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## Discrimination

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## Discrimination

Discrimination that makes a clear distinction between something good and something better is radically different from discrimination against persons who have characteristics different from our own. Having a “discriminating taste” usually indicates a positive capability for recognizing better qualities as opposed to those that are ordinary. We want to be carefully discriminating in our choices, and not discriminate between one person and another based on some disordered pattern of unexamined thoughts and feelings.

Becoming a discriminating person is a high ideal: one who is not readily influenced by thoughts, events, or persons that lead only to hurtful selfishness. Some billboard advertisements promote their particular brand of laundry soap or Scotch whisky by suggesting that their product is widely preferred by those with discriminating taste. Such claims exemplify the challenge for any of us who strive to make appropriate determinations between levels or degrees of goodness, effectiveness, or helpfulness. Those who want to influence us for their own purposes imply that our criteria should be limited to appearances and to considerations only of personal advantage. We recognize, when we are reflective and honest, that our best decisions depend upon the internal information that arises from the complementary interaction of our hearts and minds and also out of concern for the various communities who will be affected by what we say and do.

We do not need to exercise our powers of discrimination when choosing between right and wrong, helpful or harmful options which are quite clear. But we often find ourselves in situations where we wonder which proposed action will be better than another one, when both seem good. Some might say that “it doesn’t matter, as long as no one is hurt.” But we have an authentic desire inside us that, if we do not obscure it with constant motion, noise, and unreflective thought, seeks to know which might be the better option for us, and also for family, friends, associates, or society in general.

Though each of us is unique in expressing our spirituality, we have experiences in common. No matter what rationalizations people might make, attempting to relate God or some transcendent power to their controlling or unkind behavior, spiritual discrimination is not about trying to justify our actions or intentions to others, but about identifying for ourselves what we can say, do, or avoid that will be better for us and for others than the alternatives that are available to us.

If, for example, we consider donating funds or volunteering for a social service agency, but have limited financial or time resources that we can

provide, we will attempt to discriminate among potentially a large number of beneficial options. We might first seek external information about various agencies, or we might start with identifying our personal criteria, such as proximity to where we live, and what kind of needs we would hope to meet. All of our considerations are part of discriminating among worthy alternatives.

Decision-making, and especially discriminating the better option from another but less good possibility, is a spiritual activity. We expect of ourselves honesty and good-will. We might also exercise trust in the God of inspirations to help us recognize, without knowing all the reasons or having all the facts, that course of action that best matches our present unique capacity for love.