

## *Instructor Weekly Messages*

### **Fairness**

- *conformity with rules or standards*
- *ability to make judgments free from discrimination or dishonesty*

### **Principles of Fairness & Justice**

The most fundamental principle of justice—one that has been widely accepted since it was first defined by Aristotle more than two thousand years ago—is the principle that "equals should be treated equally and unequals unequally." In its contemporary form, this principle is sometimes expressed as follows: "Individuals should be treated the same, unless they differ in ways that are relevant to the situation in which they are involved." For example, if Jack and Jill both do the same work, and there are no relevant differences between them or the work they are doing, then in justice they should be paid the same wages. And if Jack is paid more than Jill simply because he is a man, or because he is white, then we have an injustice—a form of discrimination—because race and sex are not relevant to normal work situations.

There are, however, many differences that we deem as justifiable criteria for treating people differently. For example, we think it is fair and just when a parent gives his own children more attention and care in his private affairs than he gives the children of others; we think it is fair when the person who is first in a line at a theatre is given first choice of theatre tickets; we think it is just when the government gives benefits to the needy that it does not provide to more affluent citizens; we think it is just when some who have done wrong are given punishments that are not meted out to others who have done nothing wrong; and we think it is fair when those who exert more efforts or who make a greater contribution to a project receive more benefits from the project than others. These criteria—need, desert, contribution, and effort—we acknowledge as justifying differential treatment, then, are numerous.

On the other hand, there are also criteria that we believe are not justifiable grounds for giving people different treatment. In the world of work, for example, we generally hold that it is unjust to give individuals special treatment on the basis of age, sex, race, or their religious preferences. If the judge's nephew receives a suspended sentence for armed robbery when another offender unrelated to the judge goes to jail for the same crime, or the brother of the Director of Public Works gets the million dollar contract to install sprinklers on the municipal golf course despite lower bids from other contractors, we say that it's unfair. We also believe it isn't fair when a person is punished for something over which he or she had no control, or isn't compensated for a harm he or she suffered. And the people involved in the "brown lung hearings" felt that it wasn't fair that some diseases were provided with disability compensation, while other similar diseases weren't.

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*"We can both see the same thing, have a different opinion and both be right, this is the power of perception"*

*"Why is it that, the fewer the facts, the stronger the opinion?"*

*"What makes life worth living is giving and Forgiving"*

*"We ought always to deal justly, not only with those who are just to us, but likewise to those who endeavour to injure us; and this, for fear lest by rendering them evil for evil, we should fall into the same vice"*

*"Keep your words soft and sweet. You never know when you will have to eat them"*

*"Fairness requires that we do not make judgments until we know all the facts"*

*"Life can only be understood by looking forward. (Be open to the future; don't live in the past)"*

1. Discuss the above quotes in class
2. Have the students come up with real life examples
3. How does fairness and unfairness affect their relationships with others?
4. Pair students off and have them think of a time when they felt they were unjustly treated and have them share their stories with the class, encourage their partners not pass judgement on the story without having both sides!

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**1. People often grudge others what they cannot enjoy themselves**

**The Dog in the Manger**

A Dog looking out for its afternoon nap jumped into the Manger of an Ox and lay there cosily upon the straw. But soon the Ox, returning from its afternoon work, came up to the Manger and wanted to eat some of the straw. The Dog in a rage, being awakened from its slumber, stood up and barked at the Ox, and whenever it came near attempted to bite it. At last the Ox had to give up the hope of getting at the straw, and went away muttering:

**2. Every truth has two sides**

**The Mule**

A MULE, frolicsome from lack of work and from too much corn, galloped about in a very extravagant manner, and said to himself: "My father surely was a high-mettled racer, and I am his own child in speed and spirit." On the next day, being driven a long journey, and feeling very wearied, he exclaimed in a disconsolate tone: "I must have made a mistake; my father, after all, could have been only an ass."