



The Art of Loving

"What?"—"I Mean Love", Appendix C: Remarks on ERICH FROMM

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OPUSCULE 01aC, v.01
THE ART OF LOVING

“WHAT?”—“I MEAN LOVE”, APPENDIX C: REMARKS ON ERICH FROMM, Part I

The purpose of this appendix is to compliment the investigation into the many analyzations of love in “What?”—“I Mean Love”. This critique of Erich Fromm’s *The Art of Loving* will serve as a practice in the ontological worldview introduced in the main body of “What?”—“I Mean Love”. The practice of this worldview is not limited by a mere understanding of the world, but amounts to a reconciliation of the many interpretations of it.

Despite what is about to be a quite fundamental critique of Erich’s work, let me first pay respect to a few immediate and surface conclusions found within *The Art of Loving*. After all, his work is informed and he does feel like a man with good intentions.

Regarding the art of loving, I would agree to Erich’s *love as activity*, or more appropriately, I acknowledge an *endeavor to love* as a healthy activity. I also agree that a sense of love accompanies giving more than receiving. And I agree in his enumeration of giving, care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge as actives which accompany a healthy love. I strongly agree with his prescription of creative activity on page 17 as a solution to separateness.

Yet, beside all of this, his approach to love—to the art of loving—through the language of **social-psychology** calls for some reflection. As it has been said, the science of psychology is comprised of methods^{c1} not the objects themselves. We can say roughly that those methods are founded upon the pursuit to ‘normalize the abnormal’. Erich’s work is written in just that spirit—of correcting, or at least of healing.

In as much as this is the case, the book presents a spirit which manifests many times in history, among very different people and times—the idea of a Christian ‘**fallen world**’ is undoubtedly the most popular inherited to us.

^{c1}See lecture “What?”—“I Mean Love”, section 12.

Erich's third chapter is dedicated to **love and its disintegration in western society**, "...*love is by necessity a marginal phenomenon in present-day Western society...*"—says Erich on page 132. This value judgment is necessary for the work, as it advances the second and meaningful part of the social-psychological approach, that of healing the individual of a 'fallen world'.

Now, I must admit that by habit I am quite critical of omniscient language—and worse, omniscient value language. After all, does Erich really have such a privileged view of the world? Or do his readers? "*The paradoxical situation with a vast number of people today is that they are half asleep when awake and half awake when asleep...*"—says Erich on page 128.

So, I am to suppose his readers are of the rare and omniscient type too. That **we** together with Erich can look **down** with sympathy upon ourselves and 'modern man'. Surely, a bit of a generalization. A bit ignorant.

Before going any deeper, I already ask for a bit of reflection. Contrast Erich's social-psychological approach to that which has become a habit in my life—that of an **ontological approach**. The approach of ontology asks after entities as they are, in each moment, for each author of those entities. Each author can answer "love" for himself—constitute love as exactly what it is. After all, love is there for the author to constitute in the very use of the word itself. Love, as an entity of 'subjective' language,

could never be 'known' more truly or evaluated 'objectively' by a psychologist. This difference of worldview is what lies at the center of the chasm between my way of thinking and Erich's.

My conclusion to this critique of *The Art of Loving* will be that these two distinct approaches lead to different worlds of **objects** and that the difference in objects has practical consequences to the **objective** of an 'art of loving'. Erich's art can only be a recommendation of practices **within the individual** and his endeavor to love only an endeavor **in the individual**. While, as I will show, the ontological approach places an endeavor to love **within the very situation of two people in a union**. At the same time, the ontological approach makes obsolete the need for omniscient value judgments.

Despite the confidence of my conclusions, the popularity of Erich's work calls after my curiosity. After all, *The Art of Loving* has been read and enjoyed by some of my closest relations, women I respect. In fact, the work came to me by recommendation from one of my dearest. This popularity suggests that the idea of a fallen world is acceptable among many of my contemporaries—that they are willing to accept that world for what it brings forth from it. Therefore, while this appendix will critique Erich's many **further-analyzations of love**, my curiosity chases after the worldview laying behind them. I will attempt to satisfy some of that curiosity following my critique in Part II of this appendix.

In advancing a solution of *mature love* for a fallen modern society, Erich takes up one catalyst, the ecstasies of 'falling in love' and their inevitable end. Erich argues that the end of the "getting to know a stranger" period brings about the end of *erotic love*.² Yet, the isolation of this 'falling in love' period, exclusive to 'young love', simply does not resonate with my experience. While Erich does not explicitly reserve the ecstasies of love for this 'falling in love' period, his descriptions of mature love—the love of later periods of life—are disturbingly absent of the *primordial love experience*. Instead, love is rationalized.

²The concept of erotic love seems misconed. I do not acknowledge eroticism—Erich's "erotic love"—as either a type of love or a situation which produces a sense of love. Eroticism is not a sensual experience and even less is it a disposition. Instead, I understand *the erotic* as an aesthetic.

Related, I do not agree with Erich's critique on gender equality—and that the closing of the sexual poles, male and female, corresponds to a decline of eroticism. While it is arguable whether an appropriation of the masculine archetype by a biological female is constructive, I would challenge that a healthy closing of the sexual gap might be just the reverse—the biological male toward the feminine. However, *difference feminism* demands a reflection besides this appendix.

Now, if this nihilistic view of the ecstasies of young love resonates with you, then perhaps you won't find this appendix of much value. However, just know that this belief is disputable. Even Erich concedes the inevitability on page 53 of his work.

Example. Erich's view stands in contrast to one popular interpretation of relationships in Plato's *Symposium*. That interpretation starts with a critique of the contemporary view of a healthy relationship which states that *one should not try to change his partner*. Changing her into who you want her to be, and who she is not, is fundamentally wrong. Both of you would be better off choosing someone different.

After setting up this prescription for a healthy relationship, the argument states that Plato would have been opposed to this modern view. As for him, you enter a relationship for the exact purpose of change—or to put it better, in order to **grow**. This is a very relatable thought. Imagine that a person comes into your life who possesses qualities which you adore. In as much as you seek to acclimate those qualities, you engage in an intimate relationship with that person.

