

## The Human Experience Pt 7: Compassion and Judgement

Rose and Andrew watched Frank leave the café. A few minutes silence ensued before conversation began once more...

"What do you think about that guy who made a fuss earlier about not having sugar in his coffee and then pouring it out on the floor. Do you think he's a nutter?" Andrew began.

"It isn't for me judge." replied Rose.

"Oh come on Rose! What do you really think?"

"To tell you the truth Andrew, your question leaves me conflicted. As an onlooker, it's easy for me to pass judgement on the guy. But it wouldn't feel right inside to do so."

Andrew was clearly puzzled by that but Rose continued "Somehow, I see judging someone's actions and motives as damaging to me. Strange as that sounds, it is me that suffers. When I judge it shrinks me inside, I become more narrow and closed. It might give me a temporary 'holier than thou' feeling, I might feel self-righteous or whatever, but the feeling leaves me less connected with myself... not exactly what you wanted to hear; hey?"

Andrew paused and then replied "I've never thought about what judging someone does to me. It just happens really - what we do without giving it a second thought."

"Exactly. It's so automatic and unconscious. That guy has a life that I have no idea about, but when I judge his actions I assume that I know everything, as if I know him; his values, his beliefs, his motives and 'his life according to Rose'! But then, you did ask me what I thought!"

"No problem Rose! I hadn't thought about judging people really. There's a lot of truth in what you've just said. We assume a lot don't we?" responded Andrew.

They sat in quiet reflection, and then Andrew asked "What do you mean; judging people hurts you?"

"Andrew, I really don't know much about all this stuff." replied Rose. "Somehow, I see that guy as being in a really terrible place; distressed. And I just know when I am distressed or confused or unhappy, I do really crazy things. I drive too fast, I become impatient, irritated or angry about all sorts of things. I yell at the kids and sometimes want to divorce my lovely man. All because I am hurting inside and feel lost....

When I judge others for their bad behaviour I forget, 'Ah but for the grace of god go I'. And that forgetting disconnects me from feeling compassion. I am then not in a place where I can nurture and support my good intentions. Judging distances me from being open, caring and more spacious within myself; and that can't be good for me."

"I sort of know what you mean Rose; but that guy earlier... people don't act like that without being mental in some way do they?"

Rose quietly replied "All I know Andrew, is that when I am judging people I have no room left inside for beautiful feelings like compassion and thoughtfulness. I suppose it is about what you want to nourish within yourself. Judging others supports the world of assumptions, feelings of arrogance and self-opinion. The feelings of compassion, understanding and insight require a more conscious choice within me and I know which inner space I want to cultivate."

### Nourishing our inner space

The world of compassion, thoughtfulness and equanimity does something to our inner world. These 'noble' feelings are so natural and unpretentious; they just are. They flow naturally without any inner exertion on our part and there is a profound connection within us; and between us and others. There are many ways we can describe the experience of compassion. Tenderness, healing, forgiveness and an expanding contentment are all descriptions of a life lived through compassion. Gravity is a powerful force that shapes our universe. Likewise, compassion is the form that LIFE takes in us when we are fully open.

Judgement on the other hand, is mental in nature. It is the creation of our own imagination and the stories we make up about ourselves and others without realising the illusion; our inner and outer worlds disconnected and separate. There is nothing in this cosmos other than ourselves that disconnects us from LIFE. What we nourish in ourselves is up to us. ■ ■

**"The unreflected life is not worth living. All of us need to draw away from our busy lives from time to time and seek a space where we can think about the meaning of life and what really matters to us." Socrates**