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Claremont McKenna College

**The Jigsaw Model: A Key to a Loving Romantic Relationship**

Submitted to  
Professor Adrienne Martin

By  
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for  
Senior Thesis  
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May 3<sup>rd</sup>

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## Abstract

Using a simple “jigsaw” analogy to explain love and its objectives, comedian Daniel Sloss had triggered 50,000 break-ups, 34 engagement cancelations, and 42 divorces. This goes to show that many people do not have a clear understanding of what is romantic love and loving relationships. This study aims to examine romantic relationships and their transformative nature. Combining the work of Professor Simon Keller and Niko Kolodny, I developed a new model that helps to address the questions raised above. I conclude that, in the short term, people are motivated by the attractive qualities of others, which contribute to the formulation of romantic relationships. The sustaining of such a relationship, however, requires the valuing of the relationship itself. Then, by examining Plato’s Ladder of Love theory, I show that long-term loving relationships are transformative tools for people to understand philosophical knowledge and the form of beauty. People who value such transformation come to value romantic relationships, whereas the existence of romance seems unnecessary to those who do not hold such value. Such a way of “climbing up the ladder” can serve as a blueprint for people to find their life’s central goals and ways to achieve them.

Keywords: Philosophy of Love, Plato, Niko Kolodny, Simon Keller, Diotima’s Ladder of Love

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## Section 1: The Jigsaw Model

### Introduction: an inspiration from Sloss' Jigsaw Analogy

As most people know, in recent years, Netflix had been gaining popularity and expanded its field of interest in a variety of areas, ranging from Korean soap operas to live comedy performances. On September 11th, 2018, Netflix released 2 episodes of live comedy performances of an artist named Daniel Sloss.<sup>1</sup> Born exactly 28 years before the show's release date, Sloss had been one of the comedians who were commonly recognized as "the critic of society", not afraid to blatantly make fun of some very sensitive topics, including vegetarianism, disability, as well as love. In his second performance named "Jigsaw", Sloss specifically tackled the concept of "true love" by analyzing how love should operate. He started with a Jigsaw puzzle analogy that his father used to explain the concept of "life" to him, claiming that everyone's life is like a Jigsaw puzzle that we need to piece together on our own. The catch is that we have all lost the box of the puzzle, so we must guess what the image should be like (in other words, what our life should be like). People usually start the puzzle with the four corners, which are family, friends, hobbies/interests, and jobs. However, we need to find the centerpiece of the puzzle. Sloss' father told him that: *"Well, that's the partner piece. You want this perfect person who you've never met before to come out of nowhere, fit your life perfectly, complete you, and make your life whole for the first time."*<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, in reality, the centerpiece of the puzzle (namely the "partner piece") had failed to fulfill many people's lives, for they had to move around other pieces so that their partner could be their centerpiece. *"I don't need this hobby. I don't need this opinion. Mom who? ... What has she done for me recently?"*<sup>3</sup> Sloss went on to talk about how his father made a mistake, that the centerpiece does not necessarily have to be one's partner. This belief of "needing a partner" had forced many, including Sloss

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<sup>1</sup> (Daniel Sloss: Live shows 2018)

<sup>2</sup> (Oron, Why 7,000 Couples broke up after watching this comedy show 2018)

<sup>3</sup> (Oron, Why 7,000 Couples broke up after watching this comedy show 2018)

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himself, to jam two un-fitting puzzles together, destroying both puzzles. As Sloss stated, “*People are more in love with the idea of love than the person they are with,*”<sup>4</sup>. Sloss eventually found out that the centerpiece should be something that one finds to be important (it might be one’s partner but not necessarily), and the commonly accepted concept of “one must find true love to complete oneself” is a societal lie.

Since coming up with this full analogy, Sloss’ show had triggered tremendous change for many. Up to June 2019 (around 1 year since the show aired), Sloss’ words had broken up around 50,000 couples, including 34 engagements and 42 divorces.<sup>5</sup> Sloss claimed that he is not upset about any breakup that happened because of his show, for he believes that none of the couple broken up had “true love”. Sloss does not believe that he had the ability to break up “true love”. What he tried to do was to enlighten people by analyzing what kind of life and relationship they have. If those realizations made them question their own life and relationship, those people would benefit from taking back the initiative in their life and re-orienting their own “jigsaw puzzles”.

While having a great impact on many in understanding some truth to love, Sloss’ analogy had been rather a simple one. He failed to get into the details of how and why those issues (bad relationships and breakups) were caused in the first place (though to be fair, Sloss’ priority was to make people laugh). After seeing Sloss’ performance, I believe that there is great potential behind Sloss’ Jigsaw analogy, specifically the impact which it had. The fact that so many couples were broken up by realizing what kind of relationship they had reveals to us that most people do not have a clear understanding of what constitutes a loving relationship. As Sloss claimed in his show, many people were pushed to being in a relationship, one major factor being the belief of “there is a true love out there”. Therefore, it is important for people to not only understand what love is but also gain a better understanding of why they need love in their life. If the goal of love is for the sake of love itself, there must be something intrinsically valuable to love. If not, maybe being

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<sup>4</sup> (Oron, *Why 7,000 Couples broke up after watching this comedy show* 2018)

<sup>5</sup> (Christina Zhao On 6/18/19 at 7:00 AM EDT, Binion, & Copland, *Comedian Daniel Sloss broke up thousands of couples - and now he’s breaking into America* 2019)

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in love leads to some other means. If both scenarios above are not met, maybe love is unnecessary to people's lives, so they should abandon love and pursue something else instead.

In this paper, I will follow the trail of Sloss of analyzing romantic love and the forms it takes in real life, hoping to reveal some ideas of "what is love" and "how a loving relationship operates". In the first part of my paper, I will be examining some theoretical backgrounds about love established by two philosophers: Keller and Kolodny. By doing so, I will be exemplifying the causation of love and why we should love. In this section, I will argue that there are two main elements to a loving relationship: attractive qualities and the valuing of the relationship itself. By combining the views from Keller and Kolodny, I will develop my own interpretation of the question of "what is love" through what I call the "Jigsaw" model. Then, I will introduce Plato's theory of love, revealing Plato's view on the ultimate form of love. By exemplifying "Diotima's Ladder of Love", a theory in Plato's *The Symposium*, I will show that there is more to love than love itself. Being in a loving relationship can lead us to understand the form of beauty. I will argue that Plato's understanding of the ultimate form of love is compelling, though it needs refinement from other philosophers' views, specifically those that were introduced in the first part of the paper. Finally, by refining Plato's "Ladder of love" theory, I will argue that a healthy and longstanding loving relationship is a combination of two relationships: short-term passionate love formulated by being attracted to appealing qualities and long-term stable love formulated by the valuing of the relationship itself. Using loving relationships as doorsteps, individuals will be able to approach and appreciate Plato's ultimate form of love: loving the form of beauty.

### Understanding Loving Relationships

In love, or at least the understanding of a desirable loving relationship, certain elements seem natural to desire. Simply put, this process is filling the blank of the sentence "a loving relationship should be \_\_\_\_". There seem to be three general intuitive rules of a "loving relationship":

1. A loving relationship should be pleasant.
2. A loving relationship should be attractive to people.
3. A loving relationship should be long-lasting.

