

A Short Introduction to the Paradoxical and Dynamic Nature of Fairness

Rongqing Dai*

Freelance Philosopher, New Jersey, USA

Abstract

Fairness is a basic cultural element in human civilization which is familiar to every single person around the world. However, little has been known about the nature of fairness during the past thousands of years in human history. This article would provide an introduction to the paradoxical and dynamic nature of fairness.

Keywords: Fairness; Paradoxical; Human civilization

Introduction

Fairness is like beauty that every person could enjoy without the need of being coached. This simple fact actually makes fairness a very complicated issue just like the issue of beauty. What someone considers as beautiful could be considered as ugly by someone else (especially when the beauty is appreciated with an abstract connotation without a physical referent); similarly, what someone considers as fair might be viewed as unfair by someone else. The sense of fairness of any person could also change from time to time just as the taste of beauty could change at different times, most probably under some external influences. Besides, as we know, the appreciation of beauty by a mature person goes far beyond the physical appearances and extends to abstract values, and fairness is indeed one important ingredient of abstract beauty that would normally please people around the world.

Even though fairness has been a buzzword of all nations for thousands of years, only a little has been known by the public about its nature over the history. Main stream thinkers have been interested in the issue of fairness mostly for what are fair or not fair and their consequences in public social affairs; and thus cultural reflections about the notion of fairness that is no doubt a critical agent of human civilization have been focused on the significance of fairness at social macroscopic level, complemented by some minor attentions on the impact of fairness on private relationships. Consequently, the whole spectrum of the fascinating dynamics driven by fairness has been so far pretty much missing in literature around the world.

This missing of reflection about the dynamic nature of fairness in literature has been one of the main causes for the confusions (of writers, poets, artists, as well as readers and audiences) about various cultural, political, and economic phenomena. When people are criticizing unfair social happenings, they seldom realize that they themselves might be important contributors to the unfair reality in many cases; when people are trying to design a fairest system or pursue an ideal society, they might not realize that without some special cautions what they consider as fair might be the seed for future unfairness; when people are puzzled about why bad guys so much often could easily defeat what they consider as good guys in many historical events, they are normally ignoring the work of fairness in the cause since they have labelled fairness as always positive; when people try to portrait historical heroes, they might assign them some attributes that could be detrimental to fairness in real life.

The lack of curiosity about fairness and consequently the ignorance of what on earth fairness is really about have led to not only mutual misunderstandings among people living together but also misunderstandings about history and about the cultural, political, and economic realities of society. This missing sight of an elephant in

the room is not by accident but a result of the complicated nature of fairness itself.

The Definition of Fairness

Every artist would know what beauty is when he/she is creating his/her works of art; but still, without referring to any specific sample, "what is beauty" would be one of the most difficult questions for all artists. Similarly, everyone who cares about fair or even fights for some fairness in this world would have an idea in his/her mind of what kind of fairness he/she cares about or fights for, but "what is fairness" without reference to any specific event would still be one of the most difficult questions for every single person on this globe. The reason for the difficulty of answering both questions lies in the fact that both beauty and fairness are open concepts in the sense that they have very wide ranges of connotation; and thus neither of them could be interpreted in a satisfactory way with a simple sentence as most people who are used to thinking by specific definitions would like to see.

For example, one definition of fairness that you might find from online is "the state, condition, or quality of being free from bias, dishonesty or injustice." However, if we define the meaning of "bias" based on a mathematically strict sense of symmetry, then we will find that an attempt of deconstructing the meaning of "free from bias" would involve ourselves into a full-scale discussion the same as a discussion about what is fairness; as for the part of "being free from dishonesty or injustice", it could only offer a very partial meaning of fairness since even crooks would fight over fairness issues among themselves.

Another example of dictionary definition of fairness is "being proper under the rules", which obviously could not fully describe the nature and impact of fairness either since the rules in this world have very often been very unfair.

The Role of Fairness

The reason that it is important to study the dynamic nature of fairness is not only because the essential importance of fairness in our life but also because of the misunderstanding that fairness (or pursuit of

*Corresponding author: Rongqing Dai, Ph.D., Freelance Philosopher, New Jersey, USA, Tel: + 0017185147243; E-mail: ronald_dai@yahoo.com

Received December 17, 2015; Accepted January 08, 2016; Published January 18, 2016

Citation: Dai R (2016) A Short Introduction to the Paradoxical and Dynamic Nature of Fairness. J Civil Legal Sci 5: 168. doi:[10.4172/2169-0170.1000168](https://doi.org/10.4172/2169-0170.1000168)

Copyright: © 2016 Dai R. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

fairness) would always do us good in this world. This misunderstanding extensively exists among the general public and is causing great confusion about human cultures. As a matter of fact, just as beauty does not always do us good under different circumstances, if we learn more about fairness, we might find that neither would fairness always do us good as we might often assume so. The best way to learn this would be to look into the paradoxical nature of fairness as discussed in the book "A brief discussion on fairness analysis [1], which could be summarized into two basic points as follows:

- a) A fair competition could in the long run create social unfairness.
- b) Social unfairness in this world is always sustained by fairness principle.

