From Harmony to eHarmony: Charles Fourier, Social Science, and the Management of Love

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Abstract: This essay examines techniques of amorous matching in the work of the "utopian socialist" Charles Fourier (1772–1837), recovering the practices and the institutions he proposed for the management of love, as well as his political arguments for their centrality in a perfected society. In doing so, it argues more broadly for the need to position the management of love at the origin of early social science. Much as early defenses of capitalism had at their core a discourse of the passions, so too was Fourier's socialism invested in exploring how problems of political economy were those of passional economy. To rectify the latter, Fourier attempted to articulate both a mathematical system—a *calcul des passions*—and a centralized information system for the gathering and sorting of personal data. The recovery of his vision thus has the potential to inform critically a radical politics of algorithmic matching through Big Data—the province today not of utopian socialism but of online dating apps.

"In Harmony . . . pleasures becom[e] a matter of the state and special object of social politics": so declared Charles Fourier (1772–1837) in the first chapter of *Le nouveau monde amoureux*, left incomplete upon his death. "Harmony" was the name given by Fourier to the ideal world his philosophy would bring about. His self-proclaimed task had been to construct "Universal Harmony" on "the ruins of uncertain sciences," rectifying the errors of political economy and moral philosophy heretofore.[1] Concerning pleasures, too, Fourier proved unequivocal. It was "love that occupie[d] first place" and love that would serve as the "lantern" illuminating a way through the

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[1] Charles Fourier, *Le nouveau monde amoureux*, ed. Simone Debout (Dijon: Presses du Réel, 2013) (hereafter cited as **Fourier, NMA**), p. 29; and Fourier, *Théorie des quatre mouvements*, in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Anthropos, 1966), Vol. 1, p. 191.

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"labyrinth of passions," becoming the "ideal center" for "a new science that w[ould] elevate 800 million humans to opulence, truth, freedom, and universal harmony."[2]

Fourier's championing of amorous pleasure, combined with a dreamlike prose couched in myth and allegory, has contributed to his image as a uniquely playful social theorist, a conjurer of fantastic new worlds exuberant and erotic. Early in the twentieth century, Walter Benjamin had already thought as much, looking to Fourier in the *Arcades Project* as an example of how industrial capitalism had generated its own forms of enchantment. A later generation in the 1960s amplified and popularized this view. Soixante-huitards, eager for precedents to a radical doctrine of free love, elevated Fourier to the position of a high "priest of paneroticism"—a precursor not just to Freud but to a Freudian Marxism attuned to the libidinal dimensions of political economy.[3] Seizing as it did on unpublished manuscripts such as *Le nouveau monde amoureux*, their interpretation remains dominant today.

At the same time, we cannot ignore that beneath Fourier's playfulness lay profoundly "managerial" undertones.[4] It was no accident that his ideas, as well as those of Henri de Saint-Simon, found their greatest support first among engineering-minded elites at the École Polytechnique. Friedrich Engels, who otherwise saw in Fourier's generation of "utopian socialists" the germs of a genuine social science, chastised these thinkers for failing to recognize the agency of the proletariat, focusing instead on a technocratic stratum.[5] Part and parcel of this technocratic leaning was a profound determinism in their approach, convinced as they were that there existed an orderly map for the total organization of society. Fourier himself, in constructing a new amorous world, believed his task "a continuation of the Newtonian calculus of attraction," one that "applied to the passional or social world Newton's theory on the material equilibrium of the universe." Sympathetic bonds between persons were to be studied "as a chapter of mathematics" and folded into a wider set of procedures and institutions for the management of love as a "matter of the state, and object of social politics."[6]

My goal in this essay is to examine why and how love became a focal site of scientific and technological intervention in Fourier's project for a radical socialist utopia. By doing so, I suggest more broadly the need to recover the management of love as a centrally constitutive component in the formation of the modern social sciences. Previously neglected in accounts of the "sociological tradition," utopian socialism has more recently begun to attract attention "as a kind of prehistory of our contemporary social sciences."[7] "*Science sociale*" was indeed the term vigorously championed by Fourier, his disciples in turn insisting that their master alone had

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[2] Fourier, *NMA*, pp. 5, 29.

