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Contemporary Love – Between Reality and Illusion

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Abstract: The experience of falling in love is one of the most beautiful moments of life, and surely each of us has lived it at least once in our life. The joy of the moment, the natural awkwardness of that period, the oversized enthusiasm, the dreams, the specific ideals, etc. they are unmistakable. Researchers in the field of social and humanistic sciences recognize that of all forms of interpersonal relationships, love raises the biggest problems in the way of investigative intentions, precisely because of its subjective nature, the intimacy it implies and hence, the technical difficulties of sociological or psychological measurement. There is, however, a difference between falling in love and love, and the confusion of the two dimensions can make the difference between love, as a real feeling, and its illusion. In the early stages of falling in love, before many confirmations and validations, each partner tends to charge the other with the projection of their own ideals. The initial state of bliss sometimes creates the dose of optimism that allows the individual to design their relationship according to their own desires and dreams, but only the concrete experience of the functionality of the two can highlight the degree of happiness or its illusion. The study aims to analyze the concept of love and infatuation in this double projection of the illusion of love.

Keywords: *love, infatuation, affection, attachment, attraction.*

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1. Love and romance - psycho-social aspects

Although many definitions have been developed, scholars describe love as a process of partnership with many strange features, impossible to analyze in all its dynamics. In love, the reactions are untimely, related to the construction of the couple, their type of relationship, common dreams and ideals, personality, etc. Love involves merging all three sides: psychological, spiritual and sexual and their weight and consistency cannot be measured, their projection being the synthesis of the individual's social environment, personal ideals and the type of intimate communication between partners (Mitrofan & Ciupercă, 2002).

Love is described as "a relationship of exchange in which those who love each other fully satisfy each other's needs, from physical to spiritual growth" (Jorgensen, 1986, cit. in Mitrofan & Ciupercă, 2002, p. 163).

At the foundation of love is the "baggage" that we received from our parents, the values with which we leave home, but also elements of the individual construction of the self. The Holy Apostle Paul said, "Love is patience, it is full of kindness, it is not jealous, in no way does evil rejoice over injustice, but rejoices in the truth, excuses all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and bears all things "(Holy Bible, I Corinthians 13: 4). Analyzing this verse today, we see its validity but also its Western character for the postmodern vision of conjugality. From the perspective of its validity, love appears as a surrender of the self in favor of the other and the reciprocity of this surrender creates common love, justifies solidarity and the common ideal. The partners appear as a single body of two resources, each pursuing the good of the other. Of course, such love seems utopian, but by adding the theological resources to love, it can be validated.

2. Dimensions of love – psychosocial meanings

From the perspective of those opposing this ideal, contemporary love is seen as an individual act, each must seek to fulfill their own needs and the other is only the resource through which to ensure the fulfillment of these needs. Love thus has the same need for the other as in the case of the first thesis, but for the attainment of one's own needs, not by giving oneself up to the other. The mutual fulfillment of the needs can also stimulate the intimate fusion and the solidarity of the partners, but the common happiness is no longer the central objective of the two, but the final result of the two individual loves. And so, each of the theses becomes an illusion for the other.

Anthony Giddens states that the way in which both partners adapt mentally and behaviorally is different depending on the form of love shown. He presents us with two types of love (romantic love and passionate love).

Passionate love refers to a generic connection between love and sexual attachment. It seems to be characterized by an urgency that isolates it from the routine of daily life, with which it often manages to come into conflict, because the person who loves in this way tends to neglect they obligations. The difference between passionate and romantic love is given by the fact that in romantic love, sublime love predominates over sexual desire, which is rather specific to passionate love (Giddens, 1992, p. 40).

In they works, Adrian Nuţă highlights Wheat's classification in terms of the forms of love, describing 5 ways of being: *epithunia*, *eros*, *storge*, *fileo* and *agape*.

He describes ***epithunia*** as the physical aspect of love, being oriented with priority towards the obtained sexual satisfaction; if the energies aroused by sexual intercourse are not assimilated on other levels (spiritual, emotional) the epithunia remains only something primitive. Epithunia leads in adolescence to the shaping and construction of sexual identity.

