

# The Estrangement of Love from Philosophy: A Critical Analysis

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**Abstract.** Philosophy does not study love seriously, there is only a tiny portion. Furthermore, philosophy perceives love as a disgrace because love is related to emotion, while philosophy is related to ratio. Through text analysis of the books *Discourse on Method* and *The Course of Positive Philosophy* to examine Western philosophy's history, this study begins. The results reveal that Western philosophy moves to developments focusing on pure rationality. Philosophy gives birth to science characterized by rationalism-empiricism. More radically, the development of science leads to positivism, and each science will have an object of study with its method. Love was then eliminated from philosophy because love is related to emotion, and in science, emotion became an object for psychology, especially psychoanalysis. Philosophy and science go their separate ways. Philosophy focuses on efforts related to understanding humanity's problems, and love is not considered a philosophical problem, only an object of study in psychoanalysis.

**Keywords:** Love, Philosophy, Modernism, Positivism, Science

## 1 Introduction

Love is not foreign to philosophy. The word philosophy itself contains love. The term philosophy comes from two Greek words, *Philo* and *Sophia*; it translates as love to wisdom. From the beginning, it assumes that the basis of philosophy is love, an expression marked by deep affection and a solid emotional drive to a particular object. However, love is alienated from philosophical discourse because philosophy tends to inquire about truth through a rigorous and systematic approach [1]. Love has become a common topic to discuss with poets and religious leaders, but not with philosophers. Love does not get strong attention in the philosophical investigation [2]. Moreover, in today's circumstances, love has become commodified and makes love transactional. The proliferation of GPS online dating sites makes love degraded; thus, love evolves into something instant and even a game to play.

As stated by Jean-Luc Nancy, many people consider love irrelevant in philosophy. Jean-Luc Nancy said that the "*impossibility of speaking love has already been violently recognised*". It implies there is the impossibility of discussing love deliberately, and unfortunately, many philosophers and thinkers have widely engaged with this thesis [2]s

Philosophy views love as a disgrace [2] . This statement points specifically to romantic love because the general conception refers only to romantic love, not other types. Love is a disgrace

to philosophy because (romantic) love puts feeling and emotion as the primary [3]. Henceforward, philosophy puts love aside intentionally or unintentionally.

A few (or perhaps almost unavailable) philosophical interrogations put love as a primary concern. Philosophical debates write about love at a glance and in brief. According to E. Kroecker and K. Schaunbroeck, even though a topic that elaborates on emotion and passion is part of an interesting philosophical problem and usually attracts many colloquies, discourse about love only excites a small number of people [4].

Many scholars from various schools of thought talk and dedicate themselves to love. However, their dedication is moiety. They only write a few pages about love in their works instead of putting love at the centre of their opus. Their dedication to love is never wholehearted.

“And many well-known philosophers in the history of ideas have consecrated a few pages of their works to the topic of love and friendship.” [4].

If philosophical discourse refuses to discuss love because love relates closely to feeling, emotion, and passion, the problem about feeling and passion also relates to a philosophical thing, aren't they? Following E. Kroecker and K. Schaunbroeck, who state that issues of emotion and passion are interesting issues to address, N. Delaney says that love which is very close to emotion and passion also very appealing to deliberate. Love attracts considerable attention to talk about; however, different from other topics in philosophy, we can comprehend only a few things about love.

“Romantic love and loving commitment are topics that a lot of artists, philosophers, and theologians spend much time talking and thinking about, and yet for all this, the topics strike most of us as rather poorly understood.” [5]

From here, it has an impression that after a deliberate discussion about love, the discussion does not fruit a comprehensive apprehension about love; love is left behind intentionally. Instead of creating a thorough effort to solve the difficulties in obtaining a comprehensive apprehension about love, many thinkers choose to put love inside the box. Nevertheless, it is pretty awkward if, because of the difficulties, philosophy abandons love while the role of philosophy is to pursue a deep understanding of everything. Therefore, it must be another argument to analyse that can explain why philosophy estranges love. If the conception of love, which relates to emotion, is the only reason philosophy becomes antipathy to love, it feels oversimplified and exaggerates explication.

