beings developed at a relatively late stage in this process, as a refined version of the more

advanced primates. This story does not require us to believe in any unique, spiritual component that makes human beings different from all other life-forms. However, it does present us with a picture of a process that is very similar to that described by the religious accounts of human beginnings. For science also attests to the fact that we began as *part of nature*, yet through a slow and mysterious process of development, we became separate and distinct from the rest of the natural world, to the point where we human beings are now, as far as we know, the only life-forms possessing self-conscious knowledge. The main difference between the religious and the scientific accounts is that the former generally regard the change as resulting from God's sudden proclamation, whereas the latter regard it as resulting from a prolonged natural process.

At this point I'd like to pause for a moment in this account of the relationship between knowledge and love in the historical development of the human race, and ask you to reflect on a simple question: Have you ever seen a lonely animal? If so, think about where it was at the time you saw it, and why you thought it was lonely. My guess is that most of you are thinking right now of an animal caged up in a zoo. We tend to regard such animals as lonely because they have been removed from their natural habitat, separated from the nature that was meant to be their home. Some of you may have been thinking of a pet, for much the same reason. Charles Schultz, the maker of the Peanuts comic strips, recognized the one-sided nature of human-pet relationships when he portrayed Snoopy as Charlie Brown's best friend, but made it clear that Snoopy's "love" of his master extended no further than the food he obtained in return. We only regard animals as lonely when they are domesticated, forced to live in the human world, because loneliness is a product of human socialization, an emotional response to the sense of alienation that comes from being separated from our roots in nature. To think of an animal living in the wild as lonely is ridiculous, if not absurd.

We human beings are, of course, animals; so why should we be so different from all non-human animals in this respect? The answer, I believe, lies at the very dawn of human history, and can be traced from there right up to the present day. History, by definition, begins at the point when human beings were first able to make a record of the past that could be passed down from one generation to the next (whether in the form of written words, drawings on the wall of a cave, or a merely oral tradition). By doing this, they objectified themselves, turning their own lives into an object that could be studied by others who had not

lived the same experiences. The stronger this awareness became of playing a role in an objective history that could not be changed once it happened, the more human beings evolved into creatures who had to survive by the force of their own knowledge, rather than by depending on their natural instincts.

At the dawn of human history, this dependence on knowledge was minimal: human beings typically gathered in groups and lived outdoors or in natural shelters such as caves. They only needed to know how to gather food and produce offspring—something they, like other animals, knew by instinct. Love as we know it (especially in its romantic form) must have played little or no role in human culture at this stage, for they were still not clearly separated from nature.

The first big change happened when human beings responded to the first inklings of loneliness by moving indoors, building dwellings that kept them closer to a few, yet ironically separated them still further from everyone else, as well as from their natural habitat. Along with this change came specific customs adopted by each tribe or village, regulating interpersonal relations above all else. For example, as Freud pointed out, a rule that was virtually universal in such primitive cultures was the incest taboo: sex with a parent or sibling was strictly forbidden. Through a multitude of traditions passed down from generation to generation, the identity of each individual was thoroughly determined by their society's traditions; little room was left for the creative impulses of love. Science (human knowledge), too, remained in its infancy.

The next revolution came when the mythical means of transmitting knowledge from one generation to another was replaced by philosophical and/or religious systems of belief. Love, too, underwent a transformation at this point. It changed from being an almost entirely unconscious force drawing people together for the purpose of mating to being a consciously desired value, sanctioned by tradition in most cases, but not wholly under its control. By the time of Confucius in China, Buddha in India, Elijah in Israel, and Socrates in Greece, people living in the developed cultures of the world were becoming keenly aware of their own individuality. With this increased awareness of their own separation from each other and from nature came not only advanced techniques for communicating (i.e., complex written languages) and for fighting the enemy (e.g., chariots, battleships), but also an ever-deepening awareness of the need to overcome this separation through loving relationships with other people.