[3] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, Belknap, 1999), pp. 3–17; Jonathan Beecher, *Charles Fourier: The Visionary and His World* (Berkeley: Univ. California Press, 1986), p. 5; and Roger Dadoun, *L'érotisme* (Paris: Presses Univ. France, 2003), p. 108. The link to Freud began with Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (1955; Boston: Beacon, 1974), pp. 217–218.

[4] Terrell Carver, "Marx and Marxism," in *The Cambridge History of Science*, Vol. 7: *The Modern Social Sciences*, ed. Theodore M. Porter and Dorothy Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008), pp. 183–202, on p. 186; and Antoine Picon, "Utopian Socialism and Social Science," *ibid.*, pp. 71–82, on p. 76.

[5] Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring* (1877), in *Marx-Engels-Werke*, Vol. 20, ed. Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus (Berlin: Dietz, 1975), pp. 242–243; and Engels, *Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft* (1880), *ibid.*, Vol. 19, p. 191. Discussion of "critical-utopian socialism" had already appeared briefly in the *Communist Manifesto*: Karl Marx and Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), pp. 497–499.

[6] Charles Fourier, *Théorie de l'unité universelle: Premier volume*, in *Oeuvres complètes* (cit. n. 1), Vol. 2, p. 37; and Fourier, "Système des sympathies et antipathies radicales en simple et en composé," in *Oeuvres complètes*, Vol. 11, p. 29.

[7] Picon, "Utopian Socialism and Social Science" (cit. n. 4), p. 82. For histories of the social sciences that either wholly ignore or marginalize utopian socialism see Johan Heilbron, *The Rise of Social Theory*, trans. Sheila Gogol (Minneapolis: Univ. Minnesota Press, 1995); Donald N. Levine, *Visions of the Sociological Tradition* (Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press, 1995); and Roger Smith, *The Fontana History of the Human Sciences* (London: Fontana, 1997).

discovered the principles of a true "social science."[8] Émile Durkheim, too, acknowledged Fourier's generation as integral to the genealogy of the sociological discipline.[9] Yet, ironically, that Durkheimian recognition simultaneously erased a discourse on the passions and their management, instead stressing theories of political economy. By the end of the nineteenth century, love, once at the core of *science sociale*, had been displaced to the epiphenomenal margins of a field dedicated foremost to the organization of labor.

I begin by exploring the movement of Fourier's work from questions of agricultural and industrial organization to the organization of passionate attractions. Here, I show the grounds for Fourier's belief that no restructuring of political economy could be successful without techniques that could identify matches—first the matching of passions to forms of work and then increasingly, in his later work, the matching of amorous partners. From this, I move into a closer examination of the specific practices and institutions through which Fourier hoped to produce successful matching, including a mathematical modeling of attraction administered by centralized information-gathering apparatuses. I conclude by drawing out the potential implications of Fourier's ideas for rethinking the history of the social sciences in the present day, when technocratic discourses of matching have acquired prominence, but in a manner shorn of the political imperatives behind Fourier's vision.

FROM POLITICAL ECONOMY TO PASSIONAL ECONOMY

"A picturesque crank," an "inspired lunatic who lived in a completely self-contained mental universe"—these are some of the more generous labels applied to Charles Fourier, who greeted readers of his first book, the *Theory of the Four Movements and the General Destinies* (1808), by announcing a discovery "more important than all the scientific works accomplished since the existence of humankind."[10] In contrast to philosophers and savants who had to date written only in ways that legitimated existing "civilization," the new social science was to be both normatively providential and anticipatory, outlining a divine order of nature not yet manifested in the present in order to bring it into being. As Fourier's use of the term "general destinies" signaled, social science would seek to discern the intended "destiny" of society—a destiny from which civilization had strayed and that was signaled by the term "Harmony."

