

## Love in Ruins

"Love in Ruins"

an excerpt from the new book

MINDS IN DISTRESS:

The Clash of Evolution, Human Conditioning,  
and Culture in America

by Edward E. Loewe, PhD

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### INTRODUCTION

The excerpt, below, is from MINDS IN DISTRESS, a new book by Edward E. Loewe, PhD (Psychology), that suggests the evolution of the human brain is not keeping pace with cultural changes.

In the excerpt, Loewe discusses how cultural changes have shredded long-held notions of love, courtship, and marriage, resulting in mental-emotional anguish for both men and women. The excerpt looks at the impact on relationships of such things as early-start sex lives, Internet pornography, increased mobility, a focus on appearance, a lack of impulse control and an endless variety of novel fantasies. The result is more men and women than ever in therapy for relationship issues.

Edward Loewe has worked for nearly 20 years with adults suffering mental disorder. He is the author of the books "Being Real: Rediscovering Truth and Reality in an Age of Deception and Illusion" and "Minds in Distress: The Clash of Evolution, Human Conditioning, and Culture in America." His new book delivers a searing critique of capitalism's impact on the human psyche. MINDS IN DISTRESS includes a battery of self-help routines designed to reduce the harmful effects of a culture gone berserk.

More information about the book, MINDS IN DISTRESS, and author Edward E. Loewe, PhD, follows the excerpt. Thanks for your interest in this material.

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by Edward E. Loewe, PhD

What we have been discussing so far -- romantic love -- is an aspect of the human condition which has shown itself to be both a source of jubilation and of pain. Its hallmark is in many ways unpredictability. Love shows no reliability whatsoever in terms of when it will appear in one's life, how it may transform the individual, how the contrast between what is expected from it and what it actually produces in peoples' lives will play out, or how long it

may last.

The genetic predisposition for experiencing attraction, romance, and love is a constant force in life. Its nature becomes altered slowly, if at all, through the process of human evolution, given that mating and procreation are its timeless underpinnings. However, this snail's pace rate of change is not true for the influence the human environment may have upon how attraction, romance, and love become experienced. The social realm produces cultural conditioning that affects the changing ways in which people think and act on behalf of these phenomena. And in America, increasingly dramatic shifts have occurred with recent generations of the young. In fact, the sudden and swift changes which have been wrought over only the past three decades, have complicated the riddle of romantic love dramatically, creating considerable risk for the individual where there was none before.

What are some of these shifts in thought and action which have entered the mind of the American public, and created the ground upon which romantic love has become more unstable than it was for previous generations? Cultural phenomena such as the following would have to be included:

\* An ever-increasing desire for self-gratification, coupled with the presence of seemingly limitless choices in all manner of things, and also a reduction in impulse control (which altogether can provide the fertile ground for the flourishing of what we call narcissism in humans):

- People search frenetically for tension reduction in life through love relationships, and when this need is not satisfied continuously with the partner they have, a new choice is often sought;

- A broad sense of personal entitlement, coupled with a never before seen range of opportunities for novel experiences, cause many to sacrifice romantic love and marriage in favor of whatever experience beckons which is different from the one which they have "used up."

\* The pervasive desire for, and changing nature of prestige, which acts as a major factor affecting decisions in romantic relationships:

- The most oft-cited factor in divorce is that of money. This is also the single most significant measure of prestige in the United States. When one person of a couple has come to widely outdistance the other in this realm of "contribution," there can begin a subtle search for a replace-

ment partner, one who can supply his or her appropriate share of assets, or provide some other desirable characteristic which the current mate seems to lack. This is a common dynamic in business partnerships that break up, and one which is increasingly being played out in romantic and marital relationships.

\* A capitalistic system which strongly encourages consumption. This also fosters the view that all things are disposable, and newer versions of whatever one already has represent an improvement over what can be discarded:

- What has been called "consumptive consumerism" (see Chapter Eight in MINDS IN DISTRESS) refers to a mentality in the American culture that leads individuals to absorb ever more of goods, while discarding what has in their mind outlived its usefulness, though it may still be quite serviceable. This outlook appears to have found its way into the realm of romantic love and marriage, so that partners are being replaced by "new models" at a rate not seen before.

