JJJJJerome Ellis – May 18 2021

**SPEAKERS**

Molly Joyce, JJJJJeroe Ellis

**Molly Joyce 0:00**

So the first question is, what is access for you?

**JJJJJerome Ellis 0:12**

What is access for me? Well, I think when I think about access, I think about like, right now in this moment, I think about, like, openness, I think about like, when like when there's like a like a passageway, or a hallway that's open, or a tunnel or a channel. That like to me, it's like, it's not it's, it's it is, you know, being able to, like, reach something or receive something, but also, like, for something to be able to, able to flow in between, like, like, like, if I say that, like some, something is not, is not accessible. That might mean, what I might be saying is like I, because of my embodiments, like, I can't reach something or receive something in relationship with this thing that's not accessible. But also, what I might also be saying is, I like something is not able to flow in between me and that other thing. I feel like sounds, we'd be sort of abstract, but trying to think of an example. Like yeah, like, like, for me, as someone who stutters, I often encounter phone conversations as something that is not as accessible as I need them to be. Because of the common thing that happens to me like 1000s of times, my life is like I'm on the phone with somebody who doesn't know that I stutter and then I start stuttering and they don't know that I'm stuttering and they assume that the line has dropped and so and then they hang up and so to me, like when I think about access, it's like one of the things that's inaccessible about it is like the way that like the specific sort of like meal you have the telephone like like there's so many factors involved but like the fact that like a person many for many people like they'll sooner think that like oh, the line is trapped. They'll seem to think that that like oh, this person has a stutter. What's like their I think there's many many factors for that. But simply what I'm what I'm what I'm trying to say is that like, part of the part of like the lack of accessibility for me there is that like, I can't reach there's a barrier for me to reach what I want to reach with which is to communicate with that person over the phone. But also what I was saying about flow is it's like we're not able to have to like have our conversation and the communication flow in between us because of this of this thing that's happening, yeah.

**Molly Joyce 4:18**

Great moving on, what is care for you?

**JJJJJerome Ellis 4:24**

Care well, I've been going, well it's interesting living with my my parents right now because like when I got on right before our call I went on on a bike ride like literally like like an eight minute bike ride because I have been like, on my computer all morning, just like in this book. And I was like, "oh my god, I have to talk with Molly at one I just need to go outside for a sec." And I'm looking out outside right now at this beautiful park and this trees waving in the wind. I was like, I hadn't even been outside today. So I literally went, I'll make a little eight minute bike ride. And my bike right before I left my mom. My mom said, "Be careful," which if I go on a bike ride, I tell my parents and they, they almost always say that, or some variation of that. And so I so when I think about when you asked me, "What about care?" I think about that, because when I, because I asked myself like, like, what does that mean when like your, your your parents says, "Be careful on your bike ride," and for me, part of what it means is that like you know, part of what it means is like, ride, ride safe. But to me further, what it means is, like, you understand, like, they're, they're saying to me, or like what I received is like, it's like you do you understand? Again, this fit this like milleu, like you understand, like the environment of what you're, you're about to go into, like you're going to be on a bike. And you're going to be with cars, and you know, what cars are capable of doing, and you know, what you're capable of doing. And, you know, the dangers involved in the risk involved. And so like, when I when I hear is like, what I receive is like, so going into that environment, like care, in this sense is like being aware of, of like, the specific forces at play. And like, I want you to navigate those with, like, your safety in mind, and also just like, navigate them wisely. Like, you know, don't, if you see a car coming really quickly, don't go into the road, you know, something so simple as that. But I but I but to me what what is interesting to me about this in this moment, is that is that like, the aspect of care, that that is like that involves like, understanding the forces at play. And what's happening. So when I go back, so when I think about the phone call again, I'm like, Okay, so like, what would it mean? What would it mean? Like, like, like, what does care mean? It in on the phone call. And to me, part of it again, is like being aware of like the different forces that play because to me, what frustrates me in the questions of access on the phone is that like, again, as I said earlier is like, there's so many factors, it's like part of it is that like the way our society is, is that like, you know, I feel like most people when they hear stuttering, or like they like think of the concept of stuttering, what their what they imagine, is someone who's someone who speaks like someone who speaks like, like someone who speaks like, like someone who speaks like Porky Pig, you know, where like, they repeat syllables, you know? And like, I do that sometimes, but that's usually not how I started, I usually just stop speaking. So to me, one of the forces at play is a specific situation in our society where like the general, public's knowledge I think of stuttering is limited in certain ways. And so like so like, an act of care for me that I do.