The key to unlocking "Harmony" lay in detailed attention to laws of social attraction that generated associations. Enlightenment thinkers concerned with liberal political economy had sought to tame the unruly and dangerous passions through the promotion of associations guided by the interests, the latter holding the former in check.[11] Against restrictive checks and balances, Fourier argued that the passions appeared unruly and dangerous only because society had failed to recognize their underlying order. Newtonianism here provided a guiding metaphor. Just as gravitation was the attractive force ordering the material world, so too was there an ordered social world governed by the attractive forces of the passions. Civilization's misapprehension of these laws of attraction had driven it to see the passions as a target of restraint. Were society reorganized to allow passionate attraction to function as intended, associations devoid of conflict would naturally emerge.

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[8] Pierre Mercklé, "La 'science sociale' de Charles Fourier," *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences Humaines*, 2006, *15*:69–88. On the role of Fourierists in founding the American Social Science Association see Carl J. Guarneri, *The Utopian Alternative: Fourierism in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991), pp. 384–406.

[9] Émile Durkheim, *Le Socialisme; sa définition, ses débuts; la doctrine saint-simonienne* (Paris: Presses Univ. France, 1992); and Picon, "Utopian Socialism and Social Science" (cit. n. 4), p. 71.

[10] Beecher, *Charles Fourier* (cit. n. 3), p. 5; and Fourier, *Théorie des quatre mouvements* (cit. n. 1), p. xxxvi.

[11] Charles Fourier, "Prologue sur les travers du monde savant," in *Oeuvres complètes* (cit. n. 1), Vol. 11, p. 8; and Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977).

To model these laws of attraction, Fourier constructed an idiosyncratic system premised on twelve fundamental passions. Novel within this system were the three "distributive" passions—what he labeled the cabalist, the composite, and the butterfly. The remaining nine fundamental passions corresponded to basic sensual desires and relational archetypes: passions for sight, touch, taste, smell, and hearing; passions of personal ambition, family, friendship, and love. Fourier's three distributive passions, however, provided for a more flexible account of combination and variance. Cabalists sought out that which was identical, like attracting like. Composites favored contrasts, attracted to opposites. Finally, butterflies alternated between cabalist and composite dispositions, attracted at one moment to the identical and at the next moment to the contrastive.[12]

The *Theory of the Four Movements* applied this model to the reorganization of agricultural and industrial associations, arguing for the redistribution of labor according to passionate attractions and the pattern of their fluctuations. Far from industrial capitalism's specialized division of labor, Fourier's was a doctrine of generalist diversity: the same individual might serve as the manager of a factory in the morning, only to work on the factory floor that very afternoon. Appearing simultaneously in Lyon and Leipzig in 1808, the book met with dismal commercial failure; Fourier retired to the countryside for the next decade, based primarily in Belley. There he claimed to be at work on an eight-volume *grand traité* that would account for the laws of attraction not only in labor but across society as a whole.[13]

Once identified and allowed to thrive, these laws of attraction would of their own accord dissolve class antagonisms produced by capitalist exploitation. As expounded in *Le nouveau monde industriel* (1829), labor organized according to true passions would yield a bounty of economic production unknown to existing civilization, guaranteeing all members of the community a "social minimum" well above the "need for subsistence." But importantly, also, Harmony would have to satisfy an "amorous minimum" (*un minimum amoureux*). Love, the most powerful of the passions, and unique in its combination of both material and spiritual bases, was for Fourier a necessity in life equal to food. Agronomy had come into being as a science to multiply raw resources; political economy as a science was meant to ensure manufacture and distribution. These fields had experienced early development, for "lawmakers in Civilization [were] not unaware that the sense of taste, the need for subsistence, is the compass of the people; that if living beings lack subsistence, people and soldiers rise up and overthrow the government."[14] A deficit of love, however, manifested itself "surreptitiously" within mental life, rather than in visible outward disturbances such as bread riots. As a result, no effort had been expended on constructing sciences that would multiply amorous relations and ensure love's just distribution. It was precisely this lacuna that Fourier proposed to fill by composing *Le nouveau monde amoureux* as a companion volume to *Le nouveau monde industriel*.

