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Loving Authentically

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I. Introduction

Authenticity is a concept first introduced by philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a romantic and the father of the notion of authenticity (Laceulle, 2018, p. 189). His ideas would later be explicated and expounded upon by western philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre, De Beauvoir, and many others, some of whom were phenomenologists (Hanne Laceulle, 2018, p. 189).

Authenticity, in a general sense, is understood as one being "faithful to an original" or "of undisputed origin or authorship" (Hanne Laceulle, 2018, p. 190). In other terms, being true to oneself via living with "originality, truthfulness, creativity, and genuineness" (Hanne Laceulle, 2018, p. 190).

On the surface, the notion of authenticity implores one to live an honest and moral life living in accordance with his or her original ideas. A concept so common one can find it espoused by Instagram influencers and ancient gurus alike. However easy as that sounds, some issues arise when attempting to live that authentic life. What does it mean to be my true, authentic self? What is my true self? Can I even know what my true self is? These questions are those that philosophers seek out to answer, and some, like the question of "if one can even know their true self," are responded to by critics saying, "no, one is actually unable to identify their true self."

Love is a topic that has been long discussed, with a text devoted to its complexities as far back as Plato. Even now, its properties elude the best of philosophers. However, in recent years philosophers have approached love through the lens of phenomenology, a philosophical approach founded by Edmund Husserl. Phenomenology is

best understood as a radical, anti-traditional style of philosophising, which emphasizes the attempt to get to the truth of matters, to describe phenomena, in the broadest sense as whatever appears in the manner in which it appears, that is as it manifests itself to consciousness, to the experiencer (introduction to phenomenology 4).

This approach to philosophy was conducted by many of the philosophers that undertook the project of authenticity, such as De Beauvoir, Sartre, and Heidegger, to mention a few. One particular question pertaining to love has piqued my interest for the longest time; loving properly or loving in such a manner that it is a true love absent of the toxicity and unhealthiness found in an untrue loving relationship. This love is not limited to romantic love but love in all facets of the meaning. In what manner could one love truthfully, or in another sense, *love authentically*?

This investigation peers into the world of authenticity, love, and phenomenology to understand the conversations surrounding love and analyze what has already been uncovered about the conversation of loving authentically. This investigation culminates in a phenomenologically based hypothesis to love in authenticity, pulling from all sources, criticizing one, and using investigations of others as a foundation upon which authentic love can be constructed.

Love is a conversation topic of unlimited potential. It reaches into the lives of all, a pressing issue that has had entire movements based around its name. There are those who discount love and proclaim that it is something to be avoided at all costs. However, for those who believe love is legitimate and that there is a path one can take in the pursuit of love, there comes a question of how to love correctly. Across the board, whether it is

despised or loved, love is respected, revered, enthralling, irrefutable, unfathomable, and inexplicable. It captivates all. Humanity must learn to love with authenticity, as it is one of the few items that bleeds into the life of all.

II. Conversations Regarding Authenticity

Sartre was one of the phenomenologists that dove into the intricacies of authenticity and provided a solid understanding of what it takes to be authentic. His work *Being and Nothingness* provides an understanding of authenticity that will be used as the grounding for understanding during this investigation. Sartre identifies the antithesis of authenticity as acting with self-negation towards oneself and lying to oneself; it is what he calls "bad faith" (Moran, 2002, p. 408). He furthers the explication of bad faith with examples, the most relevant being a woman on a date with a man. This woman acts in bad faith. She "knows well the intentions" of the man on the date (his pursuit in a relationship), yet "she does not want to see the possibilities of temporal development which his conduct presents" (Moran, 2002, p. 412). Sartre uses this example to explain that humans act in bad faith when they deny either their *facticity*, one's tangible circumstances, or *transcendence*, the ability to transcend oneself (Moran, 2002, p. 413). In the circumstance the lady is denying the transcendence of the situation, she refuses to acknowledge the possibility that the current happenings could transcend the current situation and evolve into anything more to such an extent that she "glues it down with all the facticity of the present" (Moran, 2002, p. 413). What one should act in rather than bad faith is the absence of this kind of faith. Therein, a prerequisite for authenticity as understood by Sartre is for one to act in the absence of bad faith and its forms.