While the three premises above seem reasonable to be conditions of loving relationships, they are easily objectionable. For instance, some people might think that a loving relationship might not necessarily be long-lasting (Objection to premise 3). Much like food, a good dish does not necessarily have to be those that can or should be eaten every day. Or perhaps, like fireworks, wonderful things can be gone in a blink of an eye. Another objection would be that a loving relationship does not have to be attractive to the people involved. Like broccoli, some things in life are beneficial but neither pleasant nor attractive (Objection to premise 1&2). These objections are valid concerns to the formulation of a loving relationship. As I introduce the philosophical theories in the following paragraphs, I will try to address some of those concerns accordingly.

### **Keller's approach: The Properties View**

In *How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Properties*, Professor Simon Keller proposed that there are certain truths revealed from the formulation of loving relationships. He proposed that, in a typical romantic relationship (two individuals loving each other), to be loved by someone indicates that there are reasons for people to feel good about themselves. This is one of the most valuable rewards that one could gain from a loving relationship. *"Of all the people she could love, she chooses to love me. That suggests that the reason why she loves me should be to do with the things that set me apart from others."*<sup>6</sup> Keller called this theory the "Properties View", which claims that love is a response to one's distinctive qualities. This theory was straightforward and relatable to most people. It not only proved that love is based on reasons but also indicated that the pursuit of love is desirable.

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<sup>6</sup> (Simon Keller, *How do I love thee? Let me count the properties* Apr 2000 163)



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When a person “A” asks someone “why do you love your partner”, A would likely get a list of attractive qualities of his romantic partner as an explanation. The interesting perspective from the “Properties view” is that it reveals how people understand the question of “why do you love your partner”: a justification of choosing one specific person as the object of one’s romantic love. Out of all the people in this world, what makes my partner choose me? Keller answers this question by pointing out that there must be something unique about the properties that you possess. Those properties, in the eyes of your partner, make you unique from others, justifying your partner’s love for you.<sup>7</sup> Though people have different stories, experiences, and backgrounds, they perceive each other as combinations of different qualities that make them stand out. The same principle is not only be applied to people we love but also to people we hate. We either love or hate the qualities that they possess, and our emotions respond accordingly to both their positive and negative qualities.

Another possibility here is that A would get answers that do not involve the partner’s properties, which might also explain the causation of a loving relationship. For example, the person would say: “I fell in love with her because she and I grew up together. It just kind of felt natural, you know?”. Since growing up together cannot be counted as an attractive quality, the time spent together might reveal something else. The time that the two spent together was an opportunity to showcase attractive qualities. In other words, compared to other people, you had more opportunities to observe the attractive qualities of the girl you grew up with. Not all people who grew up together end up in marriage, so there must be something special about you. There are certain things that set you apart from others, and Keller suggests that those “things” are your attractive qualities. If we were to ask further questions to the interviewee, he would likely present a set of attractive qualities of his partner that he had observed over the years. They would eventually realize that the time they spent together caused their awareness of those attractive qualities, justifying their loving relationship.

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<sup>7</sup> (Simon Keller, *How do I love thee? Let me count the properties* Apr 2000 165-166)

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## Objections to Keller

There are, however, some issues to Keller's "Properties View". The most significant objection is "trading partners". For example, person A and B are attracted to each other. Suppose A is attracted to B because B is the most beautiful person A had ever met (to simplify the example, let us suppose the only quality valuable to A is physical beauty). A married B 10 years ago and had enjoyed the marriage so far. Now, A meets C, who is more beautiful than B (in A's eyes). The question then is raised: should A leave B for C?<sup>8</sup> According to Keller's theory, if a relationship is justified by the attractive qualities of others, A should definitely leave B for C, since C is more beautiful than B. The "Properties View" explains A's leaving B for C, since A is only motivated by the attractive qualities of others.

This betrayal is both anti-intuitional and unrealistic because most people in a stable relationship do not leave their partners as soon as they meet someone better. This raises many issues with Keller's theory. In reality, it is unlikely that one's partner is the best person at the qualities that one finds attractive. If Keller is right, everyone in society would be after the "best person" of the qualities they find attractive. For instance, anyone who is attracted to athleticism would only be pursuing Olympic champions (not even silver medalists). Perhaps, they shall start considering trading partners every four years if their partners do not do well in the next Olympic game. People who are attracted to physical beauty would only pursuit "Miss Universe" and would change targets every year depending on who won the latest beauty pageant. This is obviously not true. We observe that romantic partners hold certain values above the attractive qualities of each other. In marriage, couples have their ups and downs. People hold the belief that true love withstands the test of time, and many lovers abide by those rules. In the next part of this paper, I will be addressing two possible approaches to solving the objections to Keller. Through addressing the objections to the Properties View, I will introduce the Relationship Theory from Professor Niko Kolodny. But first, Keller responded

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<sup>8</sup> (Simon Keller, *How do I love thee? Let me count the properties* Apr 2000 170-171)

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briefly to the objection of trading partners, which I will be addressing in the following paragraphs.

### Solutions of the Objections to Keller

There are two possible explanations for Keller's theory. First, Keller's theory is false, and it does not justify people's love for their partner. This explanation fails because Keller's theory does sufficiently explain some justifications of a loving relationship. It successfully explains not only the mechanism behind romantic attraction but also our instinct of using attractive qualities as justification for love. People find it natural to provide a list of attractive qualities to justify their love to their partner, and the "Properties View" could also explain why some relationships worked instead of other ones (people involved in relationships losing or gaining attractive qualities cause changes in relationship status). Therefore, a second and more plausible explanation comes in handy: Keller's theory reveals some truth about love but not all of it. Therefore, we need another amending theory that would complete the explanation of the question "what is love".

Keller briefly battled this objection in his paper. He stated that there are two main reasons why one should not trade partners. First, Keller thinks that the romantic lover would see the pursuit of others as damaging to the present relationship. Because people love their significant others, they would dedicate energy and resources to their partner. This makes it psychologically not possible for them to disarm themselves to their beloved while looking for someone better.<sup>9</sup> However, this explanation does not fit well with Keller's own "Properties View". The explanation points to something valuable other than one's property, perhaps something developed by dedicating resources to the significant other. The second explanation Keller provided is that romantic partners share a system of values of the way they look at the world. Perhaps through time, your partner learns to understand your jokes, take care of you when you are sick, as well as buying the right brand of orange juice with no pulp in them.<sup>10</sup> Like the first explanation, this also seems to lead to some revelation other than the "Properties View". While some people might think that

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<sup>9</sup> (Simon Keller, *How do I love thee? Let me count the properties* Apr 2000 170-171)

<sup>10</sup> (Simon Keller, *How do I love thee? Let me count the properties* Apr 2000 170-171)

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those habits developed are new attractive qualities, such qualities could easily be adapted by the “replacements”. On the one hand, Keller’s explanation fails to solve trading up partners for someone better because that “someone better” might possess better qualities to these. On the other hand, the “Properties View” alone fails to explain some other value that we put into the relationship that Keller seems to be hinting at in the explanations.

