

Love and Politics

Eszter Kováts (ed.)



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Preface

“Love is a deeply communal feeling. Love is far from being a ‘private matter’ that concerns the two persons in love: Love is a connecting link that is valuable for the community”.

(Alexandra Kollontai, 1921)

Love, which carries the possibility for truly symmetric, mutual relationships between people, is an essential part of human existence. How we think about it has far-reaching consequences for the gender relations and for the societal practices amongst which we get socialised and rear our children. How did people think about love in the course of history? How does the tradition of courtly love influence our concepts of dominance, initiative, subordination, dependence and partnership? How does the economic order based on the cult of consumption define our desires and ideas about love? What kind of emancipatory and political potential is there in the discourse about love? Is any dialogue possible across various concepts of love?

These questions were explored in the dialogue forum “Love: Personal? Political?” held by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Budapest on 6 October 2015. This volume is a collection of the edited versions of lectures held at the conference.

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung is a German political foundation committed to the fundamental values of social democracy, therefore gender equality and

equality of loves is of highest priority to us. The event and this volume, too, were implemented in the framework of a regional program that we have been running since 2012. We deployed the program “Gender equality in East-Central Europe” in an attempt to contribute to a wider discussion about the questions around gender equality in Baltic and Visegrád countries,¹ and that they are removed from the “not before we have solved more pressing issues” frame. Also, to contribute to exploit all the experience, quiet or loud breakthroughs that are there in the region, so that we can find inspiration in each other’s political strategies instead of referencing documents of international organisations and Scandinavian countries.

The forum in October was part of a series; it was the sixth in a series of public debates launched in 2014. We organised conferences on the anti-gender movements seen in several countries in February² and June 2014³. We attempted to gain a joint understanding with human rights based and conservative women’s organisations, religious groups, civic organisations, scholars and politicians why the issues of gender equality generate fears and anger in many countries, and how the conditions for dialogue across the society can be created.

Positive feedback spurred us to preserve this rare medium where people thinking very differently about the social roles of men and women gather in the same space and debate. This is how we also organised a forum debate on the societal issues around motherhood⁴, the changing forms of masculinity and where men see their roles in the implementation of gender equality⁵, and discourses around childbearing.⁶

¹ More about our regional gender program here: www.fesbp.hu/gender

² Summary film about the forum: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQLw20apiKo&feature=youtu.be>

³ Summary film about the forum: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O82sWwjeT8I&feature=youtu.be>

⁴ Summary film about the forum: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8w8FlwPcVQg&list=UU3nKaVeRmB-b06h0W9fNFZg>

⁵ Report about the event: <http://www.fesbp.hu/common/pdf/BerichtEN20150325.pdf>

⁶ Report about the event: http://www.fesbp.hu/common/pdf/Bericht20150422_EN.pdf

The common point of these forums was the search for a possibility of dialogue across various ideological positions and convictions.

This may seem like an idealistic initiative.

On the one hand it is not by sheer accident that we come to the convictions that we have come to, but there are certain values, arguments and scientific knowledge behind them. What separates us is real and substantial. That, too. And it is only natural that we stand up for ideologies and positions that we believe are right, and we want to make sure that they gain publicity and hegemony in the Gramscian sense.

On the other hand, and also in this same context, there is a great number of institutional and political conflicts of interest that make us sustain and increase this distance. These make us malevolent. We often think that if I talk to the other then I also capitulate to his or her ideological frame. Or we believe – sometimes not so wrongly at all – that they will use us to legitimate their own position. We feel that leading a dialogue betrays our very cause, organisation or the group that we owe to be loyal to.

Thirdly because we speak very different languages, we get a grasp of the world from very different angles. We often feel that the other does not represent the opposite of our standpoint, but rather argues from a very different frame of interpretation, uses different concepts, and understands our concepts completely differently. However, we can sense trouble. That this is not how we should talk to each other. There are, could be and should be consensual thoughts as regards gender equality even if we have diverging interpretations of the social and political processes, diverging political interests and different frames of phenomena we use.

Our initiative of a dialogue is about making sure that we reflect on our own respective language and approaches. Maybe we realise in the end that there are certain connecting points in our beliefs. Maybe we can find ways that allow, on longer term, to overcome labelling and polarisation, and new

consensuses can be formulated. About gender equality but also beyond. About how we talk about politics, responsibility, dignity, inclusion and Europe.

What does not constitute dialogue?

Dialogue certainly does not entail surrendering your own position and conviction; it does not equal compromise. We also cannot expect this from the other as a precondition for talking to them in the first place.

However, dialogue also does not entail the possibility to finally explain to the other why she or he is wrong in her or his thinking, what she or he misunderstands, why she or he is harmful as seen from a certain enlightened position. Dialogue is not about explaining. It can certainly be part of it, however, it will only work if it comes complete with self-reflexion and respect for the other.

It also must not be about splitting. For example I have come across arguments that “certain lobbies have lined up behind benevolent gender activists”. There is a great temptation to split “cool feminists/conservatives/liberals” from feminism, conservatism etc. The advantage of these arguments is that they differentiate within groups with certain labels, and perceive that the systems of thoughts within these groups may be very different. However, we must not create additional enemies in the hopes of a desirable consensus.

Dialogue, according to the original intention, is not the consensus of the top one per-cent, or the agreement of professional (upper) middle-class women inconsiderate of systemic exclusion. Dialogue is also about empowering the disempowered. If we want real change, then the objective is not even just putting their cause onto the agenda but also thinking jointly with them. This means that dialogue cannot be based on the practice of exclusion by the privileged elite. The question is whether we can find a different language to articulate injustice and suffering, i.e. different from the current language that is available and points out profoundly important issues, but

which is also constraining and framing everything in the context of power relations and oppression.

Poles and assumed consensus

Dialogue also needs clearly posted poles, common normative foundations. For example the dignity of every human is unquestionable. That of women as well. We shall not, for example, debate whether it is “permissible to hit a woman”. Or one cannot be emphatic and ask “why do you mind violence against women”. There are certain minimum standards to dialogue.

Yet I also think that we can talk about the same minimum standards, even if in different languages. To keep with the above example: although we all disdain violence against women, we also have different approaches to it; this is why it makes sense to debate this topic, too. And if we talk to each other, it may turn out that we are in agreement over more points than we originally thought.

Another easy example is the political representation of women. We all know the figures: the rate of women in the current Hungarian Parliament is 10%, which is the lowest rate in the 28 EU Member States. I am certain that everybody who reads this volume will agree that this is not enough, it is insufficient, it is not right. We also know that this is not based on that perhaps women are less smart or ambitious, but there are structural reasons in the background. But why do we think that the low representation of women is a problem? Because so-called “female characteristics” such as tenderness or the ability to find consensus are not reflected in legislation? Or perhaps because we consider how women become part of politics unjust? Or because we look at female representation as a gauge of democracy? And how could all of this be remedied: By introducing gender quotas? The education of women? Encouraging men to play a bigger role at home? We already have very diverging concepts when we come to this point. A very easy-to-represent consensus (“More women in politics!”) leads, on the second degree, to diffi-

cult-to-solve ideological conflicts. This is also the reason why we don't have policy issues on the agenda of the dialogue forums for the time being. The consensus would be disrupted already at the second step: Political and institutional counter-interests come to play, different principles, diverging ideologies appear; and then there is the conclusion that "the other has a harmful approach".

Why do we organise a dialogue?

Because we all can feel that there is something wrong. The downward spirals of fear and mistrust dominate our public life. We exist in parallel realities; hatred and an apparent split into two are growing. Our existing explanations do not suffice to understand the situation. What we assumed, or wanted to assume, to be democratic consensuses are no longer that.⁷ We can feel that we should talk to each other differently. We can feel that we cannot progress without self-criticism. We can lose a lot unless we can formulate new consensuses.

And we also know that assumptions about gender equality are not divided along the fault-lines of left or right, conservative, liberal or leftist. It is not at all certain that fault-lines coincide with artificially built walls.

We certainly cannot be naïve. Dialogue does not promise results on short term. However, maybe we can take a few baby steps to depart from our rankling culture of debate, our languages that have nothing in common, from our parallel realities.

We believe that the existence of this joint space where we can debate face to face rather than in the online space or with phantoms ("the feminist", "the conservative"). Even if we don't agree about many things, there is a place where we can have these debates.

⁷ Kováts, E., Póim, M., Tánczos, J. (2015): Beyond gender? Anti-gender mobilization and the lessons for progressives. Foundation for European Progressive Studies and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Budapest. http://www.fesbp.hu/common/pdf/FEPS_FES_Policy_Brief_2015.pdf

Of course, our ambitions are larger than that: We want to reach real consensus as regards the questions of gender equality. We want to make sure that these are removed from the cruel, polarising and labelling space of political practice. All of this should happen even (or necessarily?) on a new language that we create together. This can have an impact on our debate culture and concepts of politics in a wider sense.

For this it is of course necessary to be able to imagine that there are not only two worlds. We should try to believe that the other is not stupid, and trust that selfish interests do not govern them only, or that they do not want to ruin the world (deliberately or guided by good intentions). These may cause serious difficulties, which we can see quite clearly.

Dialogue – if I let it happen – forces me to take the fears of the other person seriously about my views and me. It helps me to understand the framework through which the other person grasps the world and societal problems. It forces me to try to formulate my arguments more precisely, or just differently from the people with which I exist in the same universe anyway. Experience from the forums of the last almost two years shows that this approach may help for people to take each other's thoughts seriously who perhaps previously thought inconceivable to talk to a "left-wing" or "feminist" or "conservative" person at all in order to make sure that they don't give more space to their concepts that are (at least seem to be) all over the place anyway.

We are convinced that we can only win on longer term if we are able to listen to each other.

Why love?

We have always been looking for topics for the dialogue forums which have political and social relevance, but which also go deeper than pragmatic policy issues, or party political, or assumed or real ideological fault-lines. We have been searching for topics that scholars working in different disciplines discuss in different frames of interpretation. Topics in which we can see a potential

for political dialogue across people of different views of the world, education, professional background and social status.

Our starting point is that the practice of love exists in a historical, social and class context. The way that we talk about love, feelings associated with love influences our political practices around gender issues and beyond. So that this is not only about individual, subjective feelings and actions, and it is not about eternal truths. The economic order built on the cult of consumption also uses and manipulates our desires and concepts about love to sustain the system. This is also why it is important how we speak about love.

Several of the authors of this volume do not agree with these starting points. It is an even bigger honour that they accepted our invitation.

Those who attended our event and the contributors who publish in this volume use very different ideological or scientific approaches and languages when it comes to love. Andrea Pető, scientific editor of this collection explains this in more detail in her introduction; however, I will make a short reference to the vast spectrum of thought that we are moving in.

There are some who think that love is the part of eternal human nature, and the ontological difference between men and women is a precondition to it; others emphasise the changing concepts of masculinity and femininity in the course of history, and have a critical approach to the referencing of one gender against the other.

There are some who look at the capacity of love from an individual, psychological perspective that is outside of time and space; and others who emphasise the historical and social determination of love while they question the norms shaping the feelings and practices of love and their transformation (who can love and fancy whom how and in which frames).

There are some who believe that the discourse on love is connected to the economic system and our place in it, and emphasise the role of consumer citizenship, while others perceive it as something that is outside the economic sphere, a refuge from commercialism.

Some say that love is the manipulative intrigue of patriarchy to justify oppression, or that it is the space for care work.

Everybody has a different concept associated inseparably with love: eroticism, inspiration, attachment, intimacy, commitment, faithfulness, marriage, family, freedom, revolution, or insecurity.

Some apply a sharp distinction between public and private spheres; and refer love, as an individual experience, to the realm outside of politics, and yet others say that love is part of politics just as everything else that is personal is part of politics, and that it is shaped by love just like politics shape our concepts of love.

Some believe that love carries an emancipatory potential, some believe it does not, and some say it is questionable if it should have that kind of potential at all.

The essays published in this volume reflect upon all of these concepts.

Certainly there are many who would like to retain some of the mystery: If anything, it is only poetry that can grasp a bit of love.

“Completely for nothing?” No, completely for everything. We must fight together for all, fight to achieve it, not to give up that we can be equal in this fight. (...) Fight for the other in ourselves, and fight ourselves in the other. To wound and be wounded, an then to bow down and tend to the other’s wounds, embrace and love.”

(György Dragomán and Anna Szabó T.: Vívóiskola, 2015)

Love is a minefield

And we can see that the discourses of love are, too.

This volume is an excellent illustration that while we all assume to know what love is, we actually mean very different things by the concept. It also makes very palpable something that many have written about: different scientific approaches also exist in a social and political space.

There have been many studies written, also in the feminist literature, about the love and the relationship of love and politics. This volume is special because it constitutes dialogue in practice. Essays also debate with each other, partly explicitly and partly without stating it, and they reflect on each other's frames. They touch upon the fundamentals of dialogue by becoming conscious about the other's frames. This may lead, on the long term, to something joint, something new – even in the political sense.

