

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/393985208>

# On Princess Treatment: A Critical Analysis on the Standards in a Romantic Relationships

**Preprint** · May 2023

DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.24147.49447

---

CITATIONS

0

---

READS

46

**1 author:**



[Khent Bryll Mag-usara Jarales](#)

Mindanao State University – Iligan Institute of Technology

**3** PUBLICATIONS **0** CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

# **On Princess Treatment: A Critical Analysis on the Standards in a Romantic Relationships**

**Khent Bryll M. Jarales**

khentbryll.jarales@g.msuiit.edu.ph

Mindanao State University Iligan Institute of Technology

## **Abstract**

Relationships are at the heart of human life, as Aristotle once said, we are social animals. Among them, romantic relationships occupy a unique place, shaping the way we grow, connect, and understand ourselves. In today's culture, there is a growing fascination with what is often called "Princess Treatment," where one partner gives endlessly while the other receives, surrounded by acts of luxury, attention, affection, and care without the expectation of giving in return. At first glance, it might seem romantic, even admirable. But when giving erases the self, or when receiving breeds dependence, can this truly be something worth celebrating, much less making a standard? This paper examines Princess Treatment in the context of modern dating, questioning whether it should be romanticized or whether it fosters imbalance and detachment from the kind of genuine relationships that allow both people to truly live and grow.

Key Words: Relationship, Princess Treatment, romantic, modern dating, and standards.

## **On Modern Romantic Relationships**

The ancient Greeks, Aristotle among them, spoke of man as a social creature, fated to move within the company of others.<sup>1</sup> To live is to share the world, to enter the public realm, to weave our path into the paths of those around us. Relationships are both a personal and a social choice, an act of freedom through which we decide how we will stand beside others. Even now, with centuries of change behind us, this truth remains unshaken: humanity is, at its core, bound to its own kind. These bonds take many shapes, from the familiar warmth of family, to the easy trust of friendship, to the delicate nature of romantic love. It is the last of these that will occupy our attention here.

Romantic relationships hold a peculiar place in human life. They do not merely provide comfort or companionship; they test and shape us, drawing out depths we might not otherwise know within ourselves.<sup>2</sup> At their best, they are genuine encounters, where two people meet not as commodities to be traded, but as living beings who seek to grow together. Yet as time moves forward, new ideals take root in the soil of intimacy. Some of these ideals deepen love; others, however, erode it, replacing sincerity with expectation. When these expectations harden into unspoken demands, they risk transforming love into a quiet form of servitude, a transaction clothed in the language of affection. One such modern ideal has been given a name: Princess Treatment.

---

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, "*Politics*," Random House (United States of America, 1998), 54.

<sup>2</sup> Mercedes Gomez-Lopez, Carmen Viejo and Rosario Ortega-Ruiz, *Well-Being and Romantic Relationships: A Systematic Review in Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood*, in International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, (July, 2019), 2.

Princess Treatment, or PT, has become a familiar figure in contemporary romance. It can appear in many forms: the granting of wealth, the showering of gifts, the indulgence of every desire. Here, however, I will speak only of its more intimate form, the spoiling of a partner through constant care, relentless admiration, and the ritual of treating her as though she were royalty.<sup>3</sup> To many, this is a fantasy worth cherishing. To others, it is an illusion that hides a more troubling reality.

The critique is not without weight. Some voices warn that when such gestures are performed without sincerity, they become tools of quiet manipulation, creating a bond that is less about love and more about control.<sup>4</sup> Others speak of Princess Treatment Syndrome: a state marked by entitlement and unyielding demands, where affection is no longer given freely but extracted as a due. In such cases, the one who is “treated” ceases to see the other as a person with needs and limits, and begins to see only a servant of her own gratification.<sup>5</sup> This lack of reciprocity hollows out the relationship, leaving only the shell of intimacy. Yet there is another way to see it. Some argue that PT, when rooted in sincerity, can be an act of recognition rather than excess. It can be a way of honoring a woman’s uniqueness, affirming her worth, and showing that she is truly seen.<sup>6</sup> In this reading, the spoiling is not a performance for the sake of an ideal, but a language of appreciation, an acknowledgment of qualities that deserve to be celebrated. Here, Princess Treatment is less about indulgence and more about creating a space where a woman may exist in her most authentic self, free from diminishment