Eros is the love that combines the two aspects: sexual and romantic. It is distinguished by a strong desire to possess the other. It is passionate and sentimental, but also changeable and temporary. The partner reaches exhaustion and the moments of sexual fullness are reduced to the point of disappearance. From this moment on, there are two possibilities: will, effort, commitment, or passivity that will lead to the end of the relationship.

Storge is a form of love based on natural and sentimental affection of mutual belonging. In the couple, its form of manifestation is mutual loyalty and a high degree of security and interpersonal comfort. this form of love is best illustrated by the relationships between children and parents, brothers and sisters.

Fillo love is fulfilled through friendship and reciprocity. The partners are attracted by the nature of their common visions, aspirations and values, being found in the interests and dreams of the other. It is a kind of deep, stable bond that always requires a response.

In a relaxed, self-centered manner, ***agape*** is characterized by total altruistic behavior. The one who can develop an agape-type love relationship is, as a rule, the most tolerant partner (Nuţă, 2002, p. 18).

Psychologists believe that all these moments are just a return to what was once experienced. The state of love is actually the state that newborns experience in the first months of life when they meet their mother, and she becomes the center of their universe. However, Adrian Nuţă says that this

does not mean that love ends but that it takes on a different form and requires effort from partners to move forward. Along with the sexual side, an important feature of love is that it is not an act of will, we do not decide whether and with whom we fall in love (Nuță, 2002, pp. 14-15).

3. Love and attraction

Love takes its form according to the personality of the one on whom it manifests, each one feels in they own way. According to one's personality, Nicolae Mitrofan identifies two forms of love: love as an emotion and love as a feeling. Love as an emotion can appear in many ways - there are situations in which the being in its entirety taken over by this emotion, suddenly changing, the emotions due to love making a person suddenly become more sociable, establishing much easier interpersonal contacts, being more tolerant, with more zest for life, more eager to be useful to others. However, there is also the opposite situation, the emotion of falling in love determines the closure in itself, and sustained efforts are necessary for the respective person to get involved in various activities and to carry them to the end. Euphoria, inattention, weak reactions to negative stimuli are all forms of externalizing love as emotion.

Love as a feeling appears as an "affective attitude" that acquires "a series of specific characteristics in terms of how it manifests at the level of personality." Love as a feeling is not limited in time and persists on a single person whose image is perceived according to reality. Love as a feeling is defined by emotional stability and reciprocity, which determines a positive evolution of the couple. Most often, love as emotion is the starting point of the feeling of love, a feeling that does not follow a predetermined path but one during which it can encounter contradictions, confrontations, conflicts (Mitrofan, 1984, p. 16).

Jaques Salome tells us about attractions when it comes to love. Attractions can be physical, emotional, spiritual but also circumstantial, related to a receptivity or a special state of sensitivity. Therefore, it is very possible to be drawn not only to one's beauty or charm but also to one's unhappiness, helplessness, and sometimes even brutality. We can be "enchanted" by the availability and lack of inhibitions of the other.

Physical attraction, if it materializes in desire, seems to influence the love affair much less than most of us would have imagined. The explanation for this is that, in fact, this kind of attraction triggers a wave of fears in the one who is the object of desire but also reactions of defense or resistance (Salome, 2003, p. 18).

Even in the most mundane forms of expression, love brings with it many demands and obligations that press on the shoulders of the partner. Love does not give us any right over the other, at best it will bring an extra receptivity and sometimes some duties "(Salome, 2003, p. 23).

Love is an assumed choice and is by no means a permanent pleasure sprinkled with only minor obstacles and easy to overcome. True love is a long-term commitment that is difficult but always rewarding. We choose to support the physical, mental, or moral development of another person. To assume love means to choose to live with a person in the totality of they being, to come in contact with their reality, a reality that often proves to have defects and shortcomings. Love presupposes detachment, although we would like to take full control of the other, to know they every move, we must be objective and give him the chance to remain what they are, to remain the person we have fallen in love with (Nuţă, 2002, p. 53).

As Osho puts it in a plastic form, in order to love, it is necessary to meet a person's center, but at the same time you must allow them to know your center. To do that, you need to open up and become vulnerable. Precisely because of this, for fear of being hurt, some people refuse to open up and thus do not allow anyone to enter their center. Because of this, they will never be able to have deep relationships (Osho, 1997, p. 118).