Another big change happened during the Industrial Revolution in



the west: philosophies encouraging individualism had prepared the way for such advances in science that, for the first time in human history, technology began to have more influence on society than religion. As the basic knowledge possessed by the entire human race increased and our ability to control nature improved, something ironic (but in retrospect, not unexpected) happened: people living in these advancing societies became more and more alienated from each other. As a direct result of this alienation—or perhaps I should say, concurrently with it (for I do not claim to know which was the cause and which the effect)—the social structures governing love also began to change. For example, the women's movement had its first seeds in this era, and continued to grow until, by the middle of the twentieth century, feminism had established itself as one of the most powerful forces in modern society. The more adept men became at removing themselves from the world in order to manipulate it, the more women insisted on clearly distinguishing themselves from their male counterparts. Yet at the same time, the intense expression of love known as “romance” went from being an exceptional experience most people only dreamed about (still allowing their love life to be governed by the tradition of arranged marriages) to being the normal way of experiencing love for the average person.

This trend reached its peak in the 1960s, illustrating even more conclusively how knowledge requires (or perhaps produces) alienation and how alienation calls for a social remedy in the form of more attention given to love: this principle suggests an interesting explanation for why the decade of “love power”, “free sex”, and all that went with the hippie movement, happened when it did; it came shortly after the first human beings were able to leave the earth and view our world from space, as an independent object. Once again, when humanity had to come to terms with the alienation resulting from our self-imposed separation from nature and the loneliness resulting from our separation from each other, we responded by increasing the attention we pay to love. Indeed, it is no accident that what was regarded as the “century of love” by many writers was nevertheless called the “century of alienation” by philosophers such as Paul Tillich. Alienation is the price we pay for increased knowledge; and love is our feeble attempt to settle the debt we incur when we cannot pay what is due.

The question raised by this historical overview is: can love accomplish all it seems to promise? Or is it perhaps only leading us further down the spiral of ever-increasing alienation? Nowadays we never seem to enjoy more than brief glimpses of the unity with nature that our

earliest ancestors must have lived with, day in and day out. When was the last time you put your bare feet into a cool stream of water? Instead of allowing ourselves to experience our oneness with nature, we chase dreams of an interpersonal oneness with an ideal partner who—so we tell ourselves—will make all things right again through the magic we call “love”. The aim in all of this, it seems, is to recapture what Adam and Eve lost in their naïve ignorance, yet to have it without giving up any of the knowledge we have gained along the way.

What was the first thing Adam and Eve came to know, after they had eaten the fruit of the Tree of Knowing? Yes, it was their own nakedness. Some scholars believe it was only at this point that they first had sex. For in Hebrew the verb “to know” can also mean “to have sex”. And the first thing we learn about their life outside the Garden of Eden is that they had children. Human history—with its never-ending cycle of knowing, becoming separate, loving, and then knowing at a still deeper level—had begun. Tantalus had stepped into the pool and begun his life-long task of trying to satisfy his hunger and thirst. Is this task a hopeless one, then, if it has no discernible end? Along these lines, Wagoner, who regards loneliness as *the* problem love sets out to solve (*ML* 3-9), says (135): “In a not-so-funny way, we are all prisoners of love.” All the best products of human civilization—all art, poetry, religion, philosophy, science, and even technology—arise out of our struggle with this psycho-spiritual problem. Though it would be overly presumptuous for us even to hope we might solve this problem in this class, we can at least entertain the hope that we might come to understand it, and therefore learn to cope with it, more fully.

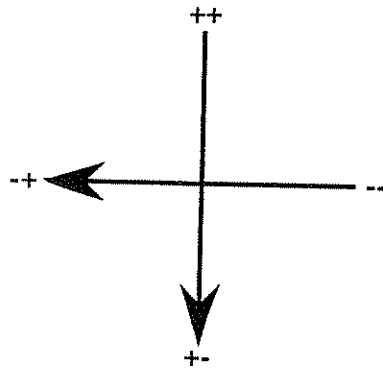
### 3. Philopsychy: Love as a Whole Person Quest

As I mentioned in the first lecture, this class is actually the third in a series of classes I teach on interrelated topics. Since I am aware that most of you taking this class will not have taken one (or in some cases, either) of the other two, I would like to spend some time now to summarize the main points of these other classes and to explain how this third class carries some of the same themes a step further. Hopefully this will achieve two goals: to provide enough background information so that those who are not familiar with the other classes will be able to participate fully in this one without suffering any disadvantage; and to arouse enough interest in those who have not taken one or both of the

other classes to convince you to do so in the future.