This paper will attempt to walk between these opposing visions. The question is not merely whether PT is good or bad, but rather a query on its nature, if it deserves to be a standard by which we measure love in our time. For, I believe that love is not a game of thrones, but neither is it immune to the trappings of power and expectation. Somewhere between servitude and celebration lies the fragile truth of what it means to care for another without losing sight of their humanity, or our own.

---

<sup>3</sup> Sofia Alherani, *The Princess Treatment: Unveiling Varied Desires*, in Medium.com, (August, 2023), <<https://medium.com/@sofialherani/the-princess-treatment-unveiling-varied-desires-faa18dd6e8e5>>.

<sup>4</sup> Luna Scribe, *The Princess Treatment: Why It’s Popular and Why It’s Hurting Us*, Sdpuo.com, (May, 2023), <<https://www.sdpuo.com/what-is-princess-treatment/>>.

<sup>5</sup> Ifunanya Ibeabuchi, *Princess Treatment Syndrome: An Inch Towards Narcissism*, in Medium.com, (February, 2024), <[https://medium.com/@Solely\\_ify/princess-treatment-syndrome-an-inch-towards-narcissism-5bd787460aed](https://medium.com/@Solely_ify/princess-treatment-syndrome-an-inch-towards-narcissism-5bd787460aed)>.

<sup>6</sup> Rhia Relationship, *Exploring Why Women Delight in the Princess Treatment*, in Medium.com, (December, 2023), <<[https://medium.com/@rhia\\_relationship/exploring-why-women-delight-in-the-princess-treatment-ce44710b765e](https://medium.com/@rhia_relationship/exploring-why-women-delight-in-the-princess-treatment-ce44710b765e)>>.

## Research Problems

In looking closely at the present state of what we call Princess Treatment, I have found traces of it that trouble me, small signs, perhaps invisible to those who accept it unquestioningly, yet persistent enough to demand attention. These traces urged me to search more deeply, to seek a framework that could help me give shape to what I sensed but could not yet fully name. It was in the writings of Erich Fromm (1997) that I found a language for this unease. His ideas on the *mode of having* and the *mode of being* offered a way to expose the inner structure of the problem, to reveal what lies beneath the glitter of the phenomenon. This path of inquiry gave rise to a set of questions, each pressing against the next, each demanding not just an answer but a reckoning:

1. What is Princess Treatment and how is it perceived in the current generation?
2. What is Erich Fromm's mode of being and mode of having?
3. Is Princess Treatment a being or having mode?
  - 3.2 In what way should we view Princess Treatment, should we standardize and romanticize it?
  - 3.3 How does it affect the individuals involved in the relationship and their perception of relationships?

## Philosophical Framework

This paper seeks to offer a philosophical reflection on a modern romantic standard known as Princess Treatment, examined through the lens of Erich Fromm's work *To Have or To Be?* (1997). In this book, Fromm speaks of two fundamental modes of existence: the *mode of having* and the *mode of being*.<sup>7</sup> These modes are not mere abstractions; they are ways of describing how a person relates to the world, to others, and to themselves.

The *having mode* is bound to the act of possession. It is the impulse to own, to control, to hold something, or someone, as a thing that belongs to us. The *being mode* is more elusive, more difficult to grasp, for it concerns aliveness itself. It is not about ownership, but about presence, about truly relating to the world and to others in a way that is open, authentic, and alive. When I consider Princess Treatment through this framework, the connection becomes unavoidable. Relationships, like all human bonds, can be shaped either by *having* or by *being*. Princess Treatment can, depending on its nature, fall into either mode. This is the question that draws me into the discussion: is it an expression of authentic being, or does it mask itself in affection while quietly belonging to the logic of *having*? Fromm's ideas provide the ground on which I will attempt to stand. They offer me the clarity to see whether Princess Treatment, as it is celebrated and romanticized in this generation, deserves the admiration it receives, or whether our view of it has been clouded, leaving us blind to its more troubling aspects.

