

## Valentine's Day: A Win For Love Or A Trap Of Capitalism?

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Every year on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February we can not escape all the couples around us, holding hands in streets which are decorated with red hearts. Like it or not, Valentine's day exists, and puts an expectation on couples to show their affection and love. While doing this, buying presents, flowers or chocolates comes automatically. What is all this fuss about? Do we seriously need a day to show our love? Is it the shop owners or the couples who are getting the real benefit of Valentine's day?

Many people, especially the ones who are not in a relationship regard Valentine's day as a "trap of capitalism." Actually, they are not so wrong. 224 million roses are grown each year for Valentine's day and the transactions for presents are expected to exceed 18.6 billion dollars in the USA. 1.6 billion of this will be coming from candy, 1.9 billion on flowers, and 4.4 billion on gold and jewelry. This is a huge amount when you think about it! There are definitely some shop owners who are getting the benefit of Valentine's Day. Besides, out of basic economics, since the demand for presents or flowers increases on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February, their price also increases. If a couple decides they will be celebrating Valentine's day on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February, the roses would be costing much less for them-worth giving a thought as a couple.

However, just because the transactions and presents bought are increasing, this does not mean that Valentine's Day is another evil product of capitalism. People have the tendency of regarding everything related to capitalism as bad, when asked they will tell you they hate the capitalist system. But just because Valentine's day is making you buy something, this does not make it intrinsically evil. Shop owners might seriously be benefiting from it, but I can not see a reason why people gaining more money can be regarded as a bad thing. The person who is buying the present is happy, and the person who is selling it is also happy, so why would there be a problem? Even if the price paid on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February is higher when compared with the other days, the transaction is still *voluntary* and is conducted with a hundred percent free will. The person always has the chance of not buying that flower but instead a cheaper substitute, no one is holding a gun at our heads when we are buying a present.

Or are they? The assumption that buying a present on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February is done totally voluntarily and totally free is very much open to questioning. Imagine you are in a relationship, and your significant other loves the concept of Valentine's day. Imagine they expect you to buy them a present and take them on a romantic date. Even if you personally find Valentine's day to be illogical, you will most probably still get a present in such a situation. There might be two reasons for this: the first one is that, since you love your significant other, you do not want to upset them, so you act like you like Valentine's day as well, out of pure goodness and with the intention of making your darling happy. The second option is way more problematic. There are some people who see the right

in themselves to act coldly or in a problematic manner when they do not get a present on Valentine's day. You might be getting a present just because you do not want to spend time and energy on the toxic manners and cold behavior of your partner.

The common point of these is that the free will of the person when conducting the transaction is no longer valid out of the expectations of their partner. In situations like this, I believe the assumption of free markets about rationality and free will is substantially bruised, it is now like you are made to spend money with a gun at your head. Surprise, like it or not you are spending that 100 dollars!

The problem of Valentine's day is not buying a present, that is only the visible part of the iceberg. The real problem lies in the expectations that are put on people by their partners. You might not like Valentine's day, you might not want to buy something, but you still do that. I believe these "romantic" acts lose all their meaning when they are done only to meet the expectations of the partner. A flower or a gift is especially meaningful when they are spontaneously given: It shows your significant other thinks about you and loves you and shows this even if they do not have to. Neither the person getting the present should be facing the burden of expectations nor the one receiving the gift should have a gift that is not sincere in a relationship.

Besides, I believe this burden of expectations is not equally distributed between genders. In a heterosexual relationship, men are expected to spend way more than women for Valentine's day. It is not in their jurisdiction to tell that they do not want it.

Can Valentine's day still be okay? What about all the people who share a sincere date on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February? I believe if both partners like celebrating Valentine's day and are doing this because this makes themselves happy, there is no problem. The free will during the transactions of presents or flowers is still there in such cases. The person who is buying the gift is happy, the person who is receiving it is happy, and the shop owner is happy. One day to make three people happy, what a miracle.

To sum up, just because people are spending money for Valentine's day does not make it intrinsically an evil product of capitalism. If the acts are done out of total free will, there is no problem, people have the freedom of giving 1.5 billion dollars to a single water bottle if they want to, it is their money and it does not concern us. What is problematic is the transactions occurring out of the expectations of partners, this time we can not talk about free will. I want to finish this article with general advice: always talk to your partner about what they think of Valentine's day so that both of you do not put themselves under unnecessary burdens!