

Niklas Luhmann

Love

A Sketch

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Editorial Note

Love as Passion was published in the early 1980s (German edition, Frankfurt, 1982; English edition, Cambridge, 1986). Eight years previously Luhmann had presented a general theory of communication media which was to enable him to conceptualize love, too, as one of these media and to compare it with other media such as truth, money and power.* The book on love makes use of the sociological tools of this theory, including most prominently the distinction found in attribution theory between experience and action, albeit without setting itself the task of explicating the

* The essay is called: 'Einführende Bemerkungen zu einer Theorie symbolisch generalisierter Kommunikationsmedien' (Introductory Comments on a Theory of Symbolically Generalized Media of Communication), reprinted in: Niklas Luhmann, *Soziologische Aufklärung 2*, Opladen, 1975, pp- 170-93-

media theory of love as such. Instead it pursues a programme, grounded in the sociology of knowledge, of rendering comprehensible the history of ideas of the topic of love. Luhmann's last treatment of the theme, in the chapter on communication in *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* (The Society of Society; Frankfurt, 1997), is similarly indirect in nature. Like the 1974 essay, it, too, is oriented principally towards media comparisons.

Not so with the text before us here, which originated in 1969. Retrospective forays into the history of the idea of love and sidelong glances at parallel phenomena in other media domains play a far less prominent role. Instead the reader is presented with a sociology of modern love relationships that addresses its topic directly.*

Accordingly, the author sets aside the scholarly apparatus of the historian in order to be guided by current research literature. What has emerged from this is a highly readable study. Unlike the

* Cf. *Trust and Power*; Chichester, 1979-

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unwieldy book on love, which makes the reader work quite hard, one can easily imagine this text in the hands of lay sociologists and of systems theoretical novices.

The reason for this is that the essay emerged from the requirements of academic teaching. Written as a basic text for one of the first seminars Luhmann offered at Bielefeld University, it remained unprinted at the time. Only a few passages were transferred from it to the 1982 book. After that, the manuscript disappeared in Luhmann's office. When it re-emerged from one of the boxes that have contained the sociologist's archive material since his death, it seemed appropriate to prepare the text for publication as quickly as possible, so that it could be brought out in time for the tenth anniversary of the author's death in November 2008. Veronika Luhmann-Schroder and Andreas Gelhard were kind enough to lend their cooperation without further ado.

Bielefeld, June 2008

Andre Kieserling

Love as Passion*

Summer Semester Course 1969

Despite being a social fact of indisputable significance and a literary theme with an age-old tradition, the phenomenon of love has attracted little noteworthy attention from sociological research to date. One can - and we shall - draw on relevant work that has already been done. It is possible to unearth a few empirical studies on particular aspects of the topic here and there, along with some clever reflections that reveal perceptive insights. But there has been no sophisticated theoretical treatment of the topic - probably because there are no theoretical ideas available that might

* The typescript used by Luhmann in 1969 to deliver his seminar lectures already bore the title of his book *Love as Passion*, published in 1982. Further details about the relationship between these two texts can be found in the Editorial Note.

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offer grounds for claiming that they are able to do justice to such a complex, tangible and yet far-reaching phenomenon of daily life.

The following considerations represent just such an attempt. They are based on proposals, published elsewhere, for a theory of social systems.¹ Our focus will be on the term 'medium of *communication*' found there. Part I is devoted to explaining and applying this term to the specific case of love. Rather than dealing with love in isolation as a specific, unique phenomenon, this approach treats it as a solution to a problem that is dependent on systemic structures and is comparable to other solutions.

On this basis, we shall show in Part II that, in the course of societal development, greater demands are made of this medium of communication, love, so that it becomes societally differentiated and institutionalized with regard to its special particularity and specific function. We shall also show how this occurs. The relationship between sexuality and love (III) thus acquires an altered meaning. An attempt is then made in Parts

IV and V to elucidate some of the difficulties arising from these structural changes.

By using the category 'medium of communication', it is also clear that we are not seeking to address love in this context as an objectively identifiable feeling of a particular kind or to determine its occurrences, provide causal reasons for them or render them functional in terms of individuals' organic or psychological system. For our argument, the reverse is the case: a certain ambiguity and plasticity in emotional state is essential (although, of course, love as a medium of communication is not compatible with each and every motivational structure). It may well be that the breakthrough leading to one's first taste of independence from one's parents, the excitement experienced during one's first tentative encounters or the first experience of mutual recognition with a sexual partner is, with the aid of a cultural cliché, interpreted as love - and is then turned into love. Rather than forcing ourselves to treat this as self-deception regarding 'actual' feelings, we see in such interpretations of feeling the

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more or less far-reaching effects of cultural socialization. What is of interest to us is not the way they are processed within the psychological system but rather their function within the social system.

The general life situation of the human being is characterized by an excessively complex and contingent world. The world is complex insofar as it presents more possibilities of experience and action than can ever actually be realized. It is contingent insofar as these possibilities become apparent as something that could be or could become different. The most important human means of creating order in this world is meaning-making, including communication, which is what humans use to reach an understanding between one another that they mean the same thing and will continue to mean the same thing. Communication, through structured language,

acquires the degree of efficacy that enables a person to cope with such a world and make a great variety of selections within it. In addition to linguistic communication, however, non-linguistic communication exists as an aid to interpreting the spoken word and indeed as an independent means of conveying meaning. It is precisely in matters of love that non-verbal modes of communication are important and indispensable.

Neither linguistic nor non-linguistic communication on its own is capable of making another person accept the meanings being conveyed, that is, of making them adopt these meanings as a premise for their own experience and action.² The real feat of meaningful communication - the selection of certain experiential perspectives from a broad range of other possibilities - is the very thing that makes acceptance of the meaning thus selected uncertain: that is to say, the other person might make *their* selection *differently*. Maintaining an intersubjectively constituted, highly complex and contingent world as a realm of choice for making selections from a host of alter-

natives presupposes, therefore, that mechanisms exist in interpersonal intercourse through which both selection and motivation occur. We call such mechanisms *media of communication*. Thus communication media are initially defined merely through the naming of a function (and not yet through actual structures or processes). They link selecting mechanisms with motivational mechanisms; they motivate acceptance of the meaning thus chosen through the manner of their selection.

How this is possible remains an open question at first.³ There are several, fundamentally different, forms of motivation via selection, which appear equivalent in this highly abstract, functional perspective. Love is one of them. Truth, power, money and art are others.

In an initial rough-and-ready classification one can distinguish communication media according to whether the meaning conveyed relates to experience or action. Experience is the processing of meaning in which selectivity is attributed to the world itself. Action is the processing of

meaning in which it is attributed to the person acting. In actual fact, of course, all action presupposes experience and all experience action. The distinction is of analytical value in the first instance. However, beyond this, it also refers to reality to the extent that systems become differentiated and attributions regarding the reduction of complexity can be divided between the world, on the one hand, and a system, on the other.

Some communication media, namely power and money, are primarily concerned with motivating the adoption of selections which present themselves as a decision about actions or behaviours. One accepts an order or a selection from those potential possibilities which society makes available for economic satisfaction. Other media, by contrast, regulate acceptance of the world by establishing a determinate - or at least determinable - meaning: that is, world as a cosmos, as an ordered entity in which not everything is any longer possible. This is the general direction in which the function of the media, of truth, of art and of love can be found. This is not to deny the

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relevance of these media for behaviour; it is just that this relevance is steered not directly but indirectly by the medium - mediated via persuasive experience.

These distinctions lend an initial and highly important shape to love as a medium of communication. Love would not be conceived adequately if we sought to interpret it merely as a motivation for a specific behaviour - such as sexual fidelity - whether such behaviour is held to be prescribed by the concept of the medium or to be chosen ('desired') by one's partner. Love colours experience in the first instance and thereby changes the world as a horizon of experience and behaviour by means of its own characteristic totality. It gives certain things and events, people and communications, a special persuasive power. Only in the second instance does it motivate a person to behave in a way that is chosen for its symbolic-expressive significance as an expression of love, or in a way that is suggested by the particular world in which one knows oneself to be united with the person one loves

- a world of common tastes and a common history, where issues are discussed and events judged in terms of love. The pivotal point of the medium is not the potential for action or the choice a person makes on that basis according to the situation in which they find themselves, but rather the existence of another person and the way in which this other person gives meaning to their own experience.

