



Life Isn't Fair: Who's To Judge?

Mitchell Milch, LCSW

Life is not fair by any stretch of the imagination. Who's to judge is the million dollar question? If God not be the ultimate judge is anyone else equipped to do the job? Unfairness is in the eye of the beholder and may not be bound by considerations of person, place, and time. Pantheists might say that God embeds in our DNA absolute notions of right and wrong and that the adjudication of such matters is way beyond any mere mortal's pay grade. For you atheists and agnostics in the audience I don't believe I'm sticking my neck out to say that achieving consensual guidelines on standards of fairness in this postmodern era is any easier than achieving a consensus on the fairness of voting stars tied to allegations of using performance enhancing drugs into Baseball's Hall of Fame.

In this postmodern era, secularists' affinities for moral relativism have rendered agreements on standards of fairness largely impossible. Much pain and suffering grows out of such relativistic, egocentric thinking. The metrics of our moral calculi may be summed up as follows: "What's good for me from my perspective I am free to pursue even if I have erroneously concluded that my actions do not infringe on your legal rights and freedoms of expression. Oh by the way, I will not take kindly to being challenged on such matters." A case in point these days is asking the wrong person to raise their drooping mask above their nostrils. If you have been openly scorned or worse for doing so, then you know what I mean.

Moral relativism as egocentric, boundary blurring, short on empathy, and apt to minimize or deny our interdependence on each other, is a formula for lose-lose interpersonal dynamics. I've witnessed examples in operation many times over in my office listening to incredulous, self-pitying and despairing significant others voice the following: My _____ just informed me after 20 years of marriage that _____ wants a divorce. I have no idea why _____ has given up on our relationship? I was reasonably happy. How could _____ do this to me?

It is the nature of human beings no matter their faith positions to struggle with issues of character, the profile of our avowed ethical and moral standards and the degree to which we conform to these standards. Self-righteous charges of unfairness abound in a

period when opinions on morality abound like opinions on the content produced by streaming services

The timeless quality of our grudges and grievances and our ensuing demands to be indemnified for these “so-called miscarriages of justice without statutes of limitations, contributes to this social evil. Self-pity and malignant envy justify aggression when we are so identified with being left holding the proverbial short end of the stick? How can ideas of fairness and justice be served given such circumstances rife for conflict?

For example how fair is it to compare any two people? Can't we all take the liberty to spin such comparisons to justify a cry to the heavens that life is unfair? For argument's sake, what do you the reader make of the following fictional illustration?

Is life more fair or less fair to me than to yourself my next door neighbor? I am White and you are Black. You were born into poverty and had to work twice as hard as me to earn your stripes in your chosen profession. I on the contrary was born into an upper middle class home. I am paralyzed by generalized anxiety that inhibits me from making friends and traveling. You have forged an audacious and resilient character in a crucible of racist oppression and do not blink at taking emotional risks. I had the means to retire years before you could, however I spend much of my time caring for my homebound wife who suffers with auto immune disorders. You are a cancer survivor and now retired enjoy traveling extensively with your wife. I am dripping with jealousy bordering on envy and often scream in silence: What's the deal?

I've reflected on my experiences as a couples counselor and have concluded that it is neither fair, decent or moral for a spouse to remain discontented for years in a marriage only to belittle the unhappy counterpart's unmet needs while demanding a debt of service be paid that in truth cannot be satisfied because the injuries predate their marriage and the scars are permanent. Achieving agreement between any two people can be an impossibly hopeless situation. What is often the best of possible outcomes is to accept what we cannot change, forgive and make the best of what we may label to be our “outrageous fortune.”

For the majority of my 67 years on this planet I would not accept that life was endlessly unfair. I was often a miserable, ungrateful person in spite of having much to thank God for. I don't believe any human being is equipped with sufficient authority and righteousness to fill the shoes of “ultimate judge.” Your frame of reference may be quite far afield from mine. God may or may not be the object of your faith that sooner or later He will right all wrongs. Still I believe we are all in the same boat and are tasked to make the best of our lives that will inevitably be rife with episodes of unfairness and injustice never to be reversed and expunged from recorded history. Love hopefully moves us to mediate our differences as best we can.