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Richard Sennett and Eva Illouz on tyranny of intimacy. Intimacy tyrannized and intimacy as a tyrant¹

This paper discusses two accounts of tyranny of intimacy. The first account is presented by Eva Illouz who analyses the way in which intimacy, which previously liberated from strict, traditional rules, has become disciplined and tyrannized by unintended consequences of therapeutic discourse, feminism and technologies of choice. The second approach is delivered by Richard Sennett who argues that tyranny of intimacy has resulted in appearing of increasingly egocentric individuals, which, eventually, leads to “a fall of a public man”. In this sense, Sennett considers intimacy as a tyrant that disintegrates the public sphere. In this paper the approaches of both Illouz and Sennett are compared and analysed. The main thesis of this dissertation is that despite the fact that Illouz’s studies concern transformations of intimacy and Sennett’s analysis discuss changes of public sphere, both of these approaches seem to be compatible. In particular, Sennett and Illouz apparently describe the same process; yet, while Sennett discovers it as concerning the public sphere, Illouz discusses it as affecting the intimate one. It can be argued that the mechanisms which transformed the public sphere have spread to the intimate sphere causing similar results. It follows that the processes taking place in the middle of the twentieth century (and described by Sennett), appeared later on the ground of intimacy in the second half of the twentieth century and in the first decade of the second millennium (and became analysed by Illouz).

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In the classical book entitled *The Fall of Public Man*² Richard Sennett analyses the mechanisms that have led to diminishing of the public sphere in the Western culture. He argues that the tyranny of intimacy is one of the most important contemporary factors which makes the public man falling. According to Richard Sennett, intimacy has tyrannised the public sphere and, as a consequence, entailed its disintegration and a fall of a public man. The fact that Sennett finds a source of this tyranny in psychology seems significant.

The advent of modern psychology, and of psychoanalysis in particular, was founded on the faith that in understanding the inner working of the self *sui generis*, without transcendental ideas of evil or of sin, people might free themselves from these horrors and be liberated to participate more fully and rationally in a life outside the boundaries of their own desires. Masses of people are concerned with their single life-histories and particular emotions as never before; this concern has proved to be a trap rather than a liberation.

Because this psychological imagination of life has broad social consequences, I want to call it by a name that may at first seem inapt: this imagination is an intimate vision of society. 'Intimacy' connotes warmth, trust, and open expression of feeling. But precisely because we have to come expect these psychological benefits throughout the range of our experience, and precisely because so much social life which does have a meaning cannot yield these psychological rewards, the world outside, the impersonal world, seems to fail us, seems to be stale and empty.³

Sennett claims that psychology causes individualization and produces logic of self-absorption and egocentrism. He is interested in how psychological logic affects the public sphere and argues that psychology promotes individual self and its authenticity as the key value, the meaning of life. Putting authenticity of an individual personality in the centre leads to the situation in which "everything returns to motive: Is this what I really feel? Do I really mean it? Am I being genuine?"⁴ As a result, "behaviour and issues which are impersonal do not arouse much passion"⁵, that is, anything not directly connected to one's self is not considered interesting or important. Therefore, public problems are perceived as useless and irrelevant as long as they do not become directly connected with personality of a particular individual. Consequently, issues do not exist as long as they are not the personal ones. It follows that, "confusion has arisen between public and intimate life; people

² R. Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, New York 1977.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 267.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

are working out in terms of personal feelings public matters which properly can be dealt with only through codes of impersonal meaning.”⁶ In this sense, the public sphere becomes disintegrated as a place that contain problems disconnected from personal issues and, as a consequence, generally irrelevant.

In order to describe the above outlined situations, Sennett uses the term “narcissism”. He does not perceive narcissism as the love for one’s beauty, but rather “as a character disorder, it is self-absorption which prevents one from understanding what belongs outside it.”⁷ Moreover, Sennett claims that the sources of narcissism are not hidden within consciousness or unconsciousness of an individual, but rather in culture. He perceives contemporary culture as stimulating for spreading of the self-centred attitudes.⁸ In Sennett’s opinion narcissism (understood as a self-absorption) leads to the ignorance of the public sphere as not directly connected with one’s personality.