Social systems which are structured according to love impose on themselves a requirement of communicative openness for topics that have not been fixed in advance. They thus leave themselves open to considerable risk. The entire experience of the partners should be an experience shared in common. Each partner should tell the other what they experience every day, each should tell the other all about their problems and resolve them through a joint effort. There should be no 'facades', no contrived stories, maintained and defended, behind which secrets are concealed. Indeed, this is a condition of a realistic (not projective) expectation of the other's

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expectations, the significance of which we shall return to later on. The institutionalization of non-specific, communicative openness presupposes discretion. Discretion relies on recognizable system boundaries and also, in this case, on both partners being aware of and respecting the same system boundaries. It also depends on each knowing that the other does so and being able to expect this of them. These requirements find expression in the predicted marital type known as ‘companionship’, an ideal cultivated by American sociology of the family, which the same sociology tests with regard to the limits of its realization in practice. Such requirements can be considered to be thoroughly institutionalized in modern marriages - which does not mean that one pays attention to them throughout, but only that the expectations associated with them cannot be openly contradicted. A wife does not run the risk of open rejection (‘That’s none of your business’) when she asks: ‘Why are you home so late today?’ Albeit the institution of marriage alone provides no guarantee that she will hear the truth.

Compared with other media by which experience is steered, the peculiarity of love lies in the manner in which it links the form of selection with motivation. With regard to truth as a medium, the condition of communication is that everyone must accept the meaning conveyed if they do not wish to be dropped from the circles of reasonable people. Regardless of the individuals concerned, truth connects all those involved in the experience (this does not necessarily mean all people *per se*) in the acceptance of a common view of the world. Individual particularities are unimportant here. Discrepancies in experience are attributed not to the world but to subjective conditions of experience. Should they lead to truths being contested, these discrepancies are purged by regarding the person who experiences something different as mad, strange, childish, and so on, and by excluding that person from the community of those who share the common experience. The scientific concept of truth is merely a particular version and specialization of this natural concept of truth.

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In contrast to this, love operates according to the counter-condition that the individuality of the experiencing person is not neutralized but is turned into the very point of reference of the reductionist process. Because the person I love sees, feels and judges things in a particular way, their world-view is also convincing for me. Because they prefer this landscape and these people, these forms of entertainment, these styles of living and this way of enjoying things, these hold greater meaning for me too than other possibilities. Love lacks the condition of universality which is attached to truth, and that is why it is able to confirm a more concrete, proximate world [*Nahwelt*]. It is not restricted to a meaning that is the same for everyone but makes a more restricted selection which can no longer be applied to everyone, only to those who love one another. Yet it retains some similarity to truth insofar as it, too, is considered to represent the common prescribed meaning for them and not a decision taken by one side that the other has to accept. The rendering specific and compression of

meaning is achieved through the restriction of intersubjective applicability - in marginal cases, to one person. This is why it is important to ensure that issues compatible with truth are separated out - like buying an encyclopaedia when you marry, so that differences can be resolved at the level of truth and don't escalate into differences of personal opinion, of expectation of opinions, and thus into differences in love.

Art, too, has specific individuality as a point of reference for reduction. It is the individuality, not of a person, but of a factual (physical or symbolic) object, which orders the world through its form - that of a picture, a series of sounds or words, a story or indeed a self-representing organism. Improving one's appearance and dressing up, self-stylization as a work of art, is not enough to make a person loveable, but it can serve to convey a willingness to engage in interaction, to exert an attraction, and as an encouragement for others to discover one's loveable inner qualities. The person who displays their charms in this way, through self-presentation, is

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making use of the fact that what they are putting on offer cannot yet specify the person whose interest these charms are intended to arouse and is thus 'subject to change', not yet binding with regard to love.

These analytical demarcations have enabled us to highlight what is distinctive about this special medium of communication of love. Love transmits specific selections by means of orientation towards the individual's own understanding of themselves and the special world-view of another person or several other people. The specific function of this medium is based on the specificity and individualized mode of experiential processing. Love conveys a dual confirmation of meaning. In it we find, as is noted often, an unconditional confirmation of one's own self, of personal identity. Here - and perhaps only here - one feels accepted as the person one is, without reservation and without temporal limit, without regard for status and without regard for one's achievements. One finds oneself expected in the world-view of the other as the person one endeavours

to be. The other's other-oriented expectations converge with the self-oriented expectations of the Ego, with the Ego's self-projection? This liberates one from the endless rounds of internal monologue and enables one to express one's thoughts to the outside world and thus also to learn from the response and to adapt to the changing circumstances of life. It is precisely because one has one's place within this world that one can accept the world-view of the other person and find a consensus in very specific views. Accompanying this Ego-confirmation is the joint constitution of a proximate world of daily living and of interactional steering, of a reciprocal expecting of expectations and of all that this implies: the joyfulness of steps coming through the door, and the certainty of thinking the same thing at the same moment.⁶

A large amount of experimental research has already accumulated on the question of an inter-relationship between love and world-views. However, its approach has been too simple in certain essential respects and it has therefore not

produced any convincing results. In every instance the problem had been posed as the hypothesis of a correlation between attractiveness of the group and similarity of views or attitudes - a correlation which was often able to be verified and is considered to be reasonably certain.⁷ What this failed to take into account, though, was the mediation of the direct world-view through the intersubjective constitution of the Ego and the world, as well as the intimacy and 'depth' of the relationship (both difficult to vary experimentally). In addition, more recent developments in personality theory have not been taken into account in these studies. For our purposes, all this will make it necessary to formulate a more complex set of concepts that is at once tailored more specifically to the medium of love.

The integration of Ego-existence [*Ichsein*] with a world constituted through love is based on a very concrete level of personal experiential processing in the proximate world that knows few alternatives.⁸ This is where it is most comfortable and where its power of persuasion lies. It

problematizes the utter contingency of other possibilities neither in the I nor in the You nor in the world. This functional foundation lends love a kind of indispensability at the level of society. While it may be entirely conceivable to lead a life individually without love and yet find self-affirmation in the world (for example through one's achievements or successes), it is not at all possible for love to be replaced as a mechanism of society as a whole. Surely it can be considered indispensable even for the socialization of infants, which can occur only through experiential processing that is highly specific and yet already meaningful and rich in references. For adults too, though, strokes of misfortune can be better overcome and a problem-filled and fluctuating environment is easier to manage if intimate relationships provide solid points of support and opportunities to express and to have confirmed the fact that one is still oneself, even in the face of these same difficulties and despite all the changes.⁹ It is not only problems with communication within a relationship that can be better resolved on this basis.

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Rather, it also enables both parties to engage in common, or at least cooperative, action in an environment which has become complicated and presents such rapidly changing conditions that the response called for is rarely clear in advance, cannot be defined in morally unequivocal terms and cannot always be agreed between the partners from one case to the next, but rather has to occur in spontaneous harmony. Thus we shall have to assume that other media of communication can take the place of love to only a very limited extent, just as love can not take the place of truth or power or money without limitations.

However, this is not to say that love needs to be dealt with as a kind of natural phenomenon or as an eternally true, moral idea: that is, as an historical and evolutionary constant. The way its function is made use of, its possibilities for expression, the forms of its societal integration and their problematic consequences, become transformed in the course of development. A sociological concept of love will pass muster if it is able to interpret this transformation.