So, even if I were to admit that the end of the "getting to know a stranger" period brings about the end of 'erotic love', it could still be argued that that period may never have to be reached. As long as a relationship continues to grow an individual his partner will never cease "getting to know him". He will continually be a 'stranger' to her. Once one 'stranger' is overcome, another appears through the

same physical body. Growth accompanies a sense of gratitude and gratitude accompanies a sense of a disposition of love. In my experience, the ecstasy of gratitude which accompanies growth is equivalent-to or greater-than the intensity of any experience of 'young love'—whatever that may mean.³

As confusing as it may be, while Erich's catalyst is unfounded, he does corroborate the interpretation of Plato's *Symposium* when he writes of **knowledge of oneself through the love of another**.⁴

Now, my substitution to Erich's mature love solution might be followed by many questions. Of course, this '*stranger cycle*' would take some regulating. Familiarity is, of course, another factor to consider. Two people in a union would be careful to balance the familiarity through *nearness* in their relationship—managing distance over longer or shorter periods in order to reach a healthy situation. Of course, a healthy union would be one characterized by individuals "growing together" on parallel paths. The reward to this 'art' is the hope

³It is worthy mention that I don't agree with this popular interpretation. Plato's prescription of a healthy relationship would not contradict the contemporary one. In the Platonic view change is sought for yourself—in the modern one change is imposed upon the other; therefore, the modern woman's resistance.

⁴See *The Art of Loving*, pages 30-31.

that your rejoining becomes sweeter—accompanied by a sense of a disposition of love. However, any prescription is better left unmentioned. Any 'art' to this stranger cycle could only be prescribed **by** the individuals, **for** the individuals. I feel ridiculous in expounding as much as I have.

In further advancing a solution of mature love for a fallen modern society, Erich takes up his objects, *motherly love*, *fatherly love*, and *brotherly love*. Among these, brotherly love is given ontological priority. (I will return to this in Part II of this appendix.) Other types of love are judged negatively—idolatrous, sentimental, mother-centered, father-centered, or those of an interpersonal sadistic or masochistic "symbiotic union".

Now, consider exactly the solution by way of Erich's ontology—**love as capacity for types**. Instead of your mother, your father, or your brother, *The Art of Loving* takes up different objects. Those objects are your capacity to love **in that way**. Here you can see the influence of the social-psychologist on the constitution of love itself.

...A second premise behind the attitude that there is nothing to be learned about love is the assumption that the problem of love is the problem of an object, not the problem of a faculty. People think that to love is simple, but to find the right object to love—or to be loved—is difficult.

—says Erich on page 2.

And after all, he **is** correct. You **can, without question**, succeed in growing these *faculties* in yourself. Now, while I take no issue with the responsibility ascribed to the individual in Erich's solution, this emphasis does result in something quite peculiar—perhaps even disturbing. The task in Erich's solution motivates a **selfish endeavor**.

Let me explain. If the objects of love are **your** capacity then healing is an endeavor you can take up yourself. Therefore, the ontology of love as capacities directs inward any art of loving. This art **disregards any particular endeavor in love** and therefore excludes the necessity of any **particular person**—your mother, father, brother, boyfriend, or husband. While I am not claiming Erich prescribes a solitary endeavor, there can be no doubt, his art does seek an *ideal love*: motherly, fatherly, or brotherly. He admits this on page 41.

Dangerously, Erich's conclusion has what I would call a *perverse positivity*. After all, if the relationship fails, both parties still win, since both have still grown individually. Throughout his work the **individual** is inexplicit emphasized.

In contrast, and despite the efforts taken by Erich, I maintain that without the **particular loved one** there is no endeavor to love. After all, if the objects of love are objects **in** the relationship, then the objectives can only be constituted by those objects in the relationship. And, more to the point, there could be no 'art' to that endeavor without the loved one.

Even if I were to admit to Erich's language, I would still be disappointed if his *types* exhausted the descriptions of situations which manifest a sense of a disposition of love. Surely enumeration feels silly and the practical risk of adopting Erich's language is that we might close ourselves off from listening (and organically responding) to our unique situation.

After all, phenomenally, what access could anyone have to this *love as capacity for types*? How would anyone understand their faculty of capacities? Surely, anyone could only 'know' this faculty by feeling the limits of that capacity. Or by experiencing the opposite, a vacancy in that capacity. Therefore, anyone could only have access to the theoretical entity, *capacity for a type of love* by means of the personal experience of the ecstasies of love. That **personal experience of a particular love is primordial**. Any further-analyzed description of love can only follow from this *primordial entity*.

Primordial love is not an expression, an attitude, or an orientation of character toward mankind. It is not an activity itself or an overcoming of separateness. It is not a union of the sexes. I agree with Erich here. Love is not a relationship.

Still, that experience, the ecstasies of love, is produced through a relationship. In as much as this is the case, love **could** be experienced though an overcoming of separateness. It **could** be experience though a union of the sexes. It could be many things. If there can be any holistic 'art' to loving, then that

art could only comprise the learnings for producing **situations which accompany the ecstasies of love.**

Further, I reject the idea that there could be a **mature type of love** which draws on a different **primordial experience** than is drawn on during a 'falling in love' period. Both *mature love* and *young love* must be the same phenomenon. Only they may feel different because the behavior surrounding them may be different.

Now, perhaps you want to say that you too **Justin**, have a very **individual** understanding of love. After all, I maintain that love 'merely' refers to what we ordinarily mean by that word, a 'feeling'—one which is individual and arises in the moment, perhaps with hours, days, or weeks between the next. However, if this is your conclusion then I would argue that your objection rests on a confusion between the **constitution of love** and the **endeavor of love**. While the primordial love experience is indisputably experienceable only for its author, an endeavor to love exists only **in** the relationship and **for** the particular loved one. 'My' endeavor could never be individualistic.

So, my critique to Erich's *The Art of Loving* is quite fundamental. In 'saving' love from the nihilistic view of the falling in love period, Erich's solution of mature love **moderates the intensity of the love experience**. The love experience is relegated to a mere gauge for his further-analyzed description of *love as capacity for types*.