After dissection of what is required of someone to be authentic, we must now move forward to discuss a foundation of the manner in which one executes love as a intentionality upon the world. Philosopher Michelle Walker supplies us with this foundation. Walker's understanding of authenticity arises from De Beauvoir's understanding of authenticity. Walker says that her interpretation of De Beauvoir's Authenticity is "the route to a life ethically lived" (Walker, 2010, p. 343). De Beauvoir explicates through examples of beings from all walks of life, the nihilist, the adventurer, the serious man, the woman in love, and many more that although each leads their life with differing ideals, their ideologies lead, through complex ways, to tyranny (Walker 343). This tyranny is the "foreclosure of the other in unacceptable ways" (Walker, 2010, p. 343). It is the self-certainty driving one not to question his or her own ideals but to condemn the other's being. In contrast, De Beauvoir proposes "the man of goodwill" as the authentic approach to existence (Walker, 2010, p. 343). This is the being who rejects the self-tyranny and "every principle of authority", and every new engagement as "the possibility of new discoveries"; it is what De Beauvoir understands as "free engagement with the other" (Walker, 2010, p. 343). This authenticity approaches being with a relinquishing of one's own ideals in favor of the freedom that comes with the possibilities of being incorrect. Rather than faltering via defensibility at the thought of being wrong, it frees one to be incorrect and adjust course accordingly. Rather than tyranny, it promotes acceptance and wisdom, the wisdom that one may be wrong and an acceptance of the other.

III. Conversations Regarding Love

The approach for love in this investigation has its grounding in M.C. Dillon's article *Romantic Love, Enduring Love, and Authentic Love*; albeit not a phenomenological approach to the investigation, it provides a sound structure for the phenomenological understanding of authentic love. The focus of Dillon's article was to find a kind of love that withstands philosophical dissection. She presents that the two forms of love found most often within modern society's ideals fall into either romantic love or enduring love. Romantic love is the love characterized through movies and novels, a celebration of the romantic movement and "consummated" through an "erotic adventure" (Dillon, 1983, p. 135). It brings about the ecstasy of mystery found within the other, the novelty of an adventure, and resides upon the metaphysical distance between lovers. However wonderful, this love fails philosophical dissection foremost because the happiness found within romantic love "resides at the apex and ever after is necessarily a downhill trip" (Dillon, 1983, p. 136). Dillon compares it to the "happily ever after" found in romance novels and how it only exists if the author knows when to end the novel. This romance fails the test of time, particularly because those who follow romantic love are not in love with the other but rather in love with "the experience of falling in love" (Dillon, 1983, p. 136). The romantics read the romantic novel to attain a glimpse into the falling of oneself into love. With the prospect of something such as marriage, this love fails to stand the test of time. Eventually, the lovers grow "stalelated", the experience loses the novelty and ecstasy of mystery upon which it once rested.

Enduring love is the other kind Dillon criticizes, a love created on the criterion of permanence. After all, romantic love fails because "if the love is real, it will endure"

(Dillon, 1983, p. 138). This love fails because the criterion upon which it is created is inapplicable when measuring itself; one cannot decipher if their relationship will last in permanence because those in the relationship have not proven it to last in permanence (Dillon, 1983, p. 138). Yet, to cover for this fault in the love the lovers make the commitments found within marriage, "till death do us part", vows, the creation of legal and religious responsibility, and sanction themselves "calculable", ensuring through promises and "future self-definition", as Nietzsche said, that they will remain the lover of whom they are now (Dillon, 1983, p. 139). They are, in essence, self-objectify. They Limit their potentiality and place boundaries upon themselves to ensure the security of their love. Dillon relates this to the underlying subjugation of objectification of the self and the other as seen through Sartre when discussing love; "beneath the surface of erotic possession lies the structure of dominance and submission (Dillon, 1983, p. 149). Enduring love fails due to the subjugation found underlying the objectification of the self and others via future self-definition. To this research, I agree that neither enduring love nor romantic love meets the prerequisites to be a true love.