II

During the course of the social system's evolution, there is an increase in the complexity of society, and of the world it is able to sustain internally. This gradually alters - sometimes in abrupt surges - the initial setting in which the communication media operate. Every meaning uttered becomes a selection from an increasing range of other possibilities; everything which is determinate involves a higher degree of selectivity. Accordingly, greater use is made of communication media. The contingency of the world becomes increasingly visible, and language loses its connection with nature. The need for rationales increases, and there is a less clear-cut motivation for accepting this meaning rather than a different one or for heeding these signals rather than others where experience and action are concerned. The fact that selection simultaneously entails motivation now becomes a problem and thus a point of reference for the functional specification of social mechanisms. This being so, the individual media of communication

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detach themselves from one another in the course of societal development and move apart. The most powerful person may no longer be the richest one and may not think that he is especially loved. Similarly, love may create for itself a world that is incapable of truth and indeed largely fictitious, and may no longer submit to the commands of the powerful, the heads of the household - just as art scorns the laws of nature and language. At the same time - as we seek to demonstrate at length using the example of love - media are released from general societal considerations. In particular, their ties to the prevailing morality are undone and replaced by specific kinds of evaluation, such as the methods of interpretative, truth-sceptical research or the political *ratio status* (reasons of state) of modernity.¹⁰ Such divisions make possible the functional specification of media. In them lie the essential social-structural conditions, not for individual feelings directly but for the institutionalization of love in forms which are appropriate to its function and enable it to fulfil those increased societal requirements.

This development involving the differentiation and functional specification of love can be identified by looking at love's topology and at its verbal, thematic interpretation in the course of the history of ideas. To be sure, the verbal representation of love cannot be taken at face value by sociologists and accepted as a reliable description of reality. At the same time, though, it is more than a matter of illusionary self-deception or false rationalization. The reflections set out in the following are based on the thesis that the literary, idealizing and mythical representation of love does not choose its topics and key ideas at random; instead, the latter constitute a response to its respective account of society. Further, although this representation of love does not reflect reality, it does resolve definable problems, namely giving shape to the functional necessities of the social system. The mythology of love evident in each instance thus enables us to gain access to an understanding of the relationship between the medium of communication and the social structure.

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The words *philos-philia-amicitia-amour* are linked to a multifaceted literary tradition that pivots around the problem of solidarity.¹¹ It is worth being aware of the fact that the basic word for love in the earlier ancient Greek literature is found only as an adjective (*philos*), that it serves as a designation of relationships founded on the household and on family relatedness in a society differentiated according to dynasties, lineages and tribes, and that it means something like ‘close to’ or ‘belonging’ (which is also applied to things, animals and one’s own body). In other words, it lends immediate expression to the social structure.¹² The need for a noun, the neologism *philia*, emerges only at the point of transition from the late archaic to the politically determined high culture, accompanied by a generalization of both the element of utility and the affective state, which allows the term to drift towards indeterminacy. This leads, in part, to what are at first inconsequential counter-movements, which attempt to eliminate the element of utility from the term and which culminate in the Platonic

speculation of *eros*. It also leads to the tradition being taken up in the basic concept of *koinonia-societas* (esp. *koinonia politike - societas civilis*), which, for the subsequent period and up to the beginnings of modernity, remains firmly linked with the term *philia-amicitia*. For the ancient European tradition, love is and remains - despite its acknowledged particularity - a constituting feature of society itself.¹³ True love is founded on the principle which also underlies society. It is represented initially as political love and then as religious love of the other through God.

Thus a society is established [*interpretiert*] which, to make interaction easier, expects its members to have positive feelings towards one another, though not towards strangers. This is love based on knowing and feeling comfortable with one another, on belonging and mutual support. The erotic is not ruled out, but it is not essential for building this structure. Passionate individual affection occurs, of course, but if anything makes its presence felt as a disruptive force at societal level. This is something which, for

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example, has to be kept under control through early marriage (India) or diverted into harmless channels,¹⁴ such as pederasty (Greece) or directing the passion towards a married and thus socially unattainable woman (Middle Ages). The philosophical and religious generalizations which seek to extend the bounds of the respective society and, in the process, to extend its specific love imperative to humanity *per se* display utopian traits. Evolutionary success lay in the opposite direction, not in universalization, but rather in the constraining and mobilization of the medium; not in loving everyone, but in loving a random, chosen other person. The conception of love that does this is created from the end of the Middle Ages onwards and becomes dominant in modernity.

It interprets love as *amour passion*, as passion. Previously explicitly excluded and treated as an unavoidable aspect of human life with no societal function,¹⁵ passion now becomes a dominant feature. In today's common, indeed almost trivialized, imagination, it is associated with such

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meaning-filled moments as: being helplessly gripped by emotion and at the mercy of a quasi-pathological obsession; the randomness of encounter and a sense of being destined for one another; an unexpected (and yet so eagerly awaited) miracle that happens to one at some point in life; the inexplicability of events;¹⁶ impulsiveness and love everlasting; compulsiveness and the greatest freedom for self-realization. All these are meaning outcomes which can be evaluated either positively or negatively and can contradict one another and provide an interpretative scheme for very different kinds of situation,¹⁷ but which converge into a single basic feature - that one exempts oneself from societal and moral responsibility in matters of love. 'Passion' refers to a state in which one finds oneself suffering passively rather than engaging actively. This does not necessarily rule out the duty of accountability for passionate acts *per se*. Passion is no excuse for a hunter who shoots a cow. However, the situation changes when passion gains recognition as an institution and is anticipated, indeed

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required, as a condition of social systems, when it is expected that, before marriage, one will fall prey to a passion about which one is helpless to do anything. The symbolism of passion is used then to cover up - that is, to protect and at the same time to conceal - institutionalized freedoms. Passion thus becomes institutionalized freedom that has no need to be justified as such. Freedom is camouflaged as compulsion.

What this reveals, as do the notions that go hand in hand with the myth of romantic love, is that the institutionalization of love as passion symbolizes the societal differentiation of intimate relationships. The most important sign of this, alongside the shedding of responsibilities, is the fact that instances of indifference and irrelevance are explicitly legitimated, that in the case of true, genuine, deep love - we shall be returning to questions of proof - it cannot be a matter of status or of money, of reputation or of family, or of any other of the older loyalties. This destructive aspect is recognized - and almost enjoyed in the process. The great literary theme of socially

degrading - or, in the broadest sense, unreasonable - love becomes transformed from the utopian into the comical, into the tragic and, finally, into the triviality of an institution whose dysfunctions are firmly established and can be managed.

Despite the medieval roots of 'romantic love', its *institutionalization as a foundation for marriage* is a decidedly modern achievement, attributable in its initial programmatic postulations to the sentimentalism of the eighteenth century, being a component here of the bourgeois critique of aristocratic immorality. That is the first time that this concept of love is removed from the vagaries of purely individual experience and becomes fixed in social expectations. It acquires the character of an imposition - an imposition for those who must witness and approve of others' passionate loving, but above all an imposition, too, for those who have to fall in love before they marry.¹⁸ Passionate loving becomes an expectation posited as a goal of learning and upbringing, a social form which permits only limited modifications for reasons of adequate communication.

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The differentiation and standardization of a corresponding behavioural pattern makes functional specification possible. Intimate relationships conceived of, represented and justified as passion can fulfil the function of love as a medium of communication in functional autonomy [*Verselbständigung*] and can thus do so all the more effectively. This is what the enhanced performance of this medium, demanded by society, is based on. The impassioning of love goes hand in hand with increasing societal complexity. Given the considerable complexity of its environment, love can no longer give consideration to other functions, which themselves have to become more specifically, more abstractly, more efficiently institutionalized. The traditional congruence between love and society, indeed love and humanity, and the functional-diffuse merging of love with law and love with utility - as found in and passed down from the world of Greek ideas - has to be stopped in its tracks. In this way love is unburdened of all the external functions it carried with it - especially functions related to

propping up morality and law, political domination and the balancing of economic needs. It is saved from the superficialities which are almost unavoidable when one has to adjust to consensus with everyone. Instead, both in thought and in generally institutionalized expectations, everything is assumed to depend on one other person.