Erich says just a few pages into his book that the art of loving is a rare achievement, that to find a truly loving person is rare, and that people are starved for love. But contrary to what Erich protests, **love is common**. After all, who today would admit that they have never experienced love or met a loving person? I have experienced it and you too, I assume. Again, love is there for the author to constitute in the very use of the word itself. Love as an entity of 'subjective' language could never be 'known' more truly or evaluated 'objectively' by a psychologist. This is necessary following from the ontological worldview.

Later in his work, on page 56, Erich challenges, "*If love were only a feeling, there would be no basis for the promise to love each other forever. A feeling comes and it goes.*" But this is exactly the case, Erich. And I agree, no one can predict the natural—including **natural feelings**. In as much as this is the case, there can be no promise to love. And, after all, in factuality, no one does this. There can only be a promise to an endeavor to love. A **commitment**. Anything beyond this promise must be dishonesty toward oneself and their partner.

Besides this, I confess that his reflection on narcissism on page 118 would be healthy for someone needing that advice, "*...the main condition for the achievement of love is the overcoming of one's narcissism.*" Yet, he continues, "*The opposite pole to narcissism is objectivity, to see things as they*

are..." Of course, this "as they are" is an audacious attitude to have—the language of an omniscient observer again.^{C5}

Despite all of this, the most difficult thing for me to swallow, what disgusts me the most, is the thought of accepting that my friends, colleagues, or lovers are so **weak in love** and **weak in self**, that they would need such self-improvement as prescribed by Erich. And I do not believe recognizing yourself in this way is healthy.

As with most languages and world pictures, the logic itself is hardly the deciding factor in accepting that language or world picture. Instead, it must be Erich's approach of the social-psychologist himself which resonates with his reader **on another account**—it must give value to her life. It must go up to reconcile the story of her life. However, if

^{C5}Interestingly, and probably unintended by Erich himself, here *objectivity* is used in a psychological sense. I have considered this use once before in my writing—in the case of an explanation to politically Left leaning people who misunderstand the lower-class voter who votes Republican—the voter who, in their mind, "votes for the rich people". My explanation to these people being that the 'interest' of these lower-class voters must lie in the appeal of an *objective ideal* which, after all, may not economically benefit them. That is, there interest is not economically narcissistic, but 'objective'.

you are of this type, then it may be that I simply don't understand you. And if that is our fate then of course that is ok too.

I would like to end this critique of *The Art of Loving* with a piece of likely controversial literature. After all, Oscar Wilde's Lord Henry may seem an unhealthy voice of heroism—he **is** the corrupter. However, I reason away Lord Henry's prescription of vanity (his displacement of **love between two people in a union** onto **love of the self**) and instead listen to the brutal (and on that account, beautiful) expression of the primordial love experience,

...each time that one loves is the only time one has ever loved. Difference of object does not alter singleness of passion. It merely intensifies it...the secret of life is to reproduce that experience as often as possible.^{C6}

—Justin Carmien, 13.01.18

^{C6}*The Picture of Dorian Gray*, chapter 17.

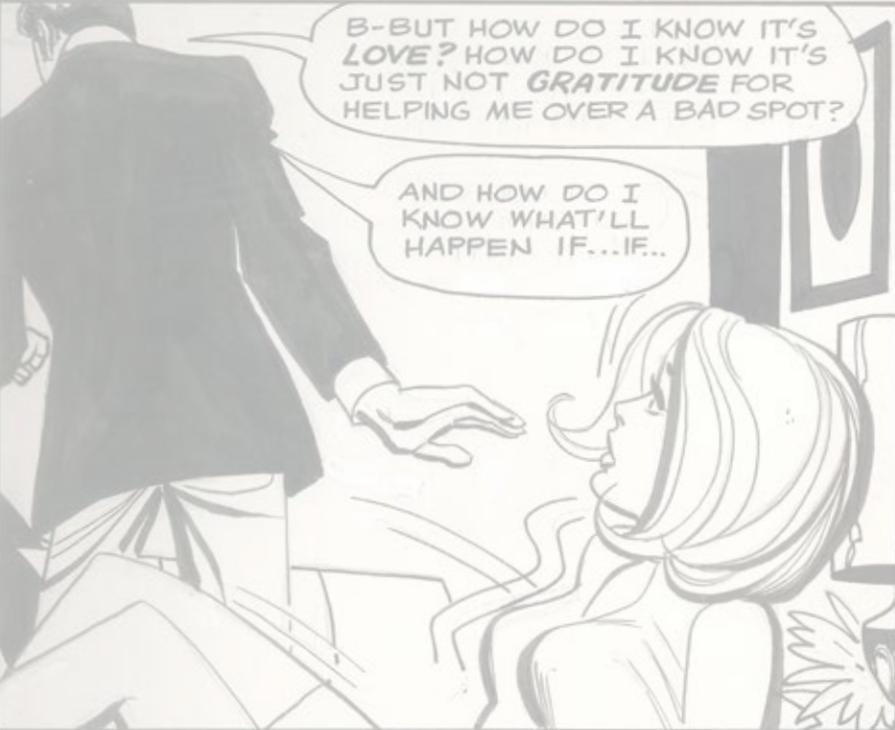


AND...AND I CAN'T WAIT UNTIL EVENING...
SO WE CAN GO OUT TOGETHER... THE
TWO OF US...AND I CAN TAKE YOU IN
MY ARMS... AND HOLD YOU CLOSE...