In the first lecture I already presented the basic outline of the first class (see Figure I.1), as contained in *The Tree*. I'll now supplement that summary by reviewing the basic lesson established in each Part of that textbook. Part One explores the history of western metaphysics, from Socrates' initial claim that the wisest person is the one who recognizes his or her lack of wisdom, to Kant's detailed explanation of the limits of human reason. Kant demonstrated that reason can produce knowledge only when it takes input from the empirical world (the world we experience in space and time) and processes it using certain fixed categories of thought (see Lecture 8). Any attempt to employ reason beyond this limit can produce rational belief, but not knowledge (Lecture 9).

In the previous summary of *The Tree* I already highlighted the important difference raised in Part Two between analytic (noncontradictory) and synthetic (contradictory) logic. Here I'll simply add that an important lesson we can learn from that distinction is that the meaning of our words depends on how we *interpret* them (see Lecture 18). Another lesson is that the various systems of meaning we construct can often be *mapped* onto simple geometrical figures to provide us with an orderly way of understanding their interrelationships. The most useful map, used frequently in all three textbooks, is the "2LAR" or second level analytic relation (see Figure I.3). It consists of two levels of binary (yes-no) distinction, combined to yield four logically possible alternatives: --, +-, -+, and ++. Understanding the logical basis



**Figure I.3: Logical Relations in the Basic 2LAR Map**

of this map is not absolutely necessary to follow the main arguments to be presented in the following lectures, for the maps are used only to clarify arguments that are also fully explained in the text itself. Nevertheless, such an understanding will be a great asset to any reader who finds the need for additional clarification. Any such readers who at this point are confused about the logical structure of the 2LAR map should consult Week V of *The Tree* (especially Lecture 13) before going on with this class.

Parts Three and Four of *The Tree* work out the practical implica-

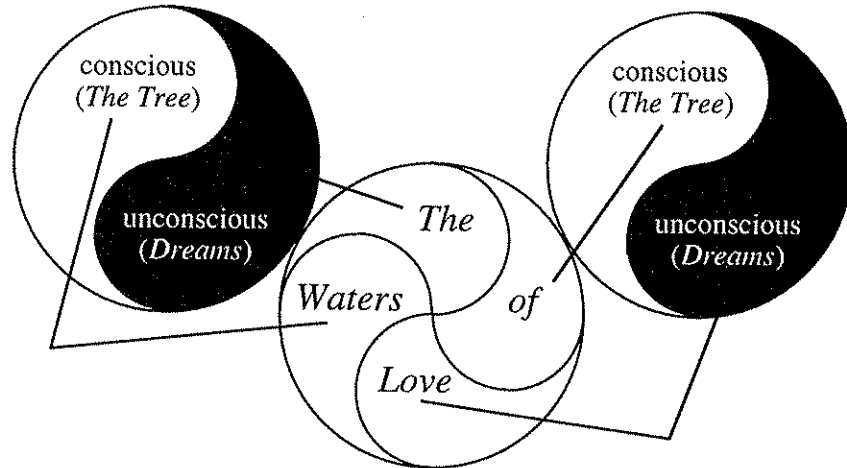
tions of the theoretical principles established in Parts One and Two. The most important task for applied philosophy is to establish the boundary line between what we can and cannot know in a given realm. Part Three of *The Tree* examines three areas of applied philosophy: philosophy of science, moral philosophy, and political philosophy. In each case we found that Kant had established a boundary line (causality, freedom, and power, respectively), while other philosophers had ignored or overstepped these boundaries in various ways. And in Part Four we focused on an even more practical range of existential issues: beauty, love, symbolism, religious experience, anxiety, courage, death, and the meaning of life. We saw that when philosophers attempt to describe these deep human experiences, their words break down and synthetic logic becomes a necessary tool for theory construction.