To the extent that this idea is capable of being realized, love as passion means the freedom to choose a partner and, if the family is to be founded on love, it means the freedom to choose a spouse. These freedoms stand in relation to the complexity of society and develop alongside it. The choice of spouse predetermined by the group (that is, prescriptive) that is found in some archaic societies, for example in Australia, is initially replaced by institutionalized preferences¹⁹ and by marriages ‘arranged’ by the families concerned. In such cases, social controls related to choice of spouse have already relaxed while still being structurally, or procedurally, institutionalized. At the end of this development, in highly complex modern societies, we find the love marriage.²⁰

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This is institutionalized as ‘formally free’, like work, contractual relations and organizational constitution. This does not mean that all social influences on the choice of partner have disappeared - a brief glance at the statistics shows that class-homogeneous choice of spouse predominates. What it does mean, however, is that controls have to be exercised in the form of self-imposed considerations during the process of falling in love, in the form of parents’ cautious facilitation or prevention of contact, or in some similar way that deviates from the institutional prescription of love.²¹ The fact that legitimacy is withdrawn from such steering mechanisms, that indeed they may not be made public and their commitment to the purpose of control must remain hidden, indicates that society has become structurally independent of them and is able to bear the risk of marriage, of whatever kind.

It is possible to see the freedom to choose in life and love according to one’s own feelings as an end in itself. This would involve taking love and self-realization in love as a value, thus posing

limits on any possible sociological insight. Beyond this superficial value fixation - and precisely because of it - the choice of partner based on individual passion has identifiable societal functions. It increases the chances of realizing the love communication medium. In highly complex and strongly differentiated societies which have a pronounced emphasis on personality and individuality and which contain very different lifestyles - even within social strata - the only way of achieving a situation whereby partners able to form intimate relationships can find one another is through a high degree of mobility.²²

In such circumstances, an institutional designation of partners would make love extremely unlikely, whereas setting aside the institutional barriers and delegating choice to the individual at least increases the chances. The publicized love idols, including particularly such outward aspects as physical beauty and attractiveness, provide widely accepted search patterns for this choice. The creation of a consensus about real-life aspects of the world and about material

identities can thus be prepared - at least in part - by this mode of partner recruitment; not until this has occurred can it then be left to elementary interactions and the formation of personal expectations.

Differentiation, functional specification and the mobilization of love for the selection of partners and common topics ultimately bring about a self-reinforcing process, which we call reflexivity.²³ Love becomes a reflexive mechanism and, in this respect, a high-risk institution, being based on a host of preconditions and being prone to perturbations. It is applied to itself before it chooses an object for itself. One loves loving and, therefore, loves a person whom one can love. The way this reflexivity is related to the differentiation of love should be seen as having two aspects. On the one hand, reflexivity achieves that higher degree of selectivity which is necessary for the differentiation of permanent systems (marriage-based families) founded on love. On the other, differentiation helps a very perturbation-prone, reflexive mechanism to remain centred on itself and

protects it from interference caused by mechanisms of a different kind, such as paid-for love, the thoughtful contemplation of love or the compulsion to love.²⁴

In the literary tradition this reflexivity of loving is not registered or legitimated until modern times and in its fullest sense not until after the start of the eighteenth century. Its emergence rests on the nascent stirrings of that structural change involving differentiation, specification and mobilization. It becomes possible only after these preconditions have been established, if not in the institutional sphere, then at least in notions of love. The scholastic formula of *amor amicitiae* (love as friendship) had not yet come to denote reflexivity but rather a kind of love. Even the early modern theological debates about *pur amour* that followed this - debates which rehearsed the possibility of Cartesian-style subjective reflection - had initially meant only reflexivity of thinking when referring to reflection. They had set themselves as their topic a *thinking* contemplation of one's own love, and for that reason had merely come

up against the problem of *interest in love*.²⁵ Soon after this a different kind of attitude becomes predominant, one which no longer proclaims the thinking of feeling but rather the feeling of feeling - and begins to enjoy it. 'Love for love' becomes the highest ideal, its most impressive prophet being Jean Paul.²⁶

Reflexivity of loving is more than just a simple matter of the Ego-consciousness fulfilling a function in love. It is also more than mere awareness of the fact that one loves and is loved. What it involves is a corresponding feeling being affirmed and sought in the realm of feelings. It involves loving oneself as the one who loves and is loved, and also loving the other as one who loves and is loved - in other words, it involves directing one's feelings towards this co-incidence of feelings. Love is directed at an I and at a you, *provided that* they are both situated in this relationship of love - in other words, that they make such a relationship mutually possible - and not because they are good, or beautiful, or noble, or rich.

Reflexivity in loving is a possibility for the gifted and ungifted alike and in all situations - it is by no means an esoteric affair reserved for only a few great lovers. It can, but need not, lead to an intensification of feeling. What it intensifies is the capacity to enjoy feeling but also the potential to suffer on account of feelings. It is now possible to love love even if one doesn't yet have a partner, or only one who doesn't love back. Incidentally, it is normally the case that this loving aimed at love is subject to a more or less cliched form of external steering. Initially, then, love may be oriented towards a generalized search pattern, which may make its fulfilment easier but may also get in the way of a more profound fulfilment in terms of feelings. Does love at first sight' not presuppose that one was already in love before the first sighting?

The function of the reflexivity of loving cannot, after all that, lie in the intensification or stabilization of feelings of love. It is related to the steering of the selectivity of loving. It seeks to guarantee that the development of feelings, in its now

unavoidable form of high selectivity within society, is steered in a way appropriate to it, namely through feelings. What can be deduced from this is that, in this restructuring of loving, it is not a matter of individual feelings but of love as a medium of communication, which has to be adapted to changed societal conditions. Only if one falls in love because of loving love is it likely that the system, which then comes into being, will use love as a medium of communication. This is partly because only in this way can the state of feeling be experienced as a unity, and only thus can awareness of selection remain latent or be suppressed once more.

III

Along with the impassioning of love, the sexual relationship between lovers also acquires an altered status.²⁷ It colours the concept and experience of love in a new and more resolute way. In an acute foreshortening of what was meant in the

philia amicitia tradition, love, as it is generally understood, is posited as an outcome of relationships whose meaning is fulfilled in the act of sexual intercourse. The concepts of intimacy and friendship, accordingly, take on a secondary meaning, a suspicion of sexuality, provided that sexuality is a possibility, given the kind of partners involved. Of course, this does not mean that sexuality only now becomes important or that it acquires greater significance than it had before, but it does mean that it only now comes to be built into a specific, differentiated medium of communication, thereby taking on a societal function which extends far beyond the function of procreation.

Sexuality acquires a basic function in the case of love, comparable to the function fulfilled by physical coercion in the case of political power, by intersubjective coercive certainty of perception in the case of scientific truth, and by collateral in gold, foreign currency or state decision-making competence as a guarantee of needs satisfaction in the case of a currency. While these comparisons

fail to take account of the important factual differences between communication media, they do make clear the consistent need for anchors of certainty, 'real assets', in all the generalized media.²⁸

In all these cases - for sexuality, physical violence, perception, and for ensuring that what are ultimately physical needs are satisfied - the act of reaching down into the organic sphere appears to be essential. Communication based on such foundations can help to convince the organism, so to speak. This relation must therefore also become a part of the institutionalization of communication media. In this respect it is a matter not merely of establishing a consensus of opinion in the sphere of meaning but also of symbiotic regulatory mechanisms which guarantee intensity in the relation to the other, an intensity capable of sustaining a high degree of disagreement and of exaggeration of real opportunities for consensus.²⁹ The meaningful-symbolic generalizability of media is based on the fact that they do not operate merely on the basis of (and thus within the bounds of) real consensus.

This is what the novel status of those basic mechanisms refers to in the institutional edifice. They can no longer be seen as a necessary evil or as an earthly burden to be contrasted with ideals. They are taken up to serve a medium and are thus brought to bear upon a social function that allows them to acquire greater value. In this context, certain forms of self-satisfaction must be ruled out - for moral reasons. This is obvious in relation to erotic self-satisfaction, but it is also true for the other media: for forcible self-help, for the intuition of truth that is evident only to the individual (i.e. fanaticism' in the language of the period of Enlightenment), for economic self-government by the individual and, functionally equivalent, for counterfeiting money. Such practices would undermine the mediating function of the medium through the basic mechanism taking on an independent status.

