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Equality

Author(s): Richard Wollheim and Isaiah Berlin

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#### XIV.—EQUALITY.

By RICHARD WOLLHEIM and ISAIAH BERLIN

##### I

RICHARD WOLLHEIM

THE principle of Equality is an essential ingredient of the most enduring and articulate political tradition to come out of European culture: that of Liberalism. "Liberalism," as one of its finest historians has written, "regarded as a universal and widespread historical consciousness, implies not only the feeling of liberty but the idea of equality"<sup>1</sup>. But like so much of that tradition, this principle has become so incrustated, so over-grown with particular interpretations, all comprehensible enough in the light of the particular historical conditions that occasioned them but, from an abstract point of view, partial and arbitrary, that it is difficult to see it clearly, as it is. Yet if we are to subscribe to it, or to reject it, or indeed to adopt any attitude towards it—as surely we all must—it is necessary to be clear about certain challenging questions that arise in connexion with it: what it means, how it can be justified, and in what relations it stands to the other principles with which it is ordinarily associated.

It would seem that in the course of history two quite distinct political principles have been advanced of which both can make a good claim to be regarded as the principle of Equality. It is not easy to bring out the differences between them, or indeed to express the principles themselves, by means of any general formulation. Accordingly I shall consider the principles through the medium of particular applications of them. For the sake of illustration

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<sup>1</sup> Guido de Ruggiero: *The History of European Liberalism* trans. R. G. Collingwood (London, 1927), p. 51.

I shall take the sphere of Property—a sphere in which much has been heard of them. The two principles are there exemplified by the two following theses:

1. Every man has a right to equal property.
2. Every man has an equal right to property.

(By “right” here, I mean of course “moral right”: an equivalent formulation of these two theses could be constructed for “right” in the sense of “positive right” by substituting for “has” “ought to have”).

Now, I think that there are two striking differences between these two theses, and so by implication between the two principles on which they are based. Let us examine these in turn:

A.—According to the first thesis, everyone has a right to equal property: from which it follows that everyone has a right to property<sup>2</sup>. According to the second thesis, everyone has an equal right to property: from which nothing follows about anyone having any right to property. All that does follow is that if anyone has a right to property, no-one has either a greater or less right than he. The difference between these two claims is considerable, and this of course is magnified when we turn from the particular thesis to the general principles that lie behind them. For if these two principles are entirely general (as I take it they are), then that from which the first thesis is derived asserts that everyone has a right in all matters, in all respects: whereas the principle from which the second thesis is derived makes no assertion about the existence of anyone’s rights in any matter or any respect.

B.—If the first thesis were adopted as a principle of political action, the resultant society would clearly be an egalitarian society: a society, that is to say, in which all commodities were distributed in equal quantities between the various members. It is clear, however, that the second thesis could be genuinely embraced and acted upon, and

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<sup>2</sup> This includes, of course, the limiting case of everyone having a right to zero quantity of property.

the society thereby brought into existence be far from egalitarian. For a supporter of this thesis might maintain that everyone has an equal right to property in that everyone has a right to the property he has worked to obtain, or everyone has a right to the property he can make use of, or everyone has a right to the property appropriate to his needs. Of course someone who maintained the principle in this way might be suspected of disingenuousness; and indeed might be disingenuous. But, then, he might not be. And if he wasn't, if that is to say he genuinely did believe that people did have rights of these kinds and everyone had them equally, then surely we should have to allow that he did really subscribe to the principle that everyone has equal rights to property. Yet it is undeniable that this principle as held by him would lead directly to a society which not only contained but actively encouraged very considerable quantitative differences in the distribution of commodities between its members.

This latter point comes out even more clearly if we consider for a moment more "extremist" theories that might be, and indeed have been, held about the right to property. Someone, for instance, might hold that this right depends upon one's physical strength, or the purity of one's blood, or the colour of one's skin. Now as a fact—as a sad fact it might be said—not everyone possesses equally the characteristics on which this right depends: some people have whiter skins than others, some purer blood, some are of greater physical strength than their fellow-men. Accordingly any society that recognized this right would not be egalitarian: but because it respected it equally in all men, it could make a claim to have realized the principle of Equality. To put the matter in its most general form, any society, it seems, could make a claim to respect everyone's equal right to property provided that the variation in the amount of property possessed by the various members of that society could be correlated with a variation in some other general characteristic possessed by them—for this characteristic could always be cited as being that on which the right to property depends.