### **Niko Kolodny’s alternative proposal: The Relationship Theory**

Professor Niko Kolodny had an alternative proposal to what constitutes love. Kolodny’s view could be separated into two parts. First, the love of a person is rendered normatively appropriate by the relationship itself. This view is a contradiction to Keller’s “Properties View” (in Kolodny’s paper, he addressed a theory similar to that of Keller’s named the “Quality Theory”). Keller believed that love is being attracted to the attractive qualities of the beloved. In other words, it is the valuing of those attractive qualities that constitute our love towards our beloved. Kolodny, on the other hand, believed that love is the valuing of our relationship with our beloved.<sup>11</sup> In other words, love consists of seeing our romantic relationship as a reason to love. Our relationship with our beloved sufficiently serves as a justification to love. For instance, if we were to ask person A why he chose person B as his partner, according to Kolodny, A would not have to justify this relationship with a set of attractive qualities of B. Instead, A’s relationship with B is, on its own, a viable reason for him to love B. He would probably say something like: “I love B because B is my romantic partner. We have been together for years, and we love each other, no other justification needed.”

The second part of Kolodny’s view claimed that love also consists of an attitude towards the beloved which partly reveals a belief that a relationship with others is rendered as inappropriate, and the volitional structure is casually sustained by that belief. This shows that there is a certain value unique to the romantic relationship between two people. The loving relationship not only justifies the love between the two people,

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<sup>11</sup> (Kolodny, *Love as valuing a relationship* 2003 150)

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but it also renders potential relationships with other people invaluable (caused by the attitude towards the beloved). This attachment is intrinsically valuable to those two individuals, serving as a valuable bond between the two.<sup>12</sup>

Kolodny's new theory seems to provide an alternative theory to Keller's "Properties View". While Keller believed that it is the attractive qualities that hold the two people together, Kolodny believed that the romantic relationship between the two is rendered valuable on its own. In fact, Kolodny addressed great concerns towards the "Quality Theory" (a theory similar to Keller's Properties view), claiming that a person's qualities may serve as reasons for wanting but not reasons to sustain our relationship. We may desire to be with a certain person because of his or her attractive qualities, but those attractive qualities on their own do not sustain loving relationships, not to mention explaining our concerns for them.<sup>13</sup> The issue now is that both views seem to be sound, for they both justify certain aspects of romantic relationships. It is hard to choose between the two because they both make a lot of sense.

To solve this contradiction, we must first re-examine Keller and Kolodny's theories carefully. Keller and Kolodny's theories do not contradict each other directly. Instead, they provide different kinds of justification to love and hold different premises to the fundamentals of a loving relationship. Therefore, it is worth examining if the two theories can be correlated with each other. Perhaps, the two premises could be held simultaneously. For example, person A is going on a blind date with person B. Before the date, A asks people who knew B about B's qualities. Person C says that B is lazy, and Person D says that B is hardworking. Those different qualities, like Keller and Kolodny's theory, might still be able to coexist. There are two ways to interpret those seemingly contradictory qualities. One way to interpret this is that one of those people (either C or D) made a mistaken judgment about B, for B cannot be both lazy and hardworking. The two are contradictory qualities, so one of them must be false. An alternative explanation is that both

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<sup>12</sup> (Kolodny, *Love as valuing a relationship* 2003 151)

<sup>13</sup> (Kolodny, *Love as valuing a relationship* 2003 140)

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descriptions are true, and B is lazy in general but works hard when it comes to B's career.

Like the "lazy and hardworking" example, an alternative explanation could be applied here. We indeed value the attractive qualities of our significant other, but it could also be true that we care about our relationship with our significant other. In this case, both Keller and Kolodny could be correct, for they revealed different aspects of a romantic relationship. We can interpret Keller's "Properties View" as partially correct and Kolodny's theory as an amendment to Keller's theory. By combining the two, a new model is thus formulated, which I shall name the "Jigsaw" model (since it is inspired by the Jigsaw analogy). In this modification, love is a psychological state of valuing, where an individual would value many things in a romantic relationship.

I shall define valuing here as a psychological state of desiring or being attracted to something. This coincides with our intuition that a loving relationship is pleasant and desirable. A loving relationship would consist of many things that we find attractive, and our valuing of those attractive things constitutes loving relationships. In full definition, love is a psychological state of valuing, where people find both the attractive qualities of their partners and their relationship with their partner to be valuable. Person A would both value the attractive qualities of his partner B, as well as the romantic relationship A has with B. In some cases, the valuing of attractive qualities would be greater than the valuing of the relationship itself (Attractive qualities > Relationship), which could lead to trading partners. In other cases, the valuing of the relationship outweighs the valuing of the attractive qualities, causing people to keep staying together regardless of them losing their attractive qualities (through age or other reasons).

### **Importance of the "Jigsaw" model**

The "Jigsaw Model" can explain many scenarios that Keller's "properties view" cannot. For instance, if a person leaves his partner for other people, we can infer that this person values the bond between him and his partner less than the attractive qualities of his new romantic partner. Vice versa, if a person chooses to

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stay with the now unattractive old partner, one could easily make the claim that the time that they spent with each other is rendered extremely valuable, more valuable than the qualities of other people (which is why they stayed together). Using the same example of the relationship among A, B, and C. By combining Keller and Kolodny's theories, there are two main reasons why A should remain with B (The Jigsaw Model).

1. A values B's beauty as an attractive quality, remaining with B would allow A to continuously enjoy such quality. (Keller's view)
2. A values A's 10-year marriage with B over C's qualities. Since B's overall value trumps that of C, A would choose to remain with B instead of moving on to C. (Kolodny's view)

The "Jigsaw Model" resolves the objection of trading partners raised to Keller's theory, for people do in fact come to value the relationship they have. This principle can even be applied to other forms of relationships, where a father loves his daughter because she is his daughter (valuing the father-daughter relationship) or a pet owner values his pet because it is his pet (valuing the owner-pet relationship).

In the paragraphs above, I have explained the Jigsaw Model by combining the views from Keller and Kolodny. In Keller's part of the Jigsaw Model, people find being loved valuable because it means that their most central qualities are affirmed by another person. Kolodny, on the other hand, believed that love is rendered normatively appropriate by the presence of a relationship. Moreover, love also partly consists in the belief that some relationship renders it appropriate, and the emotions and motivations of love are causally sustained by this belief.<sup>14</sup> I will, in the following section, address a few more important elements of the Jigsaw Model. First, I will address the specific steps to achieve a loving relationship. Using Plato's "Ladder of Love" as a model, I will argue that Keller's Properties View is more suitable in the short term of a loving relationship. Kolodny, however, more successfully explains how people come to sustain loving relationships. Through the steps exemplified in the "Ladder of Love", the specific instructions to how to pursue a loving relationship are clear. Secondly, there are reasons beyond attractive qualities, affirmation, and the valuing of

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<sup>14</sup> (Kolodny, *Love as valuing a relationship* 2003 146)

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the relationship to why people should pursue romantic relationships. By examining level five and level six of the “Ladder of Love”, I will argue that people can potentially gain an appreciation of philosophical knowledge and the form of beauty through participating in a loving relationship. Because love is transformative, individuals become something beyond themselves through love. Finally, I will argue that, if the outcome from those transformative experiences is desirable to people, they should pursue love and vice versa. Love is an optional path towards completing our “Jigsaw puzzle”, so it is worth examining how our life could be oriented around our beloved. In the following paragraphs, I will not be engaging in an exegesis of Plato that aims to be true to his original view. Instead, I will be extrapolating on his ideas to articulate an intuitive story about how love becomes a transformative tool towards Plato’s ideologies. Such ideologies might be potentially desirable to many, making the romantic relationship a tool to complete people’s “Jigsaw puzzles”.