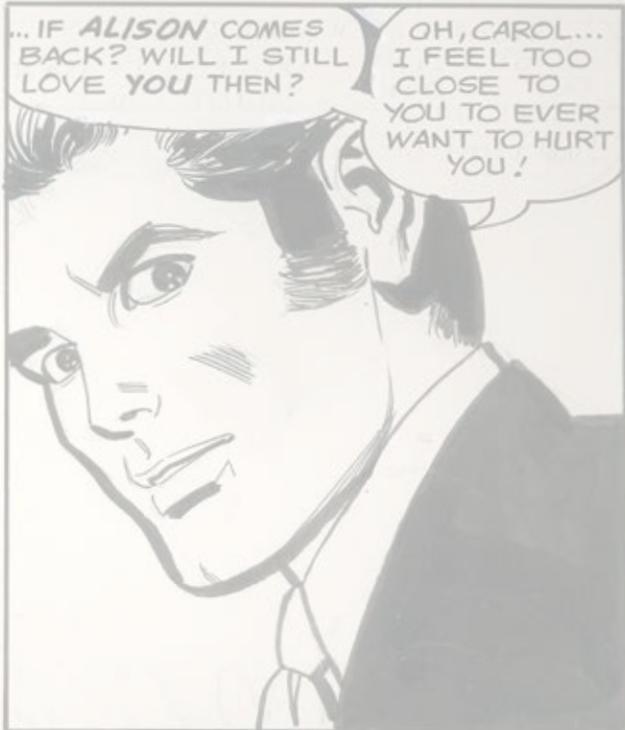
... AND
KISS
YOU...

OH,
KIP...



B-BUT HOW DO I KNOW IT'S
LOVE? HOW DO I KNOW IT'S
JUST NOT *GRATITUDE* FOR
HELPING ME OVER A BAD SPOT?

AND HOW DO I
KNOW WHAT'LL
HAPPEN IF...IF...



... IF *ALISON* COMES
BACK? WILL I STILL
LOVE YOU THEN?

OH, CAROL...
I FEEL TOO
CLOSE TO
YOU TO EVER
WANT TO HURT
YOU!

OPUSCULE 01aC, v.01
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“WHAT?”—“I MEAN LOVE”, APPENDIX C: REMARKS ON ERICH FROMM, Part II

Up until now I have only critiqued Erich’s *The Art of Loving* logically. However, these critiques are less important to me than the questions which have motivated the writing of this appendix. Despite my remarks on the previous seven pages, I still have not approached the answer of why a method of the social-psychologist resonates today among my contemporaries. Or why the idea of a fallen world is acceptable—even appealing. And I have not considered the appeal in the emphasis of brotherly love—and its eclipse over romantic love in Erich’s work.⁶⁷

Perhaps the answer is simple—that today we are living within the historical continuum of the totalitarian ideologies of both the Left and Right. Perhaps the **appeal of brotherly love simply propagates a message of tolerance**—a dire message following the atrocities of war in the twentieth and

twenty-first centuries. Or perhaps the appeal of brotherly love is simply a consequence of opening international borders, technological advances in transportation, and subsequent migration. Perhaps it is a symptom of racial guilt. However, whatever the factual explanation, we should not be too quick in dismissing how **boring** these answers are—and not because they are overly obviously, but because these rationalizations address the **generation**. They do not speak toward any particular **author** of that morality.

Now, whatever psychology is at work in the social-psychologist Erich Fromm it can only be a mere hypothesis. And here, as elsewhere, I do not presume to know an author better than he knows himself. I am not going to **psychoanalyze** Erich. Yet, despite my inhibitions, I can theme a popular **character** through Erich’s words.

With the emphasis of brotherly love, and despite Erich’s **moderation** of the intensity of the love experience, I theme **Erich’s reader** as one escalating the intensity of love, only, not through a love experience, but through the many **further-analyzations** of love in *The Art of Loving*.

⁶⁷Like erotic love, the concept of romantic love seems miscoined. I understand *the romantic* as an aesthetic.

The highest escalation of love in that book reveals itself in the emphasis of brotherly love. I believe this cannot be overlooked. That type of love is argued to be the foundation for all further-analyzations—and apparently necessary for the *primordial love experience* itself.

Now, I would accept brotherly love as a healthy capacity of oneself, only if it amounted to what is expressed on page 46 of *The Art of Loving*, “*I love in you everybody, I love through you the world, I love in you also myself.*” I understand that meaning as equivalent to **I love humanity in you**.

Yet, Erich becomes something else for his reader when this statement is expanded too, “*If I truly love one person I love all persons.*” Here murkiness surrounds the identity of his objects. If brotherly love is a love for a **non-particular everyone** and the object of his art is your capacity for loving this non-particular *everyone* through a **particular someone**, then why write as though the object of the art is none other than **any particular one** itself? After all, anyone should be allowed, without guilt, to be indifferent to people in or out of their lives.

In confounding the objects *capacity to love* and the *particular loved one* Erich becomes something of a prototype hippie—sixty years ahead of the polyamorous Tinder generation of today.

Now, to be clear, I am not claiming that the Erich of *The Art of Loving* advocates sexual promiscuity. I am doubtful that is his intention. I am certain that is not his argument. And, I would be highly skeptical of

anyone suggesting that the book, *The Art of Loving*, propelled culture into the sexual liberation of the last half of the twentieth century. This movement was undoubtedly **organic**.^{c8} However, I am not interested in Erich’s intention. I am interested in theming the character of his reader.

In reading his work, I find myself in the position of someone resorting to rationalizations, not to **support** the experience of love, but to **compensate** for its absence. I theme in his reader a **displacement** of the ecstasies of love. Or I theme a **sublimation** of the pains of love. While Erich is theming a fallen world, I feel it more appropriate to theme a **fallen reader**—someone in which a fallen world resonates as true. This person is alien to me, as I simply don’t find need for this worldview. This accounts for my curiosity.

Now, the absence of this **fallen person** in Erich’s work is not accidental, as this identification of his reader would undoubtedly render the work unappealing to his reader. However, for someone who cannot admit to “*love’s disintegration in western society*” the identification of the fallen person is implicit to theming Erich’s reader of today.

It goes without saying that if one has no control of events, then one should not be **accountable** for the consequences of those events. This seems

^{c8}Further reflections the sexual liberation of the last half of the twentieth century in an afternote following Part II.

fair. I cannot help but theme this *displacement of accountability* as the cause for the appeal of both the Christian fallen world and the method of the social-psychologist. (It is also worth mentioning that the entity '*personal history*' which displaces accountability from a current self onto a past 'fallen' self—naïve or reckless—satisfies the same appeal.) In recognizing **around** you and **in** you a fallen world, you become **empowered**. You can take hold of your destiny—choose **good**, choose **growth** from out of it.

