

The Meanings of Love: An Introduction to Philosophy of Love

By Robert E. Wagoner

This introductory text offers a clear, concise look at the philosophy of love. The author's presentation assumes no previous knowledge of philosophy, providing the humanities student with an insightful introduction to some of the most prominent writers and philosophers, both ancient and modern. From the dialogues of Plato to the writings of feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray, Wagoner presents six major ideas of love: erotic love, Christian love, romantic love, moral love, love as power, and mutual love.

This study asserts that even though we have only one word for love, six fundamentally different meanings can be distinguished: erotic love, Christian love, romantic love, moral love, love as power, and mutual love. Wagoner identifies each of these ideas of love in terms of the special meaning it brings to experience. No one meaning is comprehensive. Each is shown to have a logic and legitimacy of its own. Why each view seems real and compelling is the focus of separate discussions, as well as the price that may be exacted by each idea. The extent to which these ideas throw light on actual experience is striking, but the book is not an empirical or psychological inquiry. How one self finds itself in another is first defined and then explored further to see how this shapes the rational and sexual aspects of life.

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