Fourier's "amorous minimum" began with the satisfaction of physical needs—in particular, the "need for sexual pleasure" (*le besoin de jouissance sexuelle*). This entailed the abolition of marriage and taboos surrounding extramarital sex, particularly for women, who, in Fourier's words, were enjoined to "suffer and die rather than [be] accord[ed] satisfaction" of their sexual appetites. The abolition of marriage went hand in hand with the promotion of multiple encounters that would allow persons to discover and awaken their true erotic desires. Famously, Fourier documented how his own views toward homosexuality, which he had been conditioned to hold in disgust, changed upon his opportunity to observe it in practice.[15]

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[12] Beecher, *Charles Fourier* (cit. n. 3), pp. 226–229.

[13] *Ibid*., pp. 249–250; and Simone Debout, "Le destin exceptionnel d'un manuscrit," in Fourier, *NMA*, pp. xix–civ, on pp. xxiv–xxv.

[14] Beecher, *Charles Fourier*, p. 248; and Fourier, *NMA*, pp. 4–7, 376–379, 377.

[15] Fourier, *NMA*, p. 375; Debout, "Le destin exceptionnel d'un manuscrit" (cit. n. 13), pp. l, lvii; and Fourier, *NMA*, pp. 176–177, 203–205.

Yet liberation from marriage and family was in and of itself not enough: equally pernicious was an allegedly free market for the pursuit of amorous passions that Fourier saw emerging around him—one promoting "false competition" rather than guaranteeing equal access and distribution. An especially worrisome outcome of this free market was a "general scission" in society, producing a class of the sexually dispossessed. Among others, Fourier placed emphasis on elderly women, the disabled "accidentally rejected by nature," and those whose sexual preferences were marginalized, with homosexuals serving as his frequent example. Amorous relations in civilization, ruled either by domesticity or by market-driven competition, catered to young, able-bodied heterosexuals. But other persons, too, had a need for partners. Fourier's Harmony would create an amorous abundance obviating competition, conflict, and marginalization. Taking the world's population into account, there should be a potential match for everyone.[16]

It was in this context that Fourier began elaborating a "calculus of the passions" (*calcul des passions*). The calculus of the passions was "the art of discovering, in all countries, even in a place that one enters for the first time in one's life, all the persons with whom one is in sympathy, and of surrounding oneself with these people instantaneously and constantly." This stood in sharp contrast to the search for companionship, arduous and protracted, within existing civilization: the "civilized . . . in arriving in a city, sometimes spend several whole years there before discovering in love, or in friendship, or in various passions, their sympathetic partners with whom it may be suitable to acquaint themselves at once." Perfecting this calculus of the passions was therefore an essential task for Harmony, equipping members with the means to "recognize at once that it was with such and such person that it was suitable to acquaint oneself."[17]

MECHANISMS OF MATCHING

Love in Fourier's socialist utopia was thus not the wanton liberation of desire, but a practice governed in its own right by techniques of calculation. Here, he echoed less Newton than Kepler in his search for an underlying mathematical harmony. Invoking the figure of the world as a *clavier passionnel*, Fourier suggested that society comprised a succession of "series," the ideal series containing a range of twelve values—the twelve notes of the chromatic scale.[18] Successful matching was in this sense akin to a giant musical composition, wherein persons were brought together according to their different physical characteristics and sensibilities to form the right harmonic intervals.

Fourier himself never completed a full account of the calculative techniques behind this system, but fragments from his journals provide clues. Consider the basic example offered in Figure 1. Suppose, Fourier tells us, that we have identified a set of persons with strong "composite" passion—a love of contrasts. Contrastive preference might apply to a wide variety of characteristics, but, for simplicity, Fourier demonstrates using three: sex, height, and humor. Women will match with men; the short with the tall; the cheerful (*enjoué*) and good humored with the serious and melancholic. Based on this knowledge, readers are instructed to do the following. First, identify the height of the tallest and shortest (in inches) among both women and men. Then do the same with the most cheerful and most serious (the unit is not specified, but some system of measurement is presumed). Next, on separate lines for men and women, write out the intermediate values between

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[16] Fourier, "Système des sympathies et antipathies" (cit. n. 6), p. 20; and Fourier, *NMA*, pp. 69, 94, 177, 329–335, 185.

