

Feminism and the Cooling of Intimacy. Unintended Consequences of Women's Movements¹

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1. Introduction. Intended and Unintended Consequences of Feminism.

This paper concerns Arlie Hochschild's and Eva Illouz's studies of unintended consequences of feminism. These unintended consequences may be labelled as rationalisation, commercialisation and cooling of intimacy. Moreover, by making intimacy rationalised, commercialised and cooler feminism seems to shape women as more similar to men, instead of making men similar to women² – this processes are perceived by Illouz and Hochschild as reinforcement of capitalistic market and men's domination on the one hand, and, respectively, as the weakening of family and women's status on the other.

Numerous diagnoses of contemporary transformations of love and eroticism, emphasise the fact that the feminism made intimate life democratised and liberated (Giddens 1992; Weeks 2007). On the other hand, when seen from more conservative and traditional point of view, transformations of intimacy and impact of feminism are diagnosed not as democratisation, but as disintegration of social order and destruction of fundamental moral values (Scruton 1986). Both approaches mentioned above agree on the facts, but disagree when it comes to evaluation of these facts. Moreover, both approaches discuss and evaluate shifts and changes that were intended by feminist movements. Yet, it is possible to distinguish some interesting studies that examine the unintended consequences of women's emancipation movements.

Both Arlie Russell Hochschild and Eva Illouz recognise the importance of feminism in democratising intimacy and are aware that – from the conservative point of view – it may be considered as disintegration of tradition and diminishing of values. Nonetheless, they also claim that liberation of

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² It should be emphasized that there is no claim about essential nature of femininity or masculinity involved within this assumption. By saying that women became similar to men it is not understood that they are becoming similar to the nature of masculinity but rather to socially and culturally constructed gender role of men.

women have entailed rationalisation, commercialisation and cooling of intimacy. This paper will discuss and combine Hochschild's and Illouz's approaches.

Yet, a few introductory remarks should be made before getting to the bottom line. Firstly, it should be noticed that neither Hochschild nor Illouz consider problems of unintended consequences of feminism as central to their studies. Secondly, it needs to be emphasized that both sociologists are aware that their critique concerns only some branches and parts of feminism, which – as every other way of thinking – is not a monolith and includes plenty of competing tendencies.³ Thirdly, cooling of intimacy, understood as it is proposed below, is not exclusively and not even primarily connected with unintended consequences of feminism, but ought to be considered as a wide socio-cultural phenomenon associated with various structural factors, especially with consumer culture (Bauman 2003).

Finally, it needs to be acknowledged that the main thesis of this paper may be seen as controversial and as presented in controversial way. Main thesis may be seen as controversial since it criticises feminism. Yet, as it has been stated above, this is a critique made by feminists, which concerns only unintended consequences of only some branches of feminism. Therefore, this critique of feminism is not against feminism. Particularly, it is neither expression of anti-feminism, which condemns the aims and values of feminism, nor manifestation of post-feminism, which claims that the role of feminism is over. The way in which the thesis is presented may also be perceived as controversial, since it is based on rather narrow textual and empirical evidence. Yet, the thesis of the text is also narrow. It does not try to prove that all, or most kinds of feminism always or very often unintentionally lead to cooling of intimacy. It only says that such cases simply exist and that it is important for feminism to avoid them. Summarising this last introductory remark, it can be said that the aim of this paper is humble and narrow: by following Hochschild's and Illouz feminist critiques of unintended consequences of some branches of feminism it tries to raise an awareness of a specific mechanism, which sometimes works against feminism and due to that fact ought to be avoided.

2. Hochschild on Commercialisation of Intimacy

At the beginning it should be acknowledged that Hochschild analyses are based on women advice books written by feminist authors. Hochschild presents feminist "modern" advice books by contrasting them with

³ One of the branches of feminism, which is obviously opposite to the tendencies diagnosed by Hochschild and Illouz is ethics of care developed by Nel Noddings (1984) and Carol Gilligan (1982).

