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Woman Between Reality and Illusion

Soon after her birth, they inculcated into her mind the idea that she was born for marriage; otherwise she would have to live like an outcast and to work as a servant in her brother's house or at some other relative's. They told her that it was the parents' duty to find for her a suitable husband because they knew better her own interest and, naturally, their own. Since she was unable to live alone and to earn her living by herself, she would have to submit to their will and seek to please them because "the parents' will is equally God's will."

By the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, new ideas began to spread. Romantic love stories, translated from the West, taught the necessity of love as a basis for marriage, condemned "arranged marriages" which chained a young girl to the will of her parents and the interest of her family. Numerous were the novels which glorified love and proclaimed it as the main source of happiness and the only thing that makes life worth living.

Armed with this theory, young women started a struggle against their parents' domination and concentrated their efforts on realizing a love-marriage which would open to them the gates of paradise. To reach this aim, many women were ready to sacrifice wealth, comfort and parents' consent. This philosophy did not always prove successful. Love is not predestined or eternal as the romanticists pretend. To men particularly, realities count more than dreams; material ambitions are more important than love.

Romantic philosophy did not make women happier than did the formal traditional one. Both philosophies lacked realism because they neglected a woman's potential and confirmed her dependence and incompetence. In this connection, I would like to relate the opinions of two modern intellectual women who base their talk on actual experience. The first is May Jumblatt whose love-marriage to the late leader Kamal Jumblatt ended in divorce. In an interview with the **Monday Morning** delegate, (No. 56, June 1973), she says: "The whole trouble comes from the romantic orientation which makes love the pivot of a woman's life, leads her to neglect personal development and prevents her from acquiring a certain independence. She expects her husband to carry the whole burden, to worship her and give her eternal happiness. This attitude is not realistic because happiness, if it exists, should come from personal effort; it can not be the result of somebody else's achievement."

The other woman who speaks about her personal experience in this context is Ann Lindbergh, a gifted American woman who married the famous aviator Charles Lindbergh. In a book which tells about intimate reflections inspired by "solitude with the sea," she says that her life had been a successful adventure because, while she enjoyed the love of husband and children, she managed to have her own independent existence and realize her own creative activity. She rejects the mystic notion of complete union between lovers, and insists on self-realization, with or without marriage. Days of solitude with the self are necessary to establish a state of equilibrium between the outer and the inner man, as Plato says in **Phedon**. "Love consists of two solitudes that meet, salute and encourage each other."

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