In the case of sexually based love the relationship between a symbiotic basis and symbolic generalization takes on particular features, which can be described in greater detail. What this

grounding makes plausible in particular is the directness and closeness of the relationship and its restriction to one partner, which, because of this, is taken up as a permanent necessity for the ideal image of love. What is additionally unique about the sexual relationship is that certain functions can be fulfilled and subtly refined in a way that is invisible to outsiders: that is, without any requirement of being publicly represented. Giving and taking,³⁰ rewarding and punishing, affirming and correcting may have their effects, but their instances are hard to establish. Aspects and intentions of exchange, sanctioning and learning are present and fulfil their function, but they cannot be pulled apart, attributed to individuals or taken to task. They become indistinguishable from one another. Except in extreme cases, this prevents any precise tally of advantages and disadvantages, any comparisons with other situations, and the relationship developing asymmetries in respect of the performance, status or interest of the partners. Even relatively imbalanced relationships can still be experienced as equal and

unparalleled thanks to this diffusiveness of the sexual contact. This is why it is possible to imply and to expect, to a degree that is hardly achievable elsewhere, that one's own experience is also that of one's partner. In addition to this, the non-verbal communication of physical touch opens up a curious range of possibilities, free of logic, for interpreting verbal utterances.³¹ It provides an opportunity to circumvent language, to generate an interpretation of the spoken word which renders the latter specific in terms of what it reveals about other worlds and about the world that is accessible to it. In the modes of love communication, one can express the unspeakable, reinforce or tone down things said, as well as trivialize or negate them. One can make up for misunderstandings and *correct faux pas* by changing the level of communication.

The relationship of medium to basic mechanism can be described as *generalization*.³² This means that the medium extends the range of its basic mechanism and exaggerates its potential to motivate. Viewed from the perspective of action,

love appears as a symbolically generalized interim goal, autonomous in terms of values, on the path towards sexual satisfaction (including the possibility of an end/means reversal and the use of the sex act as a means to prove one's love). Yet in imagining this as a causal or instrumental arrangement (whichever it may be), this way of seeing things remains inappropriate because it is too narrow. The generalization must be clarified with regard to its system functions.³³

Seen in temporal terms, the achievement of the generalization of love lies in bridging the intervals between sexually motivated contacts. One loves continuously but - particularly as a man - has other things to do in between. One's partner can be confident of one's return. This confidence, acquired in the context of the mother-child relationship, is one of the first learning-necessities of human life and forms an essential source for all generalizing cultural achievements.³⁴ In the realm of love as it relates to sexuality, this temporal generalization acquires two further features. First, love facilitates indifference, a kind of indifference that

extends to physiological responses in the face of attractive offers from others. In other words, it helps resolve or at least defuse the problem of sexual competition. Second, love fills periods of waiting with expectation. One essential function of the 'romantic' love complex has been seen in its compensating for the denial of premarital sexual intercourse and turning a moral prohibition into a positive function.³⁵ The anticipation of fulfilment is stoked up and enjoyed for what it is. The assumption of fulfilment renders love reflexive, which would be hard to motivate without reference to a continuously vibrant sexuality. Reflexive love can surpass and idealize itself uncorrected in the uncertainty surrounding a partner, and can then, once the partner has been found, confront them with extreme expectations, with an idealized self according to which they are expected to live for the sake of love. In this way, despite the weakening of motivations concerning the extended family and economic or other societal considerations, the willingness to get married is preserved - naturally against the backdrop of utopian expect-

tations.³⁶ What is remarkable here is the way difficulties relating to the temporal dimension (problems of continuity) can be turned into factual generalizing achievements which, however, involve problematic consequences of their own.

The reverse relationship - that the factual generalization supports the temporal - can also be found. Love, as the generalized basic theme of a social relationship, makes it possible for intimate systems (particularly the family founded on love) to establish and create awareness of a *difference in levels of relationship*. Love itself and its continued existence is distinguished from the specifics of daily interaction. This differentiation facilitates the control of highly complex causal processes by separating out the levels at which effects either are to be heeded or may be ignored. In this way a certain immunization against minor events - that is, temporal stability - is achieved. One does not need and must not constantly demand proof of love, nor see in every incident a risk to the whole thing. One must not threaten to withdraw love and thereby advertise the dangerous inference from

wise of consensus in their current environment. They can read consensus from indifference to consensus - this, too, being a structure of expectation whose evolutionary improbability catches the eye. The fact that, as shown here, a demand that is plausible at the level of the basic mechanism of sexuality - no participation of third parties! - is applied to love as a medium of communication confirms our hypothesis that the sexual foundation of passion has become the essential foundation for the medium of love.

At the same time, the scope of sexuality, particularly as a causal factor, should not be overestimated. Clearly it must be compatible with the generalizing functions of love, but it does not enact them itself; in this, it remains reliant on psychological and social mechanisms. Indeed, it bears asking whether natural sexuality (to the extent such a thing exists) is sufficient to motivate the initiation of a love relationship when to do so involves overcoming cultural or interest-based obstacles. It seems that, for this to occur, *additional* sources of arousal are necessary which

cannot be reduced to merely arranging for or offering the prospect of sexual satisfaction. Such occasions for enhancing the possibilities of physiological and psychological experience surely used to lie, as well, in the awareness of shared deviance from the norm, in the initial or even continuing illegitimacy of passion. Today, in place of this, one finds a wide array of commercially organized excitations which, conveyed through writing, images, sounds or opportunities for action, have the benefit of being more easily isolated from and, incidentally, more easily synchronized with one's lifestyle.³⁹ Also found here are social functions which, with respect to the conditions of their temporal placing, their reference to possible meanings, and the opportunities they hold for communication and consensus, are system-dependent. This requires further research.

IV

The autonomization and functional specification of communication media cannot be institutionalized

at the level of processes alone (by creating order in the *sequence* of events). It presupposes the formation of corresponding social systems. Power only comes to be articulated in the political system as a medium of a special kind, as does truth in science and money in the world of finance, while art suffers from the fact that the differentiation of a social system allied to it poses particular problems. In all these respects - and thus also in the case of love - a considerable measure of functional differentiation of the social system is the evolutionary precondition for the autonomy of a medium. It is true that the individual medium always remains relevant outside the sub-system in question - that is, at the macrosocial level and in relation to other sub-systems: politics also needs truths, the world of finance forms power, relationships based on affection also occur frequently within small groups in the workplace. However, only the sub-systems of society succeed in enhancing performance within each medium, in fully exploiting its particular style of transmitting selections, because their structure is tailored to this function.

Love as Passion

However, there are limits to the functional specification of structures and processes, because it requires system building.⁴⁰ We need to determine these limits more precisely for the case of intimate relationships based on passionate love. Passionate love leading to sexual relationships finds in the founding of a family a system that is capable of lasting. This means, specifically, a family based on monogamous marriage,⁴¹ which for its part is expected to be based on love and is represented as such. Passion, however, is a chance condition for which no responsibility can be claimed, a condition which arises in just as uncontrolled a manner as it fizzles out again - a highly unstable systemic principle. The symbols of passionate love which sustain the differentiation and functional specification of the medium are not necessarily just as good for that second requirement, that of system-becoming and system-preservation of relevant interactions. The contradictions in the institutionalized concept of love, which we have already noted above⁴² - the contradictions between inevitability and freedom,

impulsiveness and permanence - have their basis in this dilemma: they translate the problem of functionally specific system formation into an ambiguous value orientation and thus offload it onto behaviour.

The fact that excessively romantic love can disrupt, if not destroy, the family is a topic of wide-ranging debate. It was discovered, first, in relation to the extended family, and after that in relation to the nuclear family as well, in relation to love relationships with outsiders after a family has been established,⁴³ and then also in relation to the family founded on love.⁴⁴ It is important to see here that the old problems of making excuses for a marriage desired unreasonably or for adultery intensify considerably when love is demanded for marriage and therefore also marriage for love. In that case, any divergence - especially any obvious divergence - from love and marriage endangers the very foundations of the system. As the structuring principle of a social system, love enhances both opportunities and risks at the same time.⁴⁵ The inherent riskiness of

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such marriages has now become apparent. The idea that marriage and family might now be tied to a fluctuating feeling which surges and ebbs away again uncontrollably, and that they might be destined to share the same fate as that feeling, has awakened the most terrible fears.