Closure

A dear friend who describes himself as a conservative recently argued in a debate that girls should be feminine, and boys should be masculine (and this is the sentence that drives us feminists up the wall). He said that this concept exists per se, and that he understood how this made him an essentialist or some such, however, this is a religious argument that apparently will never end.

And yet I think that if we can overcome sentences by the other that automatically trigger our anger and counter-arguments, and if we can take a step back, then there is a chance to hear each other and leave the dichotomy of “us” and “they” behind.

As far as we are concerned, we are convinced that love does carry a certain emancipatory potential. This was the reason why Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung organized a dialogue forum on the topic, and this is why it publishes the lectures. The possibility of a mutual relationship between equal partners based on respect and intimacy is potentially inherent in love, and this has far-reaching consequences also for the social relationship of genders and beyond. Another reason is that love and its social dimension also involve deeper layers than interests and party politics and ideological fault-lines. The talk about love contains transformative and emancipatory power also for the relations we foster.



ANDREA PETŐ

Political opportunities of a dialogue on love

When we say, *horribile dictu*, sing that “Love is in the air” or “All you need is love”, then we all assume to know what it means. We mean the most important, most valuable and also most painful human feeling. The word ‘love’ does not denote the split between *eros*, *filia* and *agape*, or the split between the meanings of ‘szerelem’ (erotic or romantic love) and ‘szeretet’ (filial or familial love). It is difficult to believe but love actually has its own discipline: Love Studies, the science of love. I want to call your attention to the novelty and political opportunities of this approach. Love Studies goes beyond the analysis of discourses and examines the practices and experiences associated with love, which promote the liberation and actualisation of humans. Human in this case is meant in the Nietzschean sense.

The following will be an argumentation for the possibility of love being the code, linguistic and symbolic, for the solution of existing societal problems because it goes beyond former general and encumbered ideological language and party political fault lines to talk about key human questions such as bonding, loyalty, equality, desires and their limits.

Why do we need liberation?

No reader will deny that power inequalities still exist between men and women in societies, even though constitutions and laws render them formally equal. It is sufficient just to look at statistical indices like the UNDP Gender Inequality Index. There are many answers to the question “why do inequalities survive”. One of these answers refers to the history of love practices, and this is exactly what the authors of this volume analyse from different disciplinary and ideological aspects.

This area of scientific analysis is defined by Jónasdóttir as “political sexuality” (2014: 13). According to her theory love (and I will use this term for simplicity’s sake) is an essential constituent of human life, which cannot be restricted ideologically and normatively to emotional labour leading to reproduction. Love is a human activity, or relationship, which is an alienable and exploitable social force (Jónasdóttir & Ferguson eds. 2014: 13) containing the possibility (I want to underline: it is a possibility and no certainty) of essentially mutual relationship between social subjects of equal standing. Therefore transformational and also emancipatory possibilities are inherent in love, which may even transform the political material practice of our modern days such as politics itself.

This volume is timely also because mainly extreme right-wing and fundamentalist political forces have been using the creative political power of love to further their own political aims. For example, these political forces will deny the freedom potential of love and limit it to motherly love and heteronormative affections of caring. But the social critical and liberating approach to love has always been part of left-wing traditions with the objective of achieving equality. Amongst others, this is what the paper of Gintautas Mažeikis discusses in this volume.

Since the nineties there has been a steady growth in the volume of literature discussed by authors of this volume, looking at love as a form of discourse that renders women oppressed on the level of society and on the micro-level

alike. The economic system of neoliberalism operates on the basis of consumption, and an important element of that is that love has become a project; and the partner in love is predictable, consumable and disposable. Just think about the highly successful television series *Sex in the City*.

Which are the aspects and perspectives for us to look at love? I will rely on the typology of Ann Ferguson and Anna G. Jónasdóttir (2014: 1-11).

The first frame defines love as an ideological form. The first to do so was Mary Wollstonecraft who, thinking about the inequality of women, used this argument as early as during the period of Enlightenment (1792). Alexandra Kollontai defined the romantic heterosexual couple as the ideology of patriarchy and male rule at the beginning of the 20th century. Iconic figures of the second wave of feminism like Simone de Beauvoir (1969) and Shulamith Firestone (1970) emphasised the ideological character of marriage: they saw it as the tool of male dominance.

From this it derives that anyone rejecting this type of normative, romantic love, will necessarily become a political resistance fighter. Adrienne Rich (1976) also follows this path as reflected in modern queer theory that rejects heteronormativity as the tool of social oppression. Early radical and left-wing feminists focus on sexuality as an oppressive or liberating power. What is called “romantic love” in English, and the forms in which it appears in movies and mass culture, have been analysed by media sciences primarily as a tool of the ideology of male rule. I can only repeat: *Sex in the City*. Feminist critique has closely examined the “language of love”, the use of language in the context of love, which can also be seen as a means to sustain capitalism, but it can also be a subversive force to reinterpret societal processes. This is discussed in the article of Justyna Szachowicz-Sempruch.

The second frame is the epistemological and moral philosophical approach that sees love as the indestructible desire to learn about the world and the other person. The philosopher Martha Nussbaum goes to the point in this approach when she says that love depicted in literature teaches us more

about ourselves than about the world around us. Feminist moral philosophers like Sara Ruddick and Carol Gilligan define socially determined love in the form of maternal love (the adjective is important here: maternal love and *not* romantic love). For them the female body is the space of “otherness”, so that they also interpret the female emotional position differently. The connection of this concept of love with the ideas of the new right is interesting. The new right uses the otherness of the female body as an argument; and according to this argumentation heterosexual love is a biological necessity and norm because women love differently than men due to their role in reproduction. This would, in turn, assign a special role and responsibility to women (as mothers) in love.

According to the third frame represented by Luce Irigaray and feminists focusing on difference, there is a phenomenological difference between the two bodies, which is primarily of corporeal nature. This thinking is the same approach as that of Plato to Aristotle, Hegel and Freud, which creates a phallogocentric world. (The authors reference them several times in this volume, and Gergely Szilvay also refers to Hegelian feminists.) It puts the male imaginary into the forefront, which reifies the partner. He says “I love you” instead of “I give love to you”. The new theory of love, which is no longer based on hierarchic relations, might change this reification.

In the fourth approach, love has a social, biological and material power. The influential Afro-American lecturer and activist bell hooks argued that it is an avenue to assign power to the disempowered, if we use love in a reinterpreted way. The current system called neoliberal neo-patriarchy also uses the power and force of love; and, according to the argumentation of materialist feminists this is exactly through which we can understand and fight the economics of it. It is the material power of love that this volume attempts to analyse, because we can understand the changes and new polarisation of the recent era, also characterised by the emergence of the new right and fundamentalism, from this aspect only (Kováts & Póim eds.

2015). The new interpreters of love politics are equally present on the left and right of the political spectrum. The studies in this volume demonstrate that there is no such thing as “left-wing” or “right-wing” love. Radical Islam uses religious love for Allah to mobilise. Post-Marxist anarchists like Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri consider revolutionary love to be the new force of social organisation. They vest love with revolutionary power, and take a legal approach. This states that everybody should be entitled to love, which is, in their interpretation beyond capitalism (Hardt & Negri 2009: 179). But love also plays a key role in the politics of feminist anti-capitalistic solidarity. So that there is no more current and complex political question than love.

Political possibilities to examine love

The first possibility is the reinterpretation of Europe. In her book *Europe in Love. Love in Europe* (1999), the Italian historian Luisa Passerini defines love as “dialectic between desire and the impossibility of fusion between lovers, even if this love is fully reciprocated” (1999: 1). I want to underline impossibility in this definition, which includes the conscious undertaking of failure, to which I shall refer back in the context of political creativity.

European love is the love of the troubadour that has been sung by many in many different ways from Tristan and Isolde to Dybbuk, its Jewish version. This shows that the emotions of the relationship of man and a woman based on inequalities and defenselessness influence modern social practices that we live amongst and hand down to our children. The article of Melinda Portik-Bakai in this volume discusses one possible psychological interpretation of this process. Every society is made up from “emotional communities”, which are created by the identical interpretation of the same emotions. Such common emotions may include the experience of a trauma, or the normative preference for joint values like heterosexual love. These create an emotional community, which is also a social mobilising force. It is a real political question

whether and how these “emotional communities” can relate to each other. This is what this collection of essays tries to achieve.

Linking up the concepts of love and Europe firstly does not only mean that European thought is ideological as it builds on Christian courtly love based on hierarchy and spirituality. But it also outlines how Europe-centred attitudes can relate to discourses of love as mentioned above. This is why it is a key question how love itself can question these discursive forms and ideologies, and what political possibilities are there in the non-heteronormative and non-hierarchical interpretation of love.

The second opportunity is inherent in how the issue of love is closely related to the matter of interpreting modernity. Troubadour love determines who can desire to achieve what in society, and how. This definition is even stronger than ever as commoditisation and consumption have strengthened hierarchies even further. Some go even further, like Mary Evans who suggests in her book *Love. An Unromantic Discussion* (2002) that the concept of romantic love should be eradicated completely, not as caretaking and undertaking responsibility, but rather its “romanticised and economic form”.

The third aspect is that religion is fundamentally connected with the concept of love. In his work *Reason, Faith and Revolution* Terry Eagleton states that religion puts “love in the centre of its universe” (2009: 31). But even if love is in the centre of the episteme the followers of religion commit gruesome deeds in its name. In *A Catholic Modernity* Charles Taylor considers Catholic religion a framework, the purpose of which is adherence to good, unconditional love (in the sense of filia) or compassion (1999: 35). This is what András Máté-Tóth and Gabriella Turai discuss in their essay from the perspective of Eros.

And finally the fourth possibility is that of political creativity, which is so direly missing from our current era. Love necessarily leads to change, to something new. This is the area that concerns everyone, where every single citizen could implement his or her principles in practice. This is also why a

left-wing feminist intervention might be important because the tradition of romantic courtly love, and the consumption cult of neoliberal neo-patriarchy manipulates the emotions of all of us. Just as the reference to *Sex and the City* was understood by the readers. It is through love and consumption that global capitalism manages and steers people; and this is why it is a key question how we love. This is the only way for us to rescue the world and thus us. And then indeed: All you need is love.

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Approaches to romantic love in early marxist tradition

Romantic love is one of the ways of overcoming alienation, instrumentalism and final reification of our work in the factories and organizations, and consumer society. However nothing is falsified and transformed into consumer kitsch more than romantic love. Love started to be about commodity fetishism and a question of private property as early as with slavery. However, emotional engagement is the way of breaking the instrumentalization of human beings. Often work in the factories and administration is full of cold steadiness, rational negotiation and instrumental power of the government apparatus. Equally, consumer society and the cult of property transform alienation into purposeful atomization of people, growth of solitude, depression, and losing of emotional-communication skills. Selling of kitsch and simulacra of romantic love: St. Valentines' day, red hearts and commercialization of March 8 are processes of manipulative substitution of social engagement needs. The cult of the family as a sacred middle-class property hides love as a social system of sharing and transforms it into a system of accumulation.

It appears that nothing more resists the desire of accumulation of capital even family relationships. Whether romantic love, its action and characters can find a significant place as a practice of breaking alienation and reification of human beings? The miracle of love or emotional openness is valid only with action, intersubjective, and not as an empty dream of solitary property owners, not as commodity fetishism. Instead of romantic love and social significant sharing we often get another substitution: temptation and seduction of courtesans and mashers, the instrumental art of love communication. The art of seduction emphasizes the importance of critically rethinking everyday love on the horizon of big ideas. Could trade unions, fighters for the rights of workers provide emotional, romantic love in our world of conflicts and diversities to overcome alienation and exploitation? The early Marxist tradition of critical thinking of romantic love tries to answer the question.

Romanticism and Dialectical Marxism: steps of thinking of love

The leftist tradition in my interpretation consists of the representatives of the Marxist ideology, the thinkers of anarchism and Critical Theory in a broad sense. Marxism and Critical Theory analyse romantic love in the context of Hegel's dialectics, historical materialism and the critique of structures of power. Hegelian aesthetics is very important in this sense. He praised romanticism as a philosophy which has overcome the limitations of the enlightenment or measured rationality. Hegel considered the romantic form of art as an example of romantic love and described it as the concealment of union, the destruction of traditional under pressure of higher feelings and ideas: "The romantic form of art cancels again the completed unification of the Idea and its reality [...]" (Hegel 1988: 79). Romantic energy overcomes the limits of human beings, elevates them from common sense and everyday life to romantic art as the human condition: "[...] romantic art is the self-transcendence of art but within its own sphere and in the form of art itself [...]" (Hegel 1988: 80). Hegel emphasizes, that romantic emotion is based on

tragic “distraction and dissonance” between limited human possibilities and infinite that is open by hearts (Hegel 1998: 158). According to Hegel, romantic subjectivity determines objective processes, encourages the heroes to individual breakthrough of everyday life. On the contrary, the synthesis of enlightenment and romanticism conveys the idea of unity of objective processes and subjective aspirations, the laws of nature and the aspirations of the spirit. This dialectical unity determines the political programme and actions of the political classes.