[17] Fourier, "Système des sympathies et antipathies," p. 25.

[18] On Fourier's relation to Kepler and Pythagoras see Claude Morilhat, *Charles Fourier, imaginaire et critique sociale* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1991), pp. 28–29. On the *clavier* metaphor see Beecher, *Charles Fourier* (cit. n. 3), pp. 137–138; and Loïc Rignol, "Épistémologie des théories de la science sociale: Association et Communauté dans l'Organicisme du premier XIXe siècle," *Cahiers Charles Fourier*, 2004, *15*:53–84. On the significance of the series see John Tresch, "The Order of the Prophets: Series in Early French Social Science and Socialism," *History of Science*, 2010, *48*:315–342.

	Gamme divergente.								Foyer.			Gamme convergente							
Humeur.	57	57 ½	58 ½	59	59 ½	60 ½	61	61 ½	62 ½	— 63 —		63 ½	64 ½	65	65 ½	66 ½	67	67 ½	Femmes.
Taille.		56	57	58	59	60	61	62	— 63 —		64	65	66	67	68	69	70		Hommes.
		x	Y	A	B	C	D	E	— F —		G	H	I	J	L	Z	1		
Taille.		65	64	63	62	61	60	59	— 58 —		57	56	55	54	53	52	51		Femmes.
Humeur.	64	63 ½	62 ½	62	61 ½	60 ½	60	59 ½	58 ½	— 58 —		57 ½	56 ½	56	55 ½	54 ½	54	53 ½	Hommes.

Figure 1. Example of a diagram for calculating "simple" sympathies among women and men of composite passion, according to sex, humor, and height. From Charles Fourier, "Système des sympathies et antipathies radicales en simple et en composé," in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Anthropos, 1966), Vol. 11, p. 38. Published with kind permission of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

these ranges, dividing into equal steps, and proceeding in the opposite direction by gender. As seen in Figure 1, from left to right, "humor" increases for women but decreases for men; height increases for men but decreases for women.

Written down and thus organized, series of twelve may now be formed. In Figure 1, **Y** marks the beginning of one series of twelve, ending with **L**; **Z** marks the beginning of a new series; **F** is the center of the **Y–L** series, splitting it into two "wings" (*ailes*). This established the basic framework of matching: women and men whose measurements aligned as closely as possible to any one of twelve positions within the **Y–L** series might be paired (*conjugué*). Not all pairings, however, were equal. Above all, the fourth (**C**) and tenth (**I**) positions in the series produced the strongest attraction.

Why was this? Enter "harmonic contrasts." Returning to both the metaphor of the piano and that of celestial orbits, Fourier proposed that just as the "revolution of the stars" displayed a regular wavelike periodicity, increasing and decreasing distance from their foci, so too did the strength of attraction across a series vary in the form of a wave. Starting at position **Y**, attraction grew as one approached position **C**, thereafter waning as one reached position **F**. From **F**, the cycle started again, reaching another peak at **I**, then decreasing until **L**. Indeed, if one juxtaposes the twelve elements of the female and male rows with the twelve tones of the chromatic scale, ascending for one row and descending for another, each position can be seen as corresponding to different harmonic intervals. The intervals formed by the fourth (**C**) and tenth (**I**) positions of the series are both perfect fourths—C/F and F#/B, respectively. The perfect fourth occupied a peculiar position in theories of harmony: depending on context, it could be treated as a "perfect consonance" or a dissonance.[19] This internal duality to the perfect fourth, simultaneously consonant and dissonant, generated the greatest attractive intensity for those who desired oppositional contrast.