However, in a similar way and for reasons analogous to those associated with the introduction of universal suffrage, this was a false - or at least exaggerated - alarm. People couldn't imagine that new, untested freedoms would become stabilized. The facts demonstrate a continued high stability for marriages. While it is indisputably the case that, for various reasons, divorce rates have risen considerably over the last few decades,⁴⁶ they have not reached a level that is threatening to society and whose consequences cannot be managed, and neither are these divorce rates unusual when compared across cultures.⁴⁷ This finding leads to the conclusion that, in a marriage sealed by love, stabilizing mechanisms develop which outlast the passion and feed it seamlessly into an orderly life.

Since we have no empirically reliable overview of either the extent or the forms of disorganization in existing families, any assumptions about this remain speculative. We can presume, however, that a system of intimate relationships, which has built its own solid world through the choice of partner and through understanding in love, is maintained by this private world and is able to dispense with passion. Passion is transformed imperceptibly into history and is simultaneously replaced by history. The impulsive attraction which motivated the one partner to adopt the selections of the other is superseded by the 'already understoodness', by the un-selfconscious co-functioning of the other in ongoing judgements about questions of everyday life and living. Even drastic changes in lifestyle can be undertaken together with the intention of continuing this world, the world in which I and You can remain the same. Passionate love turns into established love.

This kind of transformation is no pure law of nature' applied to love, but depends on the differentiation of this medium and thus on the

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institutional prerequisites mentioned above. It presupposes, namely, that society leaves lovers with sufficient system complexity that, through the latter being treated selectively, a system history emerges which they perceive as their own and are able to distinguish from general world history. It also presupposes the existence of sufficient world complexity so that a personalized, proximate world can emerge in contrast to it, from which the one gazes at the other. (The existence of several kinds of skin cream is the precondition for her preferring this one and him that one and for both creams standing side by side in their usual place in the bathroom - reminding him of her and her of him.) At the same time, a proximate world specifically personalized in this way acquires motivating power for complementing and correcting, for preserving and adapting, because one recognizes oneself personally and unmistakably in it and in the expectations of the other person. To this extent splitting up would always mean change of self and loss, or a reinterpretation of one's own history.

All this in no way rules out conflicts within marriage, but it does give them a particular emphasis, one that exists not at the level of direct dissent about the world but at the level of expectation of expectations.⁴⁸ From the vantage point of this level the factually existing consensus can be *successfully overestimated*, that is, generalized.⁴⁹ In such cases, a quarrel acquires significance with regard not to the question of what the facts of the matter are, but to the question of which expectations one can entertain in relation to the expectations of the other. It is only at this level of personal reflexivity of awareness of the awareness of the other that a conflict acquires explosive potential, because it is here that it encounters the crucial point from where the world of the system is constituted as shared and special⁵⁰ Differences of opinion about the world itself serve merely as symptoms or as symbols or as weapons for that deeper lying conflict which ruins love. One can conclude from this that, in good marriages, conflicting opinions which might be burdensome at the level of mutual expectation

Something of this is captured and brought onto a normal, manageable level in the sobering American ideal of 'companionship', which seems to be replacing the romantic complex of love.⁵⁵ Social 'stapling together' based on sexuality is preserved in this ideal in the form of a willingness to engage in leisure activities together. It is precisely the casualness and interchangeability of these activities - an evening spent at a party, watching television or having sexual intercourse - that constitute a stabilizing factor, as it can only be glossed over by means of the other person's participation, even as it serves to avert conflicts. What matters is not *what* one does together, just the fact *that* one does something together.

Passionate love is an improbable institution. Although falling passionately in love may be a perfectly straightforward matter for the individual, the institutionalization of love as passion rests on a host of conditions and is nothing if not problem-

atic. Marrying and having a family life on this basis constitute not only a personal risk but also a societal risk. Thus, part of understanding this institution requires an understanding of the circumstances in which this risk can be borne, how it can be borne, which attendant problems need to be resolved towards this end and, thus, how an evolutionarily improbable institution becomes probable. The difficulties of system formation and system preservation in relation to love have already given us an example of this. Further elements become apparent when we pay attention to the problems associated with integrating this risk-prone institution and the social systems based on it.

Differentiation and functional specification unavoidably entail a considerable degree of non-integration of love. This is demonstrated most directly by the fact that, with regard to passionate love specifically, possibilities are thrown up which cannot be realized at the macrosocial level. An over-inflated measure of legitimated expectations and needs for reduction *within* society are the result of this.⁵⁶ Love overstretches society, not

only *qua* ideal but also *qua* institution. This situation demands, on the one hand, a good measure of non-co-institutionalized common sense on the part of lovers and, on the other, tolerance for them in other societal spheres - in particular, an effective political protection of their privacy.⁵⁷

In addition, clear system divisions need to signal to the actors in which scheme of relevance they are acting at any given moment and which of them has precedence. The wife of the ministerial aide must not suddenly take it into her head, out of love for her husband, to press a secretary of state for a promotion. The fiancée of a student must not experience as neglect the latter's passion giving out while he is preparing for his examinations. In addition to such rules concerning prioritization, it is above all the definition of love as private, intimate, if not indeed secret - and even this aspect becomes plausible through its relation to sexuality - which serves to curtail its excessiveness to that which is feasible in societal terms.

One can assume that this overstretching is also related to the psychological systems and organ-

isms of those who are assumed to be capable of passionate love. Not everyone has the ability or the inclination, time or opportunity for it, and hardly anyone can endure it for any length of time. In this respect, there must be social mechanisms capable of sustaining a more or less large discrepancy between representation and reality. Here, too, the net curtains of privacy fulfil their function. They make it possible, first, to hide the fact that one is in love - and, later, that one is out of love. One can also assume that in a great many cases and with the aid of commonplace clichés, superficial communications about love occur between partners who are prepared to marry one another.

Other problems resulting from functional differentiation arise from the fact that love is reserved for intimate relationships and is expected to a greater extent within them - and is then lacking elsewhere. Widespread complaints regarding the coldness and reserve of modern society - interpreted by Tonnies into the concept of modern society itself - and regarding alienation and the

lack of emotional fulfilment in work, interaction and organization all reflect this situation.⁵⁸ Opportunities for satisfying emotional needs in a focused way are kept available with the aim of relieving other systems of the burden of such functions and enabling them to recruit fully satisfied, well-balanced and efficient individuals. The boundaries of society, along with those of the world that is practicable for society, melt away into indeterminacy and remain emotionally neutral. Meanwhile, those small systems and special worlds with which the individual can identify come into being within society.

This means, for one thing, that broad areas of society now need impersonal means of motivation. But just as important is a second, complementary consideration, namely that the only place where the individual can be seen concretely in *all* their roles - the optimum location for social controls - now lies in a narrow, partial, specially constituted and not generally accepted world, which therefore no longer works as a starting point for societal controls. We might also put it

this way: society must delegate the most effective and, in particular, the most just forms of social control to sub-systems which develop their own, varying kinds of morality and do not identify their boundaries as being the same as those of society. At least love between husband and wife - unlike love between parents and children - is disqualified as a vehicle of transmission of social values and controls. The argument that runs 'if you want to love me, you have to earn a lot, be a regular church-goer and a regular voter in elections' is as morally suspect to us as any instance of imposing conditions of interaction on love.⁵⁹ Even in the case of criminal acts being committed, we expect that love will not be revoked because of them.

The way in which problems resulting from an institution are offloaded onto individuals, so that they are expected to cope with them in the form of an acceptable load of anxieties and behavioural burdens, can be demonstrated by looking at a further problem. The idea of passionate love stylizes it as an improbable case of luck, as risky fate. How is one ever to be certain that this sole

and unique instance of luck has come to pass, that one loves and is loved in a way that can never be otherwise?⁶⁰ The generalization and symbolic exaggeration of the medium make the question of proof acute. But proof is made difficult through the ambiguous normalization of love. What is it that the lovers are to prove to one another - impulsiveness or permanence? Chance or predestination? Being at the wanton mercy of one's own passion or belief in the partner's perfection? The necessity of the choice or their freedom to choose one another as opposed to other options?