Now this is on the face of it a paradoxical situation and might well seem to many something much worse. For there can, I think, be no doubt but that it is the thesis of equal rights to property, not that of rights to equal property, or, more generally, the principle from which the former not the latter thesis is derived—what we might call the Principle of Proportional, as opposed to that of Quantitative, Equality—that belongs so integrally to the tradition of Liberalism. And if this is so, it seems highly unsatisfactory, to say the least of it, that this principle can be used to condone, indeed to encourage social arrangements that not merely are inegalitarian but by any reasonable standards are grossly inequitable. Surely, it will be argued, the principle of Equality is being travestied when it is quoted in justification of policies of, say, religious or racial discrimination. There must be some error or weakness in its formulation that permits such abuse of it. Accordingly, if the principle is still to fulfil its rôle as one of the main directives of liberal political policy, some effort is called for in the direction of greater rigour or clarity in its expression.

Such an objection, though sympathetic, is, I think, quite misconceived. For surely in all the cases of inequitable societies that claim to respect everyone's equal right to property, what is wrong with the claim is not a false interpretation of what it is for everyone to possess an equal right but a false view of what right it is that anyone possesses. The inference from, say, "A possesses the right to the property appropriate to the colour of his skin" to "Everyone possesses the right to the property appropriate to the colour of his skin" is perfectly unobjectionable: what is objectionable is the acceptance of the premiss "A possesses the right to the property appropriate to the colour of his skin." For it is not true that A possesses such a right; for there is no such right.

The only reason that I can see for denying that what seem like cases of equal distribution of "false" rights are ever really cases of equal distribution, is the view that no-one is ever really mistaken about what rights people possess. Everyone knows quite well what rights people possess—on

this view—but some try to conceal this fact because they are neither prepared to deny the principle of equal distribution of rights nor prepared to accept the practical consequences of distributing equally such rights as there are; consequently they accord to some one right and to others another right and try to gloss this over by inventing a basis for their discrimination. Such a view seems to me totally unpalatable. People can be hypocrites, but some I am sure aren't. Possibly one reason for thinking that more are than actually are lies in an ambiguity in the language of the attribution of rights. For someone might say "A has a right to the property he has worked for" and say this not just to specify the amount of property A has a right to, *i.e.*, all that he has worked for, but to indicate the reason for this right or the characteristic on which it depends, *i.e.*, that the property has been worked for. In such cases it is correct to infer from what he says that if he believes in the equal right to property he would admit that everyone else has a right to the property he has worked for. However, someone might say, "A has the right to the property that he has worked for" and say this only to specify the amount of property A has a right to, and wish to leave open the question of the reason for this right, the characteristic upon which it depends. But by assimilation of this case to the first, he might be taken to concede that everyone has the right to the property he has worked for, and accordingly when he explicitly denies this right to someone on account of the colour of his skin, be thought to have thereby forsaken the principle of equal rights to property. However, once we appreciate the true force (or true weakness) of his original attribution of A's right, we can see clearly that this is not so: and so *a fortiori* can see how little there is in the view that the equal distribution of "false" rights is always disingenuous.

But it might now be urged: Granted that someone does not violate the principle of equal rights merely by extending to all the right he has falsely attributed to one, does he not violate it by the original false attribution—for can one be said to accord everyone equal rights when one accords

no-one his right? Here we seem to be on familiar ground. For the question as it stands is of the same form as others that occur over and over again in moral philosophy: Can a man be said to have done his duty when he has done only what he erroneously thought to be his duty? Can a man be said to have done to others what others ought to do to him when he has done to others what he believes others ought to do to him and his beliefs are false?

And surely the answer in all cases is No. For if, say, a man has done what he erroneously believes to be his duty, then it is false that what he has done is his duty, therefore what he has done is not his duty, therefore he has not done his duty. What is mysterious is why such questions should ever have caused any real perplexity, and why philosophers should have resorted to such unlikely expedients as "objective duty" and "subjective duty", "objectively right" and "subjectively right". Consider the question—Has a man told the truth when he has told what he believes to be the truth?—would any philosopher think that here was a reason for differentiating between the "objectively true" and the "subjectively true"?