However, according to Sennett “narcissism” is not the only direction in which individuals retreat from the public sphere. He also argues that contemporary culture holds the belief in the undisputable value of intimate warmth and closeness. Contrary to intimacy, the public sphere appears cold and impersonal:

The reigning belief today is that closeness between persons is a moral good. The reigning aspiration today is to develop individual personality through experiences of closeness and warmth with others. The reigning myth today is that the evils of society can all be understood as devils of impersonality, alienation and coldness. The sum of these three is an ideology of intimacy: social relationships of all kinds are real, believable, and authentic the closer they approach the inner psychological concerns of each person. This ideology of intimacy transmutes political categories into psychological categories.⁹

According to Sennett, the contemporary culture diminishes the public sphere not only by spreading narcissism, but also by emphasizing the importance of personal and warm bonds. Intimate relationships based on love and friendship are evaluated as the key values that are way more important than impersonal and “cold” relations in the public sphere. It follows that, as Sennett argues, culture suggests individuals to participate in small and warm communities like families, rather than in bigger groups based on impersonal bonds like society.

To summarise, Sennett argues that in the contemporary culture values such as the observation from neutral point of view or objective judgment are dimin-

⁶ Ibidem, p. 5.

⁷ Ibidem, p. 8.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 326.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 259.

ished. They are treated as cold and not authentic practices that do not bring any benefit to an individual personality. Issues are considered as important to one's self or as unimportant at all. Sennett claims that such an approach leads to a dangerous illusion that warmth, closeness, intimacy and authenticity are the answers for all important questions, and that they can help to dissolve any problem. In the result the real causes of problems are left undiscovered and "the forces of domination or inequity remain unchallenged."¹⁰ Yet, it should be emphasized that according to Sennett individuals choose two kinds of directions to retreat from the public sphere: narcissism understood as self absorption and intimacy understood as warm bonds based on love and friendship.

Intimacy and its transformations in contemporary Western culture are the main topic of Eva Illouz's analyses. Illouz discusses and labels some of such transformations as tyranny of intimacy. According to Illouz, tyranny of intimacy is caused by three factors; namely, psychology, feminism and technologies of choice (e.g. the Internet). It should be noticed that these three factors are usually discussed as main causes of liberation and democratisation of intimacy. Anthony Giddens argues that scientific approach to sexuality and intimacy (especially psychology and Freud's psychoanalysis) have helped to distinct the importance of intimate life and enabled more open public discussions on topics like love and sexuality.¹¹ In this sense, science (including psychology) has helped to emancipate intimacy from strong restrictions and from being a taboo topic. Moreover, Giddens emphasizes the importance of increasing the freedom of choice. He argues that individuals are no longer attached to others till death tears them apart, and that their choices are no longer regulated by local customs or family's will. The fact that the freedom of choice has become greater as well as the spectrum of choice has become broader is, according to Giddens, "reason for celebration".¹²

In a similar fashion, Jeffrey Weeks claims that in *The world that we have won*¹³, women, homosexuals and queers are increasingly considered equal to men and heterosexuals. He strongly emphasizes that feminism (together with gays' and lesbians' movements) has led to more democratized and more egalitarian intimacy. Weeks also positively evaluates the Internet (which is the main "technology of choice" in Illouz's terms) claiming that "Internet provides a new form of inti-

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 339.

¹¹ A. Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, Cambridge 1992.

¹² N. Gross, S. Simmons, *Intimacy as a Double-Edged Phenomenon? An Empirical Test of Giddens, "Social Forces"* 2002, 81(2), p. 538.

¹³ J. Weeks, *The World We have Won: The Remaking of Erotic and Intimate Life*, London, New York 2007.

macy where anything seems possible, with fewer of the risk than traditional forms of contact.”¹⁴

Although, Illouz acknowledges the abovementioned importance and positive impact of feminism, as well as psychology and technologies of choice, she also discusses the unintended consequences of these three phenomena. She argues that despite many differences feminism, psychology and technologies of choice share a number of important similarities, especially when it comes to their impact on intimacy. In following parts of this text Illouz’s reconstruction of unintended consequences of psychology, feminism and technologies will be discussed.

