A Review

The Tragedy of Human Rights: Liberalism and the Loss of Belonging

An essay by Adam Seligman and David Montgomery. Detailing about how to reach a civil society, a society that feels welcome and is no longer excluding those that do not fit within their preconceived ideals.

Written in 2019, Seligman and Montgomery summarise their idea of a new society where people can feel they belong: a civil society. Their plan states that in order to belong people have to accept the difference as part of the norm to destroy boundaries that exclude people.

Longing to belong

Considering it is a time of which people have found themselves isolated by screens and guidelines; I feel that it isn't fair to isolate people for means of which they cannot control. 'Longing to Belong' encapsulates this by showing means of belonging, this essay details these ideals thoroughly.

Lauren Morey

THE TRAGEDY OF HUMAN RIGHTS: LIBERALISM AND THE LOSS OF BELONGING

BOOK REVIEW

Lauren Morey

N0850266@my.ntu.ac.uk

Nottingham Trent University, Student, Creative Writing BA (Hons)

The Tragedy of Human Rights: Liberalism and Loss of Belonging by Seligman and Montgomery, is a thought-provoking essay, written in 2019. It details a way to reach a civil society so that people do not feel a loss of belonging. They state a loss of belonging as coming most commonly from stereotyping and racial segregation. It is an essay which fits with our theme of 'Belonging' as it shows how we as a community can become more inclusive, allowing those who are excluded to finally belong. I feel that this is an essay of thought as to how to improve the future of our community rather than an in the now and quick fix.

This essay brings to light the question of belonging and whether we need to belong in a society. I believe that to function as a cohesive community we need to belong to feel included and exclusion will lead to more bad than good. However, Seligman and Montgomery suggest that we just need to accept each other's existence even if we disagree to form a better community of people.

They talk about how exclusion is the main issue stopping bonding in communities. It is exclusion boundaries that lead to isolation of communities who are stereotyped and not given a chance to belong. According to the essay's argument, it is extreme views affecting our society creating boundaries to keep each other separate rather than building bonds.

An example Seligman and Montgomery use is America and their response to refugees.[1] Refugees do not have a choice about leaving the community they had already created; it could be anywhere from civil war in their country to unsafe conditions. It is part of the Geneva Convention that states that we must accept refugees as they had no choice in leaving their country. At the time of the essay, Trump and the Republican party were running America and they are more right-leaning. The view they held was similar to their view on immigration in which Trump's promise in his election campaign (2016) stated in paraphrase 'build a wall' to stop immigration and refugees coming through to American soil. These extreme views are based in stereotypical prejudice and sum up how we are incapable of reaching civil society and 'belonging' with the boundaries politics have formed in our views.

In response to the above example, I feel that because of the exclusion created by the stereotypical prejudice it has lead to difficulties

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[1] Adam B. Seligman, David W. Montgomery, 'The Tragedy of Human Rights: Liberalism and the Loss of Belonging', *Society*, 56 (2019), 203-209 (p.205).

for refugees to find jobs, homes, food, all because they are hated on when they had no choice. To link the political issue with a current crisis, it is similar to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement that has been occurring in America. People of colour have been discriminated against by the criminal justice system and a lot of radical right-wing Americans. This is not to say that similar issues are not occurring in other places, but that the media coverage is strongly focused on America. Both refugees and people of colour in America have a more burdened worry about simple things such as going to the shops, a necessary need, because of the exclusion that is made by the community that surrounds them. Overall this makes them feel as though they do not belong.

Seligman and Montgomery conclude their essay with two subheadings detailing their solution to the problem and achieving a civil society. They suggest keeping boundaries but instead of having them exclude, they include. This is done through the acceptance of difference. 'We are not suggesting that difference be praised […] acknowledging the deep discomfort brought by very different and at times seemingly incompatible ways of being in community with others.'[2] I interpret this section of their essay as them saying that accepting differences within the community and moving forward from this will lead to an inclusive new community and civil society. It is a matter of acceptance even with the discomfort associated that can build bridges to bring people together rather than walls which separate.

Overall, I would recommend this essay to those interested in political interpretations of inclusion in a future society. I would recommend it to those who wish to change their views on exclusion. I would recommend it to those who strive for a peaceful change. It is a thought-provoking essay that both Seligman and Montgomery created and raises questions of belonging and reaching a civil society.

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[2] Seligman, Montgomery, 'The Tragedy of Human Rights', (p.209).

Lauren Morey, Nottingham Trent University