“traditional” ones. She compares the role models and the images of “ideal women” presented in both kinds of approaches:

Marabel Morgan is greeting Charlie in pink babydoll pajamas at dinnertime while her children watch. The ‘Chicago woman’ leaves her husband for her lover, then leaves her lover, to ride a greyhound bus up a mountain alone. One is in the thick of family life, the other pretty far outside it (Hochschild 2003a, 20).⁴

Obviously, Marabel Morgan is an example of a role model proposed by “traditional” advice book, and “Chicago woman” is an ideal of “modern” feminist approach. Marabel Morgan puts on a funny dress to make her husband laugh when he gets back from work. She is tender for him when he appears at home, showing their children that warmth and being sympathetic is important part of family life. Family and strong emotional connection are fundamental values presented by the image of Marabel Morgan. On the other hand, “Chicago woman” seems to avoid personal attachment. She believes that achieving equality with men requires preserving her own autonomy and independence. In this view, emotional attachment is seen as an endangerment to autonomy and independence, as an obstacle in the fight for gender equality, and as opening the door for exploitation.

According to Hochschild, traditional advice books are “warm”, because they emphasise importance of strong emotional attachment and family. In contrast, feminist modern advice books are “cold” due to the fact that they suggest to avoid strong emotional attachments in order to save personal freedom, autonomy and independence. Hochschild profoundly analyses the directive of preserving one’s personal autonomy and avoiding emotional attachment. In particular, she tries to understand, what exactly does it mean to preserve one’s autonomy, independence, and freedom. She investigates what kind of self-care do feminist advice books propose.

On the one hand, this specific care is connected with the attitude toward the others, the potential partners, lovers etc. As sociologist claims: “Most of these ‘modern’ books whisper to the reader, ‘let the emotional investor beware.’” (Hochschild 2003a, 22) It seems, that emotional investor should beware, because he ought to know, that he shouldn’t expect any kind of strong attachment or deep bond. He should be aware that woman he is interested in do not want to invest too much in him. Instead of him, she wants to invest in herself: “If Morgan counsels women to accumulate domestic capital and invest at home, Dowling cautions women to invest them in the self as a solo enterprise. (...) Gaining the edge during this period, then, is the postmodern cowgirl who devotes herself to the ascetic practices of emotional

⁴ The ideal type of „warm” intimacy is based on *The Total Woman* by Marabel Morgan (1973), and an example of „cool Chicago women” comes from a *The Cinderella Complex* by Collette Dowling (1981).

control, and expects to give and receive surprisingly little love from other human beings" (Hochschild 2003a, 22).

The phrase quoted above shows that preserving one's autonomy requires not only specific attitude toward others (that is based on avoiding "risky investments" and strong attachments) but also very peculiar attitude to one's self and one's emotions. It seems rather paradoxical that investing into one's self is understood as limitation of expectations about fulfilling intimate relationship and as a sort of emotional asceticism. It is a consequence of the assumption that emotional attachment is unpleasant as a potential cause of losing autonomy and independence, and as a source of reproduction of gender inequalities. Moreover, intimate relationships are considered as disappointing and hurtful. Thus, it is better to resign from closeness and attachment and to reduce one's emotional needs. Therefore, the advice provided by feminist advice books is to stay cool toward other people as well as toward one's own expectations.

Yet, it still remains a question, where should women invest, if not in others, and not in their own feelings – how to care about one's autonomy, freedom and independence except detaching self from the other people and from the emotional expectations. Hochschild claims that feminist advice books provide two main answers for abovementioned questions. The first answer provided by feminist advice books for a question "how to care for one's autonomy?" refers to the body and consumption:

Each cool modern book offers a slightly different version of the commercial culture. Some express a theme of production, others a theme of consumption. In *Having It All*, Helen Gurley Brown does both, by focusing on the production of the body she displays as a ware. In the nearly one third of *Having It All* that she devotes to the female face, hair, body – exercise, diet – and dress, she proposes a policy of 'investment' in the bodily self. Brown tells women what to do: dye your hair. Get a face lift. Diet (Hochschild 2003a, 26).