\* The culture-wide emphasis on beauty and appearance. This is not a new phenomenon in the history of humans, but it has become a more powerful influence than before, as a consequence of economic forces involved with selling every conceivable means for improving one's appearance:

- Just as consumerism emphasizes what one should own to feel adequate, this influence places extraordinary importance upon how one must appear in order to measure up in life. This distracts from the value of personal traits that can prove sustaining to love relationships, and influences people to place considerable emphasis on finding attractive partners, people who may however not prove to be compatible in other ways.

\* A dramatic increase in the appetite for fantasy over reality:

- A wide variety of obsession-producing offerings such as pornography, Internet dating, publications, and some media productions, have shown their capacity to remove the focus of many millions of people from a potentially viable romantic love relationship, to the pursuit of fantasy fulfillment. A common phenomenon encountered by marriage counselors today is that of a relationship which has become diminished by a partner's having become engaged in one or more other relationships involving people who are dating on the Internet.

\* A major reduction in the application of once universally accepted, tradition-based values, such as those invested in the family, the knit community, and secure, shared beliefs which support a range of moral and ethical choices:

- Loyalty and commitment have become oppressive to many who increasingly embrace a "no-strings-attached" mentality for relationships. This supports the developing notion that friendship, family, jobs, and love are unlikely to endure, because in time they will either be taken away, or will no longer meet one's personal needs.

\* A widening view that life is largely about oneself:

- Americans live in a culture that has produced unforeseen appetites, and even public support, for vast personal experimentation with behavior and self-expression. This pursuit of whatever seems momentarily self-fulfilling to the individual is often damaging to the cooperative spirit required for the success of romantic relationships and marriage.

\* Changes in the mores of mating:

- Traditional dating which led to engagement and marriage has been replaced by "hanging out together" and cohabitation. The latter has been shown to produce fragile relationships, yet it is favored by more than 50 percent of men and women today;

- The prevailing current choice most people make for an early-start, sexually active single life has been shown to lead to multiple relationships, with a cumulative negative effect on the prospect for a single, lasting romantic love union.

\* An American culture which is marked by nothing so much as by rapid change:

- The rate at which the individual must make personal life adjustments to accommodate changes imposed upon him by the culture and his environment, can be so swift that the pledge to support the romantic love relationship above all else may today become swept aside by whatever becomes necessary for economic self-preservation. Families and relationships regularly become fractured through the relocation of a partner.

~ Assessing the Relationship Mess ~

Love and romance are here to stay. They are a lately evolved aspect of the instinctual human responses that promote mating, especially in the western world. And, they are adaptive for continuing the existence of the human species into a future which we cannot foresee; one which may witness humans evolving into a still more complex life form, or which on the other hand may witness the early extinction of Homo sapiens. The potential of a future for the ritual of marriage cannot, on the other hand, be predicted, at least not as it is now known in western societies.

Marriage is a cultural and religious construct, a custom which is not required for mating, nor for procreation. In some regions of the world it is plural, with males having multiple wives. Elsewhere marriage must be undertaken one spouse at a time. And in southwestern China, where the Na people live, the population has shunned marriage altogether for many generations, conceives children through consensual sex with non-family members, successfully raises its offspring in communal fashion, and through all this has suffered no evidence that a higher power disapproves and will come "down" to punish these behaviors, or banish the Na people to hell.

As Stephanie Coontz writes in her recent book entitled "Marriage, a History," the institution of marriage seems headed for obsolescence in much of the world. This now seems clearly its direction in the peaceful Scandinavian countries of Europe. And given the divorce and illegitimacy rates occurring in the United States, it is also difficult to see how the rites and laws of marriage, as Americans have pledged to uphold them for some decades, can flourish much longer here.

Coontz seems to consider this outcome the result of visions Americans have in recent time developed which favor the individual's search for his own self-fulfillment and "happiness," a course that can crowd out partners whose contributions to such self-realization might come to seem un-noteworthy. But the fact is that marriage and the various other kinds of human pacts which preceded it, have never successfully competed with what some refer to as the baser instincts of man, and so, it remains to be seen whether the human species will ever be able to unify behind a single, socially constructed approach to monogamous mating, such as marriage is supposed to provide.