An answer to how this calculus of the passions should play out in more technical detail with additional variables was never laid out in Fourier's writings. Conceding that tables such as that

[19] Fourier, "Système des sympathies et antipathies" (cit. n. 6), pp. 42, 27, 39–45; William Drabkin, "Fourth," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com (accessed 2 Mar. 2021); and Julian Rushton, "Perfect Consonance," *ibid.*

shown in Figure 1 would need to be "modified thousands of ways in practice" to account for moral qualities and body shapes, among other factors, he analogized his own work to that of the "first sailors who discovered a portion of America . . . unable to draw up a well-ordered map, much less reason over the interior of the country." Moreover, evidence suggests that Fourier understood his calculus of the passions as approximative. For true discernment of all passional nuances, one required a "perfect knowledge of the human heart," in the absence of which numerical tables would have to suffice.[20]

Instead of furthering the calculus of the passions, the *Nouvelle monde amoureux* delved at length into how it might be socially instituted. Near the center of each community stood a site dubbed by Fourier the "Exchange" (*La Bourse*)—a site "much more animated and intriguing than [the exchanges] of London or Amsterdam." It was to the exchange that members of the community went periodically "to arrange [their] programs, whether for work or pleasure, for the following days." This process was administered by a director or directrice and twenty-four "negotiators" (*négociateurs*), equally split among males and females. Annexed to the Exchange were the other information organs of the Phalanx: a mail room for incoming and outgoing correspondence, a newsroom for processing dispatches and drafting bulletins for distribution, a stable for post horses and messenger dogs, and a welcome center for visitors.[21]

As should be clear, matching was a problem extending well beyond amorous relations: in all functions of society, people had to be matched—to the right roles and right types of labor, to the right leisure activities. But *amour* took pride of place. The Exchange was therefore also the site for what Fourier dubbed the "court of love" (*cour d'amour*). In addition to councils tasked with planning festivals and orgies, the court of love employed a group of "confessors"; like Saint-Simon, Fourier had simultaneously inherited and subverted a vocabulary of religious titles to denote a managerial class that would maximize amorous pleasure rather than constrain it as sin.[22] Confessors were drawn from among those the community deemed especially psychologically perceptive at "discerning the favorable conjunctures that would give birth to affinity, and sorting out in a crowd of one hundred pairs assembled at random the ones which [had] the proper degree of suitability for sympathy to erupt." Fourier noted that these confessors, "civil servant[s] of the highest esteem in Harmony," would likely be those aged sixty years or older and more often than not female.[23] To these confessors fell the duty of administering *examens de conscience* for each member of the community, which entailed a written statement as well as an oral interview. From the written statement and interview, the confessor would seek to discern the true passional profile, along with associated amorous proclivities, of the person in question. This information was recorded on a file card. Each evening, the court of love would gather for two or three hours to review these file cards and assign to each individual a list of six persons in the community with whom he or she stood in sympathy. After this, activities were organized during which individuals could meet their matches, deciding if and with whom they wished to consummate an amorous relation.[24]

Copies of these file cards were also given to all individuals to carry with them, and Fourier dedicated a section of *Nouvelle monde amoureux* to detailing how such a practice would enable matching for strangers in a strange land. Travelers arriving in a foreign community could submit

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[20] Fourier, "Système des sympathies et antipathies," pp. 36, 56–57, 46.

[21] Charles Fourier, "Formation d'une phalange d'attraction," in *Oeuvres complètes* (cit. n. 1), Vol. 10, pp. 191–192; and Beecher, *Charles Fourier* (cit. n. 3), p. 243.

[22] Frederick Neuhouser, "Conceptions of Society in Nineteenth-Century Social Thought," in *Cambridge History of Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century (1790–1870)*, ed. Allen W. Wood and Songsuk Susan Hahn (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2012), pp. 651–675, esp. p. 671; and Picon, "Utopian Socialism and Social Science" (cit. n. 4), pp. 71–72, 77.

[23] Fourier, "Système des sympathies et antipathies" (cit. n. 6), pp. 21, 24, 28.

