

Missed Encounter and Love

Avi Rybnicki

In *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan discusses the interpretation of the “falsum”¹ and its sometimes productive function, which can even shift discourse.

A colleague asked about the possibility of avoiding a missed encounter, which seems to me, like asking about how to avoid a false interpretation. In my understanding, the missed encounter is the condition for love and desire. Only in nature, in the world of instincts, is there a fitting and true encounter. There, we speak only of satisfying needs.

This fact is attacked and denied in today’s culture, as the capitalist discourse demands the satisfaction of needs and the constant production of new ones (Marx’s surplus value). This replaces love and desire—with all their inherent pain—by *well-being*², which becomes a demand of the superego.

Freud stated that happiness as a state is not part of the *Lebensplan*, the life plan of the human being; one can only hope for moments of happiness. Denial of this leads to growing disparity and guilt in subjects for not fulfilling their “task.” This push for happiness through a carefully curated *well being practice* - without love’s inherent pain - aligns with Freud’s criticism of those who do not choose love objects but claim to love everybody. He says: “[a] love that does not discriminate seems to me to forfeit a part of its own value, by doing an injustice to its object; and secondly, not all men are worthy of love.”³ For Freud, the subject bears responsibility for the fate of his libidinal life and even makes a “forced choice,” that is, one made unconsciously. By this, Freud established psychoanalysis within the ethics of examining and stripping away identifications to open the possibility for something new to arise and criticized institutions of society that seek to regulate love life, such as monogamy and marriage.⁴

¹ Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, ed. J.-A. Miller, trans. R. Grigg, New York: Norton, 2007, p. 134.

² Birgani, S., “Wellbeing as Love”, *NLS Congress blog*, 2025. <https://www.nlscongress2025.amp-nls.org/blogposts/sarahbirganiengels>

³ Freud, S., “Civilization and Its Discontents” (1930), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXI*, London: Hogarth Press, 1961, p. 102.

⁴ Freud, S., “Civilized Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness” (1908), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume IX*, London: Hogarth Press, 1959, p. 195.

This approach stands in contrast to the inflationary use of terms like 'abuse' and 'post-trauma', which takes away the subject's possibility to influence their life and leave them as an eternal victim. Patients may even like this and respond with anger when disturbed by the analyst in this *jouissance*...