Consumption is treated as a cure for anxiety and fragility of personal relations. The connections between consumption and intimate relationship, especially the impact of the market logic on intimacy that leads to treating other people as commodities, is extremely interesting topic however it is impossible to discuss it in this paper. Yet, consumption is not the only way to care about individual autonomy. Authors of feminist advice books seem to be aware that consumption sometimes may be not enough to deal with emotional confusion and that the communication with another human being may sometimes be necessary. That is why the second suggestion concerning the way to care about personal autonomy concerns using therapy services.

According to Hochschild, feminists present therapists as the ones who should replace family in providing emotional support (however it would be

perfect, if any kind of support wouldn't be necessary: "the ideal self doesn't need much, and what it does need it can get for itself") (Hochschild 2003a, 24). The therapists are not as "dangerous" as family members, because they are professionals who do not want to get into any emotional relationship with a patient, therefore they are not interested in limiting anyone's autonomy, independence or freedom. Therapists get money for their job so they are not a threat: "Actual healing is reserved for a separate zone of paid professionals where people have PhDs, MDs, MAs, accept money, and have special therapeutic identities" (Hochschild 2003a, 25).

3. Illouz on Rationalisation of Intimacy⁵

As much as therapists' services are concerned, it seems reasonable to investigate Eva Illouz's studies on therapeutic discourse. It is worth noticing that Illouz's approach interestingly combines with Hochschild's claims. Illouz argues that psychology emphasises importance of two main conditions of mental health: preserving autonomy and permanent self-examination. Preserving autonomy is understood as being not too much dependent on anyone. Being attached to one's intimate partner (or to anyone else) entails the loss of autonomy, and the loss of autonomy entails the loss of mental health.

The main mean to save one's autonomy is to conduct permanent and detailed self-examination. One should analyse himself/herself, as well as monitor and name his/her feelings. Actors ought to be able to describe their selves, their experiences and their emotions in neutral, scientific-like terms, and to make themselves objects of studies and researches. It is also important to communicate emotions in intimate relationship by using abovementioned rational and neutral terms. Illouz strongly emphasises that such therapeutic discourse entails hyper-rationalised and mechanistic egocentrism (Illouz 2008, 150).

According to Illouz, an unintended consequence of this approach is making intimate relationships "cool" by rationalizing them and promoting radical individualism (Illouz 2007). Yet, Illouz, claims that individualisation and rationalisation of intimacy caused by psychology is supported by feminism. According to Illouz, although feminism and psychology consider themselves (and often are considered by outside parties) as heading in the opposite directions, their unintended consequences are compatible and lead to rationalisation, commercialisation and cooling of intimacy. Despite the fact that the aim of therapeutic discourse is mental health, and the aim of feminism

⁵ The reconstruction of Illouz's analyses of psychology is a shortened version of studies presented in the article Richard Sennett and Eva Illouz on tyranny of intimacy. Intimacy tyrannized and intimacy as a tyrant (Musiał 2013).

is emancipation of women, both of those aims are considered to be achieved by means of autonomy and rational self-examination:

Women have been enjoined both by feminism and by therapy to clarify their values and preferences and to build relationships that conform to and suit those values, all with the goal of asserting an autonomous and self-reliant self. This process can take place only when women carefully take themselves as objects of scrutiny, control their emotions, assess choices, and choose their preferred course of action (Illouz 2008, 137–138).

Feminists claim that emancipation of women should be achieved by loosening or sometimes by cutting off women's attachments and dependency to men (and – in fact – to any other close persons as well). Women shouldn't sacrifice themselves for men, and shouldn't be unconditionally committed to them, but rather ought to become autonomous and independent individuals. To achieve that, females ought to analyse themselves and their intimate relationships to investigate whether they are treated as equals or not. According to feminism women can liberate themselves by examining rules that regulate their family and intimate life e.g. by measuring the share of housework done by them and by their partners and by comparing their own will of sacrifice and commitment to analogous dispositions of their beloved ones. In this sense feminism puts individual freedom as a centre value and proposes rationalisation of intimate life as a mean to achieve autonomy and – eventually – women's emancipation and gender equality.

