

5 DISCRIMINATIONS

Human cognition proceeds through the interplay of two operations: The perception of differences—discrimination, and the assessing of similarities—equating. For centuries, extensive use has been made of the sign, “=,” to designate that two objects, A and B, are to be regarded in the light of their similarities or identities: $A = B$. But a sign to designate that two objects are to be regarded in the light of their differences is also needed: A vis-a-vis B, or $A \neq B$, for short.

The recognition or emphasis of a difference may be as important as the recognition of an equivalence. I give here five discriminations, having important consequences for how we think about the world.

There is only one essential function of government—all others could best be performed by other institutions—that function is to protect its citizens from other governments.

- **Absolute \neq Invariant.** The idea of the existence of ‘absolutes’ has been in disrepute since the theory of relativity. However, that theory does not abolish the essence of the concept as many interpreters think. It replaces ‘absolute’ with ‘invariant.’ In a general way, we may discriminate between the two concepts as follows: An absolute is universally one and the same everywhere for all time, while an invariant is the same under a set of allowable transformations. If one views the world from only one position, many things may appear to be absolute; but when things are viewed from many positions and moving states, they may change and lose their absoluteness. Only what remains unchanged when viewed from every position and state of motion is allowed to be called invariant. We may postulate absolutes, but we must search for invariants.
- **Genotype \neq Phenotype.** Each organism exists in two forms: First, in the visible physical form we call the body—the phenotype; and, second, in the form of a DNA molecule that is a recipe for making that body—the genotype. Evolutionary modifications occur in the genotype; testing of the modification occurs in the phenotype.
- **Legal \neq Legitimate.** Jefferson held that ultimate sovereignty resided in each person. We form states by delegating to a government a portion of our individual sovereignty. Government passes laws, which—through this covenant of delegation—we agree to abide by. When we disregard these laws, we act illegally. However, when government violates the covenant by appropriating to itself more than has been delegated to it, government acts illegitimately. The double direction of the covenant is the basis of the state, with legality ceasing when legitimacy ceases.
- **Master Race \neq Chosen People.** Some historians have pointed to a strong similarity between Nazi views of Germans as a Master Race and Jewish views of Jews as a Chosen People. This is a case where the difference, not the similarity, is what is important. The Master Race is an elite of privilege, with rights to dominate and domineer; The Chosen People is an elite of responsibility, with obligations to serve God’s purpose for the world.
- **Monotheism \neq Hinotheism.** Monotheism: There exists but one God. Him only shalt thou worship and serve. Hinotheism: There exist many gods, among them God, who alone is worthy of thy worship and service. The paths of cultural evolution greatly diverge according to the choice between these views.