

# Relationships and Ways of Relating

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If one searches for the term "relationship" on the Internet, one encounters equivalent terms such as acquaintance, friendship, relation, interaction, contact, connection etc. The highest score for matching equivalence with the term "relationship" received in a crossword portal the term "love relationship" (wort-suchen.de, 2021). Relationships or love relationships are, of course, in different cultures historically and through economic relations differing from each other unequally shaped by the respective level of social development. In what follows, I will be writing about relationship/love relationships in technically developed countries.

The gradual decline of the aristocracy in the 18th and 19th centuries was historically accompanied by the increasing rise of the bourgeoisie and the capitalist mode of production. In this context, the romantic love affair represented an ideological and affective counter-design of the bourgeoisie to the forced marriages that had prevailed until then, but it by no means meant the abolition of compulsory family relationships, which were predominantly patriarchal within the family. On the one hand, the idealization of the love relationship and love marriage developed into an emancipatory act vis-à-vis conventional tradition, but on the other hand it also became a new, ultimately veiled form of oppression under capitalist conditions, in which the patriarchally shaped nuclear family became the agency of power relations.

In the multi-author book, edited by Klotter (1999), which is well worth reading, he himself describes how a "*somehow* romantic promise directed towards the future" (emphasis in original) is described in the context of initial infatuation, but the fate of love marriages is not reported. "The patterns of experience of love are manifestly culturally predetermined. When we live today, we use images of love that this culture provides. Even if we reject these images, we do not escape them. They are engraved in our minds" (Klotter 1999: 13). Whether one takes the myths or fairy tales of our culture, or even the world of pop songs, finding each other retained the upper hand for long stretches in idealized representations (cf. a. Gleiss, 2007: 20).

In the film "Beziehungsweisen" by Calle Overweg (that had its premiere at the Berlinale) three heterosexual couples played by actors and actresses are shown, who are in crisis in the context of their partnership (formerly love relationship). The three therapists in the film are also trained in psychoanalysis and couple therapy in real life and work, among other things, in couple therapy. The film shows what has remained or become of the former love relationships, what has changed massively and become a problem. In the film, couples therapy is given the unspoken task of saving what can still be saved, or - again unspoken - also of making the separation painless as possible.

It is striking that the seemingly obvious ideological oppression of the so-called love marriage affected women much more violently than men. Thus, for decades up to the present day, women-fair jurisdiction has been established in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) with regard to the § 218. Alternative legal possibilities from the law books of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) found until today no consideration in our state. There are even

Western-oriented, technically developed countries in which women must accept to bear children conceived through rape.

In the FRG there was a heated debate in the parliament (Bundestag) in 1957 about whether the so-called obedience paragraph § 1354 (from 1900!) of the Civil Code should be abolished. This paragraph stipulated that the husband could decide on the whereabouts and taking up of a professional job of his wife. However, this paragraph was contrary to Article 3 of the constitution (from 1949, para. 2), which states: "Men and women have equal rights. The state shall promote the actual implementation of equal rights for women and men and shall work toward the elimination of existing disadvantages." The obedience paragraph was eventually abolished.

The claim that relationships - including love relationships - between people should be self-determined and not determined by others was first taken up at the beginning of the 20th century by the youth movement, which also became politicized as a result. The resurgence of the women's movement in the 1920s ushered in a struggle for self-determination and against the § 218 that continues to this day. Sexual and family policy issues also played a major role in the student movement, which came to a head in the FRG during the 1960s, as did the entanglement of the parents' generation in National Socialism. The proverbial "sexual liberation" in the student movement was understood among students as being a detachment from reactionary ideals and as emancipation in the class struggle. Wilhelm Reich's writings, such as "The Sexual Revolution" from 1936, also provided a theoretical basis for this.