In each of us there is a special place, a privileged space preserved for the being who will know how to understand us, to love us and to take care of us unconditionally. In each of us there is a living need to find a partner who knows how to receive our love, to receive our desire to love and to be loved.

At the same time, openness to the other is a form of validation. It stimulates the other's openness, stimulates fusion and trust, stimulates the new couple's intimacy and continues to validate feelings. Fear of vulnerability stems from an awareness of failure, a set of confused feelings from previous marital experiences. For that reason, the fear of subsequent failure leads to self-isolation, to the tendency to control the marital relationship, to unrealistic fears, each time fueling the fear of dissolution. For this category, love has a confusing projection even for the individual himself. The fear of not being hurt creates the need for self-protection and self-protection becomes an obstacle in the way of interaction, of the common journey in intimacy. Ones own needs are not known in their dynamics and through ones own attitude, the individual predefines the conditions of unhappiness rather than those of happiness.

4. Love and gender

From another perspective, love should be viewed in terms of gender. Are there gender differences in love? Almost all people, regardless of gender, are able to love and have a stable and intimate relationship. And although in social discourse there are often discussions about the difference in genetic programming in love, yet science says that there is no gender difference in love, but there are differences in its form. There are certain differences in the abilities and motivations of women and men to love, and these differences are found in various aspects of a love relationship, whether formalized through marriage or not.

Gender is not a predictable variable, despite stereotypes that men "run away" from responsibility and marriage. More important is our psychological story, our personality and the gender roles we have internalized in the socialization process.

Aristotle stated that by their nature, men are superior in every respect to women, and that it is precisely because of this, that she is inferior to him, that he must love her more than he does, so that inequality between them may be reduced (Hatfield & Rapson, 1987, p. 17). Interestingly, modern feminism, as well as the results of Peplau and Gordon's 1985 research, have confirmed this: of the two sexes, the women are the ones who sacrifice the most for the relationship, giving more love than they receive from their partner. What is certain is that the socialization of gender inequality over traditional periods of human socialization has socially built this inequity in the love relationship as well. Men continue to have higher expectations from their partner at the same time as they do not want to be asked for the same level of attention and expectations from their partners. We demonstrate once again that the differences in love do not depend on gender, but on the social contexts in which those partners were socialized (Peplau & Gordon, 1985).

Of the two genders, in terms of expressing feelings, women are generally the ones who talk about their feelings, their intensity, the euphoria that love makes them feel. On the other hand, Risman et al. (1981) state that men, although they do not often publicly confess their feelings and are not so extroverted in this regard, are the first to realize the appearance of love, much earlier in the evolution of the relationship than women.

5. Conclusions

Contemporary love cannot be analyzed by the prism of punctual indicators, as it has different nuances depending on the type of culture in

which the individual was socialized and according to they personal ideals. In public discourse, there is a tendency to legitimize more and more a type of dual message, that of socially desirable values and that of one's intimate feelings, often other than those felt and desired by the individual. As Lipovetsky points out, in our societies, the culture of marital relations and needs acts through two antinomic tendencies: one that stimulates immediate pleasure and the other that favors the rational management of time, body, and relationships, hedonism being considered a kind of "multi-service" attitude. ". It also draws attention to the fact that in the culture of happiness "diminished" by external rule, chronic anxiety can be induced, its role being not to save the individual, but to avoid moral guilt (Lipovetsky, 1996, pp. 67-68).

Although they declare their autonomy from the rigid norm, individuals still receive influences from the cultural proximity, that veil or censor their attitudes, feelings, and decisions in marital relationships.

Sometimes individuals learn more from relational failures than from the relationship itself. The decision to play socially prescribed roles in married life may diminish access to self and the failure of such a trajectory may have revealing effects on future selection criteria and on the type of the understanding of love. The illusion of love is all the greater as is the gap between the imperatives of cultural norms and the intimate desire of the individual. The dimension of love is not an algorithm to be measured and calibrated by society, but is the result of the direct interaction of partners in a couple and access to love is made by intimately questioning their own needs and desires and exposing them to each other, in the direct interaction between them.

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