Let's first discuss the paradox (a) mentioned above. As we know, the fairness of a so called fair competition is normally referred to the condition of the competition, not the goal of competition. As the dictionary definition of the word *competition* tells, the goal of a fair competition is to determine a winner and loser in general. Consequently, a fair competition (i.e., competition in market economy) could create unequal social status out of previously equal parties. Once that unequal social status becomes true, people would soon forget how the new unequal status quo was created through the fair competition and the *fairness principle* would be quoted and applied to this new social status. This would demand a new fair distribution according to the new social status. This new distribution of social wealth could have been considered as unfair according to the previous social status among people of like positions before the new unequal social status was created through that fair competition.

The reason for the paradox (b) to become valid is because social unfairness has always been closely related to either unfair action by some existing social structure or the unfair set up of the social structure itself. However, the reason for any social structure to exist is because it is supported by demand of fairness (or we may call it as *fairness principle*). For example, in a social structure, one of the very basic embodiments of fairness principle is that subordinates should obey superiors, which in turn is one of the basic conditions that social unfairness could be carried out. The force of fairness would indeed to prevent the change of social unfairness in more profound ways for which you might find more in depth discussions in reference [1].

How Fairness Analysis could be Carried out and its Potential Impact

We all know that it is our instinctive nature to sense and react to beauty, but many (if not most) people would not relate our sense of fairness to our instincts while our sense of fairness is indeed one of our fundamental instincts, which determines that fairness principle would have fundamental impact upon every corner of every level of human civilization. Therefore, it would far from enough for understanding how the power of fairness affects our life if we only investigate fairness at macroscopic social level. We need to treat fairness as a fundamental element penetrating every spot of every culture just like gravity force penetrating every bit of mass in the whole universe. As we could expect that the actions of fairness in social life would be highly dynamic and nonlinear [2] as social processes would normally be. Once we understand better the nature of fairness, we could investigate the dynamics of human culture by taking into consideration of the role of fairness during relevant processes in a similar way of analysing the dynamic status or static equilibrium condition for a mechanical system by applying the knowledge of forces, as what is done in reference [1].

Fairness analysis would not only provide a non-traditional way to understand how human life is impacted by fairness principle, but also would promote renovated non-traditional ways of studying almost every cultural field in human society including politics, economics [3], history, sociology, and even literary and visual arts. This is because fairness analysis would not only provide a means that would enable people to look into human culture in a much more fine-tuned approach but also demand researches in more connected ways than traditional ways. For example, with fairness analysis people could look into the dynamics of an organization to diagnose what might be wrong to cause the loss of competitiveness instead of traditional coarse-grained cause-effect judgment. Literary writers could also use fairness analysis as a magnifying lens to help scrutinizing individual and social life. Historians would examine the cause and consequence of many historical movements from a very different angle and record the history in the future in quite a different way by taking into consideration of how the force of fairness affects the historical processes.

Conclusion

It has been widely acknowledged that the work of artists and aestheticians (i.e., the creation and study of beauty) has great impact upon human civilization. Accordingly the nature of beauty has long been a well-known topic for philosophy or a special branch of it, aesthetics. Ironically, the nature of fairness is still pretty much an untapped territory since almost no one has seriously studied the issue, even though nobody in this world would disagree that the creation of fairness would be the same important as the creation of beauty. This is because not only the creation of fairness but also the study of fairness is much more difficult than the creation and study of beauty in this world. Obviously, fairness cannot create visual pleasure as beauty, which not only makes it harder to discuss fairness than discuss beauty but also determines that the study of fairness would take a very different way from the study of beauty. Therefore, in order to fill in a missing part on the spectrum of human cultural radar about fairness, one of the most fundamental concepts of our civilization, we need to take a dynamic approach to look into the impact of fairness upon our political, economic, and general cultural life as briefly introduced in this article.

References

1. Dai R (2015) A brief discussion on fairness analysis. Out skirts Press.
2. Dai R (2015) A Brief Introduction to Fairness Analysis. Arts and Social Sciences Journal 6: 2-4.
3. Dai R (2014) Chaotic Order: A Consequence of Economic Relativity. In: Faggini M, Parziale A (eds.) Complexity in Economics pp: 117-135.