## Section 2: The Transformative Nature of Romantic Relationships

### Plato’s Ladder of Love

In *The Symposium*, Plato examined several theories regarding love. As usual, he chose to express his most valued viewpoint through Socrates. The “Ladder of Love” claimed that there are six steps to a “Ladder”:

1. Love for a particular body (Desire to lust, being attracted by physical features of another person)
2. Love for all bodies (people recognizing that many bodies can have beauty, so love is expressed towards all beautiful bodies in the lover’s view)
3. Love for souls (Physical features are put aside. Instead, moral attributes are now valued over physical attraction)



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4. Love for laws and institutions (Love of the product of people with beautiful souls, such as practices, customs, and institutions)
  5. Love for knowledge (Love to acquire knowledge)
  6. Love for love itself (Seeing beauty in its true form, namely itself. Every beautiful thing is connected to the true form of beauty itself, and this stage allows people to learn and love the true form of beauty)<sup>15</sup>

### **Level 1 to Level 2**

The individual starts at the basic level of love: the physical beauty of a single person. For instance, while walking on the street, Tom sees a beautiful woman in a red dress and falls in love with this woman instantly (level one of the ladders). This sudden love makes Tom question why he finds that particular woman beautiful. As he questions himself, he makes a list of qualities that appeals to him of that woman: that red dress, big and bright blue eyes, golden silky hair, and curvy figure. However, as Tom makes the list, he realizes that there are other people with similar figures. As Tom realizes this, his love for the woman in a red dress is lessened. Instead, his love is now focused on all people who possess the qualities above (level two of the ladders). This obsession with the beauty of bodies is “sexual love”. People’s desire towards others would eventually shift from one person to many. This is caused by people’s realization that the attraction was originated from the bodily qualities but not the specific person. They come to value the attractive physical qualities of others and pursue relationships according to their preference for those qualities (sounds familiar? I will address this with Keller’s theory in later parts of this paper). While Socrates is not keen to say that this is what love is, it is what a lot of people perceive love to be initially: a fascination with physical beauty.

### **Level 2 to Level 3**

As people progress on the ladder, they would move from the fascination of bodily love to the love of

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<sup>15</sup> (Howatson & C., *Plato - The Symposium* 2008 210a - 212c)

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the soul. What Plato claimed to be the “soul” is more like what modern philosophers would characterize as non-physical qualities, such as wisdom, patience, and passion. People come to realize that there is more to others than their physical beauty. In fact, there are certain attractive elements that go deeper into those attractive people. It contributes to the question “what makes those people attractive”, and it also correlates with those people’s self-identification. A good example of being able to shift from level two to level three of the ladder is the difference between choosing sex partners and romantic partners. One would appreciate physical beauty more than moral beauty if one were to only choose sex partners. Yet, spending more time with a person makes one appreciate the non-physical qualities of one’s partner. One recognizes that, for a romantic partner, there are qualities beyond physical beauty. It is, perhaps, quite shallow to only recognize the physical qualities of others, leading people to appreciate the soul. In fact, antipathy in relationships is often caused by the distaste of the other’s non-physical qualities. Through time, the valuing of non-physical qualities trumps that of physical ones. Diotima claims that a great virtuous soul is beautiful and attractive to people, even if it is trapped in an unappealing body (level three of the ladders). This shifts people’s love from a physical and superficial kind to an intellectual and profound kind.

### **First three steps of the Ladder**

The first three steps of love, while needing a lot of explanation in its applications, make a lot of sense. The shift from level one to level two is a realization of what constitutes love. In other words, enlightenment on the journey of learning what is love. The first level describes our experience of feeling physical attraction for the first time, which starts with one body (the first person one finds physically attractive). Then, this person moves on to summarize the qualities which he or she finds attractive. Moving up the ladder to level two allows the person to find many bodies attractive, shifting from the fascination of the physical attraction towards one person to the attractive bodily qualities of many. Similar principles could be seen in examining art, where one would find a specific art piece to be attractive and beautiful. Soon, as people’s tastes evolve,

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they would realize what elements had specifically caught their eye. By doing so, they could locate other art pieces with similar attractive qualities and enjoy those new works too.

Level three of the ladder entails something a bit deeper, for it shows the elements that are correlated to one's self-identification. Such moral qualities, once affirmed by others, build confidence because they are core to our self-recognition. This also shows that there is more to people than their physical beauty, and we could appreciate those beauties too. Those qualities include wisdom, passion, and courage, all of which contribute to the beauty of a person. Moving to ladder three does not entail that physical attraction is out of the picture. Instead, it shows Plato's position on the value of different attractions. In Plato's eyes, physical attraction is appealing, yet it is not as appealing as an attraction to the soul. It is relatively harder to find the soul attractive. Therefore, one would first go through the fascination of bodily attraction and then move on to finding the soul attractive. The ladder shows the hierarchical relationship among different qualities. As we climb the ladder, we are more enlightened about the love of beauty. We appreciate each level of the ladder, even though the appreciation is not equal on every step.

#### **Level 3 to Level 4**

Level four of the "Ladder" is the love for laws and institutions. Moving from three to four is gaining an appreciation of the beauty of the product of those "attractive souls" (level four of the ladders). An easy way to understand level four of the ladders is a parallel example with the relationship between a sculptor and his sculpture. Laws and institutions, much like the sculpture of a sculptor, are the product of people with beautiful souls (Level 3 of the ladders). Such products can take many forms. One example of such a product is the birth of a loving relationship. Once a loving relationship is established between two individuals since both individuals are attractive souls (to each other's eyes), their romantic relationship is a product of their beautiful souls. As they come to value their relationship (The Relationship Theory), they come to achieve level four of the ladders. Of course, there are more incarnations to level four of the ladder. For instance, in

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heterosexual relationships, creating children can become the products of beautiful souls. In homosexual relationships, the adoption of a child or even building a family with each other becomes the product of beautiful souls. Perhaps, for married couples, overcoming certain marital challenges could become products of beautiful souls. As I have said, level 4 of the ladders do not have to take a specific form. Instead, it only follows the general rule of being the product of attractive souls.