To answer this, it is first necessary to understand what Fromm meant when he spoke of these two modes of existence. It is to that task that I now turn.

---

<sup>7</sup> Erich Fromm, *To Have or To Be?* (London, New York: Continuum, 1997), 20.

## On the Having Mode of Existence

I have said that the *having mode of existence* is shaped by the urge to possess, to claim as one's own. It is the desire to turn what we see, and even whom we love, into property, something held, controlled, and secured within the boundaries of ownership.<sup>8</sup> This impulse can be directed at anything, whether an object or a person, so long as it can be made "mine." To make this more vivid, I turn to a poem by the English poet Tennyson, which Fromm himself reflects upon. In it, Tennyson describes a moment while walking, when he sees a flower growing from a wall:

"Flower in a crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies,  
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower—but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is."<sup>9</sup>

Here, the act of plucking the flower becomes a perfect image of the *having mode*. Tennyson's curiosity, his wish to understand the flower fully, leads him to take it from its place, to make it his. Yet in the very act of possession, the flower is destroyed. What once lived in the quiet dignity of its own being is reduced to something held in a hand, already fading.<sup>10</sup> From this, Fromm shows that the *having mode* is not only about private property; it is also marked by the absence of a living relationship between the possessor and the possessed. In this mode, what matters is not the life of the thing or person, but the fact of ownership itself. It is a relationship tinged with deadness, where concern for growth, change, or inner reality is set aside. The object is valued for being "mine," not for being alive. And so, in the *having mode*, the world is subdued into possession, stripped of its independent life, until nothing remains but the hollow comfort of ownership.<sup>11</sup>

## On the Being Mode of Existence

From what has been said, I admit that the *mode of being* carries a complexity that cannot be overlooked. In this paper, however, it shall be understood in its most essential sense: as a state bound to aliveness and to an authentic relatedness with the world.<sup>12</sup> In this mode, what matters is not what a person has, but what a person is. It is not concerned with possessions, for it points to something inseparable from the self, something woven into the fabric of one's existence, something that cannot be taken away. Fromm himself expresses this with great clarity:

*"The anxiety and insecurity engendered by the danger of losing what one has are absent in the being mode. If I am who I am and not what I have, nobody can*

---

<sup>8</sup> Fromm, *To Have or To Be?*, 21.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 63-64.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 21.

*deprive me of or threaten my security and my sense of identity. My center is within myself; my capacity for being and for expressing my essential powers is part of my character structure and depends on me.*"<sup>13</sup>

The *being mode* does not measure a life by the weight of its possessions or the extent of its holdings. Instead, it turns inward, to the living core of the self. It is a way of existing that is active, alive, and open, expressed through growth, inner development, the transcendence of one's ego, the ability to give freely without fear of loss. These gestures point toward its nature, though Fromm reminds us that the totality of the *being mode*, its essence, is something that cannot be fully captured in words.<sup>14</sup> In this mode, ownership loses its place as a primary concern. To live in the *being mode* is to dwell not in the anxiety of possession, but in the security of one's own aliveness, a security that cannot be stolen, because it does not exist outside the self.

## **On love**

Fromm, in his discussion of the *modes of having and being*, draws on examples from daily life to show how these two ways of existing reveal themselves. One of the most revealing examples he turns to is love. He suggests that love, in its essence, is something abstract, and for this reason it cannot be possessed.<sup>15</sup> In truth, there is no such thing as "having" love, there is only the act of loving. Loving, in this sense, is not a static possession but a living activity: caring for, knowing, enjoying, responding, affirming one's connection to the world, whether that world takes the form of a person or a thing.<sup>16</sup> It is a movement toward life, sustained by the presence of aliveness itself. This kind of love is a process, self-renewing, self-increasing, never fixed or final, and it reflects the *being mode of existence*.<sup>17</sup> Yet Fromm also describes another kind of love, one shaped by the *having mode*. In this form, love becomes an act of control. It imprisons, confines, and subdues the person or thing that is "loved." It suffocates instead of nurturing, drains instead of giving life. The relationship becomes deadened, not because the feeling has vanished, but because it has been claimed as property.<sup>18</sup> These are the essential differences between love in the *being mode* and love in the *having mode*. They matter here because this paper deals not only with Princess Treatment as a social phenomenon, but with romantic relationships themselves, relationships that inevitably involve the question of what it means to love. I am aware that Fromm's reflections on love extend far beyond this, yet for the purpose of this study, my concern lies with these two aspects: the being and having modes as they take shape in love.