The second class emphasizes the key distinction between the "conscious" and "unconscious" aspects of an individual's nature. According to the Swiss psychologist, Carl Jung, the unconscious guarantees psychic balance by applying the principle of "compensation": whenever something in a person's conscious life is overemphasized, his or her unconscious responds by giving rise to an opposite influence, usually in the form of a dream (see *Dreams*, Lecture 12). Using this principle, Jung developed a complex theory of dream interpretation, including reference to numerous "archetypes", or general types of sub-personality that tend to arise in each person's unconscious (see Lectures 17-18). These include the "shadow" (the opposite of everything a person regards as good), the "anima" for men or "animus" for women (the opposite of everything a person regards as "normal" for his or her own sex), and numerous other more specific archetypes, whose ultimate purpose is to counteract anything that would stand in the way of the person's "Self" archetype (the archetype of wholeness) developing to its fullest.

Despite their differences, all three classes in the series could be regarded as explorations of the same topic from different perspectives. The overall topic is what I call "philopsychy"—a word meaning "soul-loving" and made up of the first half of "philosophy" (love of wisdom) followed by the first half of "psychology" (soul-study). Thus, the first two books explore the areas of philosophy and psychology, respectively, while this third book synthesizes the first two in at least two senses. First, it employs both philosophical and psychological methods to promote a deeper understanding of love. We shall glean insights about love not only from the philosophical theories advanced by classical giants such as Plato and Aristotle, and modern thinkers such as Kierkegaard

and Sartre, but also from psychological theories advanced by Freud, Jung, and a variety of other influential psychologists. Indeed, our scope will be broadened still further to include ideas from theologians, poets, novelists, and anyone else whose ideas can contribute to a balanced, “soul-loving” understanding of the subject.

The second, and perhaps more significant, sense in which this third class serves as the synthesis of the first two is that it carries the overall goal of the series to a new level. *The Tree* introduced the “know thyself” goal by relating it to Socrates’ declaration that this was to be the main goal of doing philosophy; *Dreams* described how psychology continues this task by training us to become aware of our unconscious side (through dream interpretation), not merely examining our conscious side (through insight exploration), as philosophy had already done. Here in *Waters* our goal is to explore a still higher plane of self-awareness: knowledge of who we are *in relation* to other persons. Figure I.4 depicts the synthetic function of this third class by showing how it presupposes the conscious-unconscious distinction explored separately in the first two classes, inviting us now to examine how our souls change when they come into contact with others.



**Figure I.4: Self-Discovery through Personal Relations**

Don't be misled by my use of the word “soul” here or elsewhere throughout this series of classes. I do not mean to be speculating about the existence of some hidden metaphysical reality; Kant (see *The Tree*, Lecture 9) taught us to be wary of making any such careless claims about realities we cannot know. Instead, I intend the term to be taken more as a hypothetical device, indicating a simple belief that there is more to being

human than can be explained by referring to our physical nature on its own. Whereas Descartes (see *The Tree*, Lecture 7) regarded the soul as a “thinking substance” and Freud (see *Dreams*, Lectures 7-9) regarded it as the unconscious source of the illusions that plague our life, we shall treat the “soul” throughout this book as something that is called into being whenever we relate lovingly to another person. What we shall discover here is that the “whole person” quest that characterizes both philosophy and psychology can reach its goal only when we take these two disciplines together and seek, as conscious beings aware of the ever-present unconscious side of life, to understand what it means to be a person in loving relation with other persons.

Seeing love itself as a quest for the whole person will require us to unite a number of opposites that tend otherwise to remain separate. For example, we will need to embrace both sides of the tension between the traditions of our society and our own individualistic impulses. When the community takes precedence over the individual, the “soul” of society suffers, because individuals are prevented from loving as they see fit. But when the individual takes precedence, those persons who enter loving relations may find their experience empty, without any community support to give it meaning and guard against alienation. A balance is required if the soul is to flourish.

The same holds true for a number of other related dichotomies, such as that between reason and irrationality. If we try to understand our personal relationships with others in wholly rational terms, love itself will slip through our fingers. But if the limitations of reason persuade us to give ourselves entirely over to the irrational side, then whatever experiences of love we may end up having will not give rise to any significant understanding. As a result, we will lose the valuable opportunity to deepen our self-awareness through our experiences of love.