Unfortunately, love, romance, and marriages have in modern time become a virtual minefield for many millions. People are beset by and torn between the influences of old rules, New Age fantasies, conflicting societal preferences, church stipulations, legal prescriptions, family expectations, and the nearly "do it your own way, there are no wrong answers"

mentality of the most recent generation. That last theme appears to represent the direction the American culture is moving in. But it will take some time to verify this. In the meantime, it seems that the best the individual might do in the realm of romance, love, and marriage, is:

\* avoid following a popular belief system down blind alleys which will prove disagreeable;

\* choose whatever seems reasonable for the life one intends to live, and the person one is; and

\* differentiate between what is most likely to avoid pain, and what has the potential for causing it, selecting the course of least pain for everyone involved.

Though we have set out to address the "riddle of love and marital relationships," this does not mean we can solve it. The problem is too multifaceted and human beings too complex for us to achieve anything which approximates a solution. The best we can do is to find ways to simplify our difficulties through removing some of the obstacles in our way. This will be a bit like removing the "Chance" cards from a Monopoly game, in order to make its outcome a little more predictable. Where romance, love, and marriage are concerned, in the remaining sections of this chapter we will reflect on what is real versus what is illusion, and also on a realistic view of some factors in love relationships that ought to be considered for change.

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## ABOUT THE BOOK

### MINDS IN DISTRESS:

The Clash of Evolution, Human Conditioning,  
and Culture in America

by Edward E. Loewe, PhD

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MINDS IN DISTRESS deals with the new mental-emotional struggles and neuroses befalling tens of millions of people, and how much of this instability is being stimulated by the culture we live in, rather than through innate flaws to be found in people.

Part 1 first leads the reader into an understanding of his evolved mind, the limitations his contemporary brain places upon his life, and the sorts of difficulties the human mind encounters in its sometimes hapless efforts to adjust to the rapid rate of change which befalls humans today. It

goes on to discuss the bases for the absolute uniqueness of every person, and the great importance this brings to the need for each individual to fully understand himself. Recommendations are made for assessing mental-emotional well-being differently than now occurs through the potentially haphazard methods mental health professionals use to identify mental-emotional illness today. The person is encouraged to develop his own, independent view of the status of his mental well-being.

Part 2 deals with the co-effects of ancient instinctual drives and modern conditioned behaviors in shaping the human experience today, and how these forces are combining with the culture to produce mental distress and illness. A spotlight is placed upon difficulties occurring in the realms of human perception, romance and marriage, an increasing flood of opposing desires in people, the growing tendency for individuals to allow their life to be guided by outside influences - especially those of American capitalism, the loss of life satisfaction which results from the anxious pursuit of consumption, the epidemic of anger which has resulted from human confusion, and the neurotic obsession with self-promotion and personal specialness which has spread across the country. These chapters point to time-worn avenues for life satisfaction, and how these are becoming obstructed by severe stresses generated through modern lifestyles that do not serve the true needs of humans.

Part 3 first considers the overall status of Americans' mental health, then reveals the often problematic nature of the American mental health system to which people rush for solutions for their distress. After this, recommendations are made concerning the types of emotional distress people should be encouraged to deal with on their own behalf. Step-by-step, easy to follow approaches for gaining insight for, and dealing with, one's personal difficulties are outlined. These strategies are intended to take into account each person's unique nature, and to lead him in the direction of regaining life satisfaction through achieving new control over his existence, while removing deadly overstress.

The book's final chapter contains a brief analysis of, and potential prediction about, the future of the American society. It gives further emphasis to the fact that each person will do well to address the meaning and experience of the life he truly wants, and to consider that to some degree this may have to be achieved through detachment from the society that today gives direction to his existence.

### About the Author

Edward Loewe, PhD, holds multiple university degrees. Following two decades as the owner of a major professional corporation, he dedicated nearly

twenty years to the emotionally distraught, in the field of clinical psychology. His work and lectures resulted in appointments to numerous private and public sector boards, and sundry awards.

Source: <http://www.relationshiprepair.net>