### **Level 4 to Level 5**

Level five of the ladders is the love of knowledge. The knowledge mentioned here is not equivalent to facts (such as the sun is shiny, the earth has gravity). Instead, it points to the end of philosophical understanding. The reason why knowledge is appreciated is that philosophical wisdom is the “essence” behind those laws and institutions. It is the formula behind the great product that made those laws and institutions beautiful (level five of the ladders). I will use the example of the sculpture and the sculptor again to address level five of the ladders.

Person A admires a Sculptor B because B possesses a beautiful soul (level 3). Soon, A realizes that sculptures are products of B, so A comes to appreciate the sculpture of B (product created by good souls, level 4). After some time, A realizes that the amazing sculpture is beautiful only because it follows the “golden ratio” and other sculptural techniques, so A comes to love the beauty of that knowledge (level 5). Each level of the ladder brings people closer to the core of beauty. In other words, this process is a transformative experience of enlightening oneself to the truth to beauties. The appreciation of philosophical knowledge is a transformative experience of realizing what makes those products of great souls beautiful. Much like how people come to realize that physical attractiveness comes from physical attractive qualities, people will eventually come to realize that it is the philosophical knowledge behind the products that make those products beautiful.

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## Level 6

Finally, individuals realize that there is something connected to all beautiful things. Much like the appreciation of one person's beauty could be reduced to the appreciation of certain qualities connected to all beautiful people, there is something universal to all beautiful things. Plato calls this "the form of beauty", the essence of beauty. This form of beauty is eternal, universal, and essential to all beauties in the world. For example, if I were to ask you to imagine a beautiful person, you might find it easy to do so. Yet, it can be hard to describe one universal feature of all the beautiful things in the world. Oddly, people instantly recognize beautiful things when they see them, and they have a similar appreciation for those beauties. While this suggests that there is a form of beauty that is universal to all beautiful things, it is, however, hard to characterize what makes beautiful things beautiful. Like coming to realize the beauty of knowledge, it is hard to achieve such appreciation without transformation. Being able to realize such a form is the core to understanding the true meaning of beauty. Once people meet this level of appreciation, they come to realize that the lower levels of love are shallow, much like how superficial it is to "judge a book from its cover" (looking back to level one from level three). It is hard to imagine what it is like to understand level six of the ladder, yet this transformation can certainly be desirable because it would explain all the appreciation we have for beautiful things and people. It is an answer to beauty itself.

### The Transformative Nature of Love

Plato provided a vivid hierarchical picture of understanding love and beauty. This provides us with a clear picture of why we love, or perhaps what we could gain from love: an understanding of beauty. By climbing up the ladder, we are enlightened to love and beauty, being able to appreciate the world and see more "colors" of it. Incorporating Keller's "Properties View" here, as we climb up the ladder, we are presented with more attractive qualities for us to enjoy since we can now understand and appreciate more beautiful things. If Keller's view is correct, we then enjoy more attractive qualities from our significant

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other, even though other aspects of our lives had not changed. We are transformed into someone very different from our original selves, people who can appreciate and love the essence of the world. In the next part of my paper, I will be explaining how the “Ladder of Love” serves as a structure to help the Jigsaw model operate. It not only explains the Jigsaw model’s chronological process, but it suggests that the Jigsaw model can potentially transform people to appreciate the form of beauty. Pursuing a romantic relationship could lead to achieving higher levels of the ladder, potentially allowing us to understand the form of beauty.

### **The Jigsaw Model's place in the Ladder of Love**

In the Jigsaw Model established in section 1 of this paper, I conclude that:

1. A values B’s beauty as an attractive quality, remaining with B would allow A to continuously enjoy such quality. (Keller’s view)
2. A values A’s 10-year marriage with B more than he values C’s qualities. Since B’s overall value trumps that of C, A would choose to remain with B instead of moving on to C. (Kolodny’s view)

If we were to compare the two rules above with the “Ladder of Love”, it is apparent that there are certain similarities between them. For instance, both Keller and Plato claimed that people are attracted by the physical and moral qualities of their beloved. Comparing the two, Keller grouped all the attractive qualities into one category, namely attractive qualities, yet Plato separated those qualities into three different stages in the process of enlightenment. In Plato’s model, the physical qualities of one person would be put into the first step of the ladder (love of one person); the general physical qualities of all attractive people would be put into the second step of the ladder (love of physical qualities), and the moral qualities would be put into the third step of the ladder. Adapting this to Plato’s “ladder of love” theory, the attractive qualities one finds in his or her partner can be put into the first three steps of the ladder:

1. A finds B to be attractive (Level 1)
2. A finds B to be beautiful because A realizes he loves low body fat, big eyes, and silky hair, all

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of which are properties of B (Level 2)

3. A also finds B to be attractive because B is smart, modest, and hardworking (Level 3)

The three stages happen in chronological order: one must first understand one person's physical beauty to be able to summarize those beauties out of the context of that specific person. Without the process of summarizing physical attributes, one cannot realize that moral qualities can be beautiful too. Kolodny's theory is comparably harder to categorize. There are two possible explanations to how Kolodny's theory correlates with Plato's "Ladder of love". The first possibility is that the valuing of the relationship itself is set somewhere in the first three steps of the ladder. Perhaps, by staying with their beloved (maintaining the relationship), people gain access to valuing the loving relationship. Or perhaps, the time spent together allows the lovers to truly fall in love with each other's qualities, thus the lovers come to value the relationship they have. The process of the first three steps of the ladder goes as the following:

- Step 1: A meets B and finds both B's physical beauty and soul attractive.
- Step 2: A pursues B and becomes romantically involved with B.
- Step 3: Through being with B, A falls in love with B's body.
- Step 4: Through being with B, A realizes that he has fallen in love with the physical qualities

that B possesses.

- Step 5: Through being with B, A falls in love with B's soul.

However, the five steps above do not seem to explain much about Kolodny's theory. Kolodny believed that love is the valuing of the relationship itself, not the attractive qualities or utilities of our significant other. This brings us to a second possibility: Kolodny's Relationship Theory is set somewhere above level 3 of the ladder. In the following paragraphs, I will argue that Kolodny's Relationship Theory fits in level 4 of Plato's Ladder. The valuing of relationship is one possible outcome to the valuing of the product of beautiful people, for a loving relationship is essentially the product of attractive souls.

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## Friends with Benefits and Romantic Relationships

I will start my comparison between Kolodny and Level 4 of the Ladder using the movie *Friends with Benefits*. In the movie, Dylan and Jamie start their relationship as “sex-partners” instead of romantic partners. While Dylan and Jamie have sex and enjoy spending time with each other, they are not committed to a romantic relationship with each other. This indicates that, while they appreciate the physical and moral qualities of each other, they do not view each other as romantic partners. However, Dylan later comes to realize his feelings for Jamie, so he proposed to her and married her at the end of the movie.

