

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

Fairism, a moral term (pg. 37-42)

The moral meaning of fairism immediately points to the foundation that society should be built on. We should treat each other fairly and all our actions should be fair. Not just in interpersonal contacts, but also in our dealings with the environment. If fair is a universal value it should also be applied universally. It is valid everywhere and always. Fair is the common theme in anything we undertake. We always wonder: "Is this fair?" It is not an easy question. For 250 years philosophers have been racking their brains about it. But that should not stop us from trying to give the term a practical interpretation. Do we not all have an idea of what fair means? We use the word often and easily. We judge situations as "This is fair". It is a basis we all have in common. Smith, the political-economic thinker, with his concept of the 'invisible hand' also wrote about the human interest in another's happiness. Kant too presumed moral awareness in the free and autonomous human being. If we have a basic notion of fair, we should also succeed in fleshing it out concretely. Not just for ourselves, but in the most general sense. Society as a whole should be organised in a fair way. Therefore all together we should give the term meaning. Taking into account the freedom of every individual, we have to listen to each other and discover what each and everyone personally means by fair. We can achieve agreement by listening to each other's story. Consensus is brought about from an emphatic attitude. Not until a person has been proven right, but until everybody understands that the selected solution is the best for everything and everyone. Such consultation takes time, more time than it is given at the moment. Therefore time is an important factor in fairism and that is the reason why it is paid the required attention. In dialogue with each other we therefore search for the meaning of fair. Not in the philosophical sense, but very practically. What is the fair interpretation of a trade agreement? What does a fair employment contract look like? Which conditions are fair to have people contribute to society? Undoubtedly it will need more time to reach agreement, but that is no problem in fairism. It enables setting out objectives in the long term. So people should not just dialogue on a micro level, but mainly also on the administrative level of society, all over the world. The poor mother from the slums should be heard as well about what she sees as fair, just as much as the rich heiress. With such extremes the discussion will definitely not be small talk but about fundamental values which have to be fleshed out politically. Any voice anywhere in the world is heard in the great global given of fairism. Then the above example is realistic. Both women can have their say since they are connected. Not only by a political and economic system, but because of the story of fairness. We do not know whether the two women will meet in practice. Their voice will certainly not be heard literally, but will be represented by those they vote for. Therefore working in a fair way lends priority to multi-coloured decisions. Whichever ideology or religion a person adheres to, it cannot have more one-sided weight

for achieving consensus. It will be the common basis that will enable getting closer to each other, to understanding each other. Rich or poor, religious or secular, left-wing or right-wing... it does not make any difference for becoming aware that we share basic values. The poor mother or the rich heiress and all of us are conscious of the fact that you should not hurt someone else. That it is better if as many people as possible can experience pleasure. Pain and pleasure are terms we all know, values we can deploy. According to the utilitarian Jeremy Bentham morally good actions also contribute to increasing pleasure. The only thing is, what is the meaning of pain and pleasure? The terms cannot be defined objectively. Therefore they cannot serve for strict calculus, but for discussing them together. What does pain mean for you? What does it mean for me? How can we avoid it together? Hunger causes pain, so can we look for a solution so that nobody has to feel that pain and ideally would even

find some pleasure? In this way people can give added value to their lives. It may already be clear that what is fair cannot be represented just like that. It is the result of consultation, again and again, by the involved members of society on both an individual and global level. What is agreed to be fair today can have a different meaning tomorrow. Then it should be discussed again. If it is better that the washing line runs in a particular way today, maybe tomorrow it is better in another way. The branches of the tree beside it can be cut down or the sun will not rise above that new house anymore. What is a good law on donor transplants today might change tomorrow because of new scientific insights or changing moral values. People change, society changes. Insights may change, science makes new discoveries. What is fair is subject to change. Nothing is an established fact written in stone. That is directly the strength of fairism as well. It is a story without an end, a never-ending story. The story should never be finished, it should adapt again and again. As circumstances change, the meaning of what is fair will alter. Fairism as such remains. Therefore fairism is also a state of mind. It continuously demands investigation into what is fair, on an individual level too. In dealing with your next-door neighbour, but just as much in dealing with someone who is far away. In voting and purchasing behaviour. In dealing with animals and the environment.

Everybody helps to work on a fair society altogether openly and in an unbiased way. Every separate individual is also responsible for the social system in which people live. Advertising and media encourage people to consume and mainly carry on consuming. As if it concerns a hunger that can never be stilled. For a long time now it has no longer been about avoiding pain. Particularly in the western world it generally relates to increased pleasure and that also seems to be limitless. With a different premise and a different picture everyone will individually exhibit different behaviour too. How many

kilometres do you drive in your car? How often do you search for something on the internet? Adequately or more than required? When the top limit has been reached, you might just as well look for the lower limit. Who knows, maybe you will succeed with 10 per cent fewer kilometres or two internet-free days a month? As an overarching story, fairism will not stand in the way of others' convictions, so that everybody can easily connect with fairism. Everybody as a fairist is a logical result of a society in which people of different backgrounds go in search of a shared idea of fair. The dialogue to arrive at an understanding of fair can also be held internally. A silent dialogue with yourself leads to insight as well. It appeals to your own responsibility, without always pointing the finger at others or waiting for someone else to initiate something. The transition to a new way of living together therefore starts at a conscious change of mind-set, in society and in yourself. If it is fair to avoid pain, war should no longer be possible either. Not a single rational person thinks that war should really exist. And yet in the year 2018 there were still people in armed conflict with their fellow human beings. A handful of leaders often decide over the heads of the citizens to take up arms for ideological, but certainly also for economic reasons. To keep the arms industry going people have to be killed and countries left in ruins. Economically it is interesting to smash something with bombs first to build it up again afterwards – a vicious circle that keeps many industries running. There is nothing fair about waging war. It is only fair to settle disputes by means of consultation. In fairism the question whether war is fair is considered to be irrelevant. It is absurd that there are still arms factories that hope that there might be war in abundance anyway, so that they can see their profit rise and their shareholders are satisfied at people's expense. How could the production of arms ever fit in with a global system that boasts removing as much pain as possible and replacing it with pleasure?