Illouz presents strong and controversial claim that unintended consequences of feminism and psychology (as well as other factors, e.g. the new technologies of choice like online dating sites)(Illouz 2012a, 177–184) have (at least partially) lead to results opposite to those that were intended by them. They postulated importance of spontaneity and authenticity in intimate life, but instead they produced rationalised and procedural intimacy. They fought for egalitarian and warm family bonds but they have created cold intimacies where commitment to others is considered as a source of oppression. They wanted to liberate intimate life from strict regulations, but they disciplined it with rational procedures of self-examination, labelling emotions, and measuring sacrifices. In this sense psychology and feminism not only have (intentionally) lead to emancipation, equality and freedom, but also (unintentionally) become discipliners of love and family, rationalisers of love, coolers of passion.

Illouz's analyses are compatible with Hochschild's claims that feminism promotes detachment from intimate relationships, emotional asceticism, and preserving one's autonomy and independence. Illouz also shows that unintended consequences of psychotherapy are highly compatible with feminism. Psychology, similarly to feminism, perceives emotional attachment as an endangerment for one's independence. Therefore, feminism

seems to claim that when one has problems with one's self – which would probably mean that one has problems with emotional detachment and asceticism – one should go to the therapy to get more of emotional detachment and asceticism. The cure for anxieties of individualism is more individualism.

4. Conclusion. Intimacy is becoming similar to the market and women are becoming similar to men

Women are advised to limit their intimate relationships, to stay cool in emotional asceticism, and to invest their energy “in themselves” that is: in therapy and consumption. To simplify, it may be said that the feminists' advice is: do not believe in love, believe in the science (psychological therapy) and in the capitalism (consumption); leave the family and join the market. This shift from trusting in home and family to trusting in psychology and market is recognised by Hochschild as a significant transformation in many aspects analogous to the transformation involving protestant ethic and spirit of capitalism described by Max Weber.

Hochschild provides strong thesis that feminism remains functional to the commercial spirit of intimate life just as Protestantism was functional to the spirit of capitalism:

Feminism is to the commercial spirit of intimate life as Protestantism is to the spirit of capitalism. The first legitimates the second. The second borrows from but also transforms the first. Just as certain prior conditions prepared the soil for the spirit of capitalism to ‘take off’ – the decline of feudalism, the growth of cities, the rising middle class – so, too, certain prior conditions ripen the soil for the ‘take off’ of the commercial spirit of intimate life. The preconditions now are a weakening of the family, the decline of the church and loss of local community – traditional shields against the harsher effects of capitalism (Hochschild 2003a, 23).

Protestantism was functional to capitalism because it positively evaluated the hard work and the asceticism – it entailed growth of efficiency of labour force and accumulation of capital. It should be emphasised that “supporting capitalism” was not an intended aim of protestant ethic, but rather an unintended consequence of its validity. Analogically, feminism is functional to commercial spirit of intimate life, because it promotes emotional and intimate asceticism – it shifts individual's attentions from home and family to the market and experts' services. Feminism fights for genders' equality, autonomy, freedom and independency of women, yet it also supports the spirit of commercialisation. Just as Protestantism helped to create producers, feminism helps to create consumers. Thus, Hochschild presents even more radical claim. She argues that feminism not only transforms family into supporter of

commercial spirit, but also enables bringing the commercial spirit into the family.

For, it seems also true that part of the content of the spirit of capitalism is being displaced onto intimate life; this is, in fact, partly what the commercial spirit of intimate life is. The ascetic self-discipline which the early capitalist applied to his bank account, the late twentieth-century woman applies to her appetite, her body, her love. The devotion to a 'calling' which the early capitalist applied to earning money, the latter day woman applies to 'having it all' (Hochschild 2003a, 24).