Increasingly, attempts were made to apply psychodynamic understanding to social and political processes. This also led to the politicization of those who practiced or were interested in psychotherapy. In addition to Reich's writings, the works of classical left-wing psychoanalysts such as Bernfeld, Fenichel, Fromm, and Simmel were read at the time. Using psychoanalytic interpretations, the '68 movement attacked social authorities, the drive suppression in the nuclear family, and the prevailing property relations. It does not diminish the merits of this protest movement if today, after more than 50 years, one has to realize in retrospect that in some places of this important movement, at first imperceptibly, but then more clearly, the dogmatism that was actually supposed to be fought, arose again: This concerned patriarchal structures, against which women within the '68 movement increasingly rebelled. Marcuse (1967) found the apt formulation "repressive desublimation" for this phenomenon. The struggle of the student movement was directed against the taboo and repression of sexuality. The saying often heard at the time, "Anyone who has sex with the same woman twice already belongs to the establishment!" shows, in the sense of Marcuse, the new, progressive - also misogynistic - repression as an only pretended form of desublimation. This throws a general light on the fact that embattled external structures had previously sedimented themselves unnoticed in the "fighters" and thus unconsciously as well as unintentionally got a chance for resurrection - the problem of so many revolutions and upheavals ...

Many offshoots of the student protest movement preserved something of the original revolt's search for freedom and identity. One could find these offshoots in the 1970s and 1980s in the changed thinking of many people, which by then had become a matter of course, and even in some state institutions: Changed educational practices, reform efforts in educational institutions, a liberal treatment of sexuality, and much more. Probably the emergence of the Greens as a left-wing peace and environmental party at that time can also be counted among these offshoots in the broadest sense. However, these developments also show how flexible our bourgeois, capitalist social order is and how it can integrate critical potential and, if

necessary, also paralyze and destroy it once resistance has slackened or been crushed. The once proclaimed "march through the institutions" - towards a new goal - then turns almost without trace and unnoticed into a "march into the institutions" - towards the administration of outdated conditions.

The struggle for self-determination of various forms of interpersonal relationships is a serial novel. Homosexuality is now no longer a punishable offense, sexual contact between young people in their parents' homes no longer leads to charges of matchmaking, and sexual activity is no longer automatically "fornication." Nevertheless, the constitution's demand for equal rights for the sexes is still far from being enforced, and so even from a bourgeois perspective we are living in an unconstitutional state in this respect. Laws continue to interfere with women's right to self-determination over their own bodies, and information on the Internet about medical measures for abortions is considered to be unprofessional advertising by doctors.

Traditional forms of love and sexual relationships have meanwhile also received modern competition at their side. The diversity of new gender roles has made a significant contribution to this, and it is perhaps not yet clear to what extent a greater free space of possibility has emerged here, or whether at the same time a decoupling of relational ability ("togetherness") is taking place, which could possibly become increasingly arbitrary and unrelated. Here, we are not necessarily advocating a monogamous lifestyle; rather, we want to reflect on phenomena such as narcissistic aspirations, which can be seen, for example, in the announcement of a man who wants to marry a virtual comic character (Brigitte, 2021). This also includes pornography on the Internet as virtual sexuality, which in part offers a kind of configuration of sexual partners according to one's own needs.

In these phenomena, "relationship" is no longer negotiated, but rather, as in the song "Cloning" by the Berlin rock band "Knorkator," a love object is created in the imagination that is supposed to be as much as possible a reflection of one's own (size) self.

What could be in store for us was also made clear in the science fiction film "Westworld" from 1973, which is well worth seeing: In a vacation amusement park, vacationers meet robots that cannot be distinguished from humans. Here, everyone can be a hero or heroine, a lover without consequences. Only when the technology of the centrally managed, controlled and repaired robots gets out of control does the pipe dream (of exclusively self-determined relationships and objects) turn into a nightmare ...

As mentioned at the beginning, the creation of the romantic love relationship occurred in the course of the emancipation of the bourgeoisie, but also partly in opposition to the Enlightenment. In our time, the demand to be able to have a romantic relationship is linked to the question of the extent to which the subject, socially constrained or emancipated, can shape their own relationship life and relationship experience as equal among equals. Then the sentence "First a woman gets roses, then she washes pants" would perhaps forever be a thing of the past.

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