In this example, because Dylan and Jamie have spent a considerable amount of time with each other, they both fell in love with each other’s physical and moral qualities, thus achieving the first three stages of the “Ladder”. Why did Dylan propose to Jamie? What is the difference between “friends with benefits” and “romantic relationship”? The answer is, perhaps, quite shocking: not much. People in both kinds of relationships enjoy accompaniment from each other, have sex with each other, and come to admire each other. The only significant difference is the nature of the two relationships. The name “friends with benefits” suggest that the relationship is, at its core, not romantic but beneficial. A romantic relationship suggests a different kind of relationship to “friends with benefits”. In a romantic relationship, people take their partners seriously. A romantic relationship is often bound with obligations and responsibilities, as the traditional Catholic wedding vows suggest: “*I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_\_, for my lawful wife/husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part. I will love and honor you all the days of my life.*”<sup>16</sup>

The oath of “*for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health*”<sup>17</sup> suggests commitment and responsibility towards the significant other. Friends with benefits, however, do not involve such commitment. Partners with benefits enjoy each other’s physical and moral qualities, yet they do not

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<sup>16</sup> (Traditional wedding vows for your ceremony)

<sup>17</sup> (Traditional wedding vows for your ceremony)



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take their relationship seriously. They do not come to value the relationship itself but only the qualities held by the other benefiter. Such kind of relationship could easily cause issues of “trading partners”, where a person who lost his or her attractive qualities would result in the termination of the relationship. In retrospect, even if Dylan realizes that he is in love with Jamie, there is no essential difference between being “friends with benefits” with her and being romantically involved with her. The most obvious difference between the two is the nature of their relationship, which corresponds with Kolodny’s explanation that people will come to value the loving relationship they have with each other.

### **Kolodny and Level 4 of the Ladder**

In Kolodny’s theory, valuing in a relationship is the valuing of the relationship itself. In other words, the pursuit of a relationship does not require much justification. Much like the pursuit of happiness, Koldony is suggesting that there is some intrinsic value to the relationship itself. As addressed in section 1 of this paper, I explained that Keller and Kolodny’s theories were meant to be alternatives to each other. With the Jigsaw Model, Keller and Koldony’s theories are combined and reconciled. However, if we were to incorporate the Jigsaw model with Plato’s Ladder of Love, it would become apparent how the two theories were able to be combined without contradictions. Or, perhaps, the reasons why those two theories appear to be contradictory become evident. We can use Plato’s theory to reinterpret Kolodny’s theory, stating that the relationship is valuable because it entails something beyond the relationship itself. Because the creators of a romantic relationship are attractive beings (Keller’s Properties View). we come to value the product of those beautiful people (Kolodny’s Relationship Theory). Much like a building to an architect, romantic relationships are the beautiful products of attractive lovers.

Because of the reasons above, I argue that one should treat a loving relationship as the product of two attractive souls. As level 4 of the ladder indicates, laws and institutions are products of attractive souls, thereby making them the product of those souls. After people have achieved the first three steps of the

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ladder, they come to value the loving relationship they have with each other.

The process goes as the following:

- Step 1: A meets B and finds both B's physical beauty and soul attractive.
- Step 2: A pursues B and becomes romantically involved with B.
- Step 3: Through being with B, A falls in love with B's body.
- Step 4: Through being with B, A falls in love with B's physical qualities.
- Step 5: Through being with B, A falls in love with B's soul.
- Step 6: Through achieving levels 1,2, and 3, people achieve a higher level of the ladder.
- Step 7: Achieving level 4 of the ladder: valuing the loving relationship itself.

As steps 3-5 entail, being in a relationship allows one to climb up the ladder of love. Moreover, as the bond remains, one can establish grounds to unlock higher levels of the ladder (since Diotima claims that one must first reach the lower to unlock the higher). We can then conclude that one comes to value a relationship through participating in a relationship for a long period of time. This allows people to unlock higher levels of the ladder, achieving level four of the ladder and Kolodny's ideology. We can conclude that, once people accomplish level 1-3 of the ladder, they would soon realize the beauty of relationship as the product of beautiful souls, allowing them to achieve level 4 of the ladder.

This way of explaining helps correlate Keller and Kolodny better. On the one hand, Plato's model exemplifies the details of Keller's theory. Using the ladder, we lay out the process of how individuals find each other to be attractive. Those realizations are not intuitive. Instead, we come to develop the ability to appreciate each other's beauty. Starting with one person's physical beauty, we come to realize what physical beauties are and move on to appreciate moral ones too. We thus move on to appreciating qualities that are core to the self-deification of our beloved, rewarding them for participating in the relationship. On the other hand, Plato's model also helps to exemplify how we come to value our relationship with our partner. In Kolodny's article, he described love as a general concept instead of a specific romantic one. This becomes

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problematic since people are born to familial love but not romantic ones. While Kolodny's theory explained both objections to Keller and familial love well, it failed to provide much insight into how we come to formulate and value romantic relationships. With Plato's ladder, it is evident that the formulation of a romantic relationship comes from people's being attractive by physical and moral qualities. After the first three levels of the ladder are climbed, people come to appreciate the relationship itself, for it is essentially the product of the lovers.

### Brief Summary

Keller and Kolodny's theories correspond to different levels of the "Ladder": Keller's theory corresponds with the first three stages of the ladder, and Kolodny's theory corresponds with the fourth stage of the ladder. This indicates that, in a relationship, Keller and Kolodny's theories correspond to different stages of a relationship. We can simplify different stages of a relationship into three parts: short-term, mid-term, and long-term. In the nearest short-term, as Plato has claimed, the desire of lust (physicality) is the most apparent to individuals. It is rather easy for people, since we are essentially mammals, to be lured by beautiful physicality. Then, we realize that there is something beyond this specific person's physicality. People start to realize that there are certain physical qualities possessed by the beautiful person, which is why we find them to be attractive. As we spend time with others, we realize that there are attractive "souls" (moralities) possessed by others. Again, all those steps, as Keller has described, are justifications to "why we pursued our significant other": there are certain qualities that separate them from others. By spending time with our significant other, we fall in love with the person, fall in love with their physical qualities, and fall in love with their moralities. Since we have completed the first three stages of the ladder, we can move up the ladder to level four: the love of institutions and laws.

Institutions and laws are the product of beautiful people: something beautiful created by beautiful people. As the short-term relationship has indicated, the formulation of a relationship is the combination of

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two attractive people (they find each other to be attractive; I have no intention of suggesting that they are objectively beautiful). Therefore, at level four of the ladder, we realize that the relationship that we have is beautiful and falling in love with such beauty justifies remaining in the relationship on its own. I must point out that, while this explanation places Kolodny above Keller in the “Ladder”, it does not mean that the individuals stop finding physical and moral qualities attractive. They merely come to appreciate superior beauties. For instance, if one were to try A5 Kobe steak, one would realize that those “new steaks” are far superior to in-n-out burgers. However, this does not mean that one-stop enjoying in-n-out. The two, Keller and Kolodny’s theory, can coexist with one another, both building into the valuing of a relationship.

### **The Story of “Jigsaw”**

By combining Keller and Kolodny’s theories, I have explained the question of “what is love”: love is a psychological state of valuing; we not only value the attractive qualities of our beloved, but we also come to value our relationship with our beloved. This process, explained through Plato’s Ladder of Love, happens in chronological order. It starts with the love of one person’s body and moves on to the appreciation of specific physical qualities. Then, people start to realize the value of the soul, appreciating the attractive moral qualities. After the process above, one comes to realize that the romantic relationship they are in also has value, and this value is above the values of the attractive qualities we appreciate from our romantic partner.