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>15</sup> Fromm, *To Have or To Be?*, 37.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

## Significance of the Study

In observing the state of Princess Treatment in our society, I cannot ignore the stark differences in how it is viewed. The vast majority seem to favor it, and it has become one of the most celebrated romantic standards of our time, romanticized especially among teenagers. Those who move within the world of romantic relationships cannot escape its influence. When Princess Treatment is performed or received, it draws mixed reactions, some praise it as devotion and care, while others question its sincerity and consequences. What unsettles me is the uncertainty in how we perceive it. How can we embrace and celebrate a practice when within it there are signs of dehumanization, alienation, and even a quiet discouragement of personal growth? It is for this reason that I turn to Erich Fromm's *modes of being* and *having*. Through his framework, I hope to reveal how Princess Treatment can be understood, to reconcile the conflicting perceptions surrounding it, and to see whether it is a standard worthy of preservation or one we ought to let go.

This study is not merely an intellectual exercise. It is meant as a call to awaken from the quiet sleep of habit, to examine the standards we uphold in love and intimacy. I wish to confront the possibility that certain social ideals can shape our consciousness in ways that turn relationships into labor, strip us from ourselves, or corrupt our understanding of love. My purpose is to expose what may be hidden beneath the charm of these practices, forces that bend our consciousness toward possession, performance, and commodification. Following the path that Fromm has laid, I seek to remind this generation that even love, something we believe to be pure and untouched, is vulnerable to being reduced to a commodity, exchanged and consumed like any other product in the marketplace of human desires.

## Princess Treatment as an Instance of Codependent Relationship

In considering Princess Treatment, I believe it is necessary, before deciding whether it belongs to the *mode of having* or the *mode of being*, to first clarify its essential nature. Among the many forms a relationship may take, Princess Treatment seems to me closely related to what is known as a codependent relationship. Such a relationship arises when, within a romantic bond, one person continually gives or prioritizes the needs and desires of the other, even to the point of neglecting their own well-being.<sup>19</sup> Codependency is often described as a pairing of two roles: the giver and the receiver.<sup>20</sup> The giver is the one who subordinates their own thoughts, feelings, and needs to those of their partner, while the receiver is the one who accepts these offerings, sometimes consciously taking advantage, at other times simply falling into the role by circumstance.<sup>21</sup>

With this in mind, I propose that Princess Treatment can be seen as a variation of this same dynamic. In Princess Treatment, one partner is expected to treat the other as if they were royalty, to go to extraordinary lengths to indulge them, to spoil them without limit, while the

---

<sup>19</sup> Eleesha Locket, *Your Guide to Codependent Relationship and Recovery*, reviewed by Lori Lawrenz, PsyD in healthline.com, (October, 2022), <<https://www.healthline.com/health/relationships/codependent-relationship>>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

other simply receives.<sup>22</sup> Here too, we find the two roles clearly defined: the giver, who enacts the treatment, and the receiver, who benefits from it. This parallel with codependency forms one of the foundations upon which my analysis will rest.