Hegelian approaches to the romantic art, romanticism and as a consequence to romantic love open the possibility to apply the power of romantic love to class struggles and new society building in the Marxist tradition. According to Hegel, romanticism overcomes classical art and the enlightenment of consciousness. Ideas of enlightenment reflected the early interests of the bourgeoisie: to protect the movement of capital, market equality and the supreme value of private property. Enlightened rationality and market values have determined the opposition between true natural feelings and a calculative attitude to love and sex in the writings of Rousseau, Diderot and Marquis de Sade. The solution of the contradiction was seen as the subjugation of natural feelings of women to the reason of men. Hegel described the enlightened mind as unhappy because it was unable to embody higher principles and ideas of reason: According to him, enlightened common moral agreement doesn't understand the real contradictions of the *Zeitgeist*. We could comment that society of the hegemonic lower middle class tends to substitute tragic idealistic love by classical family ownerships. Romanticism on the contrary, in Hegel's view, reveals the power and irresistibility of love as an ideal and world process, as a motive for development and a destructive issue at the same time, and as a subjective understanding of the higher Spirit's processes. Enlightenment and romanticism are like thesis and antithesis, the clash of logical calculation of the market and objective forces of freedom. Hegel sees a synthesis, overcoming the oppositions of the enlightenment

and romantic periods in historically specific and institutionalized processes of freedom, into development of civil forms of love in the developmental processes of society. Only a procedural civil form of love implies the unity of political ideals or ideologies with strong feelings or emotional attitudes. The enthusiasm of the French revolution, building of a new society and subjective romantic love should coincide in a single dynamics. Civil romantic love unites the collective political, the requirements of the state, party or political class with individual emotions and hopes. It is the love and enthusiasm of the work in one, for example in front-line or factory love, or love in the construction industry.

The Marxist tradition of the era of Rosa Luxemburg, Alexandra Kollontai and Georg Lukacs at the beginning of the 20th century follows the tradition of Hegel and endeavours not only unlimited romantic love above enlightened mercantilism, but also gives sexuality and love a new proletarian, civil form when responding to the call of the time. So proletarian or, according to Alexandra Kollontai, *red love*, is supposed to be developed by both: the romantic sense of liberation, and the civil sense of certainty; by a spontaneous activity of the class struggle, and normative social care. The Marxist tradition emphasizes the importance of social, class and historical approaches in explaining the various forms of love. Romantic love varies according to the form and contents of places in society: in factories and in villages, in class war and in academic work. Therefore, according to Luxemburg and Kollontai, socialist and capitalist love should be different both in form and content. To understand the ideas, it is necessary to interpret Marxist understanding of totality, history and class-consciousness.

Before World War II, representatives of historical materialism – starting from Karl Marx and Georg Lukacs – considered romanticism as the ability to show the biggest and most radical inconsistency or contradiction between hopes and the material conditions of life, between grand ideas and the misery of everyday society. Later, Marx formulated the principle of inadequacy be-

tween powers of production and relations of production based on the romanticism of the vision of a utopian good life and the material conditions of modernity. Lukacs maintains in his dialectical theory of the novel:

“In the nineteenth century novel, the other type of the necessarily inadequate relation between soul and reality became the more important one: the inadequacy that is due to the soul’s being wider and larger than the destinies which life has to offer it.” (Lukacs 1971: 112)

Existential and radical inadequacies produce collective disillusionment and a desire to change the world. The positive ideas of action come from friendship, solidarity and love. The dialectical approach to romanticism do not show simple historical totality but it is full of inadequacies, contradictions that influence and move global processes. However, the romantic mind is blind to the fact that contradictions and tragedy couldn’t be solved by subjective action but by class movements and corresponding social organizations (for example councils). The ideas of grandeur, the world of freedom, which cannot be known and identified, encourage people to break government laws and to open the romantic revolutionary movement of history, but the objective is to transform them into a rational political or industrial movement.

However, at the beginning, romanticism and revolution coincide, and this moves people to higher ideas. According to Che Guevara, love and revolution should merge into a single stream of the world spirit: “...that the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love” (“Che” Guevara 2008). Marxist or proletarian, *red love* has to give a creative form to the destructive spirit and support principles of labour councils and civil certainty. Thus the proletarian revolutions in Russia, China or Cuba, but only at the beginning, have opened a vast historical search for new forms of sexuality and family relations. Alas, after the murder of Luxemburg, after the golden exile of Kollontai to be an eternal Ambassador, no revolutionary dialectics of romantic love was developed in socialist countries. However, I think the historical materialism of love can and should be developed based on the ideas of dialectical

critique of romantic love and friendship, and could use the ideas of Clara Zetkin, Rosa Luxemburg, Emma Goldman and Alexandra Kollontai.

From proletarian spontaneity to the learning of productive socialist love

Zetkin emphasized the necessity of political class approach to the interpretation of phenomenon of love in the context of historical materialism. According to her, there is no reason to follow the female “sisterhood” myth about common gender romantic love interests:

“In the atmosphere of the materialist conception of history, the “love drivell” about a “sisterhood” which supposedly wraps a unifying ribbon around bourgeois ladies and female proletarians, burst like so many scintillating soap bubbles” (Zetkin 1984: 97).

Similar class political love visions were developed in the papers and letters of Goldman. She was a prominent anarchist and far from Critical Marxism at the same period as Luxemburg but in the United States. She was one of the first to overcome the political self-isolation of heterosexuality, showing the possibility of a different sexuality and its political, liberating value. Goldman presented strong critique of state power and related her own romantic vision to the liberation of women. She criticized the state’s and the political party’s activism in continuation of traditional family and sexual relationships and presented the liberative political and positive role of spontaneity. Emotional spontaneity of love not only liberates from institutional instrumentalisation of human life, for example in the family, but opens other, positive, constitutive horizons. She wrote in the essay “Marriage and Love”: “Certainly the growing-used to each other is far away from the spontaneity, the intensity, and beauty of love, without which the intimacy of marriage must prove degrading to both the woman and the man” (Goldman 2005: 177). One of the forms of liberation is emancipation or “detaching from ...”. However romantic love is more than simple liberation or emancipation, more than neg-

ative way of liberty, but imputes new, grand ideals into everyday life: “Eman-
cipation, as understood by the majority of its adherents and exponents, is
of too narrow a scope to permit the boundless love and ecstasy contained
in the deep emotion of the true woman, sweetheart, mother, in freedom”.
Market or alienated work relationship constructs self-supporting women.
The tragedy of them consists in the fact that “she feels deeply the lack of
life’s essence, which alone can enrich the human soul, and without which
the majority of women have become mere professional automatons” (Gold-
man 2005: 169). Anarchist-syndicalist ideas of Goldman are consistent with
the theory of organizational spontaneity of Luxemburg.

Luxemburg spoke about self-developing and self-learning practices of re-
sistance, about the necessity of growing consciousness and new institutions
among the workers. She criticized, but didn’t reject, the idea of the leading
role of the party and professional revolutionaries, which often break organi-
zational initiatives of the local councils. An important contribution to the de-
velopment of social historicism was the papers of Luxemburg on the analysis
of organizational spontaneity in the crisis of capitalism. Following Luxem-
burg, it could be stated that it is not only grand ideas but organizational
spontaneity as well that are inherent in communal everyday life. Factory
unions, local cultural movement and their committees, local councils should
support local initiatives, even politically; but they must also accept the con-
tradictory nature of great expectations and material conditions. Ideologically
driven spontaneity is a form of live reactions to existing problems or creative
activity. Organizational spontaneity is emotional openness, and can accept
and understand social or class oriented romantic love: openness to the visions
of beauty and good. The theory of self-learning allows for a new look at the
political interpretation of the left or the red of love and family relations in
the context of both: locality and romantic vision. Luxemburg strictly criticized
any ideological violence against any spontaneous protest movement includ-
ing women. Especially the party and its ideologues couldn’t solve women’s

issues, sexuality norms or ideals of love. No party principle is able to determine new and creative forms of family, love and sexual relations. Thus Luxemburg's judgments about the role of spontaneity are more similar to Goldman's revolutionary romanticism than to the doctrines of Lenin. However, according to Lukács, the idea of spontaneity of Luxemburg should be considered only in the context of dialectics of totality and spontaneous, infinite and local. We are not talking about the rise of voluntarist desires, because romantic love is always defined by historical, class ideals and the creative beginning.

Ideas of spontaneity and creative proletarian feminism of Luxemburg had a profound influence on the thought and writings of Kollontai, another revolutionary of October 1917. Dialectics of the transformation of romantic love into proletarian socialist relations and sexuality were most consistently expressed in her writings. Kollontai wrote about her vision of becoming a "New Woman":

"How difficult it is for today's woman to cast aside this capacity, internalized in the course of centuries, of millenniums, with which she tried to assimilate herself to the man whom fate seemed to have singled out to be her lord and master. How difficult she will find it to convince herself that woman must reckon self-renunciation as a sin, even a renunciation for the sake of the beloved and for the sake of the power of love." (Kollontai 1971).

Kollontai transformed classical Hegelian dialectics of master and slave and the idea of negation of negation for the purpose of female emancipation. Hegel's idea of dialectics of master and slave, which is very important for Marxist and leftists considerations, was used for female, national and colonial liberation purposes. However correlation between big social, socialist expectations (abstract idea) and everyday family life were important. Not only relationships between the hegemonic male and the subaltern female should be solved but the "new woman" for socialism and communal life should be discovered. This is the logic of transformation of romanticism of love into

social dialectics of everyday life. According to Kollontai, the first step of liberation was to denunciate the prejudices of the sin of sexual love and to overcome man's traditional *Weltanschauung*. Building new emotional-ideal perspectives became the task for the imaginary of a new socialist society. For interpretation of the ideas of Kollontai I'll use the concept of *ideasthesia*. It describes coincidence of emotional experience and an ideal, which is a radical condition of human being (*conditio humana*). Emotions should be developed under contemporary communicative, cultural, political conditions. It partly coincides with the vision of Gustave Flaubert's novel *L'Éducation sentimentale*. *Ideasthesia* could be simple, banal and developed, as feeling of courtesy or romantic love in utopic communities, or the environment of the working place. The concept *ideasthesia* partly explains how socialist (social) movement and the spontaneity of organizational initiatives open the gate for civic and corporeal liberation of working women. According to Kollontai, proletarian women need to create, propose and defend new historical and proletarian forms of feelings, and a corresponding form of family based on new productive relationships, on new world views and institutions. She wrote: "Every woman who exercises a profession, who serves any cause, an idea, needs independence and personal freedom" (Kollontai 1971). Kollontai was one of the first who considered romantic love in the factories as an immanent part of creative and human work. According to her, for a long time love was alienated from capitalist productive relationship as well as from politics as a negative or destructive emotion that negatively influences labour processes and politics. New proletarian relationships have to return to free and creative emotions, romantic love must return to the factories, to the manufactories, labour collectives, research institutions. Proletarian and Marxist romanticism and dialectics presupposes overcoming the instrumentalisation of work, breaking through reification, developing love and even sexual relationships in industrial mass buildings. Only proletarian friendship and love could transform exploitative work into socialist holiday, into sacrificing for a better future for all human

beings. I would say that old fashion Bolsheviks, such as Bucharin or Stalin, were far away from really revolutionary ideas of Kollontai and didn't accept either the liberative role of spontaneity or socialist romantic love. Besides new productive and love relationship her concept presupposes a new institution of family. In the paper "Communism and the Family" she wrote:

"The workers' state needs new relations between the sexes, just as the narrow and exclusive affection of the mother for her own children must expand until it extends to all the children of the great, proletarian family, the indissoluble marriage based on the servitude of women is replaced by a free union of two equal members of the workers' state who are united by love and mutual respect. In place of the individual and egoistic family, a great universal family of workers will develop, in which all the workers, men and women, will above all be comrades. This is what relations between men and women, in the communist society will be like. These new relations will ensure for humanity all the joys of a love unknown in the commercial society of a love that is free and based on the true social equality of the partners." (Kollontai 1920)

Kollontai wrote a lot of literary criticisms, political papers and popular stories on the subject of emotional development of women. In her popular stories she presented the feelings of the "new woman": a free of the bonds of economic dependence on the system of production and men, open to romantic love and socialist ideas, independent and revolutionary. She discussed interdependencies between new revolutionary expectations such as new forms of family, councils, self-government of workers and love desires. Kollontai showed the contradictory development of women in the style of socialist realism: through social and emotional learning and fighting, the new woman becomes ready and able to essentially fulfil herself in any field – whether it is party, social-political or scientific activity, without any alienation or reification of emotions. This represented the new active, creative gender identity and a new vision of corporeality and politics. In her active creative approach

to the link between becoming new, socialist romantic love and productive processes, everyday life negates old tradition of patriarchal family or norms of traditional bourgeois society. It doesn't mean prostitution or selling the body, but love and family as active parts of social and civil processes. She describes the "New woman" as different from bourgeois ideals:

"The bourgeois ideal of love does not meet the needs of the most numerous segment of the population – the working class" and ... "Love is a conglomerate, a complex connection of friendship, of passion, of maternal tenderness, of love, of consonance of spirit, pity, admiration, habits and many, many other shades of feelings and emotions" (Kollontai 1990: 88).

