

“How do I love thee?”
Cognition and Metacognition in and through Poetry

This paper will explore different levels of cognition and metacognition as expressed in or engendered by poems, and especially love poems. It will seek to distinguish between speaker/addressee, author/reader, and teacher/student communication; and likewise between content and relationship aspects involved on each respective level. Especially with regard to the latter distinction, the frame of reference will be provided by the theory of communication put forward by Paul Watzlawick, Janet Beavin Bavelas, and Don D. Jackson.

In the light of the abovesaid theory, I shall try to illuminate the role of love poetry as a response to the dilemma created by two contradictory aspects of the human condition: the incommunicability of experience as posited by R.D. Laing, and the impossibility of not communicating as posited by Watzlawick et al. I shall further talk about the interaction or even interpenetration between what Alfred Schütz terms paramount reality on the one hand, and finite provinces of meaning on the other, by means of shared aesthetic experiences. I shall finally attempt to delineate the simultaneous highlighting and challenging of ontological boundaries as a didactic method aimed at metacognition: a level of awareness allowing a recalibration of self in relation to other, and of both in relation to the wider world.

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