[24] Fourier, *NMA*, pp. 180–188; and Fourier, "Système des sympathies et antipathies," pp. 25–27.

their amorous profiles to the confessors of that new community and submit themselves, too, to another *examen de conscience* by a new set of confessors. The travelers would then be treated to a banquet, while the confessors convened to "go through and classify the confessions and determine for each . . . a list of six sympathetic persons." Concluding this "distributive work" (*travail distributif*) of "sympathetic matching" (*assortiment sympathique*), the potential matches and the travelers would assemble in the court of love to be presented to one another. In this way, newcomers might quickly find company. Even more suggestively, Fourier indicated that such a practice could be applied to hostile forces at one's gates: enemies were to be greeted by the open arms of their sympathetic matches rather than by armed forces.[25]

SOCIAL SCIENCE AND THE MANAGEMENT OF LOVE

Although the 1960s rediscoverers of Fourier were wont to chastise nineteenth-century Fourierists for censorious prudery, a more precise description might be "chauvinistically selective and revisionist." *Nouvelle monde amoureux* was judged unfit for publication by Fourier's disciples, but politically active socialists such as Victor Hennequin (1816–1854) were attuned to elements of Fourier's proposals regarding love. Sympathetic matching, in particular, was seen by them as a necessary step ahead of the *entremetteuses* who populated existing society. For these matchmakers and their "matrimonial ledgers," matching was a matter of social status and wealth: the dowry of a woman; the capital of a man. Fourierist matching, in contrast, explicitly rejected social status. An emperor, in Fourier's words, might possess the same sympathetic profile as a peasant.[26]

Other facets of Fourier's theories on love were, however, deliberately obscured or transformed. Fourier's positive valuation of homosexuality was written out of accounts by his followers. Meanwhile, his view that elderly women and the disabled had been maligned by civilization as objects unworthy of erotic desire disappeared, replaced by encouragements to the heterosexual coupling of young women with elderly men. Alongside these tendencies came a view that problems of political economy were of more essential concern than those of the passional economy. For Fourier, the two had been equally fundamental components of his general theory of attraction: Harmony was certainly about "being led to work by pleasure," as one part of his larger aim "to join together many pleasures of the body and the soul into a connection of which the civilized are incapable."[27] In contrast, Fourierists after Fourier would posit the proper organization of labor as a precondition for any reorganization of amorous relations, postponing consideration of love for the distant future.[28]

In a similar fashion, the "problem of order" at the root of modern sociology—the problem of how individuals cohere in a regular entity known as "society" and how those social ties are strengthened or weakened—came in the decades after Fourier to emphasize political economy and the state, rendering the seemingly "private" passions at most a secondary consideration.[29] For liberal capitalism, these passions were to be managed by the market's coordination of interests. For Marx, they were the outcome of relations of production, much as for early Durkheim they emerged from the division of labor. Rounding out the classical triumvirate, Max Weber saw order in a typology of legitimate political authority.

To urge a reconsideration of Fourier's theories of amorous matching is not uncritically to champion his ideas, many of which, once their surfaces are scratched, reveal themselves as deeply problematic. Equating sex with subsistence, Fourier came close at times to excusing rape in existing

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[25] Fourier, *NMA*, pp. 180, 135.

[26] Victor Hennequin, *Les amours au phalanstère* (Paris: Libraire Phalanstérienne, 1849), pp. 38–40; and Fourier, *NMA*, p. 228.

[27] Hennequin, *Les amours au phalanstère*, pp. 40–42, 50–51; Fourier, *NMA*, p. 177; and Charles Fourier, *Théorie de l'unité universelle: Troisième volume*, in *Oeuvres complètes* (cit. n. 1), Vol. 4, pp. 442, 445.

[28] Hennequin, *Les amours au phalanstère*, p. 11.