But why would Erich's reader demand on herself such accountability anyway, such that she would need to displace it onto a fallen world or find use for the prescriptions of the social-psychologist? Undoubtedly, because of those residual entities inherent in our historical continuum by way of **Christian ontology**—that is, she feels accountable for her **free will**. She fears of her **punishment**.

Therefore, I conclude my thematization of Erich's reader as someone accepting the entities of a secular world built upon the historical continuum of Christian morality in order to satisfy those moral residuals of Christianity.⁶⁹

With the character of Erich's reader now themed, I should feel as though I have reached the conclusion of this appendix. Yet, I do not feel satisfied. What I mean is this: if my critique of a worldview built upon the historical continuum of Christian morality is to be of any worth to you, my reader, I owe you something more. I owe you a substitution. And if my substitution is to be satisfactory, I must offer you the benefits of shedding these moral residuals.

Underneath **free will** and **punishment**, underneath a **fallen world** and a **fallen individual** lays the foundation: **value judgements**. The remaining pages of this appendix will explore a substitution of a world-approach built upon value judgements and I will attempt to explain its partial benefits.

⁶⁹For someone like me, who does not feel this residual of morality, free will—as an element of my experience of the world—I would just assume drop the identification of a 'fallen world' or 'fallen past self'. I cannot see anything interesting in any of these entities. It is not that I find them **factually** refutable, as the atheist does; instead, they simply lack relevance.

Consider in contrast to a world of value judgements a world-approach I encountered through a muse of mine roughly three years ago. Her spirit inspired much of my writing at that time. Since then, her spirit has become a background to my life. I suppose it is worth mentioning that she was nineteen years of age at that time.

This girl lived with great passion. She accomplished this passion by watching herself. She was amused by herself—amused by the *character* who she found herself to be, amused by what this character did, from one moment to the next. She lived in a **retroactively articulated world**. A critic might have themed her experience as passive. Yet, this passivity was not similar to the experience of a football match spectator or reader of a scientific journal. Her passivity accomplished a submersion in the experience of life. Her flaws had been made innocent—even adorable in my opinion. Free from any shame-of-self she was prepared for a depth where she could discover her own natural feelings—her own *nature*. Her world-approach was a healthy **self-absorption** and positive **selfishness**.

Now, if I were to theme this world-approach as a possible **pure substitution** to the secular residuals of Christian morality, I would look towards *amorality*. Yet, there is nothing extraordinary novel in the idea of amorality as a lifestyle toward self-honesty and self-discovery. Historically, the idea can be traced back to the writing of Friedrich Nietzsche—where I have likely first encountered it.

However, it is debatable that a pure ideological amorality is possible. After all, what consequences follow from allowing each other free discovery of our natures? Well, let us consider it through a more difficult case. Only through the difficult cases are we going to confront any serious consideration. So, what if, for example, we allow a man who finds himself in disgust of homosexual behavior to discover his own natural feelings, without any shame-of-self. After all, if we moderns are to accept a homosexual man, then it should also follow that we accept someone who feels disgust in the presence of homosexual behavior. No one can help how they feel and, as the relationship advice goes, your feelings are completely valid. You should never experience guilt or apologize for them. So, let us allow this man to discover the depth of his disgust; however, despite our tolerance into his investigation, he **will** have to accept any consequences of his nature and his investigation into it, both from within himself and from his surroundings.

The 'punishment' for this man will be experienced in the maneuvering with his nature.^{c10} Or his nature will accompany another consequence—the ending of a relationship entirely. After all, some will need

^{c10}*Nature* here simply meaning *that which is discovered*—whether that nature is 'in' yourself or 'in' your surroundings, 'in' your environment. Also see "What?"—"I Mean Love", Appendix A.

a distance from him in order to discover their own nature—and no one should find anything inherently unfortunate in this termination. A loss of *nearness* to a family member, friend or lover may, after all, be quite healthy. Therefore, despite the absence of any morality which allows for this freedom for discovery, therefore no ‘moral punishment’, there is still something of a ‘natural punishment’—or better ‘**natural consequence**’ to having a nature.

Now, quickly I would like to interrupt our investigation into a pure ideological amorality to address an imaginable critique to the example I have chosen. After all, there **is** the Karl Popper mantra toward tolerance. This mantra usually goes something like, “Everything should be tolerated, except intolerance.” The prescription here being that the man who finds himself in disgust of homosexual behavior should be ‘educated’—brought to our ‘mature morality’. However, if this resonates with you, then I doubt you have considered every case.

I mean, should we be tolerant to pornography featuring sexual intercourse with a consenting sixteen-year-old?—what is considered child pornography by many today. This is, of course, an easy example and there are more difficult ones. So, don’t come to me with a retort that everything should be tolerated, except intolerance. There will always be subtleties to any moral value. What if the footage is of two sixteen-year-olds having consensual sex? What if the one watching is a sixteen-year-old too. What if the distribution was

merely between friends? Is this worthy of criminal offense? (This example was, in fact, a case for Danish news recently.)

Now, in light of the consideration of ‘natural consequences’ how far has a pure ideological amorality taken us toward a satisfactory substitution of the secular residuals of Christian morality? Well, surely we have freed ourselves from the burden of a free will. We must also assume we have removed the possibility of malicious physical or psychological punishment. Therefore, without the possibility of malicious punishment we **should** have curbed any **fear of punishment**. However, even if fear could be removed entirely, that person must still be confronted with something which I have come to think of as a *paradox of accountability*. That is, I find myself simply presented with my feelings, completely subjected to them. Yet, I also find myself their author—accountable for their articulation, as no other can be.

In as much as there are consequences to having a nature, I feel a tragedy in being accountable for what I cannot control. Consider the dissonance which follows from holding open both this **subjection** and **accountability**. There is something of a *tragedy of the paradox of accountability*. Therefore, my conclusion thus far must be that a pure ideological amorality ‘merely’ replaces *fear of punishment* with a *tragedy of accountability*.