According to Kollontai, the task of the becoming socialist is to destroy the hermetic desire to accumulate property and, first of all, the property of domestic slaves – women:

"The sense of 'property' and of the 'foreverness' of legal marriage has a harmful effect on the psyche; a man has to make only the smallest emotional effort to preserve the external trappings of an attachment since the partner is in any case riveted to him for life. The modern form of legal marriage impoverishes the soul and in no way helps mankind to gather the store of 'great love' which the Russian genius Tolstoy talked of and longed for" (Kollontai 1972: 18).

As an opposition to the capitalist accumulation of capital, and as well as property she develops the idea of sharing which is based on the socially accepted forms of friendship and love. In this sense love is something opposite to the desire of power. Learning of emotions and sharing should be conceptual, not naïve and therefore based on the critical and class-based understanding of society. She opposes the idea of proletarian or red accumulation of love to the financial accumulation of property or capital, and understands romantic love as a process in the new, socialist form. Differently from the gathering of property, the accumulation of love corresponds to the needs of the emotional growth of society, but not the private interests of the capital

owner. Gustave Flaubert, who I mentioned before, was interested only in individual emotional education and growth, egoistic development; however, Kollontai speaks about emotional growth of society. It is not the accumulation of private feelings, not the satisfaction of ownership needs but a participation in the development of the community and a production of emotionally good society.

Summary

The critical Marxism of Lukács largely relied on the works of Luxemburg and developed a critique of the objectification and reification of feelings and emotions. It is the part of contemporary Marxist philosophical anthropology and Critical Theory's philosophical anthropology (J. Butler, A. Honneth). The reification and instrumentalisation of love, family relationships and sex became a defining moment for the current state of individualism and consumption. I am not even ready to use the word "society" because it entails a strong presence of communities, groups or circles of friends. Alienation, objectification of love and the instrumentalism of sex destroy love relationships in factories and manufactories, in universities and institutions. The absence of skills and attitudes, the language of romantic love provides only domestic forms of desire and egoistic individual relationships. On the contrary, openness to socialized romantic love, the development of society's emotional skills help to accept institutional creative spontaneity, power of praxis and poesies which were described in the work of another socialist and anarchist-syndicalist: Cornelius Castoriadis (1987).

I found social dialectics of romantic love and spontaneity extremely important for the development not only of family relationships, not only as the practice of overcoming reification, but first of all as an emotional and moral development of communities and society. Social romantic love engages lovers into circles of common grand ideas and everyday life, into cultures; therefore histories, ideologies, organizations. Contemporary spontaneous

organizational activism presupposes many possibilities: intervention into the cultures of Others (class, gender, religious, subcultural), negotiation, production of alternatives, but also the building of new friendship circles, networks of trust and romantic love relationships. Advocacy of socially engaged developed emotions correlates with the policy of social economy, emotionally open institutions, supports struggle against human exploitation and is political potential for progressive politics today.

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Amor vacui

Religious attempts to tame love

Intro: safe sex?

You can read a few adverts on the website of the French dating site (www.meetic.fr) that left the French philosopher Alain Badiou quite outraged. “*Love exclusive of chances*” – the page tempts you; “*We can be enamoured without being in love*” – they write, and they offer safe love for which you can even hire a love coach who will prepare us for and guide us through the safe adventure. These adverts discuss love from the perspective of safety, and they are about quasi the “*full scale car insurance of love* “. This is the kind of propagandistic war without victims. Action and pleasure with complete aversion of responsibility and consequences.

However extreme these publicity slogans are, they still highlight a typical logic of our current culture, which splits the human and the social phenomena. Pleasures and goods are on one side, while suffering and negative consequences are on the other. We try to build the safe zones of the “risk society” (Beck 1991). The first person plural in this case means the rich, the wealthy

of the upper class of society who will give anything for the security of their pleasures – much like sex tourists in Taiwan. In contrast to them Badiou warns that “we must rediscover risk and adventure as opposed to comfort and safety” (Badiou 2011: 15-18).

The cheat of safe sex, risk-free eroticism is false not only in the sense that accidents can never be completely excluded, but even more because it does not account for the true nature of eroticism, which annuls the usual frames of existence and understanding and conveys experience and knowledges that cannot be integrated into the safe framework of the logic of our everyday routines. Eroticism is an existential risk, total adventure. Just like religion.

Examples from the history of religion

In the majority of religions, love is displayed from the perspective of sexuality, which has positive and negative connections to religious myths and the rituals that convey them. The positive manifestations of sexuality include fertility rituals and sacred orgies; while the negative ones include the techniques of asceticism and sexual self-control. The following is a – consciously arbitrary – selection of pre- and post-hierology religious traditional elements on the basis of one of the most prestigious encyclopaedia of theology (Jones 2005), which delineate the vast space and complicated relations in that eroticism and religion, i.e. the all-subduing sexual drive and the all-encompassing myth intersect. These otherwise very different traditions have one common point in that they do not use love/sexuality on a standalone basis, but interpret them from the religious myth, and for the reinstitution and symbolizing of mythical states.

The framework and rules of everyday life are suspended in the orgies of the *Aranda* people in Central Australia: the ecstasy of orgies is supposed to recall the ideal circumstances of the mythical ancestors. Similarly, the *Ngayau Dayak* tribe in Borneo performs sacred orgies to ritually display the mythical beginnings. The ritual of androgynisation amongst Australian aboriginals

also want to ritually restore or show the original, ancestral past by circumcising the penis and making an incision that reminds of the vulva. Thereby man symbolically returns to his original state and becomes both man and woman “again” (cf. Sexuality in: Jones 2005).

Sexual self-control and other practices do not always presume a dualism of body and spirit. The Han dynasty in the East (25-220 a.D.) the *coitus reservatus* of the Taoist tradition played a ritual role. The male’s ejaculation was prevented through applying pressure on the vas deferens, while female secretion was captured and swallowed. Both were associated with the concept that these secretions guarantee eternal life. The religious teachings of India about sexual desire are known from the *Kama Sutra* (poems of desire) collection, which is very far from the public perception that it is merely a technological guide to sexuality. The *Kama Sutra* discusses sexuality in the reference frame of the Tantra. Tantric texts often use erotic or sexually charged expressions to describe internal feelings or psychological states. For example the adjective of the hymen is the flash, which also denotes emptiness; and expressions used for women also denote non-existence. Tantric texts can be read in a completely spiritual way, but they can also be seen as realistic descriptions of images. The couple performing a sexual act transform into the gods Shiva and Shakti through initiation. The ultimate purpose of the sexual act is to stop, suspend breathing, thinking and discharge (cf. Sexuality in: Jones 2005). These ancient mythologies hint to something that later, noble religious traditions consider further in the form of increasingly complex normative teachings and casuistic guidance. Eros and Amor are interesting for us from this aspect, because they subvert the systems in Europe: they represent the most passionate challenge to our metaphysics, moral and politics.

Amor and Eros – the gods of all-consuming desire

Love opens an empty space where the space is filled with relationships, routines, institutions and judgments. This full space is our basic experience until

love enters and wounds us with its arrow. When love enters, all completeness vanishes; all that was disappears without a trace. Unbreakable bonds break, impossible becomes possible, the opposition of good and bad evaporates; and suddenly there is only nothing, the moment of deepest crisis and creation.

Eros is the Greek embodiment of love or, more precisely, sexual desire, the son of Aphrodite who is attributed great power: He can loosen the limbs of gods and humans (Hesiodos & Most 2006: 121), he is tempestuous and irresistible. He looks like a little child with golden locks who is completely void of any feeling of responsibility. This is what the charming child shooting around with his arrow symbolises in the Hellenistic pantheon. Plato separates the figure of Eros into two, and describes him as the opposition of the intelligent (*sophron*) and the provocative (*aisros*) (Plato & Griffith 2000: 180).

Since Hesiodos there has been a different image of Eros as well, which refers to the cosmological and philosophical reflection. Eros is an ancient potential, the original ancient force that is born from Chaos together with Gaia and Tartaros (the earth and depth), but has no parents. (Hesiodos, Theog. 116-122) Parmenides says that the Nix is Eros's father who is born from the world egg created by him. Amor and Cupid, treated as synonymous, correspond to the figure of Eros in Latin (cf. Eros in: Cancik et al. 2004 <2013>).

The all-consuming, irresponsible vagrancy of Amor is also described in the Jewish and Muslim mythology and poetry. According to the Song of Songs, Amor is an irresistible and lethal passion. "For love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep it away" (Song of Songs 8:6-7). And as we know, the popular tradition of Islam teaches that faithful men are received in paradise by 72 virgins ready to fulfil their every whim. "As for the righteous, they will be in a secure place. Amidst gardens and springs. Dressed in silk and brocade, facing one another. So it is, and we will wed them to lovely companions. They will call therein for every kind of fruit, in peace and security. Therein they will not taste death, beyond the

first death; and He will protect them from the torment of Hell.” (Qur’an 44:51-56). Thus the Qur’an does not promise a perfect celestial harem⁸ that the mortal human (man) desires so much with his sexual drive, but it also refers to the promise of fulfilled desires, the harmony that is in opposition to the experience of earthly life – if Amor wounds you with his arrow. Thus the figures of Eros and Amor in ancient traditions do not represent the immanent vertical of either romantic love or sexual fantasy or practice, but rather the completeness and checklessness of all-encompassing desire.

Amor vacui – endless pleasure in the shadow of nothing

After this excursion into the history of religion, we can also sum up a few aspects of how mythologies of antiquity and pre-antiquity look at Amor. Amor is one of the supreme gods, he is an arbitrary and total power. He represents a passionate threat in earthly life, and endless pleasure and complete satisfaction in the celestial environment. As in case of any other totality, the total demand for Amor is opposed by the void. However, systems try to channel the need and drive of desires to devour all in culture, the soul of the individual and politics alike. One of such systems is called religion.

“Amor vacui” is thus the love of the void, the desire for complete satisfaction, the parallel presence of wanting all and complete oblivion. Love is directed towards the void because it wants satisfaction there alone. It is there in the antecedent void where it wants to enfold, fill up everything, be the being that is alone. The loneliness of complete attention to the other, the one opposite to me, and absolute difference from the other. Amor is the actor and action at the same time. Subject and deed. Amor vacui and horror vacui are the two approaches to the same matrix of relations. All is juxtaposed to the void; it is the fear that fills all according to horror vacui, and the desire

⁸ There has been a centuries long debate amongst the exegetes of the Qur’an on how to interpret paradisiacal huris. Theology lately states that the right translation is about white doves rather than the celestial harem of virgins.

that fills all according to *amor vacui*. The relationship with nothing, the void can be destructive, depressive passivity, or the *carpe diem*, the unlimited hedonism of halfway satisfactions. But it can also be more creative like Derrida's *khora* (Derrida 2005), van Gennep's (van Gennep 1960) or Turner's (Turner 2002) liminality of rites of passage that represent being outside of time and systems, Nietzsche's abyss in which he looks down with pride (Nietzsche 1954 524), or it can be the experience of Jesus in the wilderness where he is surrounded by tame beasts and attended by angels (Marc 4:12-20).

The three models of Christianity for the domestication of love

Amor became an arch enemy of sorts in the teachings of Christianity. This verdict was imposed by Augustine, the bishop of North-Africa and the unsurpassed theologian of the age of the 4th century – he relied on and was inspired by his own existential experience. Augustine's *Confessions* and other works of theology equalled eroticism with sin and hell, the evil itself; and thus a relentless, but forlorn, fight was launched to ban the mischievous Amor. Although his approach is the most influential up until today, the characteristics of Amor as described above are more multifaceted than that Christianity deals with them according to Augustine's teachings only. Let's look at the models of exclusion, inclusion, and finally contrast harmony.

Exclusion

Augustine knew love from his youth, which he opposed with corporeal desire called "sensual love" in *Confessions* (Augustine 2009), which he used to be a slave of. Sensuality became literal hell for him because only he was important to himself instead of his partner or God. He lived with a woman in mutual faithfulness, but he considered sexual communion a sin unless it led to the birth of a child. Therefore there are two sorts of love that exist for him: one that is directed towards the world, which is a sin, and the one directed towards God, which never fades in the service of pleasures.