A critique of psychology is one of the main topics of Illouz’s studies that appears in most of her books (and connects her analysis with Sennett’s perspective in a specific way). The sociologist believes that psychology has produced therapeutic discourse that has a great and rather ambivalent impact on contemporary culture, especially on the intimate life. It should be mentioned that Illouz distinguishes between “serious” psychology and “pop” psychology.¹⁵ Yet, despite the fact that her analysis concern mainly informal pop-psychology, she claims that both formal and informal parts of therapeutic discourse share some common assumptions and provide individuals with specific beliefs and worldviews.¹⁶ Illouz’s basic claim about the therapist discourse is as follows:

Clinical psychology has played a uniquely central role in suggesting (and bestowing scientifically legitimacy on) the idea that love and its failures must be explained by the psychic history of the individual, and that, as a result, they are within the purview of her/his control. Although the original Freudian notion of the unconscious aimed at dissolving traditional authorial notions of responsibility, in practice, psychology played a crucial role in relegating the realm of the romantic and the erotic to the individual’s private responsibility. Whether psychoanalysis and psychotherapy intended to or not, they have provided a formidable arsenal of techniques to make us the verbose but inescapable bearers of responsibility for our romantic miseries.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 159.

¹⁵ “The therapeutic discourse is thus both a *formal* knowledge system that has distinct boundaries and rules of writing, is produced in formal organizations, and is carried through professional networks, especially through “knowledge producers” (E. Illouz, *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-Help*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 2008, p. 28) and “an *informal*, amorphous, and diffuse cultural system present in ordinary cultural practices and self-understandings. Although, this book focuses on the latter system, I try to stress the connections between the two realms”, ibidem, p. 10.

¹⁶ “I argue that the boundary between specialized psychological knowledge and so-called pop psychology is porous in that both the professional language of psychology and its popular version address the self using similar metaphors and narratives”, ibidem p. 13.

¹⁷ E. Illouz, *Why Love Hurts: A Sociological Explanation*, Cambridge, Malden 2012, p. 4.

Illouz strongly emphasizes the fact that methodological perspective of psychology is individualistic. It entails the assumption that most of issues can and should be explained by the internal mental states of a particular individual, for instance, by one's dreams or memories from the childhood. If one wants to dissolve his/her problems, one should look for the solutions "inside". According to Illouz, psychology often reduces explanations of individual's situations to his/her mental condition, at the same time excluding or undermining any outside factors such as culture and social structure. To simplify this thesis, it may be said that psychology claims that everything is in one's head, and an individual is the only creator of his/her life, the only one who is responsible for its shape.

The consequence of abovementioned assumptions is that psychology considers an individual personality as the greatest value. An individual is the source of mental problems and mental health, so it should be the centre of every life plan. Yet, a question remains, how one should care about her/his individuality to become healthy rather than sick. Illouz argues that psychology emphasizes the importance of two main conditions of mental health, that is, autonomy and permanent self-examination. Personal autonomy is understood as being relatively not too much dependent on anyone. It is strongly connected with Freud's idea that individuals are often strongly attached to their parents and that they should become independent by dealing with childhood memories. However, the contemporary therapeutic discourse goes further and says that one should not be excessively attached not only to one's parents but also to any other people, including intimate partners. Being attached too much entails losing autonomy, which, in turn, entails losing mental health. Autonomy, authenticity, independence are the key values emphasised by therapeutic discourse.

The key solution to saving 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 terms, and make themselves objects of studies and researches. Furthermore, communicating emotions in intimate relationship by using the abovementioned rational and neutral terms is also important. Illouz strongly emphasises that the approach of therapeutic discourse entails hyper-rationalised and mechanistic egocentrism: "By insisting that the rules governing the expression of emotions are to be learned reflexively, the therapeutic discourse has made emotional life a matter of procedural and reflexive monitoring of the self [...]"¹⁸

¹⁸ E. Illouz, *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism*, London 2007, p. 2007.

