Dave Eggers: The Circle

What is this?

The following are are my unstructured study notes for the novel “The Circle” by Dave Eggers (Paperpack Edition, Penguin 2014, ISBN 978-0241970379).

The notes were created with classroom discussions in mind about the consequences and implications of increasing social-media use. So you can take them as they are but need to put in some more work before they can be used in class.

— *Andreas Kalt*

Mini-Camera presentation (p. NN)

- discussion about the implications

LuvLuv presentation, Mae’s Information gets shown on the stage (p. 117)

- Discussion about the difference between individually posted information and aggregate information
- Research: What of that is already possible today?

Discussions with Mercer (p. 130, p. 257 ff)

- Mercer argues that social media have changed people for worse, has turned people into teenagers
- Discussion about this position

Serious talk about Mae’s participation (p. 175 ff)

All voluntary, but at the same time socially enforced

Delusion of control through superficial numbers (p. 191 ff)

Congresswoman wears a camera at all times (p. 205 ff)

- “to go transparent”

Subtle feeling of pressure and coercion (p. 211 ff)

- Talking to Kalden, he disapproves of the constant camera on the congresswoman
- Mae is reluctant to leave without being seen by her supervisors
- Before she goes with Kalden she takes a few pictures and posts them to show herself being social (p. 217)

Energy needs of data storage (p. 220 f)

- environmental implications of widespread use of digital devices and cloud storage

Talk with Eamon Bailey — privately and on stage (p. 276 ff)

- Slogan in three Parts (p. 303). Cf. George Orwell: 1984

Mae is transparent (p. 307 ff)

- Mae talks to her viewers (p. 309) — vlogging?
- Mae is not transparent – she is used as a marketing device.
- Later: her parents’ home is also transparent (p. 323)

Completion (p. 311)

- Ideas of completion (fulfilment?) – hopes to find in an online service what one can’t find in real life

Keeping up appearances (p. 322)

- When you’re always being watched you have to fake appearances and turn to your inside world for recreation → also cf. George Orwell: 1984

Private meetings (p. 335)

The leaders of the health companies meet in private — why?

Student measurements (p. 342 f)

- Illusion that complete measurement of learning will improve learning or even improve personal skills of students.
- “Where was this 20 years ago? My kids would have gone to Yale”

Mae goes to Francis’ dorm room (p. 378)

- Francis is sorry that he recorded the sex that the two of them had, “I couldn’t believe that I was with you. And there was some part of me that assumed it would be the only time. I wanted to remember it” – Is recording something really the best way of remembering a special moment? → smart phone photos everywhere, cf. quote by Franz Grillparzer:

> „Monde und Jahre vergehen, aber ein schöner Moment leuchtet das Leben hindurch.“

Mae learns about some people’s negative opinion and meets Annie (p. 410)

- Narrative perspective: stream of consciousness?

Mae is completely taken in by the ideology

- Even Mercer’s death and Annie’s breakdown don’t make her question it

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