„But the living soul takes its origin from the earth, for it is not profitable, unless to those already among the faithful, to restrain themselves from the love of this world, that so their soul may live unto You, which was dead while living in pleasures, – in death-bearing pleasures, O Lord, for You are the vital delight of the pure heart. (Confessions, Book 13, Chapter XXI)

Inclusion

The process coined by Augustine, which tried to exclude Amor completely and shove him into the dark void of sin and perdition, was not and could not be fully successful. Christian teaching experimented, and is still experimenting, with a kind of domestication (Cf. e.g. Catholic catechism). We would like to highlight but a few elements of that. First, the differentiation within the concept of love was already there at Augustine, which separated corporeal love and the higher level divine love from each other. Later a *triple division* became dominant: eros is the corporeal love, filia the friendly love, and agape is the divine love.

For Plato, eros does not only mean pure sexual desire driven by instincts, but also a desire for transcendent beauty behind the beauty of the present. He differentiates between vulgar eros and elevated, celestial eros. Real beauty lives in the world of ideals (Phaidros 2000, 249E). This desire cannot be completely satisfied as long as we live. The expression 'filia' in Greek does not only denote friendly love but also loyalty to the family, the political community, the employer and the master (Nicomachean Ethics, Book 8). Agape means the divine love towards humans, and the human's love towards God, but also love felt for the whole of humanity. In Augustine's concept, agape contains the determination and passion of eros, and the quality of agape, but also surpasses these because it is in contact with the transcendent. Agape even extends to the enemy in extreme cases, as it is described in the teachings of Jesus (Matthew 5:44-45).

The theology of Bernard of Clairvaux and Bonaventura are closest to the theological exploitation of the erotic nature of love.

In his work *Agape and Eros* (1930-37), the Swedish Lutheran theologian Anders Nygren takes a strongly opposing stance to all earlier explanations of the concept of love that has preserved something from the Greek or Latin mythologies. He is in opposition to these when he expands on the strictly Biblical contents of love (agape), and discards the values of eros and filia. The opposition of Catholicism and the Protestant church also receives major emphasis in his work, with more support for the latter when he says that love is a direct action and virtue between God and human, so that no mediation by the church is needed at all (Nygren 1982).

However, one of the most influential theologian of the 20th century, Paul Tillich, discusses the threefold nature of eros-filia-agape in patristic by assigning a special Christian content to each of the phenomena, and the essence is that love primarily wants to reunite what has been separated, it wants to unify with the other. The eros quality of love manifests in the wish to unify with transpersonal beauty and truth. The filia quality manifests in the personal unity of I and You. And the agape quality is “the deep dimension of love, i.e. love with regard to the foundation of life “ (Tillich 1999: 63). A next step along this line is the constraint of eroticism in the institutional framework of *marriage*. Surpassing Augustine, the normative teaching of Christianity no longer considers sexual pleasure a sin even if it is not pursuing directly the production of offspring. The deepening of marital love will also legitimate eroticism within a marriage. Another solution for the restriction of unbridled Amor is the elevation of sexual self-restraint (*celibacy*) to the level of extraordinary blessings, and the designation of otherworldly objects for erotic desires instead of mundane objects, primarily with the person of Mary the Divine Mother. And last but not least the spiritualisation of eroticism is achieved with the canonisation of *mystical persons* and the institution of observant orders and the acceptance of their regulations. It was certainly not only Saint Teresa of Ávila or Saint Angela of Foligno, known by many, but also a great number of other distinct mystics who lived

through the deepest erotic experiences in the mystical union with Christ, which is not alien to other religions, but is best known in Europe from the Christian tradition.

Contrast harmony

While the first model wants to exclude eroticism from the religious space entirely and labels it as sin, the second model uses the energy inherent in eroticism. However, we do not consider these two models the most important when considering the religious dimensions of love and sexuality. Namely, the term 'amor vacui' is, beyond all of these, a sort of *coincidentia oppositorum*: it shows its specific depth along the paradoxical unity of contradictions. Amor is the god of unbridled arbitrariness and total subversion to whom everything is non-existent that is against him. He recreates the completeness of relationships and things with his appearance in a devastating manner. If he wounds you with his arrow, everything that has been so far becomes something different. The scholastic name of this phenomenon is *transsubstantiatio*, transfiguration. This technical term entered the Christian teachings through the 4th Lateran Council (1215) and it was applicable to the Eucharist. Along this line, amor vacui allows the perception of eroticism and religion in a contrast harmony. I would like to highlight this solution from the perspective of Georges Bataille who was perhaps the most important philosopher of eroticism in the first half of the 20th century.

The erotic experience is close to the sacred – says Bataille – because both can shatter our lives fundamentally. It belongs to the essence of both to turn us inside out. “The erotic activity liberates the beings who participate in it, it reveals their deep-rooted continuity like waves that of the story sea” (Bataille 1992: 923). In his concept, orgy is exaggeration, turmoil, religious zeal (Bataille 2001 [1958]: 147). It opposes labour with confusion. Labour means discipline, while confusion is eroticism, which represents the inspiring and all confusing challenge of the extremes. The essence of eroticism is that

it crosses the world of taboos, it is transgression. Just as confusion transgresses the system of rules of order.

In his work *Eroticism* (2001) Bataille systematically explains his concept of eroticism that he often discussed in his earlier lectures and essays. His key notions include continuity and interruption, different levels of eroticism (body, heart, mysticism), and also the sacred and the profane. With regard to Christianity he explains that this religion has built up a whole system of taboos and regarded them as sacred. Eroticism has been excluded to outside the religious system and expelled to the satanic sphere of sin. While pagan religions considered transgression sacred, Christianity sees sanctity in compliance and system. His considerations are, on the one hand, provocative and paint a unique picture of eroticism and Christianity. On the other hand they are rough and equal one characteristic of Christianity with the whole. One could state more that Christianity has been trying to turn eroticism into its service at least as much as it has been trying to exclude it. Bataille also refers to this possibility when he gives a positive interpretation of sin from the perspective of redemption at the analysis of the theological term of *felix culpa* (blessed sin). However, in the case of mysticism that is related to eroticism, he does not reflect on erotic spaces within the Christian religious system.

The Christian religion differentiates three forms of eroticism: that of the body; the soul; and the religion. What is common in them is that they can release the individual from his or her closedness. The opposite of closedness is nudity, which is not only the space of approximation of the erotic act, but also of execution. (Stripped of his clothes...) This moment connects the erotic act with the mortal sacrifice. The naked person is virtually destroyed in his or her shame. The erotics of the body is a violent act of communion irrespective of securing the offspring, in which both parties attempt to reunify what was split into two: woman and man. The eroticism of the heart is the longing for the other which, when consumed, also dies and ends up in the erotic act of the body. If it is not consumed, then it becomes creative self-expression,

poetry. And finally the eroticism of religion, sanctity (which could also be described as the divine) is the sacrifice and mysticism; both are benign encounters with continuity that many religions name god.

Conclusion

Amor vacui – by examining the expression in the title we can gain insight into how the interaction of eroticism and religion is not primarily defined by a competitive fight. The related demand of eroticism and religion for complete inspiration is more important, with pornography and kitsch at the opposite extreme. Pornography performs sexuality on the level of the technology of satisfaction, while kitsch replaces unique and existential aesthetic or religious experience with a mass product.

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Conservative love: unequal love?

What do theoreticians of conservatism⁹ as a way of thinking hold about love? Is there any political and emancipatory potential in love according to conservatives?

Authors listed in the conservative pantheon¹⁰ deal with the topic of love sporadically only, because they are mainly concerned with the issues of politics, society and the state; i.e. public affairs, while love is considered to be a private matter. Equality as a utopic aim is not important to them; it is more something that needs to be rejected. So that it is more other elements of their philosophy, primarily their views on humans, i.e. man and woman, that allow us to conclude to what they might think of love. I will attempt to give an overview of that below.

⁹ Historically, conservatism emerged as a reaction to and critique of the French Revolution, c.f. Burke 1990; Nyirkos 2014.

¹⁰ Who belong to the “conservative pantheon” more or less is discussed e.g. by Egedy 2005; Egedy 2014.

Edmund Burke as one of the “founders” of Conservatism discusses love for a few pages in his juvenile work on the supreme and beauty (1757); however, he does not examine the human relationship but rather the emotion itself, which he analyses from an aesthetic point of view (Burke 2008: 46-49, 60).

C.S. Lewis also discusses medieval courtly love and the theological-philosophical concept of love (Lewis 1936, Lewis 1960), who may be familiar to the public as the author of the Chronicles of Narnia, but his work as a literature historian and defender of the Christian faith is also well recognised. He emphasises that love is directed to a particular person in their entirety, as opposed to mere loveless sexual desire, the satisfaction of which does not consider the personality of the other important. Lewis points out that in love – in contrast to friendship – we do not represent ourselves only, but “all masculinity and femininity of the world”; “the man does play Sky-Father and the woman the Earth-Mother, he does play Form and she Matter” – thus consciously borrowing pagan symbolism despite him being a Christian apologist (Lewis 1960: 145).

However, we must turn to Roger Scruton for a more contemporary approach related to the issues of gender and emancipation, who dedicates a whole chapter to love in his work on the philosophy of sexual desire (Scruton 2006: 213-252).

The conservative attitude

In order to understand why equality is not that important for conservatives, we need to examine their general philosophy of the world. Conservatism is like other systems of thought: it is multi-faceted. People tend to say that there is no such thing as conservatism, there are only conservatives: religious and atheists, ones who think along the lines of eternal morality, and ones that are sceptical about truth, monarchists and republicans, capitalists and anti-capitalists, nationalists and internationalists. Russell Kirk, one of the kick-starters of the conservative renaissance in the United States in the

fifties who wrote a general overview of Anglo-Saxon conservative thinkers was completely clear about the diversity amongst conservative authors. He declared that there was no such thing as a “conservative model”, conservatism is against ideologies, it is more akin to a state of mind, a type of a character. However, Kirk adds, there certainly is a common point in that conservatives want to preserve “ancient moral tradition” of humankind, and they think that political problems are ultimately “religious and moral problems” (Kirk 2008: 7.; Kirk, “*Ten Conservative Principles*”).

One of the characteristics of the conservative attitude is an epistemological scepticism vis-a-vis the possibility to understand ultimate, universal truths, which is similar to that of post-modernism: This states that the functioning of the world and humans is so complicated and sometimes random that it is ultimately impossible to understand. There are conservatives who are truly so sceptical that they are accused of relativism similar to post-modernism; and there are others who assume that universal and eternal moral principles exist, which can be laws of nature of anything else, however, it is impossible to transform these into a general guide to behaviour that could be use always, everywhere and in all situations.

Conservative authors agree that the solution is not the resistance of post-modernism to the quest for truth, but rather sticking to knowledge, proven practices, habits and institutions, the common moral that were accumulated over the course of centuries. These may be imperfect, but they provide a safe framework for human coexistence and welfare. They believe that tradition does not suppress but rather liberates you, e.g. from the burden of always starting from scratch, from *creatio ex nihilo*. Conservatives who criticise modernity like post-modernists do often argue from a pre-modern stance.

Even conservatives who are sceptical about eternal truth insist on “ancient, moral tradition”, and, interestingly, exactly because of their scepticism because they believe that it has been proved by practice, so that it is better to rely on it than to keep searching for eternal truth.

Conditio humana

As love is an interpersonal relationship that lays major emphasis on our uniqueness and human existence, it is important to look at how conservatives view the human. They believe that there is such a thing as natural, eternal, given human nature that is independent of society and pre-dates politics. Because if there is no human nature, then there is no human either as there are no essential characteristics that would define humanity. Thus conservatives are indeed essentialists. Conservatives accept the classical view of Christianity that man is the inseparable unity of body and soul, and therefore they refuse not only materialism but also spiritualism that devalue the material world. Human existence is also bodily existence: male and female existence.

Conservatives may accept Michel Foucault's premise that power relations indelibly transcend our human relations (Foucault 1999: 91-96), however, they don't see any tragic component in this. This is a given of human existence that is easy to live with. Asymmetry, conflicts and problems cannot be eliminated from the world. However, conservatives also believe that the overly socialised stance of post-modernism is not true when it says that the person is only a product of social interactions. If that were true, it would also mean that the need for autonomy and recognition emphasised by the supporters of this view could not exist either: "that the 'self' is created in interactions, dialogue and exchanges, then where does the 'self' come from that requires recognition" (Molnár 2014: 96-97). Of course, post-modernism is partly true: We are not born free but into natural communities social beings, however, this community (or if you like social interactions) do not oppress you, but we become free through education received from the community (Scruton 2010: 41-55).

Conservatives confess to the "politics of imperfection": Man is imperfect in terms of both his mind and moral, therefore society and politics are also imperfect. This means that if we want to improve the world and society from

its foundations, then we attempt something that we don't and will never have sufficient knowledge for. This utopic, revolutionary attitude of "engineering society", which would create an earthly paradise, could, in turn, lead to a point when we generate bigger problems as a side effect than the ones we solve. Politics focusing on equality is also seen as such a utopic effort.