Moreover, by referring to George Simmel, Illouz comes up with a conclusion that this rationalised self-examination leads to disintegration of intimate bonds and makes actors remote and distant:

remoteness derives from the fact that people share a standardized language, an abstract way of capturing and making sense of relationship. In other words, the fact that we increasingly have cultural techniques to standardize intimate relationships, to talk about them and manage them in a generalized way, weakens the capacity for closeness, the congruence between subjects and object, the possibility of fusion. When the relationship becomes increasingly generalized and intellectualized, love loses its unmediated character, and both the emotion and the object of love come to be interpreted in terms that are alien to the inner experience of the self.¹⁹

To summarise Illouz analysis of therapeutic discourse it should be said that psychology puts individual personality and its autonomy in the centre as the most important value, and as the main factor that has an impact on one's mental condition. In order to take care of individual autonomy actors should emancipate from too strong attachments to other people and ought to analyse and examine their own emotions in a neutral, scientific manner to become their own therapists. According to Illouz, an unintended consequence of this approach is making intimate relationships "cold" [Illouz, 2006] by suggesting that individuals should rather keep the distance instead of making commitments and sacrifices: "Because the therapeutic discourse was by definition centred on individuals, it was also individualistic, commanding men and women to put themselves at the centre of their life plan, with the result that, without explicitly intending it, they undermined the traditional commitment to the family based on self-sacrifice."²⁰ In this sense, therapeutic discourse becomes a tyrant that rationalises and individualises intimate life making it more organised and less warm. However, according to Illouz, psychology is not alone in being an unintended tyrant of intimacy because it gains support from feminism and female emancipation movements.

The investigation of the way in which Illouz discusses the relations between psychology and feminism seems very interesting. The sociologist claims that,

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 149.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 118. It is worth mentioning that Illouz's critical analysis of therapist discourse becomes counter-argument for one-sided and optimistic thesis of Anthony Giddens (*The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, Cambridge 1992) who claims that psychology and therapy have a great positive impact on intimate life. Illouz explicitly argues that Giddens' point of view is too one-sided, ibidem, p. 142–143. It should be also mentioned that neither Giddens nor Illouz describes all kinds of feminism, but they rather choose a specific sort of feministic attitude. It means that Illouz's analyses should not be understood as concerning all feminists in general.

initially, feminists welcomed psychoanalysis with open arms as a recognition of women's passion and as an ally in perceiving sexuality as a "battleground for the politics of emancipation."²¹ Yet, contemporary feminism mainly criticise Freud's ideas, especially due to the essentialisation of femininity. Similarly, feminists often stand against psychology and therapist discourse in general. Illouz explains this critique by saying that "It has even become somewhat of a cliché of feminist critiques to view the therapeutic mode of self-understanding as a form of false consciousness that translates political collective problems into psychological individual predicaments, thus inhibiting the possibility of genuine structural change."²² In this sense feminists are in opposition to psychotherapists' assumption that individual problems are not connected with cultural patterns and social structure and that they can be explained individually. This is the point where feminist's critique meets Illouz's approach; yet, the sociologist argues that "the feminist critique of therapy has missed an even more important fact: the vocation of psychology was to criticize, with various degrees of explicitness, the family, and it was this critical vocation that in practice met and merged with feminism."²³ According to Illouz, although feminism and psychology consider themselves (and often are considered by outside parties) as heading in the opposite directions, the unintended consequences of these ideologies are compatible and lead to rationalisation and cooling of intimacy.²⁴

Despite the fact that the aim of therapeutic discourse is mental health, and the aim of feminism is emancipation of women, both of these targets 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."²⁵

Feminists claim that emancipation of women should be achieved by loosening or sometimes cutting off women's attachments to men and dependency on them. Women should not sacrifice themselves for men and should not be unconditionally committed to them, but rather ought to become autonomous and independent

²¹ Ibidem, p. 14.

²² Ibidem, p. 106

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ It should be mentioned that Illouz is not the only one who argues that feminism have led to cooling and rationalization of intimacy. A similar analysis is presented by Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Commercialization of Intimate Life: Notes From Home And Work*, San Francisco, Los Angeles 2003.

²⁵ E. Illouz, *Cold Intimacies...*, p. 137–138.

individuals. To achieve that, females are obliged to analyse themselves and their intimate relationships and to investigate whether they are treated equally to men or not. According to feminism, women can liberate themselves by examining rules that regulate their family and intimate life, for instance, by measuring the share of housework done by them and 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 the key value and offers rationalisation of intimate life as a mean to achieve autonomy, eventually, women's emancipation and gender equality.