And I did it this morning because I rented a moving van when I came down to Virginia, and I got a bill for $325 in the mail the other day saying that there was damage to and I was like there was no damage to it. So I had to like call them and whenever I call, especially things like this where like, I know it's going to be complex, I'm gonna have to say like very specific numbers immediately, like when they answer the phone. I was like, hi, I want to let you know that I haven't stutter. So if I stop speaking, it's not the phone. It's just me. It's I say that so to me, that's an act of care. Because I know that one of the forces at play is this So is this thing that like, it's very likely that the person if I start if I start stuttering, the person is not gonna know what's happening. So to me, and, but and so then the person on the other line, she said, "Okay, no problem." And then I started on on the phone, and she waited. So to me, it was like, I like, I, I like initiated an act of care. And she reciprocated by, by, by understanding. You know, so to me, it's like it to me, it's like, the, it's like being hung up the like, the, the possibility of being hung up on the phone to me is like, is related in some way to the the car going fast on the road, it's like, I know that that is going to happen. And so I know not to go into the street. And so I'm like, navigating the environment, that I know very well. And the telephone is another environment. I know very well, because like, when I go on my bike, it's like, I hear my, my, my parents and I and I appreciate their active care and telling me to be careful. And I know that I have a lot of experience riding my bike. And so I know, I feel very confident in navigating it. And so the same thing on the phone. Like, when I was younger, I would have never thought to tell the person that I started I would like every phone call from me, it was just like, like a nightmare. Until I was an adult and I went to speech therapy, and they told me they were like you, you should just tell them what I would net I never thought about. So. To me. Yeah.

**Molly Joyce 11:45**

So, so great. Um, perhaps kind of similar what you're talking to, or what is control for you?

**JJJJJerome Ellis 11:57**

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Control. Yeah, I mean, control. I feel like for me, it's so much an illusion. Or like, like, the craving for sugar, it feels like I have such a sweet tooth. And like, I've, the way I often think about like sugar, and like cravings and things like that. It's like, it's like sugar is important. In the body. And in our current in the world that I live in, there are many forms, there are many ways to get the sugars that the body needs. And like. I feel like, it's like, I find myself in a moment, I'm craving sugar. And it's like, well, what am I actually craving? Like, like, do I just need like, does my body is my body just asking for like an apple. But I'm gonna give it some candy. And like, that's not what that's not what it needs. That's like, what the craving tells me but like, it doesn't, it doesn't need any, it doesn't need candy. Right? Like, you know, like, I there's, like, there's, there's like, in the loser. Like, there's like an illusion aspect to the craving. And I feel that way about control. Like, when I crave control, I try to ask myself, I like if I find myself craving. Yeah, like if I, if, like, if I if somebody doesn't agree with me, and I want them to agree with me. And, and to change their mind. And I can feel a craving of like wanting to control their opinion. And I tried to reflect on that. And sometimes if I'm able to do that, and I reflect like, oh my craving to control them. Sure, it might be like natural or whatever. Like, perhaps what I will, what I what I actually need is like to is like to be perhaps I'm also feeling insecure, in my opinion, and I want to feel more secure in my opinion. And maybe if I felt more secure, in my opinion that I wouldn't feel the desire to control it as much, you know. So to me, it's kind of it's kind of like control for me is often kind of like a cipher, or like an enigma where like, it seems to be It seems to be pretty straightforward. But to me, it's like much more complex again, like when I crave sugar, it's like, well, like crave sugar and I can just eat some candy but it's like, oh, but maybe actually like a better way is actually to just like go have maybe I just didn't have lunch and like maybe I should actually just have like go full meal. When what? Like it feels like my buyers craving sugar maybe it's actually just craving nourishment or you know yeah, definitely makes me want some candy.

**Molly Joyce 15:39**

What is weakness for you?