[29] Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1937), pp. 89–102.

civilization. The rapist, according to Fourier, "acts by need," for "the need of this kind in men and women can be pushed until the point of urgent necessity just like the need for food." Granted, it was his belief that Harmony would eliminate this pressure—and thereby eliminate rape. Pointing this out, however, only defers the dilemma. Insofar as individuals could be modeled by their characteristics and matched in series, agentive subjects did not exist.[30] Harmony had no room for any theory of consent—only for destiny, as established by the calculus of passions.

Nevertheless, there are ways in which recovering Fourier's Exchange, confessors, and passional profiles seems timely.[31] The technocratic management of our amorous passions is alive and well today, albeit in perversely privatized form—not as "a matter of the state and special object of social politics," as Fourier would have wished, but the domain of corporations, proprietary algorithms, and Big Data mining. Online dating, too, claims for itself status as a social science. As the introduction to this Focus section discusses, the tripartite organization of Christian Rudder's 2014 *Dataclysm* implicitly expresses the book's status as a sociological treatise: OkCupid data explains "what brings us together," "what pulls us apart," and "what makes us who we are."[32] But unlike Fourier's socialist vision of amorous plenty, dating apps have notoriously exacerbated inequalities of class, gender, and race, entrenching Fourier's fears that some would be sexually dispossessed. That same feeling of dispossession has formed the basis of a virulent discourse of masculinity, most notably in the incel movement.[33]

New though some of these developments may seem, their emergence is perhaps in part the result of an obliviousness within social theory toward its own constitutive history. While we have no shortage today of sociological scholarship that takes amorous attraction in its physical and emotional dimensions as an object of investigation, these works form a subfield of specialization—a sociology of love, a sociology of the emotions.[34] Yet the management and organization of love was once deemed an essential problem of an emerging social science wedded to socialism. Devising reliable techniques to solve love's puzzle was an integral precondition for the radical imagination of a new world. Justice might be found in a better political economy—one that featured the production of material goods without exploitation and their distribution without inequality. That justice, however, would be incomplete unless complemented by a well-ordered passional economy guaranteeing equal satisfaction of the amorous needs of all. To put it bluntly: socialist utopia once promised more love and better sex. Are there social techniques of management that would allow amorous relations to be multiplied without exploitation—without the marginalization of certain genders, bodies, ages, sexual orientations, and sexual preferences? Can a calculus of the passions allow all to find their true match or matches? It is these questions and their stakes, I suggest, that must be reclaimed in our accounts of the emergence of the modern social sciences.

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[30] Fourier, *NMA*, p. 376. On the lack of "individuals" in early utopian socialism see Picon, "Utopian Socialism and Social Science" (cit. n. 4), pp. 79–80.

[31] For an early foray into the link between Fourier and online dating see Joan Roelofs, "Fourier and Computer Dating," *Telos*, 1985, no. 65, pp. 127–136; on computerized dating and its appropriation by male commercial interests see Mar Hicks, "The Mother of All Swipes," *Logic*, 2017, 2, https://logicmag.io/sex/the-mother-of-all-swipes/ (accessed 23 Mar. 2021).

[32] Christian Rudder, *Dataclysm: Who We Are (When We Think No One's Looking)* (New York: Crown, 2014), pp. 10–11.

[33] Danielle Broadway, "How Virtual Dates Are Making It Easy to Fetishize Black Women behind Closed Doors," *Cosmopolitan*, 23 July 2020, https://www.cosmopolitan.com/sex-love/a33407409/virtual-dates-make-it-easy-to-fetishize-black-women/; Olivia Petter, "Racism Is Rife on Dating Apps," *Independent*, 24 Aug. 2018, https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/love-sex/dating-apps-racism-tinder-bumble-grindr-online-dating-a8504996.html; and Amia Srinivasan, "Does Anyone Have the Right to Sex?" *London Review of Books*, 2018, *40*(6), https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v40/n06/amia-srinivasan/does-anyone-have-the-right-to-sex.

[34] See, e.g., Fay Bound Alberti, *A Biography of Loneliness: The History of an Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2019); Eva Illouz, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (Berkeley: Univ. California Press, 1997); and Viviana Zelizer, *The Purchase of Intimacy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 2005).