The research problem that needs to answer in this article is: Why is love estranged from formal inquiry in philosophy? Thus, this article aims to analyse the reasons of love becomes foreign or alien in the philosophical quest formally. To carry out the analysis, the history of philosophy, especially Western philosophy, is scrutinised to find the beginning point of philosophy's exclusion to love.

## 2 Method

This study uses a qualitative method with a narrative-descriptive approach through text analysis. Text analysis aims to examine the logical concept of primary data; in this study, the primary data is the book of Rene Descartes entitled *Discourse on Method*, particularly the one which was translated by Donald A. Cress and published in 1998 by Hackett Publishing Company entitled *Discourse on Method and Meditation on First Philosophy Fourth Edition*. Another is a book by Auguste Comte entitled *The Course of Positive Philosophy*, particularly the one which was freely translated and condensed by Harriet Martineau and published in 2000 by Batoche Books Kitchener with the title *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte in Three Volumes: Volume 1*.

Rene Descartes and Auguste Comte are philosophers many scholars believe to be pioneers in establishing the foundation of modern Western philosophy. Many thinkers agree that the modern era in philosophy starts with the Cartesian method, while Comte attributes his contribution to founding modern science, notably in social-humanities science.

## 3 Discussion

### 3.1 The Role of Reason in Western Philosophy

The movement of Western philosophy heads to the supremacy of reason. The supremacy of reason then creates methods of inquiry, which in the end, cause science to split from philosophy. Everything is approached by a scheme which relies solely on reason. On this account, love loses its attractiveness because there is a common assumption that links love only to emotion. The mystery of love ends and is solved because there is general acceptance that philosophy aims to resolve every issue. If the issue is resolved, it ends the investigation. At least in common knowledge, it is answered that love is part of emotion. The problem of love is finished; thus, it ends its philosophical problem. The demonstration of this argument can be explored by analysing the development and the history of Western philosophy.

From the development history, it can infer that Western philosophy has a characteristic that puts reason as supremacy. Things which irrational and unreasonable are erased automatically from philosophy. Since the beginning, philosophy in the West has been founded on total rationality, non-sensory perception, and non-perspectival [6]. Moreover, the unravelling of modern-contemporary philosophy is more radical. The supremacy of reason is narrowed-down to positivism which puts everything to be measurable and observable. Immaterial things cannot be verified. Something is logical if factual, and the senses can perceive it [7].

### 3.2 Periods in Western Philosophy

Bertrand Russell divided the periods of Western philosophy into three significant periods. Each period has a distinctive characteristic which differentiates it from the others. Each period can be classified again into sub-periods. Each period emerges and flourishes following the development of Western society [8]. The three significant periods are as follows:

1. Period of Ancient Philosophy. This period branched into three sub-periods:
  - a. Pre-Socratic Philosophy
  - b. Philosophy of Socratic, Plato and Aristotle

- c. Post-Socratic Philosophy
- 2. Period of Catholic Philosophy. This period branched into two sub-periods:
  - a. Philosophy of the Fathers
  - b. Medieval Philosophy
- 3. Period of Modern Philosophy

Ancient philosophy is characterised by two principal attitudes; (1) an inquiring attitude and (2) a receptive attitude. An inquiring attitude is a mentality keen on a critical investigation, which leads to a receptive attitude. A receptive attitude is an attitude that refuses any reception on anything prior to the investigation [9]. Ancient philosophy focuses on understanding nature and the physical universe (*Philosophia Naturalis*) and examining the essence of humans and things related to them. In brief, philosophy in this era emphasises on cosmos or *cosmocentric*.

Catholic Church strongly dominates the period of Catholic philosophy. The primary purpose of philosophy is to justify fundamental Christian doctrines. In this era, the nature of philosophy per the motto of the Jesuit Catholic order, "*Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*". It implies that philosophy aims to legitimise the church's doctrine to bring the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. This period focuses on divinity under Catholic belief, called *Theocentric*.

Western philosophy experiences radical transformation in the third or the modern period. In much literature, the modern era always connects with Rene Descartes, a French philosopher. However, the emergence of the modern era did not appear unexpectedly, but many pioneers commenced it. It is a simplification to attribute the modern era solely to Descartes because, before him, the dawn of modern has risen since Renaissance, even though Descartes is the person who marks this era through his opus. The main characteristic of this era is the focus on inquiries which entirely centred on humans and humanity, or called *anthropocentric*.