Our romantic relationship is the product of ourselves and our significant other, which is why we find it more beautiful than attractive qualities. Then, by explaining Plato’s Ladder of Love, I explained the question of “what is the goal of love”: love leads to a list of enlightenment that is transformative to us; as long as people desire any link in the enlightenment process, romantic love becomes valuable. The list of enlightenment includes all six steps to Plato’s ladder of love, including lust, moral attributes, loving relationship, knowledge to love, and understanding the form of beauty. Typically, people gain the first three directly from participating in a romantic relationship. In the short term, people come to appreciate the lust

and moral attributes of their partner. As time goes by, they might come to value their relationship too. The last two are potential goals that love can lead us to. To gain access to understanding the last two, one must first accomplish the first 4 steps of the ladder. Keller and Kolodny's theories provide a modern understanding of how we could climb up the ladder of love, thus helping us potentially reach the final two steps of the ladder.

### Section 3: The Past, Present, and Future of Romantic Relationship

#### What comes next?

So what comes next? Specifically, what comes after when we achieve level four of the ladder? The answer seems to be apparent to Plato: we keep climbing up! Levels five and six of the ladders respectively point to the love of knowledge and the form of beauty. While both levels seem to diverge from being romantically involved in a relationship, they are potential benefits to being in a romantic relationship. As previously described, level five of the ladder points to the end of philosophical understandings, specifically the understanding of love. By appreciating the significance of one's relationship, one starts to understand knowledge regarding a romantic relationship, such as the theories of Keller, Kolodny, and Plato. In this process, they realize what kind of relationship they are involved in, and they realize the mechanism of how and why those relationships were formulated. By doing so, they start to understand the core of a romantic relationship. They realize the ends of love and are developed to go beyond where they started. People finally achieved the end of love, understanding the knowledge and beauty of the forms. While the knowledge of Plato, Keller, and Kolodny is available to all regardless of their involvement in romantic relationships, there is a difference between "knowing" and "loving". To know knowledge of love is to read and interpret texts. However, to love knowledge is to truly understand philosophy, appreciating its elegance and significance. This requires people to be engaged in romantic relationships, and they must also achieve the first four levels of the ladder to be able to do so. People must appreciate the relationship for the sake of itself, realizing the

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intrinsic value of being in a relationship (loving laws and institutions), thus be able to truly understand the knowledge of love.

The same could be seen in epistemological studies, where there is a significant difference between knowing and understanding. For someone who is color blinded, they could easily find information regarding what it feels like to see color, but it is drastically different from seeing color. Similarly, to experience and understand love is also drastically different from merely learning information about the knowledge of love. One must go through the steps by putting in the work and time to understand the knowledge and beauty of the forms. Without those efforts, that information could only be served as guidance to determining if one should pursue a romantic relationship (deciding if we desire the ends of the relationship in the first place). As we have concluded before, if one does not desire the end of a romantic relationship, it seems pointless for one to go through the steps and put in the works.

Finally, after people have done so, they can reach the peak of the “Ladder”. Plato claims that level six of the ladder points to the essence of love: the form of beauty. As knowledge explains why something appears to be beautiful, the form of beauty is the connection among all beautiful things, the core of beauty. The forms are timeless and unchanging, while physical things are in a constant change of existence. Plato believes that every beautiful thing in the world is somehow connected, and people perceive the beauty of those things from their form. For instance, when a sculptor is working on a sculpture, he would check on the blueprint which he drew for reference, seeing if he is “doing it right”. The blueprint, in this case, in the form of the sculpture. Similarly, how do we know if something is beautiful? For people who understand the “form”, they have in mind an idea of the ideal of something. For sculptors, they have in mind an ideal image for a sculpture. For musicians, they have in mind an ideal of a musical piece. This “ideal” is different from loving the qualities of a good piece (level 1-3), appreciating good music (level 4), and understanding the mechanism that makes a piece sound good (level 5). Instead, one could interpret level six as building “musical taste”, allowing musicians to build up their taste and truly understand good music.

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## The Jigsaw Model in Practice

Now that we have described the specifics of the Jigsaw model, it is worth pointing out some other revelations of this new theory. I modified my model to make the climbing of the ladder focused on monogamous romantic relationships. However, there is no reason to doubt that the same could be applied to polygamy romantic relationships. In fact, my theory can serve as justification for such a relationship. By multiplying the number of people involved in our romantic relationship, people not only increase the attractive qualities they can enjoy but also increases the ladders available. The success of any one of those ladders leads to one's realization of the knowledge of love and form of beauty. This could potentially motivate one to pursue a polygamous relationship instead of a monogamous one.

Keller, Kolodny, and Plato seem to have a drastically different idea of what an ideal romantic relationship is. While Kolodny's theory points to a monogamous relationship, Plato and Keller's theories seem to claim otherwise. In the refined Jigsaw model, I purposely left out the idea of an "ideal" relationship because I believe I am in no position in making such judgment. While modern societies mostly restrict individuals to monogamous relationships, it seems like there is no perfect formula for the specific characteristics of an ideal relationship. Much like the form of beauty to beautiful things, the Jigsaw model only provides a blueprint for an ideal loving relationship. The model does not and should not be limited to the specific execution of those relationships. For instance, a polygamous relationship could also possess attractive qualities (Keller), the valuing of the relationship itself (Kolodny), and the desire to understand the form of beauty (Plato).

In some cases, one could even argue that a polygamy relationship could lead to more attractive qualities and more valuing of the relationships. I have written exclusively on this topic in my previous paper *The Unexpected Outcome of Maximizing Love: The Harem Model*, which specifies how and why one should pursue a polygamy relationship (using the Jigsaw Model as justification). Much like conservative societies hold strong opinions against homosexuality and transgenderism, there is always the possibility that we as

philosophers are the “conservatives”. To avoid such conservatism, while thinking of the Jigsaw Model and applying it, one should not be restricted to social norms and common sense. If the relationship at hand matches the Jigsaw model, it is worth examining if such a relationship is desirable or beneficial.

### Coming back to Sloss' Jigsaw Analogy

Now, I want to spend some time explaining how the Jigsaw Model might change how people perceive love in their life. In Sloss' analogy, life is like a jigsaw: you orient your life around something/someone you love, and you would be able to build your life with clear goals and organization. The theory of what formulates an ideal relationship fits this model perfectly. There are a few goals that function well here. If one were to orient one's life around someone, one would climb up the ladder through appreciating that person's attractive qualities, loving that person (level 1-3), and finally appreciating the relationship with that significant other (level 4). Since the significant other is the centerpiece of this person's jigsaw, the greatest happiness this person receives is the relationship itself. In other cases, if a person's “jigsaw” is oriented around the pursuit of beauty or knowledge, this person can also achieve his centerpiece through formulating a loving relationship (climbing up the ladder to realize the form of beauty).

Two essential questions are raised here:

1. Should all people pursue the ideals raised above?
2. Is climbing up the “Ladder of Love” the only way to achieving those ideals?