Illouz claims that the impact of feminism and therapeutic discourse on intimacy seem to be highly ambivalent and disturbing issue, in contrast to one-sided positive evaluations of these two ideologies briefly sketched at the beginning of this dissertation. However, Illouz consequently investigates tensions between the intended aims and unintended consequences of feminism and psychology, and sharply contrasts the former with the latter one:

Indeed, psychotherapy and feminism seemed equally committed to creating a new “utopian vision of a life space in which people could meet face-to-face in some absolute and unmediated sense, beyond all status or conventions. The alliance of psychology and feminism was unintended, but its effects surprisingly conflicted with the cult of authenticity and spontaneity that had dominated the 1960s and 1970s: the meeting of psychotherapy and feminism ultimately produced a new discipline of intimate bonds, which took the form of an increased use of the language of rights inside the bedroom, the practice of self-observation and self-knowledge, and the injunction to work on and change relationships.

The feminist and therapeutic persuasions produced new emotional practices, entailing new ways of attending to emotions and new ways of using cultural categories and discourses to classify emotions, label them, explain them, and transform them. To put this differently: feminism and therapy conjoined have been part and parcel of a vast process of disciplining the emotions inside the private sphere.²⁶

Illouz presents a strong and controversial thesis that the unintended consequences of feminism and psychology have led to results opposite to those that were intended by both ideologies. They postulated the importance of spontaneity and authenticity in intimate life; yet, instead they produced rationalisation and procedural intimacy. They fought for egalitarian and warm family bonds but they 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

²⁶ E. Illouz, *Cold Intimacies...*, p. 102–103.

measuring sacrifices. In this sense, psychology and feminism not only have led to emancipation, equality and freedom, but also have become tyrants of intimacy, discipliners of love and family, rationalisers of love, coolers of passion.

Although, Illouz does not mention technologies of choice in the paragraph where she explicitly talks about tyranny of intimacy, in another place she strongly connects them with psychology and feminism by showing that they have similar unintended impact on intimate life. Thus, it may be assumed that technologies of choice are discussed here as the third tyrant of intimacy. The leading example of technologies of choice discussed by Illouz are online dating sites. Illouz contrasts contemporary procedure of choosing partners via Internet with pre-modern and early-modern choices. Illouz argues that the pre-modern choice was rather simple and uncomplicated. Individuals were searching for someone “good-enough”, from a decent family, with an appropriate social status, appearance and character traits. Most often the first “good-enough” candidate was the final choice:

the pre-modern actor looping for a mate seems a simpleton in comparison with contemporary actors, who from adolescence to adulthood develop an elaborate set of criteria for the selection of a mate and very sophisticated means to reach their goals. Such criteria are not only social and educational, but also physical, sexual, and, perhaps most of all, emotional. Psychology, Internet technology, and the logic of capitalist market applied to mate selection have contributed to create a cultural personality which has considerably refined and multiplied its tastes and capacity for discernment and choice. Psychology in particular has greatly contributed to defining persons as sets psychological and emotional attributes and intimacy as the sharing of two personalities whose attributes and tastes must be finely matched and attuned. A hyper-cognized, rational method of selecting a mate goes hand in hand with the cultural expectation that love provides authentic, unmediated emotional and sexual experiences.²⁷

The sociologist claims that the abovementioned combination of psychology-based idea of matching personalities and market-based idea of rational selection from available options is highly apparent in functioning of online dating sites like match.com. Illouz shares the common intuitions that such dating sites increase freedom of choice and range of options; however, her analysis goes deeper and further.

Illouz scrutinises the fact that the Internet is often considered a place where one's individual features can be openly and freely expressed; yet, in practice, the profiles available at online dating sites are rather similar and standardised. It seems that the forms provided by dating sites are aimed rather at making data measurable and comparable, than at helping to express unique qualities of personality.

²⁷ E. Illouz, *Why Love Hurts...*, p. 180.