Bringing commercial spirit into family and intimacy means that these spheres are invaded by the market logic. Individuals treat their families as companies that need management, consider themselves as investors of intimate emotions and treat others as investments. The radical examples of this trend are situations when one hires experts to manage his family life (Hochschild 2012, 131–145) or when one tries to hire a wife (Hochschild 2003b). Hochschild provides illustrations of successful and almost total commercialization of intimacy on particular examples, e.g. she describes a case of a woman, who claims that "anything you pay for is better" – that in most cases it is better to hire an expert or a professional than to ask family member or a friend for help (Hochschild 2012, 183–196).

Hochschild criticises the "cool" feminism that produces commercial spirit of the intimate life. She claims that "Instead of humanizing men, we are 'capitalizing' women" (Hochschild 2003a, 29). This means, that "cool" feminism tries to adjust women to the men's world instead of making men's world more appropriate. Women are suggested to become cold and detached instead of making men warm and attached. In Hochschild opinion, women should influence men to become warm and attached to family to make intimacy stronger in competition with capitalistic market.

According to Illouz, abovementioned situation is connected with a specific mechanism, which is immanent to desire of equality. Illouz argues that equality is very often confused with sameness; thus, feminists instead of being equal with men appear to be more and more similar to them. Illouz, similarly to Hochschild, observes that when women become similar to men – that is, when they prefer to stay detached from intimate relationships, and focus on preserving their autonomy by using therapies and consumption – they are becoming functional to capitalistic market. In the end, Illouz utterly agrees with Hochschild's statement that feminism should humanise men instead of capitalising women: "Feminism has other strands and other aims than making women into the productive forces of capitalism: namely to make the public sphere a more ardent sphere of preoccupation for women" (Illouz 2012b).

To summarise, it may be said that the main unintended consequence of intimacy is the cooling of intimacy that appears to be a combination of

rationalisation and commercialisation processes described by Hochschild and Illouz. Therefore, unintended consequences of feminism seem to entail two mechanisms: 1) women are becoming similar to men by becoming cool and rational participants of economic and emotional market, 2) the sphere of love, intimacy and family becomes more and more similar to the capitalistic market.

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Feminism and the Cooling of Intimacy. Unintended Consequences of Women's Movements

Abstract. Numerous diagnoses of contemporary transformations of love and eroticism emphasise the fact that the intimate life has become democratised and liberated. Anthony Giddens argues that personal relationships increasingly become compatible with the model of pure relationship, which means that they are more egalitarian and that both partners are free to choose and to negotiate the shape of their relations. Jeffrey Weeks claims that in “the world that we have won”, women, homosexuals and queers are increasingly considered as equal to heterosexual men. Most scholars agree that feminism (together with gays’ and lesbians’ movements) is one of most important factors that enabled the democratisation of intimacy. Yet, it is possible to distinguish some interesting approaches that examine the unintended consequences of women’s emancipation. Sociologists like Arlie Russell Hochschild and Eva Illouz recognise the importance of feminism in democratising intimacy, thus they also claim that liberation of women has entailed rationalisation and commercialisation of intimacy.

One of Hochschild’s main thesis is that feminism commercialises intimacy by legitimising “the commercial spirit of intimate life”. What is more, she argues that instead of humanizing men feminism is capitalising women. On the other hand, Illouz persuades that feminism – together with therapeutic discourse – rationalises intimacy by emphasising the necessity of analysing and quantifying all aspects of intimate life. Hochschild and Illouz claim that feminism unintentionally makes intimacy “cold” – that is that it suggests focusing on personal autonomy and perceiving warm and close bonds as an endangerment for that autonomy. The cooling entails loosening of family and intimate relationships and making individuals more attached to the market. In the end, both sociologists agree that “cool” branches of feminism make women similar to men and intimacy similar to the market.

Keywords: intimacy, love, feminism, emancipation, rationalization, commercialization

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