

Essays for studying by Lukas: The Art of Loving by Erich Fromm

And so, the text. True, not all of it, but practically speaking, merely the beginning. A prelude, so to speak, to *The Art of Loving: An enquiry into the nature of love*.

Is love an art? If so, then it requires knowledge and effort. Or it could be that love is a pleasant feeling, the experience of which is accidental – falling like luck across a person's path. This thin volume springs from the first premise, though today most people might undoubtedly be convinced of the latter.

It isn't that people consider love to be unimportant. They crave it: seeking it in countless movies and stories filled with happy and unhappy love stories or listening to ballads and silly songs recounting love's virtues, triumphs, and tragedies. But hardly anyone actually believes that there is any necessity in learning *how* to love. This particular viewpoint is based on several premises, which, individually and cumulatively, tend to contribute to its preservation.

For most people, the problem of love revolves around the desire to be loved, rather than a quest to love others or to know how to love others. The essence of the problem is to feel loved -, to be aroused by a sense of love towards oneself. People take several paths to achieve this end.

The first path, which men are most likely to utilize, is to become successful, wealthy, and rich enough to secure and manipulate their social standing. Another path, this one mostly used by women, is to make oneself attractive by carefully attending to her body, clothes, etc. Other methods of improving one's attractiveness (utilized by both men and women) are: to develop good manners, to become a proficient conversationalist, to be always available to lend a hand, to excel in modesty and humility. Many methods used to attract love are the same ones that people employ to become successful – namely by forming useful friendships and influential connections. For the majority of people in our culture, the ability to arouse love is plainly founded on a combination of likability and sexual attractiveness. The supposition that love is the problem of love's object, or recipient, rather than hinging on the ability of the lover is the second factor underlying the belief that loving requires no training. People think that loving is a simple business. They believe that the difficulty instead lies in finding one's true love. This attitude has grown through the development of our modern society. Importantly, a colossal shift occurred in the twentieth century changing how one chose the object of one's love. During the Victorian period, as in many traditional cultures, love, in most cases, was not a spontaneous, personal experience that would later lead to marriage.