Equality

Already quoted above, Russel Kirk gave a good summary of the view of conservatives on equality and equalisation: "For the preservation of a healthy diversity in any civilization, there must survive orders and classes, differences in material condition, and many sorts of inequality. The only true forms of equality are equality at the Last Judgment and equality before a just court of law; all other attempts at levelling must lead, at best, to social stagnation. Society requires honest and able leadership; and if natural and institutional differences are destroyed, presently some tyrant or host of squalid oligarchs will create new forms of inequality (Kirk, *Ten Conservative Principles*).

According to John Kekes, the American conservative (and also atheist) philosopher of Hungarian descent, pluralism is also against egalitarianism because the latter defines an absolute basic principle, while the values of freedom, order, peace, justice, healthy environment etc. may be in conflict with the basic principle of equality. He says that neither people nor their dignity is equal; or if yes, then at most on an abstract level that has no practical consequences whatsoever; it is rather inequalities, merits and acts that have practical consequences (Kekes 2004, 88, 109-111). What is the ground for this scepticism with regard to egalitarianism? While egalitarians think that equality is the guarantee for freedom (because power relations create the possibility to control others, and thus represent a potential threat to the autonomy of others), conservatives believe that equality, if we attempt to create it politically, is the death of freedom (because if we get freedom, then inequalities will naturally emerge).

All of this certainly does not mean that conservative thinkers think that some sort of inequality would be desirable in all relationships and interpersonal relations. However, hierarchical relations are equally justified in interpersonal relations (e.g. school, workplace), as are equal and coordinate relations (e.g. friendship, love). They can even support measures that can be described as emancipatory like the fight against the glass ceiling or the encouragement of part-time employment to ease the situation of the parents (in practice usually the mother), or the facilitation of a more family-friendly employment market. However, all of this does not happen on the basis of an intention that considers equality a general and self-explanatory value, but it is rather family-friendliness (or eventually freedom) that is the starting point for conservatives.

Scruton on love

Scruton argues for traditional morality. His main, perhaps surprising postulate is that Plato was wrong when he opposed love and sexual desire. This is interesting because it is exactly traditional morality, which is usually accused of being anti-corporeal; Scruton turns this accusation around. While he admits that the traditional Christian approach – on the basis of Plato – has devalued sexuality excessively, his target is the anti-corporeal approach of the Enlightenment, and authors who try to explain sexuality in a scientific way such as Sigmund Freud and Alfred Kinsey who, in Scruton's view, disregarded the fact that love and sexuality were directed at a concrete person rather than anyone or anything. Thereby Scruton partly protects, partly criticises Christian sexual ethics. It is important to know in this context that while Christianity, practically on the basis of the Platonist Saint Augustine, disdained the body for a long time, it has always taught about the inseparable unity of body and soul in its theology. However, Scruton does not primarily rely on Christian theology when he outlines and protects an approach to love and sexuality that he assumes to be traditional, yet more positive towards

earthly delights than Christianity. It is a good question then what exactly Scruton means under traditional morality; it is probably the unity of body and soul, and idiosyncrasy as opposed to dry, scientific explanations.

Scruton – like Lewis – lays emphasis on the relationship between concrete persons. He believes that “erotic love” is the form of desire and love at the same time. The other person, in his or her embodiment and concreteness, is a central focus for both love and the accompanying erotic desire.

Is this relationship between concrete persons a coordinate relationship of equals? For this we need to examine the question of friendship and love. The important elements of friendship are, states Scruton on the basis of Aristotle and Michel de Montaigne, respect and mutuality; consequently, we may add, assumes a sort of equality and horizontality in their relationship. According to Scruton the same is true for love because the “structure” of love is like that of friendship; and yet, he adds, there are two points of difference: the feeling of exigency (we fall in love despite our will) and the “absolute focus” on the physical existence of the other (we cannot think of anybody else than the person we are in love with).

Scruton on men and women

Immanuel Kant, perhaps the most important philosopher of the Enlightenment tried to establish the dignity, autonomy and equality of the persons by creating the phenomenon of the transcendent person. This posits that all our characteristics, including our bodies, are random. What I really am to myself and others is a person; my personality can be separated from my body. The consequence of this is that there can be two types of human bodies: male and female, but there cannot be two different persons on this basis.

This philosophy of the personality is, according to Scruton, against the picture that conservatives hold of the human, and it is incomplete at several points. He argues that Kant’s approach leaves a rather unlikely role to the concept of “gender”; it does not take seriously our bodily existence, i.e. it

“stands at war” with the truth that we are our bodies, and it thus completely separates personal freedom from our biological destiny for the sake of a transcendental illusion. Finally, Scruton says, Kant fails to recognise that if the differentiation between genders is artificial, then the human person is also artificial, i.e. he challenges this concept of the personality.

It is namely unavoidable, states Scruton, that we become persons and have a concept of persons. However, the concept of the person changes from one culture to the other. The same is true for gender. And these two processes go hand in hand: the evolution of the person and the evolution of gender are the two aspects of the same story. At the same time it derives from our fundamental experience of being people embodied in a biological sex that we must become persons on the basis of this experience, so that we need to construct ourselves accordingly – biological sex therefore has ethical relevance, too.

Scruton states that one of the important branches of feminism builds on the Kantian concept of personhood, and he considers Simone de Beauvoir, the author of the key feminist writing *Second Sex* to be the iconic representative of this strain.¹¹ However, Scruton also believes that differences between the sexes are irrelevant for this group that he describes as “Kantian feminism”, just as you can cut two different gems to the same shape.

Of course, writes Scruton, characteristics that are thought to be traditionally masculine or feminine, in fact masculinity and femininity can also be conceived as a scale without and strict discreet categories. But where men and women differ most, according to Scruton, is the perception and experience of their sexuality: “gender is an elaborate social prelude; when the curtain rises, what is disclosed is not gender, but sex” (Scruton 2006: 265). Meaning that in sexuality, where the body is the subject of curiosity and

¹¹ Hogy Scrutonnak ez ügyben igaza van-e, az témánk szempontjából mellékes, de meg kell jegyez-
zük: Beauvoir-t a kanti felvilágosodással szemben álló feministák egyik kiindulópontjuknak tekin-
tik, így nem biztos, hogy egyetértének Scrutonnal.

exploration, inborn, biological-psychical characteristics, which defined differences between the sexes, become the most important. The nature of embodiment is best reflected in the anatomical differences that separate men from women: Scruton assumes that “we know, then, the ‘truth’ of gender: which is that, as embodied creatures, we are inseparable from our sex” (ibid. 266).

According to Scruton, the most important aspect is not whether masculinity and femininity change over the course of history, but rather that this fundamental difference exists universally; and therefore it is necessary that we experience the world through this schism, this split in one way or another. Without that we would ignore a fundamental feature that is an organic part of our human existence: “The distinction between man and woman is a distinction of sphere, of activity, of role and of responses; it is also a distinction within the structure of desire. We might fight against these distinctions; we may wish to remodel them, even to destroy them altogether. But they exist, and not a few philosophers drawn extraordinary conclusions which depend, for their plausibility, upon our acceptance of given gender identities as natural” (Scruton 2006: 269).¹²

All of this leaves us with the truth that genders are also socially constructed – notes the English philosopher – because all customs, moral and language stem from interactions among people; however, this does not mean that they do not result also from our human nature. US law professor Carlos Ball also points out in his book arguing about the morality of gay rights that moderate constructionism is compatible with a certain degree of essentialism (Ball 2002).¹³

¹² Scruton fails to explain why he thinks that differences between spheres derive from the difference between men and women; the author of this essay assumes that Scruton was certainly not considering a strict separation but rather an observed shift in emphases; however if it a strict separation that he means, then he is wrong.

¹³ Ball argues that the gay movement should not fight for its aims starting from the basic tenet of the neutral state and ethical neutrality, but it should rather display them as morally good and acceptable objectives.

It is much discussed today by social scientists and philosophers if human “essence”, nature or state exist at all, and mainly if masculine and feminine characteristics exist as inborn. We should add, however, that no serious contemporary conservative author thinks that everything is determined by biological (genetic, hormonal, psychological etc.) sexual differences. It seems more that thinkers ignoring biology entirely stand in opposition to those who believe that the characteristics, features and choices of men and women are partly also influenced by their biology (Lippa 2005).

None of this means that conservatives would oblige anyone to choose a job or activity that they assume would fit them – they welcome if the freedom of choice is open to everyone, and everyone can do what they want to do. But it is merely futile and pointless if we try to change trends that apparently are according to our own choices (Lippa 2008). Freedom here is in opposition to equality if it is understood as numerical equality.

Personal? Political? Emancipation?

Robert P. George, professor of law at Princeton University, and his fellow authors who argue for the exclusivity of marriage between man and woman say that “the more intimate a relationship, the less it tends to attract the state’s attention” (George et al. 2012: 38), so that the matter of love can be important for the state from the aspect of rearing children (sustainability of society) only. Scruton, however, also states that we as social beings inevitably live in a web of religious, civil and legal institutions, so that erotic love cannot be politically neutral or innocent (Scruton 2006: 361). Namely, conservative thinking – in agreement with Aristotle – sees family as the basic unit of society, and in that case the strength of intimate partnerships that represent the foundation of the family is important (and so is the strength of marriages based on intimate partnerships, as conservatives see marriage as the most adequate framework for setting up a family) (George et al. 2012: 39-41).

The tradition of conservative thinking lets us conclude that there is nothing wrong with love and romantic attraction gaining ground as the foundation for marriage in the last centuries. They can also welcome the emancipation of women, as women are no longer legally (or by unwritten custom) subordinated to men, and they appear as equal. However, conservatives think it is a private matter how roles are distributed within a couple.

In my view, however, conservatives are more likely to argue for the traditional approach to masculinity and femininity in the public discourse, i.e. they would emphasise that men should be masculine, while women should be feminine. We cannot deny that no clear boundaries can be drawn here, and that there are many exceptions; and yet they believe in some kind of a male and female ideal. This may, nevertheless, include an emphasis on experiencing our own emotional lives as men (which may make men more complete), or encouraging fathers to play a bigger role at home; and it is even compatible with the concept that a husband should also support his wife in her career. Supporting women in undertaking political roles can seamlessly fit into this frame (especially since Margaret Thatcher).

Conclusions

Love is certainly important for people of a conservative conviction not only for the reasons of marriage and family, but it has a societal and political aspect only to the extent that love, as a relationship between private individuals points towards the continuation of life; and it the undertaking of this relationship needs to be strengthened because members of society have become insecure about their relations and commitments. Scruton also consider the demystification of the world and the disappearance of rites and sanctity from the world as fundamental problems: “as those changes take their effect, the experiences of erotic love becomes dangerous and uncertain in its outcome. Our responsibility retreats further from the confused terrain of sexual experience, and threatens even to void it of desire” (Scruton 2006: 361).

Is there political and emancipatory potential in love for conservatives? Is love political or personal? In order to find an answer we need to point out that conservatism thinks exactly the other way round as compared to critical theory, post-modernism and Marxist approaches. These emancipatory approaches demonstrate radical dissatisfaction with how the world is set up even today, when they say that it is dominated by exploitative capitalism and the suppressive “heteronormative matrix”. Thus – using the coveted expression of conservatives – they argue for social engineering; and they use love also as a tool for the liberation and emancipation, and the transformation of the world – however, such and exploitation of the most intimate relations of a person is ethically solicitous from a conservative aspect. However, it is a pointless question for conservatives beyond this ethical concern: love to them, like other human relations, is a pre-political factor; and politics must consider it as a fundamental, unavoidable aspect of life, and as such it needs to be respected and left alone. Capitalism is an aspect of the material aspect of the world, which may be imperfect but it is an appropriate way to take care of our day-to-day business; and the “heteronormative matrix” is not some cunning invention of the intention to oppress, but it is also an existing, natural, pre-political phenomenon as a consequence of the attitude of the overwhelming majority of the people, and the need to sustain the species. Conservatives thus want to preserve and protect rather than transform all of that, which means that if conservatives were to politicise love more than it is now, then they would certainly do it in a “reactionary” way. Therefore they also don’t have a social engineering agenda for which love could be used, and on the basis of which the issue of the “emancipatory potential” of love could arise.

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Attachment and love

*“Like all real love stories,
ours will die with us, as it should.”*

(John Green: Fault in Our Stars)

If we want to understand love (and even the concept seems almost paradoxical), then it is important to examine what is in its background from a psychological perspective. Why does it happen that some adults are constantly in love – always with someone else –, but there are others, which represents the other extreme, who is unable to be in love ever.

The acknowledged psychology researchers Cindy Hazan and Phillip Shaver state that love is related to the functioning of three behavioural systems: attachment, sexuality and care. I will focus on attachment in my essay. “We suggest to conceptualise love as an attachment process, which people perceive slightly differently according to their earlier attachment history” (Hazan & Shaver 1987: 511; cited by Urbán 1995: 355). On the basis of research on attachment and my experience in the following I will be looking for an answer to what foundations can facilitate a person in experiencing “real love”.

Attachment

The first research initiatives looked at children. Therefore, as the roots of adult attachment patterns should be traced in childhood, we should make a brief overview of the research into attachment in the last near one hundred years.