**JJJJJerome Ellis 15:47**

Well, It's funny, I find it often very hard to show other people my weakness, whether that's physical or emotional, or otherwise, but I find it especially people I'm, I'm close to I can find it hard to admit when I'm when I'm when I'm when I'm feeling weak and yeah, like through that I'm like, well weakness, it can be so beautiful and powerful. Because I think weakness is often an opportunity for care. You know, it's like an opportunity for someone else to someone else to care for me. Like, if I admit to someone that I'm feeling weak, that I'm feeling like I need support, again, physically or emotionally, which I find much harder to admit emotional weakness. Like, if I'm feeling super anxious, and I'm like, that can be, it can feel to me like a form of weakness. Not in like a pejorative sense or negative sense. But just like, I'm feeling really anxious today. And like, one way of dealing with that, that I often go with is just not to tell anybody and just to feel anxious. But sometimes, it's like, sometimes it's like, if I feel it's ironic, because it's like, sometimes I have to feel strong enough in order to admit that I'm feeling weak. Or like, then another time, I'll like, text, a friend of mine, say like, I'm feeling super anxious, will you assure me everything's gonna be okay, or, you know, something like that? And then that turns into an opportunity for care. So I think, I think yeah, I think yeah, I also think weaknesses like, like, relates to what I said earlier about openness and like, flow. Because to me, it's also like weakness. It can open up a channel of care, you know, it's like, like, like, even the phrase, like when you say, like, you open up, you know, I opened, I opened up to my friend, and then they, they extended some care to me, of course, part of what's scary about for me about admitting weakness, sometimes you open up that channel, and then the person, you know, doesn't respond with care or doesn't respond kindly, or I text a friend say I'm super anxious. Can you affirm something from and then they say, like, you're you being a baby or something, you know? You know, so that like that, the openness there's also an openness to potential hurt. Yeah.

**Molly Joyce 19:11**

That's super interesting. And then kind of along with that, what is strength for you?

**JJJJJerome Ellis 19:18**

Yeah. Well, when I think about strength, and this moment, I think about, I think it's Lao Tzu maybe or Chuang Tzu or another ancient Chinese thinker, but I think they give the metaphor of a, of having a green branch. And how it's like one of the branch branches green, it's very hard to break it. Let's see. Oh, you can bet and when it's old and brittle, you can snap it very easily. And I think about strength in that sense I think of like strength as flexibility and strength there's elasticity and pliability even why the word as I think sometimes I have the image of strength as something rigid like steel or something sometimes I think strength is yeah it's like the opposite of rigid it's that which that which that which is able to bend yeah.

**Molly Joyce 21:02**

I love and then kind of my usual controversial question, what is cure?

**JJJJJerome Ellis 21:12**

Yeah cure well cure while I'm thinking about "curates" and cure and I wonder if they shared a route I don't know what the route is. I want to look it up actually. I feel that I feel that something will be revealed to me here. Oh yeah. Yes. Yes, they both come from Latin "curabe" to take care of so to me yeah to me if I if I think of cure in terms of care then that that helps me because I think of care as something that's ongoing and I think of cure the normal sense that I think of cure and is as you know as a terminal point, you know, that like once the cure has been found or once the key once you have been cured and the thing is you are cured of is over and I think I find truth in thinking of it instead of some as something ongoing.

Yeah, and like, yeah the like ongoing and and evolving to I would say yeah, because I because I think that's like, like a curator. I think of a curator I think I'm trying to think of like ongoingness in terms of curation. And that like, I find like, when part of a curatorial practice might be, you know, you know, you program an artist to present their work. But part of your curatorial practice might be that you are in an ongoing relationship with that that artist and like an ongoing like stewardship of the work that is being is being a curated.

So whatever it would you say one stop like termination or something like that because I feel like it doesn't really exist. Or you know, or even if you kind of so quote unquote solve one problem like another one's inevitable termination with the body especially, yeah, that's right.

**Molly Joyce 26:13**

Great, and then kind of that on the other side of that, what is interdependence for you?

**JJJJJerome Ellis 26:22**

Yeah. Interdependence to me is like, like, the way things are like to me, interdependence is like how the how the world works not just human life, but all life and even then, even like that, which is not normally not within certain Western sciences, considered life, like, like rocks and things like that. Feel like, like interdependence is the way things are, I find it scary at times to realize how dependent and interdependent I am odd on other people, but I think it's the way the way things are. And I'm ongoingly accepting that. Yeah, and I think about you know, that phrase, you know, "no man is an island," because I think about islands themselves felt like, if you look at an island, you're flying over it, you know, it could look like it's isolated. But of course, it's it's connected to everything. Even though you might not be able to see the landmass underneath of the island. Yeah. Yeah.

**Molly Joyce 28:18**

And then last question, what is assumption for you?