Yet in philosophy there is never smoke without flame. I suggest that what lies behind the difficulty that philosophers have experienced in answering these simple questions is the doubt whether these are the proper questions to ask. And this in turn depends on the problem of how we are to interpret such principles as that of doing one's duty, or that of doing to others what others ought to do to one, or that of according to all equal rights. For we could see these principles as what might be called Rules of Life, that is to say, rules that we feel people should consult before they decide how to act. In that case the relevant question would be, for example, "Can a man claim to have done his duty when he has done what he erroneously believes to be his duty?" And the answer here of course is Yes. However, we could regard these principles not as Rules of Life but as what might be called Ideals of Perfection. In that case what we should be interested in is not whether people live by them but whether they live up to them. We should be

interested not in what people can reasonably claim to have done but in what they have actually done—and in moral matters these can fall apart.

In which of these two ways are we to regard the principle of Equal Rights—as a Rule of Life or as an Ideal of Perfection? Are we to ask of a man whether he can claim to have abided by it, or whether he really has abided by it? Now, the principle of doing one's duty is part of the "moral education" of human beings: and the point of moral education is to produce good human beings. And the goodness of human beings is determined by the rules that they live by. The principle of Equal Rights, however, is part of the "political education" of statesmen: and the point of "political education", I submit, is not to produce good statesmen but to produce good states. And if the goodness of statesmen is determined by the rules that they live by, the goodness of states is determined by the rules that statesmen live up to. In consequence, though it is reasonable to treat the principle of doing one's duty as a Rule of Life, to treat the principle of equal rights in the same way is to miss its point. Good intentions in a ruler are of little interest except in so far as they augur good results.

At this stage it might be objected that the assertion that everyone has equal rights seems to come to no more than the assertion that everyone has such rights as he has. In the expression "equal rights" the word "equal" occurs vacuously. Now the force of this objection is far from evident. Of course, if everyone's rights are equal, then to attribute to everyone equal rights is to attribute to everyone nothing more than such rights as he has: but conversely, if everyone's rights are equal, to recognize such rights as everyone has, is to recognize nothing less than everyone's equal rights. In other words, if everyone's rights are equal, then the two expressions "everyone's equal rights" and "such rights as everyone has" denote the same thing: but this is not surprising—for this could be false only if the expression "everyone's equal rights" did not denote everyone's equal rights or the expression "such rights as everyone



has" did not denote such rights as everyone has. The pertinent question now emerges as, Does the word "equal" in the assertion that everyone has equal rights, add anything to our knowledge of the kind of rights that everyone has?

And the force of the objection that I am considering may lie just here: in, that is to say, the denial of any informative value to the word "equal". Indeed, this denial might be thought to follow from what I have already said. For if in the matter of any single commodity it is in principle possible for two people to have rights to widely different quantities and for these rights to be equal, surely nothing is said by calling these rights equal? But this argument leaves out a vital step. For it will be recalled that according to my reasoning it is not possible for anyone to reconcile inequality of distribution with equality of rights without correlating the differential in distribution with a corresponding differential in some other characteristic which is that on which the content of the right depends. In other words, the principle of equal rights demands that if two people have rights to different quantities of some commodity, then there must be some difference elsewhere that justifies this. And this, it seems to me, is not a trivial point. The fact that advocates of reactionary or bigoted policies can always invent spurious reasons for their discrimination, so far from demonstrating the triviality of the point, seems rather to attest to its importance. As one of the greatest of all moralists has said, "L'hypocrisie est un hommage que le vice rend à la vertu." And if in private life this homage is a piece of pompous and nauseating ceremony, in public matters, though no less aesthetically displeasing, it can play a valuable rôle as a curb on prejudice and reaction.

At this point it might be objected that if the upholder of Equal Rights is maintaining that any difference in content between the rights of any two people depends on and is determined by (has as its necessary and sufficient condition) a difference between them in some general characteristic, he is clearly wrong. For what he says may be true of one kind of right but it could not be true of another kind of right whose existence he has doubtless overlooked. This point

can be well brought out by means of a distinction made by Professor H. L. A. Hart in a recent paper<sup>3</sup>: that between General Rights and Special Rights. General Rights are rights that all men possess against all, and possess *qua* men. Special Rights are rights that particular men possess against particular men, and possess in consequence of some special transaction they have conducted or some special relation in which they stand. An example of a General Right would be the right to free speech: examples of a Special Right would be A's right to a yacht in consequence of B's promise to give him one, or A's right to invest B's money in consequence of B's authorization, or A's right to educate B because B is his son. Now it seems that the upholder of the Equality of Rights is committed to the principle that all rights are general rights. But this clearly is unpalatable. For no liberal surely is out to deny, say, A's right to whatever it was that B promised him. Accordingly we need to re-interpret the principle of Equal Rights so as to accommodate these cases and yet not compromise the spirit that informs it. And this can I think be done. For though A's right in the matter of the yacht promised him is a special right, it is a special right which is a consequence of a general right. For everyone has the right to become a promisee. And so we might interpret the principle of Equal Rights as condemning all Special Rights which are not consequential upon General Rights.

