

"Love and Social Justice"

There is a highly influential and widely admired principle within Black American moral and political philosophy that directs us to respond to certain forms of injustice with love. But, despite its considerable influence, this principle is puzzling on its face, and reflection on some influential formulations of the principle raises some pressing questions: What does it mean to love someone in the relevant way? What are the grounds for the view that such love is an appropriate response to injustice? How can we respond to any form of injustice in this way without merely facilitating further, more severe mistreatment? Can we reasonably adopt this principle without also adopting certain religious beliefs or commitments? I want to characterize and defend a version of this principle that James Baldwin develops in his early fiction and his early essays, and I want to address some of these questions as they apply to Baldwin's view. You are wonderful!