However, and despite my emphasis in the word “merely”, there is some progress made by

this substitution. For example, a resolution to the tragedy of accountability can be found in the popular interpretation of the philosophy of the Stoics—and then again in the translations of Fredrich Nietzsche. The prescription in both being a change of attitude—toward one which is life-affirmative. That is, if I am to encourage self-honesty and self-discovery, I must also be willing to accept the consequences of my nature. At best, I must love those consequences. Cherish them. Therefore, the prescription being *amor fati*—a love of one’s fate.

However, I can also imagine shyness towards the acerbity of this prescription—perhaps felt as unnecessarily cruel and unforgiving. Therefore, a fair challenge might be to find a different path. For example, a question might be: can we not mitigate the consequences to having a nature?—either in our approach to the world or by establishment of some institution. In fact, I have read of just such a claim. This claim comes out of the contemporary political metamodernist movement of Scandinavia. I think it is worth taking a few pages to digest this claim before ultimately revealing its untenability. So, let us consider a passage from Emil Ejner Friss and Daniel Görtz’s character, Hanzi Freinach—the metamodern author of *The Listening Society*.

...individual people cannot really be blamed for anything. All moralism is meaningless. This translates to radical acceptance of people as they are; a radical non-judgment that can also

be described as a civic, impersonal and secular bid to love thy neighbor.^{c11}

On the surface, given what we have already considered about natural consequences, the claim that “all moralism is meaningless” simply cannot equate to a “radical bid to love thy neighbor”. Our consideration of natural consequences has taken up a **particular** situation between a particular *someone* and a particular *someone* else. Yet, the political metamodernist “radical bid” is “impersonal”—neither a love of humanity in a particular *someone* nor a love for *every* particular *one*. In as much as the political metamodernist finds need to explain the relationship to a non-particular *everyone* I have sought to uncover the provocation which could have led to the need of the political metamodernist claim. This discovery alone could lead to an interpretation of the political metamodernist theory, wholly.

Now, as I have come to understand it, the political metamodernist theory predicts a near-future social, economic, technological, and moral webbing called **metamodernity**. According to the political metamodernist, natures of *(in)dividuals* simply become singular as the developmental stage realizes more thoroughly. Therefore, within the metamodern developmental stage, and possibly

^{c11}See *The Listening Society, Metamodern View of the Human Being*, page 369.

present already in prior human development stages, tolerance of homosexuality and an absence of disgust over homosexual behavior naturally develop together. In the meantime, the political metamodernist maintains an attitude of acceptance toward the osculating and contradictory values within his development stage, reassured in the belief that future archaic values will naturally die out.^{C12}

Therefore, the political metamodernist bid to “*love thy neighbor*” must mean something like a *tolerance for everyone with the expectation we will grow out of any nature which we metamodernists collectively discover to be intolerable*. Likewise, the political metamodernist ‘impersonal love’ toward a non-particular *everyone* must be a strangely directed love toward the thematic object *citizen of their world development stage theory*.

^{C12}Here I should mention that the political metamodernist claim that the metamodernist himself is characterized by osculating and contradictory values is, as of yet, unsatisfactory—at least at the time of publication of *The Listening Society*. Any reader must be lost on the supposedly “radical” *and-or* world-approach without first understanding more explicitly the phenomenon of the world for the metamodernists’ metaphysical subject, the *(in)dividual*.

This belief about the nature of world progress allows the political metamodernist a surface amorality toward people of all stage developments. Yet, this amorality rests on a substantial belief about the world—one which allows the metamodernist what I would call a *naïve universalism*. In as much as the ideals of the moral webbing of metamodernity lie beside them ‘objectively’ they cannot claim metamodernity as their ideal, but simply a natural worldly ‘fact’. Of course, this is the same naïve universalism which a Christian missionary harbors. While the Christian missionary has his Holy Spirit, the metamodernist has his natural world development stages. But, in both instances, a naïve universalism allows their conscious to go free from any guilt of holding their ideals over other people; yet, both can maintain a humble “I know better than you” attitude toward people they see as below them.

The political metamodernist is also guilty of a rationale equivalent to that which the Theosophical Society took up in reconciling the world’s many religions in order to redeem those worldviews. So, while according to the Theosophical Society, a singular theological truth manifested through the many world’s religions, the metamodernist takes for granted the reconciliation of Left and Right political issues in order to manifest a unified ground in which to move forward. Of course, this rationale can prove useful for any society experiencing stagnated discourse. Therefore, the political metamodernist movement may yet prove promising in factualizing

a new political structure able to redeem political discourse following Right and Left politics.

After all, I agree with the political metamodernists. A new political activity which will "*outcompete liberal democracy and capitalism*" is ripe—and I believe this is the case signaled by the realization of Donald Trump to the presidency of The United States of America. However, I doubt the successor of liberal democracy and capitalism will be won through taking for granted the reconciliation of contemporary political platforms, such as sexual identity or dietary or sexual preference—as the political metamodernists have done.

If the political metamodernists instead take up a platform which compliments democracy with a new **pure contentless political shell** for doing politics, they might, after all, reach a national discourse in which "*all moralism is meaningless*". Yet, because the political metamodernists have addressed the reconciliation of contemporary political issues so pressingly, they have consequently aligned themselves with those issues and unsuspectingly brought themselves into those debates. However, it is my suspicion that this consequence was not so innocent. It is possible the political metamodernists aren't so much interesting in establishing a pure amoralistic political shell as much as they are interested in establishing that shell for the exact purpose of driving their value-laden agendas—which include reevaluation of liberal democracy and destruction of the capitalist economic system along

with promotion of the 'reconciled' issues of their *Green Social Liberalism 2.0*.^{C13}

It seems undeniable that the political metamodernists are at the intersection of two historical continuums and, as of yet, have unsatisfactorily reconciled the world-approaches inherit to each. The first continuum is that of the Hegelian tradition: that world-approach which takes the world as a substance of the omniscient 'world historicizing' temporal-centric observer. This is the very same world-approach I find in the Erich Fromm of *The Art of Loving*. The second continuum is that of the Heideggerian tradition: that world-approach which takes the world as phenomena of the metaphysical subject. In contrast to the first, this second world-approach is yet to be acknowledge as value-