Descartes revolutionised philosophy and stated that the foundation of philosophy must be the reason and only reason, not religion or any institution like the church. The principle of Descartes's thought is centred on four things related to the theory of knowledge. There are; (1) the strength of the mind in order to gain knowledge from the external world, (2) how far the mind can drive through the structure of reality, and (3) how sound the mind is at representing the outside world and (4) what is the limit of the mind to obtain the truth [10].

Descartes introduces a method infamous as Cartesian Doubt. He says that to attain knowledge, we must follow the four scepticism methods as follows:

1. Do not accept anything as truth except that thing has been already clear; thus, nothing can refute it
2. In the inquiry process, the thing must be broken down into as many parts as possible
3. Start the investigation from simple things that are easy to discover to more challenging and complex things.
4. Everything must be considered in the inquiry process to avoid negligence of things that may contribute to the explanation [11].

Cartesian doubt is available in the book *Discourse on Method*. Descartes wrote the book in French, first published in 1637 and marked the modern era in Europe. Cartesian doubt is in the second part of the six parts of *Discourse on Method*.

“The first was never to accept anything as true that I did not plainly know to be such; that is to say, carefully to avoid hasty judgment and prejudice... The second, to divide each of the difficulties, I would examine into as many parts as possible and as was required in order better to resolve them... The third is to conduct my thoughts in an orderly fashion by commencing with those objects that are simplest and easiest to know in order to ascend little by little, as by degrees, to the knowledge of the most composite things... And the last, everywhere to make enumerations so complete and reviews so general that I was assured of having omitted nothing.” [12]

From this method, Descartes doubts everything until he finds out there is nothing left to doubt about except himself, who is thinking. It is when the truth emerges; when the subject thinks, and from the thinking process, he doubts all the things and what has left only him, who thinks and doubts everything. Because of the thinking process, humans realise everything that exists or *Cogito Ergo Sum*. In the book *Discourse on Method*, the precise sentence is *Je pense donc Je suis* which can freely translate as I think therefore I realise my existence, or I think therefore I am. This excerpt is written in the book's fourth part [12] .

Even though Western philosophy is torn apart into different eras, in general, Western philosophy has similarities across ages. The first feature, Western philosophy emphasises reason's ability to analyse, which translates into effective and efficient speech: the second feature, Western philosophy orients to comprehending the universe and scientific discovery. Consequently, Western philosophy is conquering nature and putting humans in the centre. The third feature, Western philosophy is optimistic and active. Humans are the centre of the universe and have significant autonomy in interpreting nature and everything [13] .

### **3.3 Estrangement of Love from Philosophy**

After Descartes, Western philosophy kept evolving into various schools of thought, such as rationalism and empiricism. Rationalism believes that the mind is the primary source of knowledge, while the opposite, empiricism believes that experience is the primary source of knowledge [11] . Immanuel Kant then synthesised the antagonism. He states that mind and experience wholly become the source of knowledge to grasp the truth, not separately. From Kant, philosophy moves far to be more radical and steer into the theory of knowledge or epistemology and bridge the birth of science, which is disjunct from philosophy [14]. Science has characteristics which differentiate it from philosophy, thus giving science autonomy. The characteristics of science are:

1. Science has a specific object of investigation.
2. Science has a specific method of investigation.
3. The investigation of science can be tested.
4. The investigation process in science follows a systematic order
5. The result of the investigation process in science opens the space for both verification and falsification
6. Science has a paradigm that can answer crises and anomaly

Philosophy then steers to the development of science, not only focusing on achieving the virtues in life as it was in the beginning. The characteristic of science is thoroughness, which implies that science is a unity. Science relates to other aspects or dimensions, which yields beneficial

contributions. Science is fundamental; it implies a solid basis and is not established on empty assumptions. Moreover, science is speculative, which means that the approaches in science are open and flexible [8] .

The development of philosophy as a mother of science dispose of positivism in a more radical way of thinking. Positivism emphasises that science only investigates things that are measurable and objectively graspable. Positivism regards science as a progressive movement. It starts from the theological stage when science relies on supernatural beings. From here, science ascends into the metaphysical stage. In this stage, every problem in the world is understood through the abstract ontological view.

