



Universität St.Gallen

School of Humanities and Social Science//Philosophy

Dr. Federica Gregoratto
(Tel. +41 (0)71 224 3533; federica.gregoratto@unisg.ch)

Prof. Dr. Dieter Thomä
(Tel. +41 (0)71 224 2729; dieter.thomae@unisg.ch)

Critique of Love – Love as Critique Socio-philosophical Perspectives

International Workshop

University of St. Gall (Main Building)

2-3 December 2016

If love in society is to represent a better one, it cannot do so as a peaceful enclave, but only by conscious opposition. (T.W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, § 110)

In the last three decades, we witness an increasing philosophical interest for all types of love, including and maybe especially romantic or erotic love. Contemporary philosophy tends, however, to regard love as a feeling or emotion, confined to the private realm of intimacy and family life. The aim of this conference is, on the contrary, to conceptually approach this topic from a broader *social and political* perspective. What are the place(s), meaning(s) and function(s) of love in our contemporary world? How does the realm of intimate relationships, which comprehends a diverse range of love forms (Eros, friendship, parental love, etc.,) relate to other social spheres? Could certain understandings of love be thought of as political, and/or as outlining alternative, new forms of (political, social) life?

One starting point for addressing these questions is provided by the so-called *autonomisation thesis*. According to social theorists such as Anthony Giddens (1992), Eva Illouz (2012) or Axel Honneth (2014) modern love has undergone a process of disentanglement from social, economic, political norms and rules: individuals fall in love and engage in intimate relationships for “reasons” that are seen as independent from political beliefs, economic interests, class membership, family and community

expectations and values. This should put lovers in the position of “making their own rules” and to recognize each other in ways that allow them to be known and appreciated in their irreducible singularity.

Such approach is not unproblematic. As already noticed by Theodor W. Adorno, modernization processes establish love as an “involuntary,” “immediate” feeling, as pure a “voice of the heart.” In this allegedly “supreme independence” from external socio-political and economic orders, however, love turns itself precisely into a “tool” of capitalistic society (Adorno 2005: § 110.) In a similar vein, feminist theorists from Simone de Beauvoir to Eva Illouz have extensively shown how the idea of pure, spontaneous love fulfills the ideological function of justifying and reproducing gender inequalities, subordinating women, exploiting their labor and discriminating non-traditional (queer, polyamorous, etc.) forms of love.

The primacy of love as intimate, private relationship constitutes an unchallenged premise that underlies both the autonomisation thesis and its critics. Is this, however, the only way we can think of love? *What is love anyway?* In this workshop, we want to address this highly thorny question with the aim of highlighting and critically discussing the social, political and critical dimensions of love relations.

More specifically, the conference revolves around three main issues/perspectives:

- 1) A conceptual clarification of the nature of love and its place and role in our political, social, economic and cultural world;
- 2) A critical-theoretical approach, which investigates how social categories (e.g. gender, class or economic structures, race, sexuality, etc.) affect and even constitute love as emotion and/or relationship;
- 3) The question whether love may entail critical, emancipating powers: Could love be seen as a disruptive, transformative force, challenging given social and political orders? Could the conceptualization of social-intimate relations help to outline alternative forms of society and community? How can we make sense under present conditions of the old-fashion slogan “the personal is the political”? And what are the dangers and difficulties in considering love in its political, public, critical dimension?

Schedule

Friday, 2 December 2016

Room: 01-U127

13.15 – 13.30: Opening Words

13.30 – 14.30: Federica Gregoratto (St. Gallen): *Agonist Interdependence: Considerations on Love Matters with and against Marx and Hegel*

14.40 – 15.40: Tatjana Noemi Tömmel (Berlin): *Is Love What We Need? Thinking with Hannah Arendt about the Function of Love in the World.*

15.40 – 16.10: coffee break

16.10 – 17.10: Martin Hartmann (Luzern): *Love and the Psychology of the Decent Society. Some Critical Remarks on Nussbaum's Recent Political Philosophy*

17.20 – 18.20: Vincent Kaufmann (St. Gallen): *Perversion and Capitalism*

19.30: Dinner

Saturday, 2 December 2016

Room: 01-114

9.00 – 10.00: Estelle Ferrarese (Amiens): *Love and Coldness in Adorno's Moral Philosophy*

10.10 – 11.10: Heikki Ikäheimo (Sydney): *Love, Freedom and Power*

11.10 – 11.25: coffee break

11.25 – 12.25: Penelope Deutscher (Chicago): *Love and Misrecognition*

12.25 – 13.45: lunch break

13.45 – 14.45: Daniel Loick (Frankfurt a.M.): *Anti Love Politics*

14.55 – 15.55: Stephanie Bethmann (Basel): *Everybody Needs Somebody. Love's Lessons on the Pitfalls of Autonomy in an Empirical Perspective.*

15.55 – 16.15: Final Discussion