

Denise Bedouret. Topic 1: "Liquid Love"

Love: Solid as a Rock

In his book "Liquid Love", Zigmunt Bauman presents what is supposed to be the typical romantic relationship of today: "Welcome to the age of semi-detached couples. In modern "liquid" society, relationships are, like high-tech toys, upgradable." His view is very controversial: he idealises these relationships, making them appear to be much more widespread and positive than they actually are.

Bauman quotes experts who seem to imply that people in a committed relationship are settling for a person they already know and have grown used to and are not open to new and possibly better opportunities. A similar criticism can be made of liquid lovers: they are restless people who are never satisfied by a single partner for more than a given period of time. Liquid love can be fun at first—all relationships are fun at first-, but one cannot expect to make it a philosophy of life and still be happy: most people begin to feel empty after some time, feeling the need for a steadier way of life. For me, the challenge and the worth of a relationship lie in loving a person and enjoying life with them after the novelty value has worn off.

Not many "liquid lovers" remain liquid throughout their lives. Human beings in general can only live with such an amount of variation and uncertainty for a limited period of time. We change as we grow older and gradually start to feel a need for stability. Thus, it is not logical to lay so much emphasis on "keeping all doors open" if the natural thing to do is to close them gradually. People who do not commit to any individual partner, but instead have many, typically end up alone, and not because they have chosen to remain so, but rather because as one ages the "doors" close by themselves.

Neither do many liquid relationships remain liquid over the years. They necessarily evolve. This means that they either end or develop into committed relationships, because no matter how much consensus there is over a relationship at any given moment, it is a live thing that changes continually, as people do. In short, liquid love is either a short-term arrangement or a stage in a long-term relationship.

Freer relationships do not necessarily make people happier. A free relationship can feel good for a period of time, just as any relationship does when it has just begun, but later on it begins to feel empty and purposeless if there is no move towards greater intimacy and commitment. I think commitment is the natural course that any

relationship takes after some time, regardless of how it began or what the partners agreed to in the beginning. No relationship can last for a long time and not involve some kind of commitment.

Moreover, Bauman asserts that committed relationships turn into a “suffocating bubble”. This can happen, but not necessarily. The couple can of course become suffocating, for a number of reasons: some people may get overly possessive and controlling; besides not everybody copes well with the monotony which can (but does not have to) emerge in the couple. However, I believe that if two people move at the pace they feel is right in the relationship, respect each other, learn to love each other and live with each other, this bubble does not need to appear. I think that people nowadays are looking for an easy solution to everything, including love and sex, and this is why committed relationships are portrayed as monotonous and suffocating.

Semi-detached relationships are not as amazing as Bauman suggests. They may make us feel good for some time, but then they tend to follow their natural course. What is important that we are not carried away by the “liquid” fashion: the relationship we choose to be in should be meaningful. For me, a meaningful relationship is that which achieves a balance between short-term negotiation and solution of problems and long-term commitment.

Excellent, with the one mistake that doesn't change anything.

Excellent ideas, a thorough analysis of what Bauman says, and a great command of the language. Go ahead to doing even better, you can!

Mark: 10.