

総合英語レベル8 第2回 愛について

予習課題：次の英文を読んで、内容を理解しなさい。

Have you ever been in love? Almost certainly you have. Most people from their teens onwards know what being in love is like. Love and romance provide, for many of us, some of the most intense feelings we ever experience. But why do people fall in love? The answer at first sight seems obvious. Love expresses a mutual and physical attachment that two individuals feel for one another. These days, we might be skeptical of the idea that love is ‘for ever’, but falling in love, we tend to think, is an experience arising from universal human emotions. It seems natural for a couple who fall in love also to want personal and sexual fulfillment in their relationship, perhaps by marrying and/or starting a family.

Yet this situation, which may just appear ‘natural’ to most of us today, is in fact very unusual. Beginning a long-term partnership, or starting a family, with someone with whom you have fallen in love is not an experience that most people across the world have. In early modern Europe, royal and aristocratic marriages were very often arranged primarily on political grounds, or for reasons of enhancing or maintaining family status. And although ‘arranged marriages’ across the world are now less common than once they were, amongst certain South Asian communities, they remain the norm. In all of these cases, falling in love is rarely thought of as having any connection to marriage or starting a family. The idea of basing a long-term partnership on romantic love did not become widespread in European societies until fairly recently, and has never existed at all in many other cultures where more material or pragmatic reasons take precedence.

Only in modern times have love and sexuality come to be seen as closely connected in the Western industrialized societies. John Boswell, a historian of medieval Europe, has remarked on the unusual nature of modern idea about romantic love. In Europe during the Middle Ages, virtually no one married for love; there was even a medieval saying: ‘To love one’s wife with one’s emotions is adultery.’ In those days and for centuries afterwards, men and women married mainly in order to keep property in the hands of the family or to raise children for working on the family farm. Once married, they may have become close companions, but this happened after marriage rather than before. People sometimes had sexual affairs outside marriage, but these inspired few of the emotions we currently associate with love. Romantic love was regarded as at best a weakness and at worst a kind of sickness.

(注) the Middle Ages : 中世、medieval : 中世の、adultery : 姦淫