^{C13}It is my belief that the political metamodernist will undoubtedly fail their potential political potency if they do not first take up identification of the metaphysical subject for which the new political paradigm is to address. Up until now the establishment of political structures has failed to identify the metaphysical subject to be supported by the political structure. However, political theory is ripe for just this task. And I believe this is exactly the task which will not only realize the solution of philosophy's efforts over the past two-hundred years, but also usher the political activity which will "*outcompete liberal democracy and capitalism*".

laden. Instead, at the root of disciplinary work, this approach provokes interest in the discovery of the structure in which the world comes to matter to the metaphysical subject.^{C14}

Ultimately, there is favoritism. The metamodern authors of *The Listening Society* relentlessly beat their reader over the head with divinations which are obvious to anyone willing to accept extrapolations of today's popular morality. While reading Hanzi's Facebook posts I find myself missing the thought-provoking word puzzles in the translations of Ludwig Wittgenstein and I pine to get back to a philosophy with such depth and articulation as found in the translations of Martin Heidegger.

Despite my belief in the potential political potency of the political metamodernist movement, the metamodernists' development stage theory fails in resolving the claim that a pure ideological amorality equates to a "*radical bid to love thy neighbor*". After all, the metamodernist developmental stage, as it is proposed, must encompass decades of human development. The positions internal to that

^{C14}In as much as the metaphysical entity *being-there* (*dasein*, from the Heideggerian tradition) is the most thoroughly articulated metaphysical subject at our disposal today, I am presented with the task of outlining the political structure which supports this entity. I have already taken up this task in my next project.

development stage must be so varied that we would have to trivialize the personal struggles of everyday intercourse in order to have the social, economic, technological, and moral webbing required for their "radical bid". Normalizing behaviors through imperialization on behalf of a developmental stage *universal ideal* can only lead to misdirected activity.^{C15} Therefore, I do not see the value in harboring an 'impersonal love' for a thematic object *citizen of world development stage theory* when a factualized amoral national discourse must account for *every* particular *one*.

Now, I could not feel justified in my critique of the political metamodernist claim without considering a certain conclusion recently published on metamoderna.org. This conclusion seemingly attempts to address the relationship with *any* particular *one*. In *How I View the World* the conclusion begins,

...I alone have the full responsibility for reality, including you...I am ultimately even responsible for your treatment of me.

While the metamodernists and I agree that we are sole accountable for the world, the prescription

^{C15}Consider my chosen example and the potential psychological damage in a suppression of homophobia. Also see my reflections on the taboos of the sexual liberation of the last half of the twentieth century in the afternote following Part II.

coming forth from the conclusion is unfounded: the prescription being that since I am responsible for you, I must 'love' you as my responsibility.

I should remind the political metamodernist that not all nature is loved—whether 'in' yourself or 'in' your surroundings, 'in' your environment. As I have written, you can't help the feelings you have. You simply have them—until you don't. And this is the same for your truths.^{c16} Think of the experience of making a conclusion: you explore two or more rationalized fantasies. You observe how the fantasy strikes you—but you are still subjected to your nature. You can't simply **decide** to have one feeling about a 'fantasy' or 'truth' over another. This necessity, that we are both solely accountable for the world, yet completely subjected to it, as we find it, is an **ontological necessity**.

In as much as this is the case, we cannot simply take up an approach of love toward the nature of any yet undiscovered "you". This "you" is not *any* particular *one*, but a generic *anyone*. Therefore, to love a non-particular *anyone* is **not** an ontological necessity. Instead, the political metamodern conclusion amounts to a therapist-like prescription of psychological training to **circumvent nature** as it presents itself to its author in the very moment.

^{c16}See *Terminus Mechanicae*, 6.08.16, *Reflection on Truth, Authorship*.

Besides all of this, anyone should be careful in understanding exactly the correct application of this concept, metamodernity—which should not be understood as anything other than an applicable **thematic object**. To understand the developmental stage 'metamodernity' as anything more—as a **substantial object**—would be to make it unprovable. After all, there are no clearly defined boundaries to societies which could wholly qualify that society. And reducing a society to a few statistical proofs could only lead to destructive consequences.

Also, do not come to me that a particular moral code is inherent to a certain developmental stage of a society—as if the acceptance of homosexually must be tied to every other value judgement of modernity ('post' or 'meta') in a massive web of morality. There is no necessary correlation between value judgement on a cross-national scale. At best, I could say that tolerance of homosexually may be **indicative** of a postmodern or metamodern theme.

Now, it may seem as though this **amoral world-approach** as a pure ideological substitution to the residuals of Christian morality promotes extreme tolerance on account that it can also accept extreme consequences of that tolerance. And yes, that is the short answer—but beware of the word "extreme". I ask you, my reader, to remember the **venue** in which this approach has been discovered. Remember my muse.

This world-approach does not address an audience known as **everyone**. It does not address

a nation of three-hundred-and-fifty million people. Instead, the author of this world-approach finds her venue in the **intimate relationship**. Therefore, currently it is an approach and discourse at odds with any discourse which address the *inauthentic everyone* through a *national discourse*.

I admit that any reader who is attuned to contemporary national discourse is undoubtedly bound to misinterpret this world-approach of unbiased self-discovery. For example, those who are accustomed to challenging race, gender, or economic hierarchical structures (those championing against patriarchies or white privilege, etc.) will find this approach disagreeable. In as much as the disposition of anyone we encounter should be tolerated, any structure supporting that disposition should too be tolerated. Consequently, this approach, in national discourse, seems to support existing hierarchies. At the very least it would be difficult to argue for any change of our current structures.