And here once again we seem up against the charge of triviality. For, it might be objected, with sufficient ingenuity any Special Right that might be claimed could be claimed as a consequence of a General Right. At this stage all I need say in reply is, first, that, whatever people might say, not every Special Right that might be claimed is in fact a consequence of a General Right; and, secondly, that not every Special Right that might be claimed would be claimed as a consequence of a General Right. Indeed, it seems that the old political doctrine of prescription and "prejudice" against which the theory of Equal

<sup>3</sup> H. L. A. Hart: "Are there any Natural Rights?" *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. LXIV, No. 2, April, 1955, pp. 183-8.

Rights was in large measure directed, held as one of its main tenets the self-dependence of Special Rights.<sup>4</sup>

## II

I now wish to turn to another and rather more complicated problem in the understanding of the notion of Equality or Equal Rights. This, in contradistinction to the points I have so far discussed, is not concerned with any general characteristic of Equality but arises solely in a special class of cases: namely, competitive situations in which all competitors have equal rights. In such situations, as in all competitive situations, it is clearly necessary that there should be some mechanism—either of a natural or of an artificial kind—to control competition and effect distribution. The question then arises, What conditions if any must this mechanism satisfy if the demands of Equality are to be safeguarded? Or to put it another way, Under what circumstances would it be said that the equal rights of the competitors had been infringed by the mere workings of the mechanism of competition?

An example will bring out my meaning. In a political democracy recognition is afforded to the equal rights of all to control legislation. But control of legislation is under nearly all circumstances bound to be a competitive affair; the limiting case being that where all interests and aims within a society are harmonious—harmonious, not identical—and are recognized by all to be harmonious. Accordingly some machinery is required to regulate this competition. The problem then arises, How can we be sure that the mechanism required to regulate the competition for the control of legislation does not in doing so infringe the rights of all to control legislation?

There are two points here that require preliminary investigation. First, it might be held by some that we

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<sup>4</sup> *e.g.*, Edmund Burke, "Speech on a Motion for a Committee to Inquire into the State of the Representation of the Commons in Parliament," 7th May, 1782. *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke* (London n.d.), Vol. 7.

cannot at the same time claim that all people possess equal rights in a certain field and also allow this to be a proper field for competition. Of course, there may in fact be competition in this field; but we cannot condone it, and so *a fortiori* cannot approve of any particular method of organizing it. For competition and rights are in their very essence incompatible: if people have rights in a certain direction, any competition in that direction is infringement or violation of those rights.

But this is not true. For there are certain perfectly recognizable cases in which rights hold and competition is permissible. For instance, suppose someone is walking along a street and lets a coin drop out of his pocket, and not realizing what he has done walks on and leaves no trace of his ownership. Now everyone who walks along this same street after him has an equal right to pick up that coin<sup>5</sup>—although in this case the situation is rigorously competitive in that only one person can actually pick up the coin. But the fact of competition does not interfere with the rights. The fact that only one person will pick up the coin does not prevent the others from having a right to do so: and when the fortunate person picks it up, it is the coin not a set of rights that he makes off with. By his actions the rights of others may be said to lapse—but only of course to the extent that his also does: what certainly could not be said is that by his actions these other rights are violated or infringed. The view that they are is intimately connected with the familiar view that every right has as its correlative a duty: so that in our example, the right, say, of A to pick up the coin entails a duty on the part of anyone other than A not to interfere with his picking it up—and so *inter alia* the duty of everyone other than A not to pick up the coin for himself. But then it just is not the case that every right implies a duty. Within the law, jurists have carefully worked out the distinction between those that do and those that don't, between rights proper or claims, and liberties or

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<sup>5</sup> By English Law this could be stealing by finding; for the purpose of illustration I am assuming a different legal system under which the finder would be entitled to keep the coin in the circumstances described.

privileges. A, for instance, has the right or claim that another man should stay off his land and the liberty or privilege to go on it himself: correlative to the first kind of right is a duty on the part of others (*i.e.*, the duty not to go on to the land), whereas in the second case there is no correlative duty.<sup>6</sup> And it seems to me that there is in morals a parallel to the lawyer's distinction.