One positive function of these difficulties of furnishing proof is that they motivate the decision to get married. Through cultural trivialization, the sex act itself has been devalued as a form of proof, given that an interest in it is implied in any case. The morning after already brings up doubts as to whether it really was love. After all, a highly developed physical sensitivity which might, through that moment, acquire the certainty of permanence, at least of one's own feelings, cannot be presumed to be commonplace. Thus the will-

ingness to enter into marriage remains a typical form of proof, while rejection of marriage is almost a counter-proof, and only those who are not *able* to enter into a marriage (because they are already married, for example) have cause to torment their imagination.

Apart from that, physical beauty and attractiveness make it easier to furnish proof - especially (and this is no minor point) towards third parties. Beauty is an essential component of love as a syndrome of imagination⁶¹ and seems to be an almost indispensable artistic and literary stage prop.⁶² Perhaps one of the reasons for this lies in the following observation: those who know themselves to be beautiful find it easier to believe themselves to be loved, and those who love a beautiful person are more easily able to convince others - and even themselves - of their love.

Thus encumbered by these problems of motivation, persuasion and proof, marriage for love means, for the individual, the opportunity and the danger of remaining unmarried. In a society that institutionalizes love as the basis of marriage, this

needs to be possible without causing any profound societal problems. It needs to be an acceptable personal destiny, as it were.⁶³ Certain obstacles appear to exist in terms of access to social contacts.⁶⁴ Equally, though, there are no religious problems⁶⁵ and hardly any economic or employment-related disadvantages.

What is far more difficult to solve are the problems associated with learning to love. In the early days of modern pedagogy this was regarded as an essential task. In the meantime, the grounding of love in sexual relationships and the compulsory isolation for lovers arising from this has virtually ruled out the possibility of an institutional solution, be it within or outside the family.⁶⁶ The opportunities for learning offered by society may be readily accessible nowadays, but they always relate only to partial aspects and leave out the essential elements. In the 'seminars of the street' (Aubert) (the walls of toilet cubicles, newspaper stands, films, and through conversations among contemporaries) not much is learned other than to assume the universality of interest in sexuality - which is espe-

daily helpful to those in need of courage. Thanks to concerned parents, one acquires an awareness of the risks and possibly of hygienic necessities at the very most. Bureaucratic educators teach the procedure - in curiously non-pedagogical terms - as objectified physiology rather than as physical sensation. The unmediated training of one's own experiences in direct private tutoring does not meet with societal approval and, incidentally, offers little guarantee that it will fulfil the requirements that are to be posed. Seduction and prostitution are the roles that provide a context for this. Thus it is left to coincidence as to whether early sexual experiences give shape to modes of feeling that are capable of learning, or whether they are objectified as a hygienic schema and are slotted in somewhere between cleaning one's teeth and scratching oneself.

Things are no better placed when it comes to learning about the social structure of expectation between lovers built on top of this foundation. We have certain reasons to suppose that a majority of love affairs do not break or deaden the

capacity to love of the normal individual, but rather enhance it and lead to the development of robust abilities.⁶⁷ However, no institutionalized trajectories exist, even for such careers in love. On the contrary, moral disapproval comes to the fore, firing itself up with the idea of love.

In view of all this, there is a lack of adequate provision for the training of refined physical and social sensitivities, for everything which is not part of nature's generous provision but has to be learned. Thus there is also no provision for the fact that individuals can learn to individualize their experiences with themselves and with their partners. The modern 'social incorporation [*Vergesellschaftung*] of sexual relationships', of which Klaus Doerner⁶⁸ speaks, offers few points of reference for developing a culture that can be handed down. At least it makes possible a certain premarital testing of sexual compatibility, rather than targeted learning. The cultural norms that forced people to take appearance for suitability, under the pressure of extreme, intensely felt expectations, are on the wane.⁶⁹

Notes

- 1 See Niklas Luhmann, 'Soziologie als Theorie sozialer Systeme', *Kolner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 19 (1967), pp. 615-44; reproduced in: Niklas Luhmann, *Soziologische Aufklärung I. Aufsätze zur Theorie sozialer Systeme*, 6th edition, Opladen, 1991, pp. 113-36.
- 2 See the distinction between 'semantic problem' and 'effectiveness problem' in Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*, Urbana, 111., 1949, pp. 95f. and, as an attempt to link the two, Russell L. Ackoff, 'Towards a Behavioral Theory of Communication', *Management Science* 4 (1958), pp. 218-34.
- 3 This openness of functional definitions in relation to fulfilling functions [*erfüllende Leistungen*] has the advantage of making very heterogeneous phenomena comparable and the disadvantage that the

concept itself facilitates no deduction or check on completeness of the fulfilling functions.

- 4 For more detail, see Niklas Luhmann, 'Selbststeuerung der Wissenschaft', *Jahrbuch für Sozialwissenschaft* 19 (1968), pp. 147-70.
- 5 A correlation of this variable with attractiveness is established by Paul F. Secord and Carl W. Backman, 'Interpersonal Congruency, Perceived Similarity, and Friendship', *Sociometry* 27 (1964), pp. 115-24.
- 6 On this, see Peter L. Berger and Hansfried Kellner, 'Die Ehe und die Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit. Eine Abhandlung zur Mikrosoziologie des Wissens', *Soziale Welt* 16 (1965), pp. 220-35.
- 7 Cf., e.g., Leon Festinger, 'Informal Social Communication', *Psychological Review* 57 (1950), pp. 271-82; John W. Thibaut and Harold H. Kelley, *The Social Psychology of Groups*, New York, 1959, pp. 42ff.; Theodore M. Newcomb, 'The Prediction of Interpersonal Attraction', *The American Psychologist* 11 (1956), pp. 575-86; Newcomb, *The Acquaintance Process*, New York, 1961; Donn Byrne, 'Interpersonal Attraction and Attitude Similarity', *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 62 (1961), pp. 713-15.

- 8 On this point, cf. the discussion of the concrete-abstract dimension as a basic variable of psychological experiential processing in Kurt Goldstein and Martin Scheerer, 'Abstract and Concrete Behavior. An Experimental Study with Special Tests', *Psychological Monographs* 53 (.1941), No. 2; and O.J. Harvey, David E. Hunt and Harold M. Schroder, *Conceptual Systems and Personality Organization*, New York and London, 1961, with the equally interesting and questionable tendency of interpreting the concrete style of experiential processing as pathological.
- 9 For an empirical study of this question, cf. Marjorie Fiske Lowenthal and Clayton Haven, 'Interaction and Adaptation. Intimacy as a Critical Variable', *American Sociological Review* 33 (1968), pp. 20-30.
- 10 This process sustains the functional differentiation of modern society. For political power, see, e.g., Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, *The Political Systems of Empires*, New York and London, 1963; for the money-steered market economy, e.g. Karl Polanyi, Conrad M. Arensberg and Harry W. Pearson, *Trade and Market in the Early Empires*, Glencoe, 1957; for science, Luhmann, 'Selbststeuerung der Wissenschaft'.