Before delving deeper, however, it is important to define these roles more precisely within the context of Princess Treatment. In studies of codependency, it is often claimed that women tend to occupy the dependent role, while men tend to hold control.<sup>23</sup> Yet I do not intend to follow this line of thought. For the purposes of this paper, the giver is not necessarily male, nor is the receiver necessarily female. The “princess” in Princess Treatment should not be understood literally as a woman, but rather as any person, regardless of sex or gender identity, who occupies the receiving role. Supporting this view, Sal Raichbach, Psy.D., notes that while women in codependent relationships often engage in people-pleasing behaviors, men are just as capable of doing the same.<sup>24</sup> The question here is not one of gender but of relational dynamics. A man may be the receiver in such a relationship, and in that case he would still be, in the logic of the arrangement, the “princess.” The title refers not to biological sex but to the role itself: the one who is treated, indulged, and elevated in this manner is the “princess,” no matter who they are.

### **The Difference Between Princess Treatment and Mere Spoiling**

When we speak of the giver and the receiver in Princess Treatment, another difficulty arises that must be resolved. If the giver’s role is to spoil and the receiver’s role is to accept, then it might seem that any act of spoiling could be considered Princess Treatment. A person might open the door for their partner, prepare a meal for them, perform small acts of service, and so forth. But this conclusion is mistaken. Spoiling in itself is only spoiling. Princess Treatment, if it is to be called such, must contain the essence of codependency. A simple exchange of kindness between partners does not meet this condition. For example, if one partner spoils the other and is in turn spoiled back, this mutuality removes it from the realm of Princess Treatment, for it no longer rests on the one-sidedness that defines codependency. A codependent relationship, as one study points out, is not capable of being mutually beneficial.<sup>25</sup> Princess Treatment, therefore, is bound to an unbroken structure: one person gives without ceasing, the other receives without giving. The roles are fixed. The giver can never be the princess, and the receiver can never become the giver. The moment these roles blur, Princess Treatment dissolves and becomes something else entirely, mere spoiling, or perhaps simple affection. A study observes, one may take responsibility for a partner without that responsibility being evidence of codependency.<sup>26</sup>

In this light, Princess Treatment appears less as a romantic ideal and more as a pattern, a fragile, almost theatrical arrangement whose meaning collapses the instant the actors deviate from their assigned parts.

---

<sup>22</sup> Alherani, *The Princess Treatment: Unveiling Varied Desires*.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Wright and Katherine Wright, *Measuring Codependents’ Close Relationship: A Preliminary Study*, in *Journal of Substance Abuse*, (1990), 340-341.

<sup>24</sup> Lauren Vinopal, *5 Signs You May Be a Codependent Man*, in *Fatherly.com*, (May, 2018), <<https://www.fatherly.com/health/signs-men-codependent-relationships>>.

<sup>25</sup> Claudia Vlaicu and Felicia Aurica Haidu, *Co-dependency In Intimate Relationship- A Learned Behavior*, in *International Journal of Theology, Philosophy and Science*, (2020), 88.

<sup>26</sup> Wright, P. and Wright, K., *Measuring Codependents’ Close Relationship: A Preliminary Study*, 341.



## Hypothetical Analysis On the Giver and Receiver

As discussed, Princess Treatment rests upon two roles, the giver and the receiver. The receiver is the one who is spoiled, the one treated as a princess. The giver is the one who performs the spoiling, who sustains the image of the princess. This section will consider these roles through the lens of Fromm's distinction between the *being* and *having modes of existence*.

It is often said that Princess Treatment is nothing more than a harmless fantasy. Yet such a view ignores the troubling foundation upon which it stands. In Princess Treatment, the worth of the giver lies not in who they are, but in what they do. The receiver values not the person of the giver, but the services rendered, the acts of spoiling received. The giver's identity becomes inseparable from these acts, as if they were reduced to a tool, an instrument whose purpose is to serve. The receiver, for their part, appears as a passive consumer of these services, embodying the *having mode of existence*, which measures worth by possession and acquisition. Fromm wrote that love is an abstract entity, and that we encounter it in reality only through the act of loving.<sup>27</sup> Yet in Princess Treatment, only the giver performs the act, while the receiver consumes it without reciprocal creation. The result is a relationship without mutual growth, without the living pulse of authentic relatedness. The giver's role demands that they place the receiver above themselves. Their own needs, desires, and selfhood are secondary. It is as if the giver's existence is defined entirely by the needs of another. In such a setting, love ceases to be a meeting of two beings, and becomes a quiet arrangement in which one lives for the other's comfort.

