

# Questioning Equality?



## **Sharing the Same Aspiration (by Thich Nhat Hanh)**

*In a relationship, when you and your partner share the same kind of aspiration, you become one, and you become an instrument of love and peace in the world. You begin as a community of two people, and then you can grow your community. In the practice centre where I live, there are over a hundred of us. We have the same concerns, the same desires, and the same future. There is no longer a place for jealousy, because we are all faithful to the same aspiration. We share everything, but we still have our freedom intact. Love is not a kind of prison. True love gives us a lot of space.*

# Equality is Dogma

\_\_\_\_\_ is good, but obsessed with \_\_\_\_\_ is not so good.

*Equality is not a source of suffering, but  
the Equality Complex is*

*- Thich Nhat Hanh*

# Equality

- We equal in the eyes of God
- All people's consciousnesses are equally sacred and worthy of respect
- We can simply agree that this true on a abstract level
- Or we can actually appreciate other people consciousness in the fullest possible manner
  - Christ-like love or seeing with Buddha nature
  - Very hard to achieve
  - Many people who actually treat others as equals see the world this way
  - Otherwise there is a lot of moral cajoling and institutional pressure

# What does an Expressed Love Look Like?

When we see lives as equally sacred, it tends to work out to a lot of equality.

- More equal incomes
- Equal freedoms
- Equal respect in interpersonal
- Speaking to others in the same tones and so on...

# The Big Catch

- This is very difficult to achieve
- Easy to claim
- Deviation from the more obvious metrics leads to wiggle room / chicanery

# Racism / Institutional Othering

- Systematic oppression functions like this
- I see that these are people with souls
- But they are not equal in abilities, they are unable to govern themselves, and achieve
- So, though I see that they are equally sacred, they should not have equal rights or outcomes
- This becomes the basis for law
- This is why many people say that only powerful/dominant groups can really be racist

# Realities of Ego and Power

- Having an ego means you don't want to be equal, but better
- Having power (as we usually define it) means that you don't have to be equal if you don't want to be. So, as long as there is power and selfishness, there will not be equality

# Moral Superiority

- We can measure our morality by the extent which we push for treating others equally
- Righting historical wrongs
- So standing for equality is a way of distinguishing oneself morally
- Love is difficult to prove
- But equality in outcomes is easier to prove
- Pushing for equality and outcomes is the way of being moral -- or performing morality

# Accepting Moral Shortcomings

- Involved the same kind of acceptance that starts off effective engagement with habits, such as drinking too much, lying or shoplifting, that do not serve us
- It allows us to look at their roots and effects, without being caught up in guilt and self-hatred
- Egolessness is rare
- Compassion for ourselves is what is necessary

# But...

We then get it looks like see lives as equally sacred, we all so see very different people.

- What it looks like for people who have very different preferences to have equal outcomes
  - Equal access to public services that we don't really want.
- People are not equally satisfied with the law, even if it equally enforced
  - Can a smoker and a non-smoker have the same rights on a crowded train car?

# Individualist Meritocracy

- We are taught to distinguish ourselves
- Individual status is determined by:
  - Our valuable traits, such achievements, money, community status (elitism)
  - how well we did under the circumstances what we were responsible for (meritocracy).
- To the extent that people are already treated equally in terms of opportunity such that the best people are on top, then elitism and meritocratic status are the same
- How much we as an individual can take credit, or are not responsible for what have achieved is a matter of our social situation and life circumstances

This is the basis for a lot of what goes on under the name of identity politics.

Examples?

# Why Love?

- Awareness of all the intricacies of the world. Seeing the complexity of the social world in front of us with its personalities, ambitions, dreams, and so on
- The kinds of complicated compromises and attention that are needed in everyday life
- Political compromises require this kind of insight
- The Pragmatic Sublime
- What it looks like to be moral is hard to describe without it

# The Role of Religion

Christianity was very lost as an institution at the time that science rose to authority

The effort to make a rational rule system mirrored what was going on in science

Seemed like a good idea at the time

# Examples:

- Political compromise -- e.g. Global warming