**JJJJJerome Ellis 28:25**

Yeah, I mean, back to the phone call, you know, it's like that, to me. One of the assumptions at play when I'm hung up on is the other person assuming that the line has dropped. And to me assumption is super complex, because it's you know, you know, like, if that person hung up on me, and I called them back and I asked them, like, Why did you hang up? And that they said, like, Oh, I thought the line had dropped. And then what if I asked him like, why did you think that then they may say like, "oh, because that's very common occurrence and I didn't hear anybody speaking." And so to me part of like, part of like, what assumption is is like, part of what assumption is is like maybe has to do with like, frequency. Like if something happens a lot happens with a certain frequency, then perhaps in the future, you will more or more likely to assume that thing is happening even when it's not. But I think the thought processes is interesting because sometimes happens to me, like sometimes I am speaking someone on the phone and then I hear them stop speaking and I'm like, edits, you know if it's somebody that I don't know. And I'm like, and I then go through my mind, I'm like, Well, of course that person might have a stutter. So I usually wait or like, if I get a voicemail from someone who I don't know, and I and it's just like, you know, there's like no one talking on the voicemail, I'll just like listen to the entire voicemail. I'm like, "well, this person might have a stutter." Or they might have pocket dialed me, but I'm just going to sit here until the end. Because I because I don't want to make that assumption, because I have been on the on the other side of that assumption, so many times. So I also think about assuming like, like, assuming a role, you know. And like, to me, the image of assuming a role is like you'd like take something on to yourself, like, like a coach or a backpack or something. And to me that, that there's something interesting about about, like, the physicality of that. In fact, I want to look this one up too soon. Let's see. Oh, interesting. Yeah. Yeah. Interesting. Yeah. So it's like, yeah, like that. The A is like, up. Up, and then the summer a is to take like to take up? Yeah. So I yeah, I mean, I think I think the take is interesting. The act of taking that like, it's almost like an, it's almost almost like, making an assumption is like, shoot, it's like you like choose an option, because it's to me, it's like, when that person is on the phone, and the and the silence starts. And they have, you know, they have many options to have which are, the line is dropped another which is, this person has a stutter. And, you know, there's other ones of course, like, another one is like, the person, you know, the person is, is neurodivergent in some way. And they are, are processing what they've heard or processing what they're going to say. And others that that like the person has, has fainted, or they or they have dropped it phone. But it feels to me that like it making the assumption you. You take one of those options as the truth. But to me what's so interesting, again, is like, because sometimes what happens is like the person on the other line, they'll say, like, "Hello?", and the way I'm still stuttering, and it's so interesting, because sometimes they'll just say "hello" once and then hang up. Sometimes we'll say "hello" twice and hang up, sometimes we'll say "hello" three times. And they'll say like, "are you still there?" And so I find that process so interesting, because it's like, when like, like, when are they going to decide? Like, and there's a delay in doing that process of choosing because sometimes some people will will, like some people, of course, won't hang up, they'll just like, stay on. And I'll start with like, a, like a minute, and they'll just, like, stay there. And I'm like, that's amazing. Like, and are you doing that? Because you know, what's happening? Are you doing that? Because you are waiting? In the unknowing, you know, I mean, because I'm sure some people, you know, some I'm, I'm sure I've encountered someone who like they know, I'm, I'm, I'm studying where they are, or they assume that I am or, you know, or they're like, well, he could be so let me wait, but some people I'm sure are, I'm sure some people I imagine. They're just like they're not I wouldn't say like they're more patient but like they're just like more willing to wait in the unknowing which I just find I find like that interval from when the silence starts to when the hang up happens so interesting. And like when someone wait when you let yourself assume something and when you like you because you could also like the person could be assuming that the line dropped but they still stay on. You know, like that's another option. Because to me, what's interesting is like is like, the lead up to the assumption but also the the transition from assumption to action. Because like, if I assume that the light has dropped, it doesn't mean that I have to hang up. But if I assume the line that some people, they assume the manager and like once the assumptions made, then the clear is action is to hang up. And of course, often because the intention is positive, the attention is like, well, I'll hang up as soon as possible so that they can call me back or I can call them back. You know, like, what they're trying to do is, is his facility facilitate, you know, sometimes what they're trying to do is facilitate communication. And I think what they think is like, "Oh, the best way to do it, in fact, is to like, hang up so I can call back and reconnect," not knowing that we were, we were still connected. So it's just endless and think about it so much.