

Discernment or Judgment

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In Julia's response to Bill (quests for certainty / abstract souls) she seemed to be writing about the differences between "discernment" and "judgment." Both she and Bill gave very well written positions. Yet, I believe that both were really addressing ways to show tolerance and respect for differing points of view. For thousands of years people have been attempting to do this. It can be seen in the sayings of many wonderful spiritual leaders.

The Suttrakritanga (1.1.50 - Jainism) says that those who praise their own doctrines and disparage the doctrines of others do not solve any problem. I am reminded of the times that I have felt hopeless conflict during consultations. Almost always it resulted from one of the participants in the group clinging to and fighting for the acceptance of an idea not shared by the majority of the group. Some times this has more to do with the popularity of an individual than a certain knowledge of "the right way" or the opposite. Some times the lone truthful voice can not convince the group of the truth. At that point the wise and noble action is to allow the group to be wrong.

Buddha said, in Sutta Nipata 798, that to be attached to a certain view and to look down upon other views as inferior – this the wise men (presumably the wise woman too) call a fetter. It seems to me that it is possible and even desirable to hold certain views based upon personal values, yet the wise person, in the interest of personal freedom and liberty will not find fault with another point of view. In the perfect world where everyone respected each other's opinion it would work fine. That world might be a very quiet place as we would not need to express opinions.

Again from Jainism (Acarangasutra 5.113) it is written that we can comprehend one philosophical view through comprehensive study of another one. This is so basic that it seems a waste of time to mention. The way we know the day is by knowing the night. The way we know hot food is by knowing cold food. The way we know love is by experiencing hate. A learned, politically correct person might say the comprehension of these differences is "discernment", but for the vast majority of our species it is just plain ol' judgment.

The Tao is rife with example after example of sensory stimulated opposites through which we might learn something about our spiritual nature. I can't remember the exact chapter and verse of a statement which says that we can know the window by understanding the wall. I'm sorry to be taking so much space to come to my point.

Many people agree with Julia concerning the use of discernment or judgment. I am not a semanticist. I'm just a plain spoken kind'a fellow who judges when his soup is too hot; the children are too loud; an unsafe situation exists; scripture doesn't (or does) have

meaning for me; I've met someone that I just don't like; or any number of other situations in which my value system conflicts with that of another person or nature. Discussions I've had in the past on this subject seem to show that there is nothing wrong with judgment as long as people agree with the judgment. It is only the people who are harshly judged who seem to object to it.

The last point is that there is good judgment and bad. The difference for me is that when a judgment is made with as many facts as possible good judgment can result. When judgment is based upon poor facts, emotions, and ignorance it usually is faulty.

To all my learned friends here on the UCS, I respect your use of the word "discernment." When I use the word "judgment" please respect my use of that word. As for my writing, I hope you will judge it for its value (good or bad). It would hurt me very much to believe that you just discerned it.