

Steven Zichichi

Rutherford

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Oxford Scholars

Divisions in Society

We live in a world filled with various cultures, religions, and ideologies. We live on a planet filled with beautiful people and magnificent places. We are creatures who have the capacity to work tirelessly to improve the situation of others, to sacrifice for the good of the whole. We are even creatures who know that we should in fact do good for others: that it is the “right” thing to do. Yet, we live in a divided world, where these different aspects of life pull us apart causing increased polarization. What is the cause of our inability to accept our differences and use them to be brought closer together as one community living in a state of solidarity? Why are humans so judgemental and could this be the cause for such division in our society today?

Yale professor and psychologist, Paul Bloom, describes our constant highlighting of differences as natural. Part of human evolution is the ability to analyze a person subconsciously in a matter of seconds. For example, when you meet someone new, you have immediately determined their gender, race, and age just to name a few. In many instances, some of these things are valuable. In the early stages of human civilization, if a person was looking for a potential mate, then it would be very useful to be able to analyze another person’s gender and age without even having to think about it. Next time you meet someone, try to not analyze their age, gender, or race. You could simply look around the room you are in and try to find someone you don’t know. It is simply impossible to do because of the manner in which the human brain operates. We are very social animals so like other social animals, we are constantly analyzing

and judging the other members of our group. This is critical for survival. Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest applies in this situation in fact. Social animals look for the best possible mate with the best traits, i.e. the smartest, the toughest, the strongest, etc. At one time in our past, it would've actually been advantageous to be able to analyze a person's ethnic origin as well. You would want to reproduce within your tribe in order to promote your groups expansion.

It is obvious is that we do live in a different world today, where we no longer operate within the tribal system. For example, the United States has become a melting pot of different cultures from all walks of life. However, in many ways, our brains still work the same way that they did a thousand years ago. Basic biological theory tells us that this will not change during our lifetime. So we are left with a natural judgemental ability in a world where it has become less useful.

Because this is so innately intertwined in human genetics, I believe that the problem lies somewhere outside of the natural judgement itself. It is the way that we react to our initial judgments. It is our ability to recognize when and how we are judging and then act upon that recognition. Judgement is something that we try to avoid in everyday life. We think of it as such a horrible thing to judge and the truth of the matter is that judging is inevitable. How we respond to the judgement stimulus is not yet decided for us though.

Judgement only becomes harmful when not tempered by empathy, awareness and intellect. If we think of judgement as a mental flaw that is in need of repair, we will be unable to satisfy a longing to avoid judgement. If you think of judgement as some sort of pathology or cruelty, you will never be able to understand how it works. It is not that we should be working to eliminate judgement, but rather that we must try to understand when and how our judgement is harmful. A person must remember that life is a journey and that any person can be going through

any number of difficult things at any given time. Until we really have gotten to know someone's story, it is only harmful to act on a judgement alone.