Although both forms of love fail, Dillon uncovers a commonality that can be used to discover what she deems an *authentic love*, the erotic transcendence underlying both. Both forms of love rest upon something that is out of their control. Romantic love relies on the mystery of the other to stimulate happiness within the relationship, and enduring love relies on the other to objectify themselves in order to attain security. However, Authentic love relies on erotic transcendence. It refuses to accept the permanence of enduring love and the insatiable desire of romantic love, and in its place, depends upon

the everchanging uncertainty of authenticity. Dillon warns against reading this authenticity as austerity in hopes to prevent the belief that beings interpret this love as "forsaking moonlight and roses for a lifetime of serious conversation" (1983, p. 150). He tells how this authentic love is grounded in the freedom of ones own transcendence and self-discovery, not limiting oneself to a life of objectification but everchanging evolution and self-discovery. This changing of the self inherently recreates the anxious awe and mystery that the romantic love so desires, while the commitment to transcendence provides a form of permanence. However, Dillon warns against reliance on the endurance of love, for if one is consistently changing, then there is no permanence, and the other in the relationship must constantly be pursued.

Yet, contrasting this problematization of the endurance of love comes Marion's *Erotic Phenomenon*, a clear phenomenological analysis, arguing that the essential temporal structure of love invokes eternity for to say that one will only love for a minute, or a day, or a year, is really to say that one doesn't really love the other. So, whilst one must understand there cannot be a reliance on the enduring love from the other, the self must forward a love that is eternal.

IV. Back To Authenticity Itself

Each researcher approached their topics with a vigor to find the truth. However, the research that contains a gap, however minor, is that of Dillon. Although he explains that one must be authentic, or "acknowledge his freedom to be and accept responsibility for what he chooses to be," there is a lack to the descriptive depth that one must go to achieve that authenticity (Dillon, 1983, p. 144). Furthermore, the short description given has faults. Foremost, if one accepts their being as that of a person who accepts responsibility for what he or she chooses to be and yet does not act on that intuition, they still fail to be authentic. One who calls themselves an authentic being in name only is inauthentic. To add, if one accepts that they are responsible for who they choose to yet fail to acknowledge their ability to transcend that version of themselves, they still act inauthentically. In place of the authenticity Dillon forwards, let Sartre's authenticity take place. His authenticity is a refined product that involves not believing one is essentially anything. This leads one to accept the responsibility of choices but relieves the contradictions that come along with Dillon's authenticity.

V. A Phenomenological Approach To Authentic Love

Apart, these conversations hold their own in their respective fields, although there had been some adjusting to one of the arguments. In conglomeration, though, these arguments can be assimilated to elucidate a sound phenomenological approach. But why does it have to be phenomenological? Phenomenology as expressed by one of the founding members, Edmund Husserl, states that the reductionary method phenomenologists take allows one to "go back to the 'things themselves'" (Husserl, 2001, 168). In essence, it returns the

investigation back to the way they are given in experience. All the glory given to other routes of though human existence and human experience lies within experience. Attempting to follow a foundation for loving absent of a grounding in experience itself leads to faults. Therein, the authentic love in which we live should be grounded in a phenomenological understanding of authenticity as forwarded by Sartre. After the firm understanding of authenticity has been reached, one must then approach existence with the intentionality of authenticity, as provided by the insight of Michelle Walker. After understanding what is entailed by Sartre's authenticity and the execution of that authenticity, we can apply this to the approach M.C. Dillon forwards while aware of the criticism upon his work.

VI. Conclusion

An authentic approach to loving must first be grounded in one's own authenticity. Authenticity is understood as one acting absent of bad faith, accepting their transcendence and facticity, and not believing one is essentially anything. After understanding how one may, in a manner of speaking, turn inward to implement, understand, and grasp this sense of authenticity, there is then the task of executing this authenticity unto reality. There is a difference between knowledge of a topic and practical application. This practical application comes through intentionality via understanding "the man of goodwill". This man living in authenticity lives while being able to accept his faults and acts not as a tyrant to his own beliefs. He is malleable and seeks the truth rather than that for his own gain. Living as an authentic being while approaching the other is crucial to the foundation of loving authentically. Last, to love authentically, one must pursue an authentic form of love. There are others that one may pursue, such as romantic love and enduring love; however,

that love will result in catastrophe. Authentic love must be grounded in the authentic approach accompanied by the pursuit of one's own transcendence and self-discovery. In totality, one must be authentic in their being, contain within their intentionality upon the other the will of the "man of goodwill" and in the act of pursuing love, pursuing the love that will last, a kind of love spoken to last for eternity whilst not relying on the illusions of endurance and romance. One must be aware when approaching the other not to mistake themselves as the man of goodwill. To accept one as the man of goodwill is to deny one's own transcendence. The actions of the man of goodwill are only authentic as long as one understands that they are nothing in essence and acting in the absence of tyranny through emulation of the man of goodwill.

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