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Warum Liebe verletzt: Leidenschaft und die Erfahrung der Moderne

Although love has long been a central preoccupation of philosophy and literature, as an ordinary pursuit, routinized within the institution of marriage, it is an eminently modern experience. Indeed, historians have established that the emergence of the love-based marriage coincided with the rise of modern phenomena such as the novel, capitalist economic organization, the emergence of the private/public divide, and the democratization of gender roles.

While many efforts have been devoted to understanding the causes for the emergence of the cultural model of romantic love that dominates contemporary culture (feminine and bourgeois), my project intends to address the more fundamental question of what makes love a quintessentially modern sentiment. Instead of assuming that modernity simply "liberated" the romantic sentiment from its pre-modern institutional shackles, I would like instead to show how love - both as a cultural ideal and as a cultural practice - has not only incorporated the very values, ideals and aporias of modernity, but in fact constitutes the very essence of the experience of modernity. In this respect, my book makes two broad claims: that the theoretical and empirical tools of sociology are better suited than those of clinical psychology in understanding why romantic love is such a difficult experience, and that the sentiment of romantic love has been a central vector for the main cultural tropes of modernity.

1. According to 18th-century philosophy and classical sociology we may characterize modernity as the complex intertwining of a number of dimensions of experience: distance between individual identity and social roles; critique as a common feature of everyday cognition; an expectation that individuals be the sole authors of their life project; an orientation of societies and individuals toward the future; predominance of ambivalence and conflict in the realm of moral choice; use of and reliance on rationalized systems of explanation; and autonomization of social spheres, with the economic, scientific, and legal spheres progressively encroaching upon the cultural and erotic spheres.

One question I would like to address is: How do these various aspects of the experience of modernity translate within the sentiment of love? I address this question by analyzing a heterogeneous sample of classical and contemporary novels, movies, women's magazines, and interviews with men and women from three different countries, Israel, France, and the United States.

2. But this work makes a further claim: Modernity has given rise to distinctly new forms of social suffering, largely due to the fact that the modern self must produce the conditions for securing its own identity. In modernity, identity is not ontologically secured by one's economic position, religion, or gender, but rather must be continuously chosen, reproduced and performed. Thus, a second theme of this study has to do with the ways in which love embodies the specific forms of social suffering generated by the predicament of modernity, such as the need for recognition by others, the difficulty in establishing what one cares about, multiplication of allegiances to competing normative frameworks, and a chronic state of normative uncertainty and ambivalence.

Recommended Reading

Illouz, Eva. *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-Help*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Illouz, Eva. *Oprah Winfrey and the Glamour of Misery: An Essay on Popular Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

Illouz, Eva. *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

"Es liegt nicht an Dir, sondern an mir": Bindungsangst als Problem der Soziologie

Die Suche nach Liebe ist eine schwierige Erfahrung geworden, die nur wenigen modernen Männern und Frauen erspart geblieben ist. Trotz des weitverbreiteten und fast kollektiven Charakters dieser Erfahrungen besteht unsere Kultur darauf, dass sie das Resultat einer gestörten Psyche sind. Die freudianische Kultur, von der wir durchtränkt sind, vertritt die starke These, dass sich sexuelle Anziehung am besten durch unsere vergangenen Erfahrungen erklären lässt und dass Liebespräferenz in der frühen Kindheit durch die Eltern-Kind-Beziehung geprägt wird. Die Annahme Freuds, die Familie bestimme das Muster der erotischen Karriere, war bisher die Haupterklärung für die Frage, warum und wie wir daran scheitern, eine Liebesbeziehung zu finden oder aufrecht zu erhalten.

Die zentrale These dieses Projekts lautet so: Wenn viele von uns "eine Art bohrender Angst oder Unwohlsein" in Bezug auf die Liebe haben und das Gefühl, dass uns Liebesdinge "aufgewühlt, ruhelos und unzufrieden mit uns selbst" zurück lassen, so deswegen, weil Liebe etwas an sich hat, das man als "Gefangensein" des Selbst in den Institutionen der Moderne bezeichnen kann; auch spiegelt und verstärkt sie dieses Gefangensein. In einer berühmten Passage formuliert Karl Marx: "Die Menschen machen ihre eigene Geschichte, aber sie machen sie nicht aus freien Stücken, nicht unter selbstgewählten, sondern unter unmittelbar vorgefundenen, gegebenen und überlieferten Umständen." Wenn wir lieben oder schmollen, greifen wir auf kollektive Ressourcen zurück und tun dies in Situationen, die wir nicht selbst gestaltet haben; genau diese Ressourcen und Situationen möchte ich in meinem Projekt untersuchen. Ich erläutere diese Strategie anhand eines Beispiels: der "Bindungsangst".

i Harry Frankfurt, The Reasons of Love, Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 5.

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Der Konsum der Romantik : Liebe und die kulturellen Widersprüche des Kapitalismus

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