An effective way of connecting the theme of love with the overall psychosomatic project of self-awareness is to regard love as “finding yourself in another person”. In so doing, we must keep in mind the warnings psychologists give of the dangers of “projection” (see *Dreams*, Lecture 17): a person who remains unaware of some characteristic of his or her own personality often “projects” that characteristic onto another person. Projecting a negative characteristic leads us to view another person as evil; projecting positive traits tends to make us fall in love. Increasing psychological self-awareness requires us to learn to withdraw such projections and recognize that the characteristics we impute to others are often as true, if not more true, of ourselves. While increasing our self-

awareness in this way is always a good idea, I argued in Lecture 29 of *Dreams* that a total rejection of all projection would risk making loving relations impossible. Instead, we may embrace positive projections as an effective way to increase our self-awareness through the give-and-take interactions of love, provided we remain aware of the projection as it happens. In this way, the experience of love can provide a more effective means of attaining self-knowledge than either the overly objective approach of pure philosophy or the overly subjective approach of pure psychology on its own. Indeed, thanks to the inevitable role of projection in loving relationships, they provide us with the best possible “mirror” for self-awareness: we not only “find” ourselves, but *recreate* ourselves.

Given the psychosomatic importance of embracing *both* sides of various oppositions, I shall adopt throughout this book an anti-reductionist approach to analyzing the relationships between the four fundamental manifestations of love under consideration. A reductionist approach is one that (for example) would attempt to explain love entirely in terms of the sex drive, or the value of sex entirely in terms of expressing love. The “waters” metaphor used in the title of this text should not be interpreted to imply that sex or marriage or friendship are merely “aspects of love”; although this is true in a sense, there is an equally valid sense in which it is not true. In Lecture 1 I expressed this paradox by listing “love” twice in Figure I.2: as a term labeling one of the four poles of the cross, love (our *idea* of love) must be clearly distinguished from the other elements; but as the term labeling the central point of the whole diagram, love (our whole *experience* of love) inevitably involves the other aspects as well, though without thereby enabling us to eliminate the significance of these other elements as essential in and of themselves. Love is a topic quite distinct from sex, marriage, or friendship, just as the latter three can be examined as something other than just ways of expressing love.

Each main part of this class will examine loving relationships from a distinct perspective, with a special issue, or approach to loving, in mind. Each of these is related to the basic “water” metaphor in two specific ways, only one of which is shown in Figure I.2. The ideal theories of love examined throughout the remainder of Part One are abstract, like the chemical formula for water, H<sub>2</sub>O. But they are also vast and seemingly unending, like the earth’s *oceans*. Indeed, theorizing about love is a never-ending project: yet, long-lasting though they are, metaphysical theories of love tend to be unstable when applied to real human situations. They are dependable as theories, but when adopted as

exclusive principles to live by, each almost inevitably loses its efficacy. The adventurous seafarer needs more than just a good map to insure a safe journey! Thus, for example, the principle of love a person adopts as a 20-year old has usually changed by the time the same person reaches 40, and the new principle is likely to evolve still further so that at 60 the person appears to be living according to yet another principle. Nevertheless, understanding these abstract theories will be as crucial to our understanding of love in action as understanding the chemistry of H<sub>2</sub>O is to understanding how water manifests itself in nature.

In Part Two you will need to get used to using the word “sex”. The slightly more objective word “sexuality” will sometimes be used instead, but we must not use this as an excuse for keeping our discussion too abstract and not sufficiently down-to-earth; for sex itself, rather than merely the concept of sexuality, will be the main focus of our discussion. The advantage of sometimes referring to “sexuality” is that it has a broader application, including all manner of touching, not just sexual intercourse. This manifestation of love corresponds to water that is so “hot” that it turns to steam. Like steam, sex provides a burst of power that is momentary and unstable; the easiest way to get “burned” in a love relationship is by making sex its sole basis. It’s wonderful while it lasts, but cannot be permanent, for steam eventually cools. But just as sex is not always “hot”, so also the ocean’s water naturally forms into *clouds* when it vaporizes—a process that is essentially the same as the one that makes steam visible. Such metaphors will assist us in recognizing many of the potential benefits of sex, just as steam and clouds both have many beneficial uses. If we harness the great potential energy of our sexual “steam”, treating it with the care it deserves, but also recognizing that it will sometimes appear in the “cooler” form of clouds, then we’ll be approaching this difficult topic realistically.