Answering the first question, I should re-stress Sloss' point about the jigsaw analogy: *“We're so trying to be an adult that some of us will take the wrong person, the wrong jigsaw piece and just jam them into our jigsaws anyway, denying that they clearly don't fit. Oh, we'll move pieces out the way, I don't need this hobby, I don't need this opinion.”*<sup>18</sup> The Jigsaw Model allows people to achieve one of the four objectives: appreciate attractive qualities, value loving relationships, understand philosophical knowledge, and realizing

<sup>18</sup> (Daniel Sloss: Live shows 2018)



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the form of beauty. However, if a person's life goals, or in Sloss' words the "centerpiece", is not one of the four above, it makes no sense for people to pursue this sort of relationship. As Sloss made clear at the end of his show: *"If you are in a relationship, you feel happy to have the same is true for your partner – it's great! And if you don't like the questions that I asked, it's because you are terrified of the answers. Because the worst thing you can do with your life is to spend it with the wrong person. There are 7.5 billion people in this world, and you found a soulmate just 50 miles from your house! What a coincidence!"*<sup>19</sup> This statement, while appearing to be cruel and uncomfortable, reveals the truth to the essence of the Jigsaw Model.

The statement makes clear that the Jigsaw model is, in fact, a pathway to certain goals. If your goal is not to gain this "significant other" or "understand the form of beauty", it makes no sense to go on this path. The same can be applied to earning money. It makes no sense to work from dawn to dusk earning money if money is undesirable. Moreover, the Jigsaw Model points to many questions that we should use against our current or potentially romantic relationships. People should consider whether this relationship is too great of an opportunity cost for them to have. In the case of romantic love, people can formulate theories of ideal models for romantic relationships. While I cannot help people climb up the ladder through my words, I can provide some insight into what level six could potentially be. Using the knowledge from Plato, Keller, and Kolodny, we can formulate refinements to our previous intuitive rules to a "loving relationship":

1. A loving relationship allows one to climb up the ladder.
2. A loving relationship involves individuals who appreciate each other's attractive qualities.
3. A loving relationship involves individuals who appreciate the relationship on its own.

In this case, if you are presented with a dilemma regarding relationships, here are some guiding questions for you to ask:

- What is the centerpiece of your "jigsaw"?
- What are the attractive qualities to your partner that are unique to him or her?

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<sup>19</sup> (Daniel Sloss: Live shows 2018)

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- Do you value your relationship over any other attractive qualities?
  - Does staying in this relationship satisfy your goals for piecing out your jigsaw?
  - Do you still plan to climb up the “ladder” through the relationship?
  - After achieving your goal, is it important for you to stay with your partner?

If all those questions receive positive and detailed answers, good! You have not only reaffirmed your love towards your significant other but have also reaffirmed that you want this relationship to be in your life. Congratulations, you have cleared yourself from the suspicion of falling in love for the sake of falling in love. You are in a good and loving relationship and your partner would lead you to your ideal jigsaw puzzle. However, if you were to receive negative answers or have a hard time answering those questions, maybe you should re-consider if you are pursuing this relationship for nothing. If you are hesitant to answer the questions above or receive negative answers, the best you could do is stop and reevaluate what you are doing. The worst thing you can do is spend your life pursuing a mirage that you do not even desire. You will not only mess up your jigsaw puzzle but also destroy someone else's.

As to the second question, the answer is comparably more interesting. In answering the first question, I pointed out that, if the transformative result to a romantic relationship is not desirable, one should not “climb up the Ladder of Love”. However, while I have argued that climbing up the ladder leads to transformative results, I have not argued against other possibilities to gaining similar results. The success of one model does not validate the failures of another. Like Keller and Kolodny's theory, multiple “Ladders” can coexist together. Not only does this entail endless possibilities of “centerpieces”, but it also entails endless possibilities to “Ladders” for people to climb. By climbing up the ladder of love, one realizes the form of beauty. Similarly, there is no reason to doubt that an artist skilled at sculpting could not have realized the form of beauty through sculpting. There are endless possibilities to how we reach the end of the ladder, for there are endless numbers of ladders. What we should learn from Sloss' jigsaw analogy is two essential points:

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1. We should realize the aims of our lives (what image we aim to piece out from the jigsaw pieces).
  2. We should find ways to piece the picture out (find the “Ladders” to our “centerpiece”).

For the first point, a philosopher can treat understanding the form of beauty as his life goal. He would then naturally move on to finding solutions to achieving such a goal. The Jigsaw model I have developed through this paper provides him with a clear path to pursue the understanding of the form of beauty. As to people with other aspirations, they should make clear to themselves what they want for their life. The centerpiece of the jigsaw can be happiness, helping others, the truth to our universe, or even just a motto. In general, unless we find a centerpiece to ourselves, there is no specific way of living that we must be restricted to. Moreover, even with a purpose, there is no one ultimate way to live our lives.

People should not be stressed about failing to climb up one ladder because there would always be another one. It is more important to realize the goals we aim to achieve and which “Ladder” is most helpful to achieve such a goal. This correlates back to Sloss’ advice that, once we find the centerpiece of our life, our jigsaw pieces naturally come together. The Jigsaw model serves as a blueprint for people to build their own “Ladder”, not replicating the exact same “Ladder”. The worse thing one could do is to climb a ladder blindly without a goal. In the case of a loving relationship, it would be entering a romantic relationship and marriage without the knowledge of where it would ultimately give back. Once you locate your centerpiece and pathway to completing your jigsaw puzzle, you might find greater achievements beyond what you imagined in the first place. From philosophical knowledge to the form of beauty, there are endless possibilities to the eventual picture of your jigsaw puzzle.

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## Ending Notes

I want to end my paper with the ending of Sloss' show. At the end of the show, Sloss made one last come back to those who still challenge his jigsaw analogy:

*"I never thought I get to do this, every bit of you adds a little bit to my happiness. All my friend from all over the world adds a little bit. Instead of just replacing one big piece in the middle of the jigsaw, I get to move a little bit at a time. If one piece goes away, that is a bit sad but I get to replace it with another...But even if I were to enter a relationship to find that right person, I don't know if I'll ever be happy or secure: being with one person and trusting that person.*

*As I know and you know, it is impossible to know if the person you are with loves you from the bottom of their heart, or whether they are just patiently waiting for you to die...I am not here to end true love, and I do not think I can. If you are sitting right there next to a person who makes you so happy, filling you with joy. And, you are confident that you give them the same happiness that they bring you. From the bottom of my heart, congratulations.*

*All I am saying is question everything. If you are not comfortable asking the question, I've asked you, it is because you are afraid to know the answer. The worst thing you could do with your life is spent it with the wrong human being...if you feel that you are with the right person, I hope that you are right. I want to be a husband, I want to be a dad, more than anything in the world. Because I guess if you're not right, the only alternative is, that when you were my age, you were so terrified of being alone that you forced yourself to love someone."<sup>20</sup>*

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<sup>20</sup> (Daniel Sloss: Jigsaw 2018)

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