It is worth mentioning that online dating sites are often introduced as functioning on scientific (mainly psychological) basis. These scientific basis are presented as a legitimisation of the promise that users will be able to measure their compatibility with each other by comparing data from profiles with applications available at specific dating sites. It seems that within online dating sites personality becomes reduced to a set of standardised features that can be objectively compared with other personalities. Moreover, compatibility of two particular personalities may be quantified and expressed in numbers. Procedure of making choice becomes highly rationalised, complicated and based on market logic of selecting the best possibility from competing options.²⁸

Illouz argues that online dating sites produce a mechanism of interchangeability.²⁹ It seems that because all profiles are standardised and all of them seem quite similar, therefore, no one is considered unique and “the only one for me”. This interchangeability is also enabled by the fact that the Internet provides individuals with an assumption about almost unlimited range of available options. Illouz argues that paradoxically people from online dating sites are considered as “real” and people from the “real world” seem to be more “virtual”.³⁰ The sociologist explains this claim by stating that one cannot consider people that he or she meets everyday as potential partners because, in majority, they do not send any positive signals about being interested in relationship, in this sense they are only “virtual” possibilities. In contrast, online dating sites present a lot of individuals who are, not only “virtually” but “really”, interested in engaging into intimate relationships. Whereas, in the “real world” doubts about “is there anybody out there?” may appear, it seems that the Internet always provides actors with a positive answer for the abovementioned question.

As a result, online dating sites become more and more market-like: hyper-rational individual compares between competing exhibited “commodities”; yet, since all the options are similar and there are plenty of examples of a particular type, nothing is considered unique and extraordinary. Individuals choose neither a “good-enough” partner nor a “destined and only one”, instead, they select the best option from available spectrum, not because he or she has specific qualities, but because the person seems better in comparison with other possibilities.

For summarising the above analysis it may be said that psychology, feminism and technologies of choice transform intimacy in the three main aspects: 1) by individualising actors and postulating personal autonomy and personal needs as the

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 183.

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 182.

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 181.

key value, which should not be neglected by any kind of self-sacrifice or “loving too much”, 2) by rationalising intimate relationships and, as a result of individualising and rationalising, 3) by making individuals more distant from each other. Therefore, intimacy becomes a “cold” place, where people are mainly concerned with protecting their autonomy and independency (to put it in other words: they are interested in “me”, rather than in “us”), where they analyse and measure their relationships with others and, as a result, where they live in remote togetherness with neutral and rational language as a common ground. Illouz claims that this kind of intimacy is one of the main reasons for “why love hurts” and becomes the source of anxiety and misery nowadays.

It seems that at least three common places of Illouz’s and Sennett’s approaches are worth emphasising. The first one is the fact that discussed tyrannies are not actions intended by any “tyrants”. Tyranny is commonly associated with a vision of a particular tyrant who uses coercion in order to force individuals to follow his orders. Neither Illouz nor Sennett introduces any particular person or institution that would force anyone to anything. As a matter of fact, psychology, feminism and technologies of choice are not created with the intention of tyrannising intimacy and intimacy is not transformed in order to tyrannise the public sphere. Tyranny is rather an unintended consequence of functioning of the abovementioned factors, it is a by-product of their existence.

The second common point of both approaches is that this specific tyranny does not appear as a coercion or as a set of orders, like a “classical” tyranny probably would. Sennett claims that: “It is not the forcing, but the arousing of a belief in one standard of truth to measure the complexities of social reality. It is the measurement of society in psychological terms. And to the extent that this seductive tyranny succeeds, society itself is deformed.”³¹ In this sense, the means of tyranny are not force and coercion, but rather seduction and persuasion, tyranny comes as a piece of advice rather than as an order.³²

The third common point concerns the critique of individualism. Both Illouz and Sennett agree that psychology and contemporary culture in general (including the discussed case of feminism and the Internet) suggest individuals concentrate on themselves, their personalities and authenticity. Illouz claims that individualisation entails a fear of commitment, inability to sacrifice and, as a result, makes

³¹ R. Sennett, op. cit., p. 338.