Based on the theories of Sigmund Freud the common concept up into the middle of the twentieth century was that love was focussed on interests: the child will bind to the person that satisfies its needs (Pulay 1997). According to Freud, human beings are mainly motivated by their biological urges (drives), so that the “the origin of love is in the attachment to the satisfied need of feeding” (Freud 1940/1964, cited by Cole 2003: 249). This phenomenon is called drive reduction. Freud considers the relationship with the mother key also in later stages of development, this relationship “becomes the prototype for the love relationships of both genders” (Cole 2003: 188).

According to the evolutionary theory of the renowned development psychology researcher John Bowlby assumes that attachment is a well-developed regulatory system, which emerges between the mother and her child during the first year of life. Bowlby observed monkeys carrying their offspring, or mothers following offspring closely. The biological purpose of this behaviour is to have the offspring close to the mother, which increases its chances of survival. When the offspring venture farther away to discover the world, they keep an eye on the mother even then, and they rush back to her at the first unusual or apparently dangerous signal. Bowlby assumed that this relationship model becomes an internal working model that will determine the later relationship with the caregiver and others (ibid: 249).

The experiments of the US psychologist researcher Harry Harlow (1959) with rhesus macaques have taught us that the mere satisfaction of biological needs is not sufficient for health psychosocial development, contrary to what Freud posited. His series of experiments involved infant monkeys separated from their mothers 12 hours after their birth, then placing two artificial sur-

rogate mothers into their cage: one made from wire that dosed food, and one covered in fur that the infant monkey could hold on to. The monkeys spent the larger part of the day clinging to the fur mother, and they climbed on the wire mother to eat only. If a scary object was placed into the cage, then the infant monkey rushed to the fur mother and clung to it. Harlow concluded that safety is more important even than food for forming attachment. It is important to point out that the fur mother alone was not sufficient for healthy development. These monkeys could not relate to their peers, were either aggressive or apathetic in their later lives, and also could not copulate normally. All of this supports Bowlby's concepts that the mother-child relationship is a well-developed regulatory system, and that safety and social interaction are needed for healthy emotional development (ibid: 252).

Mary Ainsworth, the famous American developmental psychologist and colleagues worked out a method in 1978 to examine attachment styles, which she named "strange situation". The key point of the experiment was to find out how infants behave if the mother leaves (when it is left alone), when it is with a stranger, and when the mother returns. Children could be allocated to three larger groups according to their behaviour.

Secure attachment (65%): These infants played quietly when their mothers were present, and they kept in contact with her (e.g. through eye contact) when they ventured to farther distances. They cried when the mother left, and were happy to receive her upon her return.

Insecure - avoidant (23%): The child was hardly interested in the presence of the mother. They were not actively looking for the proximity of the mother, but they were also not actively avoiding it. When the mother left, they remained quiet, but they were avoidant upon her return. A stranger could calm them down just as well as their own mother.

Insecure - ambivalent (12%): These children clung to their mother desperately initially, and they found it hard to start playing. When the mother was out of sight, they became tense, nervous; and when the mother returned,

they became angry and avoidant as if punishing the mother for not being present (Main, Solomon, 1986; cited by Carver & Sheier, 2003: 284).

These are the attachment patterns. But why does one child become securely attached and insecurely the other? Let's move on.

Research into attachment patterns

Researchers have done a great amount of research to understand the reasons for these attachment patterns in the last 30 to 40 years. The two main questions were what might be in the background of different patterns, what are the reasons; and whether these patterns have any effect on later development.

Influencing factors

Parental behaviour

Observational studies have shown that the mother of the securely attached child pays attention to the slightest signals of the child, and reacts to the child's needs adequately and "synchronously" (smiles to return a smile, and reacts to crying in a manner adequate for the problem). The mother of the avoidant child is often rude and rejecting; while the mother of the ambivalent child is inconsequential and does not adapt to the child's needs (Belsky & Isabella 1989; cited by Carver & Sheier 2003). Ainsworth found that the securely attached child's mother was characterised by the ability to give sensitive answers; the good relationship between the mother and the child is characterised by an active dialogue and a mutual process (Oláh & Bugán, 2001). The response preparedness of the mother (as the primary caregiver) to stress does not influence attachment in itself, but it is much more important that she interprets the infant's signals correctly and that she reacts to them adequately (Belsky & Isabella 1989; cited by Carver & Sheier 2003: 285).

Inborn characteristics of the infant / inborn temperament

According to Thomson and Chess (1977; cited by Oatley & Jenkins 2001) neither the mother's, nor the child's personality are good predictors of the emerging

attachment style, but it is the “good fit” of the mother and the child that determines. Ultimately, due to the many contradictory research results, the common standpoint is that temperament may play a role in the development of attachment, but not a very big one. Additional research is needed.

The role of the family

Evidence shows that the chances for secure attachment are better in case of families living under more secure financial circumstances (Shaw and Vondra, 1993, in: *ibid*). The other factor is the relationship between parents: The rate of insecure attachment is higher amongst the children of couples who have relationship problems (Belsky & Laabella, 1988, *ibid*). Addiction or any other serious illness of any of the parents can also be important.

Cultural effects

There are different educational customs in different cultures, which also have an impact on the development of the child’s attachment. Some research shows that children growing up in kibbutzim in Israel, who have been raised in communities since their early years, are much more insecure even though they see their parents every day: only 37% of them showed a secure attachment pattern (Sagi et al. 1994; cited by Cole 2002: 258). Children who spent the night with their parents instead of the common dormitory were significantly more securely attached. Other research looked at German children and found again a lower rate of securely attached (33%). The reason is assumed to be that German parents convey cultural values that require greater interpersonal distance, and they try to dissuade their children from “clinging”, this hoping for the development of a more autonomous personality (Grossmann et al, 1985; cited by Cole, 2002, *ibid*).

Attachment to the father

The most defining relationship in the early years of the infant usually exists with the mother as they get to spend most of their time with her (primary caregiver). Amongst attachment research, there is only sporadic evidence

into other relationships with others, e.g. the relationship of the father and the child. In pre-school age, when little girls start identifying with their mothers, boys have a greater need to identify with their fathers, and so they have to differentiate themselves from the person that they have had the closest relationship with up to that point. According to Freud, who gave the to-date best known explanation of this process, boys have to rearrange their attachment patterns at this time, they must take a distance from their mothers and re-rapprochement their fathers, and they use this process to acquire their sexual identity that they will retain in their adult years (Cole 2002). This may lead to a more difficult situation of boys nowadays when more and more fathers “are missing” from families. The reason is often divorce, perhaps death, but, most commonly, even if there is a father, his work and travel take so much time that he is hardly present in the life of his children.

The stability of attachment patterns, and the internal working model

As quoted above, Bowlby was the first to assume that the child establishes an internal mental “working model” for the functioning of relationships on the basis of its relationship with the primary caregiver, and this is then used for its later relations (Bowlby 1969, in: Carver & Sheier 2003). This model contains an expectation on what to expect in intimate relations, how far one can trust the other. The internal working model operates unconsciously and it influences our social experience. The internal working model of securely attached person stores an implicit memory and knowledge, which says, “if I get into trouble, someone will take care of me, and my feelings will be seen positively”. In contrast, people with insecure attachment patterns feel doubtful about whether help will ever come, and if yes when and from where (Kököneyi 2006, cited by Vetier 2007).

The developmental psychologists Main and Cassidy compared the attachment patterns of the same children at their ages of one and six. Their re-

search showed that 84% of the children had the same attachment patterns at the ages of one and six (1998; cited by Carver & Sheier 2003: 285). Other research has also demonstrated that the attachment style remained largely the same up until adulthood (Walters 1995; in: Oatley & Jenkins 2001).

The internal mental working model is stable, durable and difficult to change, partly because the parent's behaviour is unchanged, and partly because the model is self-sustaining (Pulay 1997; Urbán, 1995). It renders the emergent behavioural pattern permanent and consistent, so that it becomes like a trait and form the core of the personality (Maunder & Hunter, 2001). The working model resists major changes as well, but it also changes as it is an active construct, thus it is not entirely impossible to alter it (Urbán 1995). For example psychotherapy can also help this process as I could also learn from my own experience.

Attachment patterns of adults

While children's attachment to their parents is asymmetric, adult attachment to the partner is symmetric and mutual, and sexuality as a fundamental force of cohesion also appears (Urbán 1995).

Hazan and Shaver asked adult participants in 1987 to complete a questionnaire that allowed them to assess their current or former love relationships along different scales. Their analysis could find a good number of similarities between the attachment styles of children and adults. Persons with different attachment styles also have different views of love, and are attached to their partners differently (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; cited by Feeney, 1991).

Secure / autonomous attachment

They feel that they are valuable and lovable. They are happier than the persons belonging to other attachment categories, but they are also more adaptable and understanding (Maunder & Hunter 2001). They were satisfied with their relationships, and their alliances proved to be longer lasting than those

of persons in other attachment types. They perceived love as a real and long-term feeling that does not fade with time (Carver & Sheier, 2003: 287).

Avoidant / dismissing attachment

They do not trust themselves or their partners, and they are afraid of not being lovable, or that their partner does not love them. They are afraid of intimacy and commitment, and cannot achieve a sense of security in their relationships, so that they rather enter into superficial relationships; they are playful and fraternising in love and are less ready to accept their partner's faults (Feeney 1999; in: Szendi 2002). The avoidant type does not believe in long-term love, does not ask for help in trouble because they do not trust that they would get any help (Carver & Sheier 2003).

Preoccupied / ambivalent attachment

This type has various names in the literature: ambivalent / obsessed / biased / flooded. They would often idealise their partner and relationship. They suppress their feelings and tend to be compromising for fear of losing their partner (Feeney, 1999; in: Szendi 2002), as they don't trust their partner completely. While afraid of loss, they also desire extreme closeness, so that their relationships are characterised by large feelings, crushes, depths and bouts of jealousy. They think that falling in love is child's play, but it can never be lasting (Carver & Sheier 2003).

Fearful attachment

The relationships of person with fearful attachment style are less satisfactory than those of securely attached persons. They trust others less, and therefore they also avoid closeness (Maunder & Hunter 2001). Only few of the fearful persons have perceived all-consuming love; love is more akin to friendship to them. They believe that others commit all too much, and when a relation-

ship of a fearful person ends, they are far less sad than persons with other attachment styles (Feeney 1994).

Different loves

After the threefold of love described by Hazan and Shaver: attachment, sexuality and care, let’s see another example. Sternberg argues for the three dimensions of intimacy (emotional proximity and mutuality), passion and commitment (Cole 2002). The combination of these three components results in different types of love in Sternberg’s system. We might discover some similarities in the two triads. Sexuality and passion can be seen as the same. I would relate attachment to intimacy, while care with commitment. If we can attach to someone, then we dare let them close to us, we trust them, and can commit ourselves to them on long term. This can be real intimacy. By the way, the triad of eros (passion), filia (intimacy, spiritual closeness) and agape (commitment) rooted in Christian teachings, and referred to in the essay of András Máté-Tóth and Gabriella Turai, can also be linked to this concept.

As the below table explains, Sternberg considers love encompassing all three components “consummate love”: It not only includes passion, it is not only an intimate relationship of souls, it is also not only a promise “till death us parts”. All of these together could compose real love.

Intimacy	Passion	Commitment	
+	-	-	<i>Filial</i> ♥
-	+	-	<i>Crush</i> ♥
+	+	-	<i>Romantic</i> ♥
-	-	+	<i>Empty</i> ♥
-	+	+	<i>Blind</i> ♥
+	-	+	<i>Partnership</i> ♥
+	+	+	<i>Consummate</i> ♥

Summary

Looking around even in my immediate environment (capital and suburbs, middle class, upper-middle class, high school and university graduates), it is obvious that life-long, consummate love is becoming increasingly rare. Maybe I can consider myself lucky that I know several married couples who (seem to) succeed at living this kind of life that is perhaps “no longer normal” today. They have been married for 20-30 years and still know how to be in love. I talk about marriage because my experience shows that couples that have been together for so long are usually married, too (with a very few exceptions). But this is no longer typical. One could say that marriage is an outdated institution and not invented for the people of the 21st century; or that the institutions of marriage, and even conservative values, are in a crisis, but I would rather tend to say that it is humankind that is facing a crisis. New “family forms” that go against the heteronormative trend of the nuclear family, such as LGBT families, polyamorous relationships, polygamy, different communes are not sustainable on longer term (Ridley 2014), even if more or less healthy children can grow up. What I can completely agree with, on the basis of my experience from my therapy practice, is the extended family model but not in the most modern sense of the word. It is becoming increasingly fashionable in the United States that generations live together again. It certainly requires a lot of adaptation, yet 16.6% choose this option (Moeller 2010). A nuclear family is almost sentenced to death unless it has external relations. However, I mean familial and friendly, helping relations. I am certainly looking forward to learning more from research results with other forms of family.

