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The Love-Hate Relationship

There are hundreds of romance movies and romance novels that paint the same picture: two people who seem to hate each other at the start eventually end up falling in love. Love and hate are, perhaps, the two emotions that most people are familiar with. They are the two emotions that people spend a great deal of time either trying to attain (love) or avoid (hate). Most people believe that hate and love are on the opposite ends of some weird emotional spectrum—that the two are as far apart as the sun is from the moon. Most people would be wrong. The two feelings are not on opposite ends—they are not distant cousins; rather they are on the same end, different versions of the same feeling. They are more like siblings. It may take a while to digest that idea in order to completely comprehend it. Perhaps, it would be better to think of it as opposite sides of a coin—closer in proximity but still different. Both hate and love are equally important human responses and spark intense feelings, have equal importance in one's life, and are extreme versions of an emotion.

Both love and hate spark intense feelings and emotions. The idea of “love” leaves people with warm and fuzzy feelings. For example, no one has ever walked away from a romance movie feeling angry or wanting to go strangle their mate. It is, after all, movies and music that help shape people's ideas about what love is. The iconic scene from the movie *Titanic* where Jack and Rose are on the front railing of the great ship, arms spread, shouting, “I’m flying”; the scene in *Spiderman* where Spiderman is hanging upside down and Mary Jane slightly rolls down his

mask to give him that memorable kiss without knowing his true identity; the whole “you complete me” and “you had me at hello” scene from *Jerry Maguire*—these are movies that reinforce for the viewing audience that love is meant to make people believe that a happy ending is possible; it is meant to make people hopeful. Images like these are what leave people believing that love is somehow the better of the two feelings. Hate, however, stirs something powerful within people as well. Though most people believe hate is the opposite of love, it is not. Instead, hate is simply love gone wrong or love when hope has faded. It is not the opposite of love; it is the result of unnurtured love. These feelings can be found depicted in movies as well. In the movie *Maleficent*, the title character seeks revenge when Steffan, the man she once loved, crushes her hope and takes advantage of her. Her love turns to hate. Love requires the presence of hope; hate requires its absence.

Despite whatever images and ideas are associated with love and hate, both are equally important in people’s lives. To know one emotion is to know the other. Love is beneficial and necessary in that it makes people less selfish, and it can motivate people in positive ways. People are willing to do almost anything for the people they love; people make major sacrifices for the people they love. Similarly, hate is beneficial because it can motivate people to take caution or to protect themselves. Humans tend to avoid the things they hate; they are careful with their words and actions around people they hate, and they try to steer clear of people they believe hate them in return. Hate is protective in that way. While the expression “love can make you do crazy things” is common to most, the idea that hate can motivate one to do better things is not nearly as common. Yet, it is true. Consider the woman working a job she hates. If she hates it enough, she is likely to make more of an effort to move on to something different, something better. The man who is in a relationship that he is starting to hate is likely to act to remove himself from the

situation, to find something better. Hate and love have that in common; they can move people in ways they might not have imagined.

In addition, whether it is hate or love, both signify not just an emotion but an extreme version of an emotion—an emotion that implies there is a deep connection. Most people do not go around saying “I love you” to complete strangers, anymore than people walk around shouting “I hate you” to complete strangers. Both require a deep connection or something beyond a mere surface knowledge of the person or thing that they love or hate. A woman’s first love—that guy she fantasized herself marrying—is the same guy whose car windshield she slammed with a baseball bat once she caught him cheating. The love did not instantly disappear and though she may be shouting “I hate you” as she swings that bat, the truth is that either emotion—love or hate—likely accurately depicts whatever she might be feeling at the moment. No matter what name one chooses to give it, there remains a connection between the girl and the guy; otherwise, why spend so much energy and risk possible jail time to vent those feelings? Love and hate are strong, extreme emotions that cause people to feel and behave in an intense manner.

Indifference, not hate, is the opposite of love. Indifference is the absence of any emotion or feeling, while both hate and love are more like emotions on steroids. Love and hate, because of the extreme feelings they evoke, remind people that they are human. The two can also be confused because there is an overlap between the two emotions. Philosopher Berit Brogaard states, “Love can turn to hate in a matter of minutes” (Brogaard). Most people who have suffered heartbreak or betrayal know exactly what she is talking about. She also discusses that both emotions have a high arousal effect can quickly turn from positive (love) to negative (hate)” (Brogaard). Despite the positive connotations society has built up about love, hate, while not as warm and fuzzy, is just as necessary. One connects people; the other protects them.

Works Cited

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