³² This diagnosis is often presented by contemporary sociologists in context of new ways of regulating sexuality and intimacy. For example, Zygmunt Bauman claims that contemporary power means “seduction rather than policing, advertising rather than indoctrinating, need creation rather than normative regulation”, Z. Bauman, *On Postmodern Uses of Sex*, “Theory, Culture & Society” 1998, 15 (3/4), p. 23.

intimacy cold, while people become increasingly more distant from each other. Sennett argues that the main consequence of individualisation is disintegration of public sphere as a result of ignoring issues that are not directly connected to one's personality.

However, it should be noticed that there is also an important divergence in what Illouz and Sennett claim. Whereas Sennett argues that the public sphere is ignored in favour of narcissism and warm intimacies, Illouz claims that warm intimacy also becomes to be perceived as unattractive and unimportant. Yet, it does not mean that these two approaches mutually exclude themselves. It rather seems that they describe a continuous process that at first affected the public sphere and after that have had a similar impact on intimacy. The fact that Sennett's diagnosis was contained in a book that was published in 1977 should be emphasised. Sennett argues that at that time warm and personal intimacy was evaluated as an important good. Probably one of the best "proofs" for Sennett's claim can be Christophers Lash's book *Haven in the Heartless World*³³, which provides a thesis that family and intimacy are the last and most important escape routes from cold and impersonal world. Two decades later, Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim³⁴ still argue that warmth of intimacy is a value that gives individual's existence a purpose and that in this sense love is a new religion, new foundation of human's existence. Yet, according to Illouz, in the first decade of the twenty-first century the situation has changed significantly. The image of warm intimacy, love and family as a haven is perceived as an illusion. Emotional attachment is concerned as an endangerment for individuals freedom and autonomy. Love and intimacy apparently have become rationalised and disenchanting. Similarly as in case of tyrannizing of the public sphere, intimacy becomes important only when it becomes a mean to achieve individual purposes. In this sense, it seems that both tyrannies describe the process of neglecting people's bonds, and of diminishing places where "us" is more important than "me". Sennett presents a process of diminishing of the public sphere understood as place of cold impersonal relations, while Illouz discusses a similar process of diminishing intimacy understood as a place of warm personal relations. In both processes, "we" becomes replaced by "me". It seems that Sennett and Illouz describe the spread of individualistic ideology, which disintegrates either impersonal cold relations of the public sphere and personal warm relations of intimacy.

The diagnoses provided by Illouz and Sennett seem to be significant as they confront some common assumptions about the impact of feminism, therapeutic

³³ Ch. Lash, *Haven in the Heartless World*, New York, London 1977.

³⁴ U. Beck, E. Beck-Gernsheim, *The Normal Chaos of Love*, trans. by Mark Ritter, Jane Wiebel, Cambridge 1995.

discourse, technologies of choice and individualization on intimacy, which have been mentioned at the beginning of this analysis. Furthermore, both analyses emphasise the fact that individuals seem to be more and more distant from each other, more and more interested in themselves and less and less interested in others, as a consequence, the distance between people seem to increase. Moreover, a spontaneous communication between individuals based on will of agreement seems to have been replaced by scientific-like pragmatic rationality and market-based economical logic.³⁵ These processes appear to be a part of what Jürgen Habermas³⁶ calls the colonization of the lifeworld. Both tyrannies discussed above may be interpreted as a threat not only to a condition of intimate life and public sphere, but also to the symbolic reproduction of society that has its source within the lifeworld.

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³⁵ It should be noticed that these kinds of diagnoses are nothing new and were discussed by numerous sociologists, for example by Zygmunt Bauman (*Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*, Cambridge 2003), who claims that nowadays intimacy becomes similar to consumption, and according to its logic individuals treat each other as commodities that should be often replaced by a new model. Yet, it is important to notice that Sennett and Illouz deeply analyse the process that has led to the contemporary situation and describe new factors that have caused it.

³⁶ J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, vol. II: Life-World and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. by Thomas McCarthy, Boston 1987.

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Richard Sennett and Eva Illouz on tyranny of intimacy. Intimacy tyrannized and intimacy as a tyrant

Key words: tyranny, intimacy, individualization, rationalization, feminism, psychology

Abstract: The article discusses two accounts of tyranny of intimacy. The first one is provided by Richard Sennett, and the second one is presented by Eva Illouz. Although, both approaches explore two various phenomena that occurred in different time, it seem that they can be analysed as compatible descriptions of continuous process.