However, if we re-place this world-approach back into its home—the intimate relationship—those who are ‘fighting the establishment’ look a bit silly when their generalizations address a particular friend, colleague or lover. And in engaging with their opponent they will have to acknowledge that by bring talk of race, gender or oppression into a world where it is foreign (where it is not felt *primordially* by their friend, colleague or lover) will be felt as oppressive and foreign. **They** will be the oppressive imperialist ‘educating’ the ‘savages’. *Orwellian*.

Now, the venue of the intimate relationship should not be considered a short coming of this world-approach. After all, intimate discourse is exactly where the world is disclosed as the world that it is. The world is there for the author as he articulates it for his audience. This understanding is nothing other than the ontological worldview in practice.

I realize this second part of my appendix has taken quite a journey. Perhaps I am not yet prepared for an exposition on *author, audience, venue and discourse*, including national discourse. These terms need to be defined further within the language they belong. Looking back across these last few pages, I feel my reflections on Christian morality (a fallen world, free will, and punishment) along with my remarks on Emil Ejner Friss and Daniel Görtz’s Hanzi Freinacht and their political metamodernism deserve articulation beyond a critique of Erich Fromm. Any publication of those remarks and reflections should fall outside of a third appendix of an investigation into love. Continuing any further here feels a bit silly.

—Justin Carmien, 10.02.18

"WHAT?"—"I MEAN LOVE", APPENDIX C: REMARKS ON ERICH FROMM, Afternote

^{CB, C15}Let us, in afternote, honestly consider the sexual liberation of the last half of the twentieth century. By "sexual liberation" I mean the perceived liberation from the demands of a 'normal' love history. Including the acceptance of **sexual promiscuity** and the excusable attitude toward **infidelity**. Also, the permissible attitude toward **sexual exploration** during the teenage years and early twenties. I want to ask seriously, how well has this liberation settled with my contemporaries?

I raise this question only with a confidence I have earned following conversations among friends, colleagues, and lovers. I have considered those who are agitated when hearing of their partner's sexual history. Consider also, that when I tell women that I lost my virginity at the age of twenty-six, they find something morally good in this. These are signs which point to a conclusion: even after efforts of praising the moral progress of sexual liberation, there remains a **sanctity** surrounding the sexual experience.

Of course, surrounding these conversations are pleas for **forgiveness** and **acceptance** of people's history or 'mistakes'. Yet, while this morality is certainly popular today, it could never be considered **eternal**—healthy for every life condition or for our future continuum. After all, any value judgement 'good' can only resonate with one who feels it as healthy—among anyone who feels it as **life preserving**. It can be no different with sexual liberation. These virtues may, after all, be harmful even today.

Consider a personal experience. I have been asked in a relationship to **not care** about my lover's sexual past—her sexual promiscuity and her infidelity. And here I ask you to hear **exactly** my **emphasis**. I was asked to **not care**. While I may be in a different position today—one of not wanting to hear of my partner's sexual history and therefore forfeiting the possibility of care—I still maintain that any movement towards **caring less** over a loved one, no matter the object of that loved one, is cause for

sadness. Personally, a fear over this loss of depth has caused much internal conflict and sadness throughout life.

Now, most women I have been sexually involved with tell me I am the best lover that they have had. And I do not mention this to brag. I am honest when I say that this statement cannot be made on account of my physical endowment or my physiological workings. It must be themed otherwise.

I have approached each of my sexual encounters with an unbridled innocence. In this innocence I am prepared to discover an **entirety** which I can commit to, presently, in a reconciliation of the past and projected into the future. In each of my encounters this *preparation for depth* must be felt by my partner, as I have heard testimony of first orgasms, which must reveal the opening of her experience as a lover.

But equally, this preparation for depth has destroyed those ecstasies. In the story of my life, when I have discovered in my lover a history of sexual promiscuity, infidelity, and disrespect for relationships generally—a **lack of care** for her partners—I have felt a loss of respect over her

entirety. In each of those cases I have been left with the thought that if I had **cared less**, if I had been shallower, then our relationship could have lasted. However, if I would have cared less, I could never have been the lover which I was for her. Likewise, she could have never been the lover which she was for me. There is something **tragic** here which cannot be written away that my standards or expectations are too high.

Because of this preparation for depth which, in my experience, parallels the ecstasies of love **necessarily**, through a **dwelling** over a **full constitution**, I find myself in doubt over any achievement in the morality of sexual liberation. While I acknowledge the healthiness of acceptance in today's explorative sexual culture, I have also felt the pain that **this is the case** of the world today. And while I believe the Justin of today is more suited to succeed in his relationships going forward, I cannot respect myself or any lover on that account—certainly when reflecting on my previous nature and preparation for depth and the lack of that preparation today.

Now, of course I have heard the rationalization that you **are** supposed to care about your partner's

history. That rationalization is made on account that it was exactly that history which grew her into who she is today. But this statement rests on an ontological unclarity. *Growth* is not the entity of concern. Growth is not the *sexual encounters* or the *disrespect for relationships* itself, or the lack of either. Even if you can admit that those sexual encounters **may have been** the cause for what you love in your partner, it still does not mean that you love **that** in your partner. Each entity is there in each moment for each author of those entities. Each of those entities stand as independent. Any **dependency** is yet another entity at hand.

I maintain that if the admittance of your partner's sexual history hurts you, that feeling is independent of any cause. Furthermore, that feeling is completely valid—again, as the relationship advice goes, you should never experience guilt or apologize for your feelings.

In conclusion to this afternote, I admit that my provocative challenge to the morality of sexual liberation may seem myopic or archaic to modern men and women. Yet, as I have said, while this morality is certainly popular today, it could never be

considered **eternal**—healthy for every life condition or for our future continuum. After all, a virtue of tolerance toward sexual liberation may simply be a consequence of a history of sexual promiscuity, whether in yourself, a friend, or lover. My point being that any particular tolerance is not a necessary virtue. Therefore, do not expect it or praise anyone for it.

Today I encounter people living in a society of many different standards and tolerances, despite the enforcement of the 'popular' morality. While the 'popular' voice promotes sexual liberation, it also **suppresses** concern over it. Concern is something **taboo**. I have suspicion that this taboo cannot persist. There is too much repression and carelessness among my friends, colleagues, and lovers.



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