



The Metaphysics of
Marriage

A Dialectical Approach



PETER T. MASTROIANNI



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By Peter T. Mastroianni

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the love of my life, my wife,

Kathryn Mary Mastroianni.

About This Edition

This book explores the profound questions of moral agency, self-conception, and human connection, *The Metaphysics of Marriage* offers a compelling dialectical journey from egoism through altruism to intersubjectivity.

This edition presents the complete philosophical argument in an accessible format, examining how we might escape both the isolation of pure self-interest and the dissolution threatened by objective morality—finding instead authentic selfhood through committed relationships.



Part One:

The Rationality of Egoism

Chapter 1:

The Challenge of the Egoist

In order for any morality to be fully established, regardless of how well reasoned, how comprehensive, or how intuitive it may seem, it must win the battle against the full-fledged egoist. Morality has always had some success in convincing morally yearning persons exactly how to act correctly. A few arguments and everyone is running around frantically maximizing utility or universalizing maxims. But what about someone who is not waiting for a "system" to "prove their actions worthy"?

What does one do to convince someone who does not wish to have reason on his side? One can attempt to show this person the beautiful, subtle perfections of some moral system, and exactly how his compliance would make the picture complete. The true egoist would not have any reason to listen, for as a true egoist he must believe that you are seeking to satisfy only your own desires.

Basically, egoists are people whose only considerations are for themselves. They are each motivated by personal desires alone, and will act only to satisfy those desires. Thus, the only way the egoist will agree to act inside your "perfect" system is if your discussion has aroused some desire to do so. Now this is not to be taken as a challenge, for the egoist will probably soon act on another desire, like going to the movies, and with equal enthusiasm.



Chapter 2:

External Arguments Against Egoism

Numerous attempts have been made to convince the egoist that his position is flawed. A society made up entirely of egoists could not possibly function. "Altruism is necessary for society, and society for human life, including that of an egoist." [1] Williams notes that the egoist is the exception, who is only able to exist because of the altruism society cultivates. [2]

But these arguments do not stir the egoist into any haze of self-reflection and repentance. These "external" arguments cannot move the egoist, for he is the proven exception, existing already despite the adverse effect he has on society. [3]

Williams then attempts to solicit from the egoist an answer to the question "Can one engage in self-interested conduct that is harmful to others?" [4] This question is presented in order to damage the egoist's position, since by answering "No" he is limiting his own position, and by answering "Yes" he is accepting something "contrary to his interests." [5]

But the egoist has another option, i.e., to say "'let them get on with it, if they want to: you are not going to find me moralizing about it'...which is not to say that he has permitted them to do it," since the egoist's statement has no "prescriptive force." [6] That is, the egoist has not *willed* any action against himself (as Williams wished he would have to), but merely acquiesced to a state of affairs over which he can have no control.

About the Author

Peter T. Mastroianni wrote this philosophical exploration to examine fundamental questions about self-conception, moral agency, and human connection. The work represents his dialectical journey through some of the most challenging problems in moral philosophy, arriving at an original synthesis that finds authentic selfhood in committed intersubjective relationships.

Mastroianni's work engages critically with major figures in moral philosophy including Kant, Hegel, Nagel, Williams, and Sartre, while charting an independent path through the tensions between egoism and altruism, subjectivity and objectivity, isolation and connection.

Originally from Little Italy of the Bronx, New York, Peter is a partner and the Chief Innovation Officer of a national boutique law firm.

Peter currently lives in New Rochelle, New York with his wife Kathryn. They have two wonderful children, Michael and Samantha. Peter and Kathryn have been happily married for 33 years, and every day together is better than the last.



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"We began with the egoist, trapped in the endless pursuit of satisfaction that can never satisfy, condemned to a life of isolated desire. We examined the alternative of objective morality, which promises to save us from egoism's isolation but threatens to dissolve the self entirely in universal principles. And we have arrived at a third way: intersubjectivity realized in committed relationship."

The Metaphysics of Marriage offers a rigorous philosophical examination of how authentic selfhood emerges not from isolation or universal principles, but from the mutual recognition found in committed relationships.

Through careful engagement with the Western philosophical tradition, Mastroianni charts a dialectical path from the self-destruction of egoism, through the costs of objective morality, to an intersubjective alternative that preserves personal identity while enabling genuine connection.

This is philosophy that matters—addressing fundamental questions about who we are, how we can live authentically, and why committed love offers more than emotional satisfaction: it provides the very ground of coherent selfhood.

Exploring Love, Commitment, and Existence

