

Contact Improvisation

Or: In the Supermarket of Love

Do you believe that...

... somewhere out there exists your one and only other half, that fits you perfectly and that fulfills all your needs?

... true love towards someone necessarily excludes intimacy with others?

... one only can have romantic feelings or deep emotional commitment (or whatever we usually mean by love) towards one person?

... being faithful means not to have sexual or romantic relationships with someone else but your beloved?

... you can own your beloved?

... jealousy is an immutable natural fact?

... Mickey Mouse lives in Disney Land?

In affectionate relationships we closely relate to others. To others who are like us and still different. And as individuals differ, so do our emotional relations towards to them. Yet, in order to keep life simple, we generally make use of a repertoire of socially standardized (and therefore considered normal) behavioural and descriptive patterns, basic figures of interpersonal relationships. Not too many, actually. When it comes to something as essential as intimate interpersonal relationships most people content themselves with the conceptual store of family, friendship and love relationship... I admit that simplification often makes things easier. But not always. One such exception is reality. Dare you happen to have sex with a good friend of yours. Dare you fall in love with someone while being in a love relationship, or even married and having a family. Then, you are doomed... Cause if something doesn't fit into the normal patterns, things must end up nasty. So stick to the rule! Have you ever considered that things might only end up nasty, just because we expect them to?

To me, this relational frugality reminds me of my parents anecdotes about supermarkets in good old communism. And I guess, if there's one good thing why we should not yet abandon liberalism and its voracious little brother capitalism then it's because of their claim that we have a right to choose what suits us as individuals.

Tango has it's undeniable attractiveness, and still, it's not the only joyful way to dance. So why not try something else once? At least, until you know what suits you...

Ideals are great and indispensable, particularly romantic ones. But, as you might know, they also can quickly turn out to be merciless totalitarian dictators setting you under pressure and making you feel bad when you don't conform to them. Yet, couldn't it be similar to absolute sovereigns that some of our most common brilliant ideals might actually lack justification? And that even though these ideals pretend to be the one and onlys they might not be handed over to us by holy mother nature (not to mention the old guy with the white beard) but rather may just have been made up by someone at a certain time for a certain reason and you might do the same? So, how about using your brains and judging for yourself? How about leaving the beaten paths and becoming a discoverer of unknown, captivating blooms in the realm of how we could live our lifes and relationships?

I can't hinder you from misunderstanding me. But. It's not about being selfish, and it's not about taking the smoothest way by avoiding interpersonal commitment. Nor is it about just having a lot of nonbinding sex. It can be, as it can be the opposite. Because it's much more than that, because it's about shaping your own abundant variety of intimate relationships.

Relationships that make you happy because they match your individual personality, and not relationships that make you feel like a monster because you realize that you will never comply with them. It's still about commitment, responsibility, trust and honesty. It's still about emotional involvement and therefore about being vulnerable. And it's even more about trying and probing and learning from hurtful experiences. And of course, it necessitates such prosaic efforts as arrangements, management and setting priorities. It's about love.

Be open. Become flexible. Be careful and be generous. Allow yourself to stumble, as you allow it to your partners. Practice and learn from your mistakes. The recipe is simple; it's its implementation that's intricate.

I wouldn't promise you anything. I just ask you whether you prefer to use ready-made and often worn out patterns or to define your own individual forms, forms that are adequate to your personal life and that allow you to weave your own cocoon of interpersonal intimacy. The good news is that no one can force you to have such ambitions as leading a self-determined life or growing and developing personally. But, it might be that so far you had considered yourself as someone with these kind of ambitions...