The topic of Part Three, marriage, focuses on the type of loving relationship where love all too often seems to die, especially for those who identify love with sexual passion. Hence the association of marriage with the frozen form of water is quite appropriate. Moreover, ice can be used to preserve food that would otherwise go bad; so this manifestation of love ends up being the most long-lasting and stable. But at what price? The mysterious attraction that (more often than not, in the modern world) compels us to enter into love relationships tends to fade away in the everlasting commitment of marriage. (Men tend to joke about marriage more than women, regarding it as a kind of “death”—and not without reason, for, like it or not, this is what marriage often is to the

“basic instinct” of male sexuality, as we shall see.) Nevertheless, just as we can learn to enjoy ice at the right time and in the right context and amount (e.g., in a cold drink or to preserve food), so also we can learn to enjoy and benefit greatly from marriage, if we do not approach it with false expectations. For although the clouds contain frozen water when they form high in the earth’s atmosphere, the ice usually condenses into *rain* as it falls to the earth. If we allow this rain to nourish the “plants” of our souls, it can serve the all-important purpose of promoting a level of personal growth that would otherwise be impossible.

Friendship is the most ordinary manifestation of love, just as water is how we normally experience H<sub>2</sub>O. Nevertheless, I shall argue that it is love’s highest expression, the goal of this study in many respects, just as ontology realizes philosophy’s goal and enjoying our dream-life realizes the goal of psychology and/or dream interpretation, and just as the leaves and butterfly are for the tree and caterpillar. True friendship is thought to be long-lasting (“friends forever”, as the saying goes); but this is largely a myth. In fact, the reality is that our friendships are constantly changing, just as *rivers* do as they wind their way across the earth’s terrain in a relentless quest to return to the ocean. Likewise, most people will have only a very small number of genuine friends with whom they keep in regular contact for more than a few years or perhaps a decade or two if they’re lucky. Yet, though our actual times of contact and being friendly with each other are relatively brief, the effect is stable in the sense that, no matter how many years transpire between meetings, good friends when meeting again can move almost instantly back into their special level of intimacy, just as water can always flow smoothly again over a dry river bed it had once carved out.

The notion that understanding how persons can join together in loving relation is the proper conclusion for both the philosophical and the psychological quest may be a mere “dream” in some respects. But on the other hand, if our understanding enables us to *experience* love more deeply, and thereby to see ourselves more clearly, then the dream may well become a reality.

## QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT/DEBATE

1. A. What is love?  
B. Is love essentially a feeling or a choice?
  
2. A. Must love be mutual in order to be genuine?  
B. Is it possible to *stop* loving someone after genuinely loving them?
  
3. A. Is there any type of knowledge that does *not* require alienation?  
B. Can love ever overcome the problem of loneliness?
  
4. A. What are the similarities and differences between love and water?  
B. Is love a reliable tool for gaining self-knowledge?

## RECOMMENDED READINGS

1. Stephen Palmquist, *The Tree of Philosophy*, especially Lecture 30, “Reunion and the Mystery of Love” (TP 229-237).
2. Stephen Palmquist, *Dreams of Wholeness*, especially Week X, “Psychology of Love” (DW 211-234).
3. The myth of Tantalus (any version).
4. The Holy Bible (any translation), Genesis 1-4.
5. Morton M. Hunt, *The Natural History of Love*, see especially chs. 1 and 10, “Introduction” and “The Age of Love” (NHL 7-15, 295-346).
6. Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, especially Book II, “The Religious Origins”, (LWW 59-137).
7. Robert E. Wagoner, *The Meanings of Love* (ML).
8. Robert Brown, *Analyzing Love* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).