*“Love is in the air (...) and I don't know if I'm being wise (...)
But it's something that I must believe in...”*
(Paul Young)

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Constructing family, understanding love

The precariousness of bonding and romance in Europe

Introduction

Facing the diverging patterns of European memory, the legacies of colonialism, the communist history and the various continuing forms of nationalism, can we speak about the European concept of family, the European concept of love (e.g. Passerini 2009, Gluhovic 2013)? Historically speaking, love, a concept continually under-theorised, had undergone various processes of signification vis-à-vis the changing politics of romance and family in Europe. One of the most compelling drives in human life (Irigaray 1997), love has been viewed as a psychic, un-measurable and unruly subject, a realm envisioned by art, literature and philosophy, i.e. areas considered less relevant for science and more for pleasurable pursuit. While early European history of family developed contradictory and politically conflicting meanings of love enactments relying on various traditions (e.g. homoerotic love inherited from the ancient Greece, Roman political, religion and power-related polygamy, arranged aristocratic marriages, troubadour/chivalry romance), they culminate in the

vidualisation of love (within nuclear bonding and romance) and love as a source of security in the social (communities, groups, villages, cooperatives). Feminist and LGBT research, in particular, formulates questions as to whether family, as a love bond of choice, is capable of transcending its nuclear entrapment, and whether this implies increasing instability of bonding (e.g. Ferry 2013). If so, what does it mean and what does it require, to love oneself, and simultaneously, to be in love with the other?

In fact, the 21st century marks a significant turning point in thinking about love as affected by current politically compressed and unresolved contentions between the diverging concepts of individuality, plurality (co-existence) and diversification of bonding (e.g. Illouz 2007, Lynch 2009, Sassen 2014, Bjørnholt & McKay 2014). For the sake of further discussion, I assume a broad (difference sensitive and tolerance based) definition of bonding meant as emotional and/or physical attachment of humans and non-humans based on culturally acceptable and non-acceptable standards, e.g. bonding between biological mother with her child, bonding between non-biological (adoptive, etc.) parent and the child, bonding between two or more adults, bonding between family members and animals (pets), bonding between various members of a group, community. Accordingly, research discussed here shows that concepts of family have undergone significant transformations, and academia is now beginning to formulate new concepts of love as powerful social mechanism for change and as a subject of knowledge. The FES conference and the present volume have therefore opened a discussion on the newly arising and most compelling subjects that – due to previous scientific undervaluation of love – have not been sufficiently explored in psychic and socio-political terms.

Tensions between the individual (union) and the collective (sociality)

In the 19th and the early 20th century European middle and upper class sociality, love appears as a narcissistic, spontaneous orientation towards indi-

vidual desires and anxieties of existential nature (e.g. Kierkegaard 1847, Heidegger 1927, Freud 1953-74). Following post-Freudian thinking about sexuality, most influential societal theories conceptualise love both in terms of individualised fulfilment of the longing for union (e.g. Fromm 1956, Levinas 1987) and commercialised value at hands of political power (e.g., Foucault 1976, Ahmed 2010). Such complex, but not mutually exclusive perception of love implies vulnerability of individuals in the face of bio-social forces (e.g. Deleuze & Guattari 1987, Kristeva 1995, Bauman 2003), whereby bonding remains both morally anchored in the nuclear heterosexuality (e.g. Butler 1997) and further maintained by commodification of affects (e.g. Illouz 2007, Ahmed 2010).

Moreover, in the second half of the 20th century, the increasingly multicultural and equally individualistic ideas of romance begin to appear on the grounds of freedom, choice and rationality, which have replaced religious and moral traditions (e.g. Giddens 1992). In Giddens' account, the Europeans ('Westerners') have moved from the conjugal relationships of the Victorian Age, through the romanticised marital arrangements of the following century towards 'pure relationship' (confluent love) as a subject of free negotiation between autonomous partners who commit to family out of 'will' rather than traditional obligation. Following this thought, individuals can choose among plural life style preferences, whereby sexuality (erotically satisfying partnership) appears to be most fundamental, overlapping in many ways with the Freudian libido, a mental/erotic force that stands against death drive. From this individuality-triggered and privacy-focused perspective, any outside authority appears as pathology imported into the relationship from the sociality. Contemporary love, confined to the sphere of private European homes, reflects on such ontological singularity, envisioned in this volume by Melinda Portik-Bakai's contribution that focuses on the act of reconciliation between family (care, affects, intimacy) and the outside world (sociality). This singularity, based on individualised recognition of happiness, desire and care, remains in

fact the only source of existential security that subjectively empowers or disempowers individuals, whereby the key to family life (bonding) is to 'strike a balance' between two incompatible spheres, as if the private and the social did not cross and overlap in many significant ways (e.g. Lynch 2009).

All these (20th century) concepts of bonding persevere today despite the exposure to globalised socio-cultural scripts and economic insecurity that accumulate further and much more complex pressures among family members, lovers, friends and partners. Family and love bonding continue to stand as self-protective entities in opposition to the outside, economy-driven life demands while many feminist issues, e.g. unpaid care work have also been slowly disappearing from research agendas, implying that women-related family pressures are resolved. Much focus today is put on migration and mobility in Europe (e.g. Lisiak 2010) and non-hetero(mono)normative models of bonding ('family by choice', nonmonogamous, poliamorous constellations based on friendships, romance and commitment as well as on 'casual' relationships referred to as 'friends with benefits,' e.g. Aviram 2008, Morgan 2011, Roseneil, Crowhurst et al 2013). But gender conflicts have never left us, they simply become less visible amongst growing diversity of precarious family arrangements. Despite numerous studies on the decline of the gender contract (breadwinner/caregiver exchange), the normative heterosexual family model continues as the reference point in mainstream thinking and EU-policy-making, where sexual citizenship is based on middle-class heterosexuality that neglects historical and material differences in various communities in Europe and around the globe (Krull & Sempruch 2011).

New perspective on love

Focusing on the family as a love bond (i.e. romantic relationship based on mutual affect, responsibility, care and commitment), this paper builds upon 10 years of my work in Canadian academia, my subsequent return to Europe, and my home country, Poland. Back in Europe, I decided to continue the re-

search by familiarising myself with various socio-political fabrics and focus on community-building work beyond academia. In 2011, I registered a non-profit organisation, Women Matter: Foundation for Women's Issues, Rights and Affairs. It is a locally focused NGO in Piaseczno (a South-stretching area in the region of Warsaw), devoted to women's issues as well as to the ongoing research on the subject of the changing structure of family in Europe. Following my earlier transnational work on family (involving urban areas: Toronto/Montreal, Zurich/Basel and Warsaw), I was aware, albeit theoretically, of current family pressures in Poland, falling especially on women (Piotrowska & Grzybek 2009). The post-socialist economic transition, precariousness of work, and the increasing Catholic-oriented family model have sharpened home-centred care-giving demands on femininity in Poland (e.g. Graff 2014). But it was only upon my engagement in a direct work with families, both women and men, as well as with youth growing up in children's homes that I have experienced the complexity of the Polish family load. In contrast to the advanced democratic economies, where individuals, especially mothers, can rely on various family policies and programmes (even if such programs are disputed, e.g. Krull & Sempruch 2011), in Poland, I have witnessed profound loneliness and vulnerability of individuals faced with very limited and inadequate public support (e.g. Szelewa 2013) and a long-term distressful family situation, leading to such symptoms as hysteria, possessiveness, revengefulness, drugs- or alcohol dependency.

During this fieldwork, I have been able to collect very detailed empirical material on the growing precariousness of family structure and the significance of bonding in relation to love. I have further conceptualised 'precariousness' to convey the performative topography of bonding with the underlying reflection that every love (relationship) is enacted subjectively as a socio-emotional performance (Sempruch 2016). Such performance might involve reproductions, resistances and political contestations of the traditional family subject, converging with a number of concepts, such as social, sexual

and political un/belonging, citizenship rights, their lack, the emergence of subcultures, communities and coalitions. As an enactment (performance) of self-affirmation that first appears at odds with the social, family/bonding inevitably permutes and also transforms the social structure, and it is in the interplay of border positions that the precariousness takes place.

My research has also compelled me to formulate love as bio-socially embedded, but subjectively defined capacity/power of individuals, a subject that cannot be studied through separately existing family models but in relation to their current heterogeneity and its opened-ended structure. Such love-centred, but also difference-sensitive perspective speaks directly to Gintautas Mažeikis' contribution in this volume about early 20th century socialist conceptualisation of love and family structure, clearly stating that bonding (based on care and responsibility) is not only a concern for individuals, but a broader social issue extending beyond private, nuclear households, and that to look at the family is to look at the significance of love in building and maintaining its power structures in relation to the outside world. In this, radical European revisions of thinking and practice related to marriage, sexuality and intimacy are inevitably linked to broader socio-economic and political transformations. Today, the urgency of such societal transformation is undeniable and speaks to concrete impacts on policy regulations with respect to wide-ranging rights of individuals. Among others, sexual and social citizenship rights, such as the right to same-sex marriage, abortion, practice of consensual non-monogamies, or protection against domestic violence must go hand in hand with the understanding that contemporary European families point to the acute precariousness of bonding based on devalued spaces of love in the sociality.

Suggested research horizons and conclusions

Impacted by global conflicts and loaded with tensions on a local scale, European attitudes and understanding of love bonds become more diverse and

elastic, but also more intensive than ever. In the light of currently emerging cross-European research (Weeks 2007, Gabb 2008, Kulpa & Mizielinska 2011, Roseneil, Crowhurst et al 2013), I highlight the importance of studies that question the conceptualisation of romantic bonding and contemporary family as a nuclear, self-focused entity that withstands outside sociality (institution, community, nation), a position typical for traditional (both conservative and neoliberal) interpretations of love bonding, represented in this volume by András Máté-Tóth and Gabriella Turai, and Gergely Szilvay. I also believe that the subject of love as a socio-political power – across geo-political, cultural and socio-economic differences of Europe – should be read in terms of active will, knowledge and awareness of being together in the world. The more researchers address individuality (self-centrism) and inability of individuals to maintain happy love bonds, the stronger becomes the need for articulating such profoundly important aspects of bonding as togetherness (community) and solidarity with others. In the face of the growing secularism and the shifting grounds of traditional institutions, psychic transformations in the perception of love as indispensable human affect are on the horizon. In this respect, post-Durkheimian sociology speaks about revolutionary potentials of intimacy, currently transforming the institution of family, while the emphasis remains on the fluctuating relationship between the collective and the individual within human being (e.g. Miller 2010). The new understanding and the emergence of the socio-emotional significance of love across heterogeneous forms of family speak to the growing recognition that the world is one and that humanity, in the interest of its cultural survival, is bound to work together across various personal, cultural, national and religious boundaries in order to settle the rising ecological, socio-economic, political and security issues (e.g. hooks 2000, Illouz 2007, Bjornholt & McKay 2014). Important voices emerge in research on the human right to love (care, preserve, sustain) i.e. the right to values globally eroded through enforced migrations, deteriorating labour contracts and various denials of affects (e.g. Ahmed 2010, Ferry 2013, Gunnarsson 2014).

For me, one of the most important questions today is whether the increasing heterogeneity of family/bonding simultaneously implies its increasing uncertainty, temporality and instability, or whether such precariousness of family is not in fact a pre-condition for its unique socio-political transformation in terms of balance and sustainability. A key metaphor for the interconnectedness of contemporary bonding, precariousness is both about the incompatibility and its conscious, subjectively defined enactments of love. Precariousness demonstrates what love bonding might be like if it really abandoned normativity altogether instead of simply calling it into question from time to time. As such, precariousness might offer a clean break with the mainstream reasoning about family and love, whereby the ethical value of difference (e.g. sexual, cultural, religious) is crucial to this formulation with great political potential.

While the emergence of the socio-emotional significance of love has just become visible across various academic disciplines, at the moment, love studies present rather conflicting fields of knowledge interests, reflecting on the key theoretical tensions that arise for scholars conducting research on family, but also opening significant ways of communication between philosophy, psychology as well as policy and global political economy, that all have much to win by being at the forefront of this transformation. The political potential of such transformation is undeniably immense as it points towards making useful political connections and alliances of different groups and communities. In this light, the growing precariousness of bonding might also imply that categorising love bonds into any exclusive definitions as stable, rigid and lasting (be it a nuclear, single parent, blended, same-sex, polyamorous or any other) can be very limiting as such. Such new political focus projects love bonds as borderless and fluid, containing all or any of these categories as intersecting in a given cultural, socio-emotional, but also temporal arrangement. Accordingly, individuals might be able to 'move' from hetero-mono-sexual (nuclear) relation to various intersecting forms of love bonds that in-

volve broader community, friendship with animals and non-human nature, based on respect and expanding beyond human desire to protect, sustain and control. Whether they do, and under what conditions, is a question of rigorous investigation, which, if accomplished, will have significant impact on ways through which to understand contemporary Western trends in family bonding.

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