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## Discourse, Distinctions, and Congeniality

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**Abstract:** This paper attempts to express how important the relationship between discourse and making distinctions is in attaining congeniality. The author wishes to show that congeniality is an ideal that is to be pursued in this diverse world. The interpretation of facts, the opposing opinions or judgments, and differing belief systems are perceived as sufficient reasons why congeniality among people belonging to different orientations cannot be attained. Among other reasons, the author zeroes in on one observation as to why he thinks it is possible to solicit sympathy, understanding, and tolerance from people despite their differences. He observes that the meanings of three claims, namely, "I know," "I think," and "I believe" are unclear or vague and are often used interchangeably, thus, the information conveyed or intended messages are ambiguous for the listener or reader. He thinks that teaching students make the proper distinctions between one claim and the others can probably change how things are—meaning, congeniality can be attained despite obvious differences in opinions and beliefs if the meanings of "I know," "I think," and "I believe" are clear.

Clear or good and vague or bad distinctions happen while people participate in discourse. When distinctions are clear then congeniality and the likes of kindness, sympathy, and tolerance result; while, anger, hatred, and persecution develop with vague distinctions. The author recognizes the difficulty of making good distinctions: Some are easy to make, including some made implicitly; while, others are difficult, tricky, and take more effort. If I say, for example, that "hell is where souls of bad people go" then this can be taken in many different ways. For me, that is a fact or knowledge but is a meaningless utterance for one listener (perhaps, an atheist). For another listener that is a claim that is either true or false, thus, an opinion. And, for another still that is false for hell is not a place but a state of mind.

As the paper progresses it shares some ways to distinguish between a fact that corresponds to the "I know," "factual matter" or "matter of fact" that corresponds to the "I think," and "matter of pure opinion" that corresponds to the "I believe." The conclusion reveals that in matters of belief or faith, the call for good listening and tolerating "stories" of others is basic for realizing congeniality.