- 19 On this difference, cf. Rodney Needham, *Structure and Sentiment. A Test Case in Social Anthropology*, Chicago, 1962; also Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, London, 1969. Whether and to what extent these structures consider the development of an individual's feelings or even have this as their latent function is contested in the ethnological literature. See George C. Homans and David M. Schneider, *Marriage, Authority, and Final Causes. A Study of Unilateral Cross-Cousin Marriage*, Glencoe, 111. 1955; and the incisive criticism of this by Needham, *Structure and Sentiment*.
- 20 For this, see as comparative studies George A. Theodorson, 'Romanticism and Motivation to Many in the United States, Singapore, Burma, and India', *Social Forces* 44 (1965), pp. 17-27; and Robert O. Blood, Jr, *Love-Match and Arranged Marriage. A Tokyo-Detroit Comparison*, New York, 1967; and with a view to social change, Hiroshi Wagatsuma and George De Vos, Attitudes Toward Arranged Marriage in Rural Japan, *Human Organization* 21 (1962), pp. 187-200. Also cf. Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr, 'Industrialization and the

Notes

American Family. A Look Backward', *American Sociological Review* 31 (1966), pp. 326-37 (esp. pp. 329ff.). Also worthy of note is the contrasting of these two possibilities as 'extremes' in Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, § 162 (Cambridge, 1991, pp. 201-2):

At one extreme, the initial step is taken by well-intentioned parents, and when the persons destined to be united in love get to know each other as destined partners, a mutual inclination results. At the other extreme it is the mutual inclination of the two persons, as *these* infinitely particularized individuals, which arises first. - The former extreme, or any way at all in which the decision to marry comes first and is followed by the inclination so that the two come together in the actual marital union, can itself be regarded as the more ethical course. - In the latter extreme, it is *infinitely particular* distinctness [*Eigentümlichkeit*] which asserts its claims; this is associated with the subjective principle of the modern world. ... - But in these modern dramas and other artistic presentations in which love between the sexes is the basic interest, we encounter a pervasive element of frostiness which is brought

into the heat of the passion such works portray by the total *contingency* associated with it. For the whole interest is represented as resting solely upon *these* particular individuals. This may well be of infinite importance for *them*, but it is of no such interest *in itself*.

The fact that Hegel disputes the importance of passion and therefore prefers the first extreme of organized marriage is due to the fact that he does not recognize the societal function of the passioning of love - not least as a result of *his* pre-sociological concept of society.

- 21 See William J. Goode, 'The Theoretical Importance of Love', *American Sociological Review* 24 (1959), pp. 38-47 (43ff.).
- 22 This applies regardless of how one specifically imagines the "fit" between partners. On this, cf. the controversial 'complementary needs theory' of Robert F. Winch, *Mate Selection*, New York, 1958.
- 23 On this generally, cf. Niklas Luhmann, 'Reflexive Mechanismen', *Soziale Welt* 17 (1966), pp. 1-23; reprinted in: Luhmann, *Soziologische Aufklärung I*, pp. 92-112.

- 39 On this in general, cf. Erving Goffman, 'Where the Action is', in: Goffman, *Interaction Ritual. Essays in Face-to-Face Behavior*, Chicago, 1967, pp. 149-270 (esp. pp. 194ff.).
- 40 Parsons takes account of this insight, for example, by *repeating as a whole* his general scheme of system functions at every level of system differentiation, in other words for sub-systems and for sub-systems of sub-systems as well.
- 41 Which has its 'immediate concept' in marriage, as Hegel aptly says, in order thus to distance itself from the 'disgraceful' notion of marriage based on contract - cf.: *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, §§ 160 and 75.
- 42 Cf. pp. 24f.
- 43 Cf., e.g., Aubert, 'A Note on Love', pp. 218, 224, prompted above all by the literary tradition.
- 44 See, for example, Ernest W. Burgess, 'The Romantic Impulse and Family Disorganization', *Survey Graphic* 57 (1926), pp. 290-4. Robert O. Blood, Jr, *Marriage*, New York, 1962, pp. 200ff. provides an overview of later American research on disenchantment and the cooling of love in marriage.

- 45 'Love matches either succeed more gloriously or fail more miserably than arranged marriages', concludes Blood, *Love-Match*, p. 83, from research conducted by him in Japan.
- 46 Cf. data provided by Goode, *Marriage*.
- 47 In comparison, for example, with the divorce rates of the Romans or the Arabs, who relied more on the dowry than on morality for ensuring the continued existence of marriages.
- 48 On this distinction, see Ronald D. Laing, Herbert H. Philipson and A. Russell Lee, *Interpersonal Perception. A Theory and a Method of Research*, London, 1966.
- 49 This is confirmed by empirical research showing that in attractive relationships assumed agreement exceeds actual agreement. See Donn Byrne and Barbara Blaylock, 'Similarity and Assumed Similarity of Attitudes between Husbands and Wives', *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67 (1963), pp. 636-40; George Levinger and James Breedlove, 'Interpersonal Attraction and Agreement. A Study of Marriage Partners', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 3 (1966), pp. 367-72.

- 50 In this recourse to the level of reflexivity lies also the corrective for the potential conflict entailed by the daily-symbiotic compression of lifelong relationships. Cf. Kurt Lewin, *Resolving Social Conflicts: Selected Papers on Group Dynamics*, New York, 1948, who saw the danger but not the corrective.
- 51 Cf. the hypothesis tested in more recent psychology that more complex personality systems rely to a lesser extent on pre-given structures (reduction of complexity.) of the social system, which also means, *vice versa*, that indeterminately structured social systems (here: structured by love) rely on more complex, 'more reflexive' personalities which experience a wider range of alternatives. Cf., e.g., Harold M. Schroder and O.J. Harvey, 'Conceptual Organization and Group Structure', in: Harvey (ed.), *Motivation and Social Interaction. Cognitive Determinants*, New York, 1963, pp. 134-66; Paul Stager, 'Conceptual Level as a Composition Variable in Small-Group Decision-Making', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 5 (1967), pp. 152-61 - albeit with the psychologist's error of deducing the complexity of a social system *directly* from the complexity of the personalities involved.

- 52 Thus writes Edward F. Griffith, 'Die Bejahung der Sexualität in der Ehe', in: Hans Harmsen (ed.), *Die gesunde Familie in ethischer, sexualwissenschaftlicher und psychologischer Sicht*, Stuttgart 1958, pp. 14-20 (p. 20). Cf. Vilhelm Aubert, *The Hidden Society*, Totowa, NJ, 1965, pp. 72ff.
- 53 Goode, 'The Theoretical Importance of Love', p. 38, fn. 1, states: 'Love is the most projective of emotions, as sex is the most projective of drives.'
- 54 Cf. the interpretations of projective experiential processing in Laing et al., *Interpersonal Perception*.
- 55 Cf., e.g., Ernest W. Burgess and Harvey J. Locke, *The Family. From Institution to Companionship*, New York, 1945; or Robert O. Blood, Jr and Donald M. Wolfe, *Husbands and Wives. The Dynamics of Married Living*, Glencoe, 111., 1960, pp. 146ff.
- 56 This process, too, has exact parallels in other media. Not all truths, or rather possibilities for the technical realization of truths, are acceptable politically or economically or religiously or in intimate relationships (problem of necessary latency, or the barriers to realizing that which is technically possible); not all political power can be enforced *ratione status* (problem of basic rights); not everything that one

could afford should be bought - for example not love, not political influence, not influence over establishing truth. Moreover, it is characteristic that in all these cases society has to trust in normative limits and in the selective effect of system boundaries and no longer in an internal standard of its institutions.

57 The most effective political protection here, incidentally, does not lie - as in other functional sectors of society - in creating appropriate organizations and in their political balance, but in the *equality of the interests of all*.

58 Incidentally this contrast can be found - in a formulation of the theme that is still theological - in debates about the problem of love in early modernity, namely in the mystification of love as a response to the modern world's separation from God (= theological non-interpretability), alienation and 'aridity'.

59 For the parallel problem of *internal* conditions of interaction, see above, pp. 44f.

60 This question, too, incidentally, displays characteristics of a secularized set of theological problems.

61 See, e.g., Henry T. Finck, *Romantic Love and Personal Beauty*, London, 1887. This certainly

doesn't mean that the beauty ideal has been firmly established formally or in substance. As its development over the past two decades indicates, it can largely dispense with charm and even offers space for vulgar brutalization, as if the point was to prove not love but the inexhaustibility of sexual potency.

- 62 The American film *Marty* (1955) offered an impressive exception to this.
- 63 Cf. the representation - albeit sociologically not very productive - of such personal destinies in Erich Stern, *Die Unverheirateten*, Stuttgart, 1957.
- 64 These disadvantages are now probably based less on institutional barriers than on the fact that the unmarried person lacks the initiative of a marriage partner with more contacts who could take them along and introduce them to others.
- 65 One might compare this with societies whose religiosity is manifested concretely in the ancestral cult and which for that reason alone prescribe arranged, obligatory, if not indeed forced marriage in order to safeguard the continuation of the cult. See, for example, T'ung-Tsu Ch'u, *Law and Society in*