Fairness, Globalization, and Public Institutions

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be heeded by leaders of nations anywhere. But ultimately they joined hands and voices worldwide, and with persons concerned about cultural and environmental preservation generally, they now reckon as a major factor in contemporary politics.

More recently, globalization and anti-globalization have emerged as competing images of the future, changing both the discussion about development and, as we have seen, "the environment." So, whatever view one might have of the future—be it bright or dark, prosperous or penurious—more and more people (though still only a tiny minority on the planet!) have become aware of their obligation to take the needs of future generations effectively into account when making present decisions. It is no longer clear to them that continued economic growth will automatically lead to a better world for future generations. And in addition to environmental concerns, many have come to wonder if continued technological innovations (both a producer and product of economic growth) such as genetic modification of plants and animals and runaway nanotechnologies might lead us blindly into a darker, rather than a brighter, future.

It is time, they say, for societies to look ahead and try to anticipate more rigorously the possible consequences of their decisions and actions. We should no longer drive into the future while staring into the rearview mirror. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "The ultimate test of a moral society is the world it leaves to its children." Or as the Kyoto Future Generations Group puts it, "Future generations: they are our conscience." Foresight is necessary.

Further Thoughts

Culture and Fairness

The Idea of Civilization Fairness

Sohail Inayatullah

Fairness is often considered to be a universal, and yet it is not a constant across civilizations. For example, in the Islamic world, justice and fairness are in tension. Islamic civilization was born in the context of tribalism, focused on punishment and sameness (eye for an eye) and in violent opposition to forces bent on its destruction. Justice thus became central in terms of external politics. Internally, however, Muhammad's contribution was *adl,* or distributive justice, focused more on multiple levels of fairness (social, economic, political, and environmental). Thus Islamic civilization exhibits a tension between justice and fairness—between retributive justice and the fight against injustice, and distributional justice, focused on creating a caring society.

In current Australian politics, reconciliation is considered more important than justice per se. Aboriginal leaders ask for an apology from the current govern-

ment so as to restore what is right. While partly based on regaining or retaining access to land essential to their perceived notions of justice, it is also a spiritual, emotional quest, about healing self and Other, aboriginal and "white fella."

In contrast, justice is far less foundational in the classical Indic episteme. Notions of understanding the self, transcending the self, and maintaining the self are more important. Lack of fairness, one might argue, has been the cost of the stability of the caste system. This grand eugenics experiment removes fairness from the mix since the classical texts have determined one's dharma (duty, mission) in life. At the same time, it is one's karma (consequences of previous actions) that defines one's current circumstances. The universe thus is essentially moral and fair. However, it is not surprising that those at the bottom are more likely to convert out of the vedantic structure since there is little intercaste mobility. Fairness within the system is high, but the entire system can be seen as stunningly unfair.

Thus civilizations construct the notion of fairness differently. In the Islamic world, because of its colonial history and because of the Sunni-Shia split, justice is far more important than fairness. In the aboriginal world, fairness comes through reconciliation, through the offender apologizing and community harmony being restored. In Indic civilization, fairness is less central because notions of dharma and karma reign supreme. In recent times, with institutionalized Hinduism (modeled after Islam and Christianity) in vogue, justice suddenly has become important for some Hindus, and thus there have been recent attempts to push back Muslim Indians in order to regain temples unfairly occupied.

What different civilizational notions of fairness point out is that fairness must be approached from, and at, different levels. If one takes the entire globe as a category, then different civilizations' notions of fairness might seem narrow. Civilizational differences experience prejudice within the world system. Certain broad notions of truth, nature, reality, and beauty have become the global norm. For the most part the global norms are not multicultural but are based on Western civilization. What this means is that Others see themselves through the eyes of the West. The results, as in the Islamic world, can be devastating. Conspiracy theories abound, individuals seethe with hate toward the West, or alternatively, as in the work of V. S. Naipaul, the Other acquiesces to the West and becomes but a pale (or brown) imitation.

Over time, either response destroys the backbone of the community as cultural vitality is lost. Seething with hate destroys cultural vitality since pathological forms of political and social practice emerge. Identity becomes a weapon used within and without. The losers in this tend to be those most vulnerable—take, for example, women in Islamic nations.

Civilizational fairness emerges once Western civilizational hegemony is named, understood, and challenged, especially in terms of its implications for

society, nature, and gender. That done, a dialogue can emerge and spaces created for other civilizations.

Globalization, even as it leads to uneven development, has been one of the modes of increased multicultural hybrid music, food, and identity. As the non-West has clawed, through immigration, back to the West, this has created hybrid identities. These have the potential to create planetary notions of fairness. Hybrid identities and the softening of the past are necessary factors of global fairness, but not sufficient. For that, a new view of the future and a globalization far more sensitive to the quadruple bottom line than we have now is required.

Globalization and Fairness

Edgar Porter

Can fairness be understood in a global context? Does culture still matter when striving to define fairness in an era of global relationship, or have we become so global in our lives that culture evaporates and we see a clear sky of universal truths writ large? The answer, I think, is that universal truths are not to be found, and culture still matters. A lot.

The story is told of American philosopher Mortimer Adler attending an international conference on philosophy in Honolulu, eager to engage his Asian colleagues in a dialogue on the "great ideas" of justice and freedom. But all they wanted to talk about, he reported, was *harmony!* To the Asian philosophers the search for harmony was paramount, well ahead of justice and freedom. To Adler, it was just the opposite. How does one convince "the Other" of the absolute, universal importance of his or her view when each is tied to rich and diverse cultures built on distinct core ideals? One does not, even in these heady days of globalization.

Does this mean that globalization has no impact on our ability to address the "big" questions such as fairness, justice, and harmony? No, it means that addressing them in order to agree on a common definition is fruitless. Globalization does not guide us to universal truth, or even universal agreement. Globalization does, however, thrust up moral dialogue in an exploring, intimate, cross-cultural environment never imagined before. Therefore, diverse cultures sitting down to discuss globalization and fairness can agree on fairness as a universal "concept." What globalization cannot do is lead to an agreement on what constitutes fair behavior.

How in this globalizing age do we guide the discussion of ideas and values toward an even more positive and constructive exchange? We might start by organizing the next conference. It will be called "Globalization and Harmony."