This arrangement, though dressed in the language of romance, reveals an underlying alienation. The giver no longer acts from their own freedom, but from the demands of a role. They may believe they are loving, yet their love is shaped into a fixed pattern, stripped of spontaneity. As Fromm observed, love can become an idol, and the lover, instead of being alive in love, becomes an alienated worshiper of the idol.<sup>28</sup> In Princess Treatment, the giver worships not the receiver as a person, but the role of the princess, serving it faithfully and losing themselves in the process. When one becomes too attached to a role within a codependent relationship, they risk becoming nothing but that role, losing sight of themselves entirely.<sup>29</sup> In Princess Treatment, the giver is confined, unable to step outside the expectation to serve. Their freedom narrows until it fits the boundaries of the role itself. Marx described alienation from one's species-being as the condition in which a person's labor no longer springs from free creative activity, but is performed out of compulsion.<sup>30</sup> The giver's labor of love becomes just such a compulsion, carried out not in freedom, but in obedience to the structure of the relationship. Here, even within the intimate space of love, there is a kind of prison. The giver cannot freely choose themselves, for their role demands that they always choose the receiver. The *having mode* governs this arrangement, for it prizes possession and control over mutual aliveness. As Fromm noted, love in the *having mode* is confining and controlling, where

---

<sup>27</sup> Fromm, *To Have or To Be?*, 37.

<sup>28</sup> Fromm, *To Have or To Be?*, 18.

<sup>29</sup> Ingrid Bacon, Elizabeth Mckay, Frances Reynolds, and Anne McIntyre, *The Lived Experience Of Codependency*, in *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, (August 2018), 761-762.

<sup>30</sup> Roudro Mukhopadhyay, *Karl Marx's Theory of Alienation*, in *Semanticscholar.org*, (June 2020), 4.

self-development cannot take root.<sup>31</sup> Even if the giver assumes the role willingly, they remain bound by it, valued only for the services they provide and denied the freedom to live for themselves. It becomes clear, then, that in Princess Treatment, the giver too inhabits the *having mode of existence*. Both roles are trapped, one in the passivity of consumption, the other in the alienation of endless service.

Another troubling aspect of Princess Treatment is its quiet ability to distort the mind of the receiver. Slowly, almost without notice, the one who is constantly spoiled may begin to turn inward, to see the world only through the mirror of their own comfort. The partner's needs, struggles, and inner life become dim, irrelevant, perhaps even incomprehensible. The giver is no longer seen as a person but as a possession, a living tool whose only purpose is to maintain this comfort. The receiver sees only the end result, the sweet surface of being treated like royalty, and turns away from the cost paid by the giver. The process is ignored, the sacrifice unseen. It is enough that the service is performed, even if it grinds the giver into exhaustion. At times, the corruption runs deeper. There are those who, convinced of their own beauty or charm, come to believe they deserve such treatment by right. The relationship becomes a kind of transaction: the receiver offers their special qualities as currency, and in exchange, they expect the unending services of the giver. What was once human connection becomes an exchange of goods. The self is reduced to a thing with a price, and the partner becomes the laborer who pays it. Such thinking does not remain confined to romance. Once a person begins to see love as a commodity, it is only a matter of time before they view the self and others the same way, as objects to be owned, used, and traded. Yet Princess Treatment does not only corrupt the receiver. The giver, too, may take it up as a weapon. In some cases, a person deliberately performs Princess Treatment to win the affection of someone they desire.

