

Meeting #6: bell hooks' "Love as the Practice of Freedom"

<https://uucsj.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/bell-hooks-Love-as-the-Practice-of-Freedom.pdf>

-Societal theory: we only desire emancipation/autonomy when we are ourselves are being threatened.

"Critically examining these blind spots, I conclude that many of us are motivated to move against domination solely when we feel our self-interest directly threatened."

-The **'love ethic'** — the belief that all people have an innate right to live self-determined lives, and that we should openly express a desire to see other people have the same autonomy that we desire.

(the credo 'by any means necessary' is the antithesis of the love ethic)

Are humans inherently self-serving?

-Humans are inherently self-serving in the long term?

-People are inherently selfish?

-Perhaps even actions in helping others

The love ethic and religion:

-“The absence of public spaces where that pain could be articulated, expressed, shared meant that it was held in — festering, suppressing the possibility that this collective grief would be reconciled in community...”

-The absence of the church in helping practice love

-What role do 'neutral spaces' play in this dialectical? What makes religious spaces any more useful in practicing a love ethic?

-Because people share a similar dogma in religious spaces, it

-Can you have a dominant religion that is not inherently self-destructive and practices a love ethic sufficiently?

-Different religions:

What religions practice a proficient **love ethic**?

-Sikhism?

-Jainism?

-Buddhism?

-As hooks mentions of Thomas Merton's essay, should love ever be treated as a 'business deal?'

-Is love a dynamic that requires reciprocity?

-What are some things where love is non-transactional?

Parent-child relationships (unconditional love)
loving relationships with others
mentorships

-Is there a benefit to drop a relationship if

-Transactional: both parties directly attempting to assess the weighting, such that they ensure they receive something in return (cost-benefit analysis)

To what extent can we love others?

-Heap Paradox! (also bald man's paradox)

NEW 1. You like them as a holistic individual

NEW 2. You remove enough characteristic so they functionally become a different person (eg. Dissociative identity disorder)

Conclusion: You don't like them anymore

Love vs. Empathy:

-Empathy does not necessitate action?

-Love is sacrificial?

-bell hooks has more of a practical view of love?

You can't choose to feel love but you have the choice in the action of love?

MLK — felt love for his allies and enemies, and went on in his life feeling love for others

'Master - Slave' and Nietzsche:

-‘To serve another I cannot see them as an object, I must see their subjecthood.’ — Nietzschean approach?

-Nietzsche — ‘will to power:’ master-slave morality. Willingness to fight power with power.

Discussion questions:

-When bell hooks refers to the ‘status quo,’ is she implying that it is inherently self-serving?

-Is there a way to carry out societal movements (whether they be philosophical, political, etc.) that is not inherently self-serving?

-Is our culture a culture of anti-love and domination?

-Why should we love? Why not just be self-serving?

-To what extent can we experience ‘joy in struggle’ as hooks mentions?

-What can take away from this essay?

-Can hooks’ theories truly be applied in real life?

-Talking about oppressive systems and wanting to replace them. The

-Is this piece inherently Christian?