

FAMILY INSTITUTE IN MODERN SOCIETY

Throughout the ages, humanity went through many forms of organization as well as the structural ties of a social cell known as family: from matriarchal/patriarchal polygamy to the current two-parents pattern. The emergence of the family boosted man's chances on survival and production of offspring.

Ancient and medieval philosophers raised many questions on the nature of family and marriage, setting the grounds for contemporary debates – its relation to state, roles in family, role of procreation in it and others. Their works reflect evolving of ideas of family and marriage: from an economic or procreative unit, a religious sacrament, a contractual association to a relationship of mutual support.

Socrates, Plato and Aristotle had contrasting philosophical views on the subject of family. In Antique era, a nuclear family structure of two parents and children was traditional in the society, yet Plato argued that in ideal city families should be communal with the matches arranged by the Rulers. Socrates' view on the roles in family was unusual for that epoch – instead of conforming his wife to his desires, he worked on perfecting himself and treated all his family experiences – especially negative ones – as opportunities to learn from. Aristotle saw the family as a model of state and disagreed on with his fellow philosophers on gender roles in marriage: “the courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying”.

With the spread of Christianity in the Middle Ages, social value of family was greatly influenced with the views of St. Augustine and St. Th. Aquinas. They were for a nuclear patriarchal family, which the greatest goal was seen in the proper rearing of children by man as a head and a woman as his assistant.

In the Renaissance Epoch and early Modern Era, the traditional structure of the family was still preserved, although doctrines of equal rights and marriage contract appeared. In particular, Th. Hobbes acknowledged that his arguments for rough equality among humans were applied to women; Jn. Locke tied his rejection of political patriarchy with a rejection of the patriarchal family, although failed to follow this reasoning consistently; I. Kant emphasized the equality and monogamy in the family. G. Hegel synthesized the preceding themes, stating that the family, as the immediate substantiality of mind, was specifically characterized by love and unity. K. Marx and F. Engels found marriage as a form of capitalistic oppression and control of woman, arguing for abolishment of private family. In later years, theories of the family as a private contract to be broken at will, gained ascendancy.

Historically, we would come in full circle – from absence of defined family structure and free polygamy of primeval chaos, to gradually more organized

communities that resulted in what we know as a nuclear family, to returning increasingly more freedom that is reflected in such arrangements as open marriages, trial marriages, communes, group marriages and non-monogamous matrimony. In the contemporary era, the boundaries of the term “family” are becoming less and less fixed. Ideals of a conservative part of society clash with the new-age societal tendencies. For instance, there is a global trend viewing an individual to be a unit of society. Nowadays, singledom is regarded as the characteristic of the modern individual. Although social isolation becomes more defined than ever, modern philosophers argue that being alone does not equal loneliness. It causes the shift from the traditional family structure to unconventional ones.

Cohabitation, an arrangement of two unmarried people living together, becomes very popular. The polyamory means basically return to the archaic form of a family without any structure. Such communal families consist of more than two adults, who live together, share finances, children, and household responsibilities.

Thus, even as a nuclear family structure is still considered traditional in the Western society, a global flight from family in the modern world can be observed. In the long run a radical change of a traditional family could turn to be a threat for a social stability.

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PHILOSOPHY OF LOVE

Love is the most powerful emotion a human being can experience. But almost nobody knows what love is. And why it is so difficult to find it? It often seems that the word “love” is not the same as one’s feeling of love. This word is used for the expression of different sets of feelings.

There were seven words to define different states of love in ancient Greece.

Philosophy of love includes Western and Eastern traditions. Platonism represents one of the most influential traditions of love in the Western world. There is a comical and colorful myth that love is the search for one’s alter ego, the part of people that can make them a single whole again. Love is a remedy for the ancient wound inflicted on people by the gods, who divided them in two as a punishment for their arrogance.