Let us imagine person A notices person B, perhaps person B possesses beauty so striking that person A feels compelled to make it their own. Person A knows that in this age, Princess Treatment holds a certain power, especially among the young. By offering it, they plant the idea in person B's mind: this is love. But here, the act is not love. It is a calculated move to gain ownership, to secure beauty in the same way one might secure a rare possession. This is not always so direct. Sometimes, Princess Treatment becomes a way to keep someone from leaving. A partner may grant it out of fear, believing that without such treatment, the other will slip away. Or it may be demanded outright, with the unspoken threat that its absence will bring punishment, distance, or abandonment. In either case, the relationship ceases to be a place where two people meet in freedom. It becomes an arrangement of control. Because it is popular and widely admired, Princess Treatment can easily serve as a tool for manipulation. It lures the receiver into dependence and binds the giver to a role they cannot escape without risking the relationship itself. Studies on codependent relationships note that the dependent partner will remain, no matter how unhealthy the situation, because moments of crisis are soothed with rewards.<sup>32</sup> This is precisely the trap here: a cycle of need and satisfaction that gives the illusion of love, but in truth confines both partners. There is no growth in such an arrangement, only a mutual imprisonment dressed in the language of romance.

---

<sup>31</sup> Fromm, *To Have or To Be?*, 37.

<sup>32</sup> Beth Le Poire, *Does The Codependent Encourage Substance-dependent Behavior? Paradoxical Injunctions In The Codependent Relationship*, in *The International Journal of the Addictions*, (1992), 1469-1470.

## On Princess Treatment as Women Empowering

Furthermore, if we take the case of a receiver being a woman, I do not deny that in contemporary society many see Princess Treatment as a way of honoring a woman's strength, celebrating her qualities, and affirming her worth.<sup>33</sup> It is said to create a space where women feel seen, understood, and valued.<sup>34</sup> This is an appealing picture, yet if Princess Treatment must serve as the instrument to make value visible, then it quietly suggests something troubling. It implies that a woman's worth in this view is not self-evident but dependent on another's gesture to bring it to light. In such a way of thinking, her intrinsic qualities begin to appear as something separate from her very being, as though they were ornaments that could be displayed or hidden depending on how others treat her. This separation reveals the traces of what Fromm calls the *having mode of existence*. Her worth, her development, her very sense of self, become tethered to an external act, not rooted in the life within her. It is as if value must be handed to her from the outside, rather than arising from her own existence. Here lies the subtle danger: when worth is seen as something that can be granted, it also becomes something that can be taken away. It becomes like any possession, an object that can be owned or discarded. Though the idea of Princess Treatment as a way to make women feel valued carries the glow of affirmation, a closer examination shows that it cannot belong to the *mode of being*. The being mode, as Fromm describes, speaks of a relationship to the world that is alive, authentic, and inseparable from one's inner life.<sup>35</sup> Growth, development, and value are not given from outside but are bound to one's very existence. To depend on Princess Treatment for the visibility of worth is to live in the *having mode*, where one's value becomes a thing rather than a living truth.

## Conclusion

Princess Treatment may appear to be nothing more than an ordinary standard in romantic relationships, yet it reaches far deeper than we often realize. It shapes the way we think, the way we feel, and even the way we measure the worth of others. Our consciousness is never isolated; it is molded by what surrounds us. For that reason alone, Princess Treatment as a cultural norm deserves careful examination. In our society, certain patterns are normalized and romanticized without question, and I believe they must be addressed for the harm they quietly produce. Among them, Princess Treatment stands out as one of the most urgent.

I begin with the conviction that Princess Treatment should be understood as akin to a codependent relationship. It carries the same qualities and the same dangers. In tracing its nature, I find that it aligns not with the *being mode of existence*, as Erich Fromm describes, but with the *having mode*. Fromm speaks of the *being mode* as a state in which relationships are alive, nourishing, and inseparable from the inner life of each person. In contrast, the *having mode* drains this aliveness, reducing relationships to transactions, possessions, or sources of control.

---

<sup>33</sup> Relationship, *Exploring Why Women Delight in the Princess Treatment*.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Fromm, *To Have or To Be?*, 90.

Ideally, our relationships should not harm the other, nor should they make our own value and growth dependent on someone else.

Yet Princess Treatment, when examined closely, mirrors the very opposite of this ideal. It corrupts our awareness, leading us to treat others as objects and to perceive love itself as a matter of exchange. It teaches us to separate a person's qualities from their being, to alienate them from their own worth, to tie development, satisfaction, and dignity to the actions of another. Under this view, worth is no longer something that is bound to one's existence, it becomes something one can possess or lose, like a trinket passed between hands.