Furthermore, the last stage is positive. It is the ultimate stage of science development and human knowledge's peak. In the positive stage, scientific truth can be comprehended by browsing the law of nature to discover the chain of cause and effect [7] .

“In the theological state, the human mind, seeking the essential nature of beings, the first and final causes (the origin and purpose) of all effects—in short, Absolute knowledge—supposes all phenomena to be produced by the immediate action of supernatural beings. In the metaphysical state, which is only a modification of the first, the mind supposes, instead of supernatural beings, abstract forces, veritable entities (that is, personified abstractions) inherent in all beings and capable of producing all phenomena. What is called the explanation of phenomena is, in this stage, a mere reference of each to its proper entity. In the final, the positive state, the mind has given over the vain search after Absolute notions, the origin and destination of the universe and the causes of phenomena and apply itself to the study of their laws—that is, their invariable relations of succession and resemblance. Reasoning and observation, duly combined, are the means of this knowledge. What is now understood when we speak of an explanation of facts is simply the establishment of a connection between a single phenomenon and some general facts. The number continually diminishes with the progress of science.” [15]

The evolvement in philosophy as a method of inquiry into the truth finally orients only to the method developed by Auguste Comte. For Comte, everything claimed as science must have a positive observation method and apprehension of the particular phenomenon. There is no alternative method but positivism for natural science, social science and humanities science. Suppose there is a subject proclaimed as science but does not implement the positivism method; thus, it can not be classified as science. Comte believes there is a hierarchical step for humans to find the truth, and positivism is the highest step. If a subject does not use the positivism method in its inquiry, it means the subject is still in the theological or metaphysical stage. Comte explains the scientific development method in his famous book *The Course of Philosophy*. The original manuscript of this book was written in French and published for the first time in 1830. This book is then translated into English.

Intellectual development keeps flourishing. In contemporary philosophy, there is logical positivism. According to this stance, the logical view of the world empirically lies in language. The mess in understanding the world is due to the availability of chaos in the logic of language.

The worldview relies on the logic of language, composed of various prepositions. The logic of language also describes the state of affairs of a particular phenomenon [16] .

The truth can be obtained through two propositions (1) empirical and (2) formal. In a formal proposition, the truth does not need to be tested. It has already been included in its language logic; thus, the truth must be tautological such as proposition  $2 + 2 = 4$ . It is true in itself. On the other hand, the truth must be tested by analysing a series of data in the empirical proposition. These data were collected from experiences mainly from experiments, discovery, and observation. The consequences of empirical verification from the logical-positivism approach make any metaphysical proposition meaningless; furthermore, according to A. J. Ayer theology, ethics, aesthetics, axiology, ontology, and philosophy of humans are utter nonsense and futile [17] .

The deduction from the history of Western philosophy analysis results in three conclusions: The first consequence, philosophy moves as the opening door for science or the mother of knowledge. It is due to the tendency of Western philosophy to move along the path of the theory of knowledge. Everything originates from philosophy but detaches from philosophy if it already has a specific object and method. The second consequence is that even though philosophy is a mother for the birth of science, since science has autonomy, the two become disjunct; for an analogy, philosophy and science are like a mother and a child. As the child grows old, the child becomes different from the mother. Philosophy aspires to obtain knowledge about ourselves or self-knowledge, while science aims to attain knowledge about reality [6].

Moreover, lastly, science, which is a son of philosophy, turns into empirical and even further logical positivism. It makes objects of inquiry in science, and the method must follow the empirical way of thinking. In the empirical way of thinking, observable and measurable data are the basis for any conclusion formulation.

