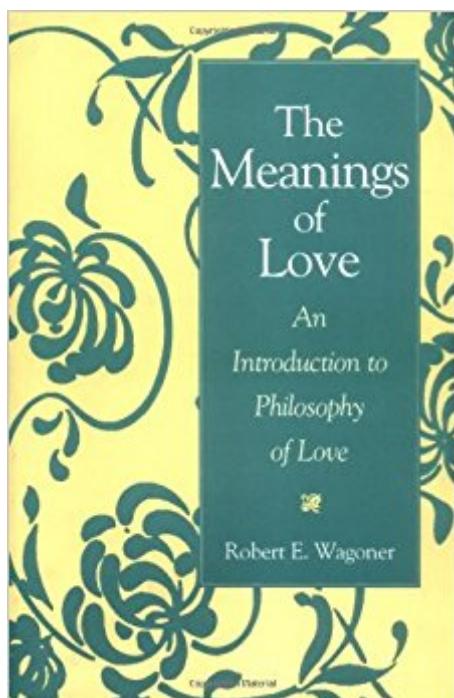


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# The Meanings Of Love: An Introduction To Philosophy Of Love



## **Synopsis**

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.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

ROBERT E. WAGONER is Professor of Philosophy at Juniata College.

Given that philosophers focus largely on rationality and the logical structures of thought, it is good to

see such a profound discussion of that most irrational of emotions, love. Wagoner presents a chronologically structured survey of the most important Western philosophical explorations of love from Plato to Irigaray. In each of the seven chapters we are given an effective summary of the positions of these philosophers as well as suggestions as to what the implications are for our contemporary thinking. These suggestions cover not just the need to understand what love is but also how it touches upon sexuality and upon our ethical lives. The book surveys the various forms of interpersonal love - erotic, romantic and moral - and does not ignore Christian love and friendship. Not only does this help us understand the phenomenon of love as it enters and, possibly, disturbs our lives, but also the moral discourses that have surrounded it and linked it to sin and excess. Altogether a good book. Highly recommended.

Required for philosophy class.

As a freshman in college, I took Dr. Wagoner's class on love, and we used this book as a text. It was a great introduction into the world of philosophy (as the title implies), and it helped me better interpret some pretty intellectually-taxing works of theory and philosophy. It is a great text for the classroom... and for those who want to start reading philosophical texts but don't know where to begin. I still own my copy from ten years ago. :)

Robert E. Wagoner  
The Meanings of Love: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Love (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997) 149 pages  
A presentation of ideas about love from Plato and Aristotle to the present: Socrates, Kierkegaard, Kant, Sartre, Irigaray. The book is organized around six forms of love: erotic (Platonic), Christian, romantic, moral, mutual, and love as power. Wagoner has read extensively in the philosophy-of-love literature; and he presents the perspectives of several thinkers quite briefly; but he has nothing original to add to the discussion.

Philosophy can be a difficult subject regardless of the focus, especially if the reader has no background in philosophy. Wagoner writes an easy to read and insightful introductory look at the philosophy of love. I have recommended and loaned it to friends who have no philosophical background and they agree with me. Those well read in philosophy can also appreciate it, however, to expect it to be more than an introduction to the philosophy of love is asking too much from this book.

Wagoner has really shown us what love is in his book, THE MEANINGS OF LOVE. Through examination of six different views of love throughout time and thought -- ranging from Plato to Sartre -- he allows we readers to become more knowledgeable on a subject close to our hearts, but never really know about in a scholarly way. For lovers young and old.

I found this book a presumptuous, hypocritical waste of tree. I found his ideas to be heavily influenced by patriarchal society. This man should not be allowed to quote Tillich but since he did he should have at least done the man justice. His attempt to define the role of sexuality in these instances were meager. See Thomas Moore for an excellent look into sexuality and human relationships. Use this book for a coaster.

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