For these reasons, I conclude that Princess Treatment is steeped in the *having mode of existence*, affecting both the giver and the receiver. It should not be romanticized; it should be recognized as a subtle but corrosive force that has been normalized in our society. As beings in this world, we carry the responsibility to think critically and to examine the structures that surround us, even those draped in the language of love. The inability to see a problem is already the first symptom of its power over us.

I also acknowledge that this study is not without its limits. My conclusions are drawn from what has been presented here, shaped by the scarcity of existing research and analysis on Princess Treatment. Where the literature was silent, I relied on the nearest possible parallels. Still, the matter is not closed. I remain open to discussion, to perspectives and dimensions that I may have overlooked. In the end, the most important thing is to keep asking, to keep seeing, before we allow the ordinary to quietly decide what kind of lives we live.

## References:

Alherani, Sofia, *The Princess Treatment: Unveiling Varied Desires*, in Medium.com, (August, 2023),  
<<https://medium.com/@sofialherani/the-princess-treatment-unveiling-varied-desires-faa18dd6e8e5>>.

Aristotle. "*Politics*." Random House (United States of America. 1998).

Bacon, Ingrid, Elizabeth McKay, Frances Reynolds, and Anne McIntyre, *The Lived Experience of Codependency: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*, in International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction, (August 2018).

Fromm, Erich, *To Have or To Be?* (London, New York: Continuum, 1997)

Gomez-Lopez, Mercedes, Carmen Viejo and Rosario Ortega-Ruiz, *Well-Being and Romantic Relationships: A Systematic Review in Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood*, in International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, (July, 2019).

Ibeabuchi, Ifunanya, *Princess Treatment Syndrome: An Inch Towards Narcissism*, in Medium.com, (February, 2024),

<[https://medium.com/@Solely\\_ify/princess-treatment-syndrome-an-inch-towards-narcissism-5bd787460aed](https://medium.com/@Solely_ify/princess-treatment-syndrome-an-inch-towards-narcissism-5bd787460aed)>.

Le Poire, Beth, *Does The Codependent Encourage Substance-dependent Behavior? Paradoxical Injunctions In The Codependent Relationship*, in *The International Journal of the Addictions*, (1992), <<http://dx.doi.org/10.3109/10826089209047363>>.

Locket, Eleesha, *Your Guide to Codependent Relationship and Recovery*, reviewed by Lori Lawrenz, PsyD in *healthline.com*, (October, 2022), <<https://www.healthline.com/health/relationships/codependent-relationship>>.

Mukhopadhyay, Roudro, *Karl Marx's Theory of Alienation*, in *Semanticscholar.org*, (June 2020), <<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3843057>>.

Relationship, Rhia, *Exploring Why Women Delight in the Princess Treatment*, in *Medium.com*, (December, 2023), <[https://medium.com/@rhia\\_relationship/exploring-why-women-delight-in-the-princess-treatment-ce44710b765e](https://medium.com/@rhia_relationship/exploring-why-women-delight-in-the-princess-treatment-ce44710b765e)>.

Scribe, Luna, *The Princess Treatment: Why It's Popular and Why It's Hurting Us*, in *Medium.com*, (May, 2023), <<https://www.sdpuo.com/what-is-princess-treatment/>>.

Vinopal, Lauren, *5 Signs You May Be a Codependent Man*, in *Fatherly.com*, (May, 2018), <<https://www.fatherly.com/health/signs-men-codependent-relationships>>.

Vlaicu, Claudia and Haidu, Felicia Auric, *Co-dependency In Intimate Relationship- A Learned Behavior*, in *International Journal of Theology, Philosophy and Science*, (2020), <<https://doi.org/10.26520/ijtps.2020.4.6.82-89>>.

Wright, Paul and Katherine Wright, *Measuring Codependents' Close Relationship: A Preliminary Study*, in *Journal of Substance Abuse*, (1990), <[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0899-3289\(10\)80005-7](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0899-3289(10)80005-7)>.