Inferring those consequences, it is understandable if love becomes alien to philosophy. Love which is understood merely as part of emotion was separated from philosophy. Emotion becomes an object of investigation in psychology, especially psychoanalysis. It aligns with the first consequence, which states that philosophy is the mother of science. Furthermore, psychoanalysis strictly differentiates rationality and emotionality. Expression of emotion (it includes love) is random and often indescribable, even though emotion is logically comprehensible by the mind. The argument follows the second consequence that states science is knowledge about reality. Emotion is a reality, and scientific experimentation can examine it. What is inexplicable is the expression of emotion because of the randomness and dissimilarities of everyone. It is the meaning of love that is baffling for a reason. It is not the love per se that reason can not understand, but the manifestation of love, which is always random that can not be comprehended by reason because reason requires order and systematic pattern. The last one, emotion is an object that can be quantified and measured. Today's neuropsychology development suggests that psychological processes and behaviour entirely relate to a neuron's structure and function, which is in line with the third consequence.

It is the rationale that explains the estrangement of love. The conclusion comes from the exploration of the history of Western philosophy. Philosophy aims to answer how we live as humans in the world where we recognise our existence. The scientific method cannot solve existential problems [6] . On the other hand, love is not considered a philosophical problem

because love fails, in common conception, to give us an understanding of our humanity. Love is merely an object of analysis in psychology. Love is not a philosophical problem anymore but rather a psychological problem.

However, there are a few notes to regard about the history of Western philosophy, which put rationality as supremacy. The progress humans enjoy is a result of science. The birth of science starts with modernity, but modernity has many flaws.

Rationality is believed as the spirit of modernity and a basis for science. Nevertheless, this premise has been criticised since the beginning, for example, by Nietzsche. Nietzsche says rationality glorified in modern times is no more than the veil of power. Rationality is not objective and will never be objective. Thus, the claim that states rationality as the basis for science will make science free from biases is exaggerated.

B. Flyvbjerg states that power and knowledge are inseparable. Power determines everything which is considered science and excludes everything which is considered not science. It is also the power which determines the interpretation of knowledge, and the primary purpose of science is to be a slave to power [18] .

Following Nietzsche, B. Flyvbjerg formulates ten propositions that elaborate on the relation between power and science. The propositions, in general, negate the supremacy of objective reason, which is viewed as the spirit of science. The propositions are [18]:

1. Power defines reality
2. Rationality is context-dependent, the context of rationality is power, and power blurs the dividing line between rationality and rationalisation
3. Rationalisation, presented as rationality, is a principal strategy in the exercise of power
4. The greater the power, the less the rationality
5. Stable power relations are more typical of politics, administration, and planning than antagonistic confrontations
6. Power relations are constantly being produced and reproduced
7. The rationality of power has deeper historical roots than the power of rationality
8. In an open confrontation, rationality yields power
9. Rationality-power relations are more characteristic of stable power relations than of confrontations
10. The power of rationality is embedded in stable power relations rather than in confrontations

In the Nietzschean perspective, rationality and irrationality are not a distinction between reason and emotion. Irrationality does not automatically put the heart superior to the brain; passion is higher than the mind.

“From a Nietzschean perspective, irrationalism does not signify the superior claims of heart over head, passion over reason, but rather a perverse way of thinking.... In irrationalism, we are concerned only with thought, only with thinking. What is opposed to reason is thought itself.” [19]



For Nietzsche, irrationality as an opponent of rationality lay on similar ground. Irrationality is a flawed thinking process; irrationality does not relate to the feeling. The process of rationality and irrationality is merely a strategy for perpetuating power. The accusation of rationality which does not have objectivity and has a hidden veil never becomes a dominant narration in science. Science always believes that rationality is a robust instrument in pursuing the truth and that everything in this world needs to be explained by reason.

In the post-modern era, Nietzsche's accusation, which suspects reason in science that later transformed into empiricism and then positivism, is affirmed. Science has a severe bias; feminism is one of the first streams that contest science a la modernism.

## 4 Conclusion

Love becomes foreign in the philosophical inquiry because of the development of philosophy, which puts reason over everything. The development of philosophy is entirely founded on rationality, non-sensory, and non-perspectival. Rationality is then narrowed down into positivism. Everything must be measurable and observable. In the end, philosophy orients the development of science and focuses on solving practical human problems. The science born from philosophy only emphasises things that can be perceived objectively. Love is understood as a part of emotion, and emotion is an object of investigation in psychology, especially psychoanalysis. Philosophy does not deal anymore with love. Love is not considered a philosophical problem but rather merely an object in a branch of science: psychoanalysis.

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