The parallel is, however, not perfect. For to the jurist when A has the right to do a certain action in the limited sense of having a privilege to do it, not only has no-one else any specific duty correlative to this right but nothing that anyone else might do would count as an infringement of the right. Of course, in his efforts to stop A from doing what he has the right to do, B might resort to actions that are infringements of other rights of A—in the sense of claims or rights proper of A—or to actions that are offences or crimes in themselves; but what he could not do—for no-one can—is to touch or harm the right itself. In the example of the coin, B might wrest it from A by threatening him or wounding him or hitting him, but however much harm came to A, throughout the whole “bestial scramble” (to use Professor Broad's delightful phrase) the right of A would remain inviolate.

But here I think the moralist would part company with the jurist. For in the eyes of the moralist—and here I mean just the ordinary man in his moralizing moments—though the mere fact of competition does not infringe the rights of other competitors, there are certain ways of conducting the competition that would seem definitely to do so. The violence that B uses against A in our example would seem to be such a case: if B had just used his sharper eyesight to see the coin first and his longer legs to get there first, the right of A to pick up the coin would have remained intact, though of course his fate—to do without it—would have been the same. In such a case B has no duty correlative to A's right—that is to say, he has no duty to let A do

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<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, W. N. Hohfeld: *Fundamental Legal Conceptions* (New Haven, 1923), pp. 36–50. For the connexion between liberties or privileges and competition I am indebted to H. L. A. Hart, *op. cit.*

what he has a right to do—but his recognition of A's right does commit him to exercising some restraint upon his own conduct. Our problem is in part to try and find a way of characterizing this restraint. In part, I say advisedly. Because A's right might be infringed not just by the behaviour of one person or another but by the workings of certain institutions or the pressure of certain impersonal forces. For this reason I have posed my question more generally and asked what demands we are to make of the mechanism of competition—and by this expression I mean all the arrangements that determine whether any given person succeeds in doing that which he has the right to do.

Now, for my second preliminary point. The problem that I am considering arises in situations where everyone has certain rights, it is impossible for everyone to do what he has a right to do, and so we ask, What sort of mechanism can we devise that will determine unambiguously what people may do and at the same time safeguard the rights of all? There is an immediate resemblance between this problem and the problem of social utility as, for instance, it appears in welfare economics. This latter problem arises out of situations where everyone has certain desires, it is impossible for everyone to have what he desires to have, and so we ask, What sort of mechanism can we devise that will determine unambiguously what people may have and at the same time maximize satisfaction of the desires of all?

Yet despite their immediate resemblance, the two problems are, I am convinced, fundamentally different in character. A decision about the maximization of satisfaction of desires is unlike a decision about the safeguarding of rights, and consequently there is no necessary connexion between the conditions that the mechanism of decision must satisfy in the first case and those that we demand be satisfied in the second case.

Let us call the two kinds of decision Welfare decisions and Rights decisions. Now Welfare decisions are the results of aggregating the desires of individuals. There are of course different methods or systems for carrying out this aggregation—each one claiming to fulfil better than any

other certain natural or commonsense demands of rationality—but they all exhibit a common pattern. First, numerical values are assigned in accordance with some principle to the various desires of the individuals: on a primitive system only an individual's first preference is considered, on a more sophisticated system his order of preferences is taken into account. These numbers are then operated upon in accordance with whatever method of aggregation is employed, and the resultant is the number of the "social" preference.

Now it is obvious that except in the limiting case of complete social harmony—a case which lies outside the terms of my discussion—the number arrived at by the process of aggregation will be different from at least one of the numbers assigned to the various first preferences of the individuals. It follows from this that if we interpret the procedure of aggregation as a method of recommending a certain social policy, given certain desires, then we must allow that it always recommends, *inter alia*, that the desires of certain individuals be frustrated, or (in the cases where orders of preference are considered) that the desires of certain individuals be partially frustrated. Now this consequence is fatal for the view that Rights decisions are strictly parallel to Welfare decisions: the view, that is, that Rights decisions are the results of aggregating the rights of individuals. For if they were, it would follow that they always recommended, *inter alia*, that the rights of certain individuals be infringed or that the rights of certain individuals be partially infringed. But neither interpretation will do. For any recommendation of a policy on the grounds that it infringes merely the rights of certain individuals would be unacceptable: for to say that a policy infringes the rights of certain individuals is to condemn it. While Welfare decisions specify ways of minimising frustration of desires, Rights decisions specify ways of eliminating infringement of rights. And again, any recommendation of a policy on the grounds that it merely partially infringes the rights of certain individuals is not just unacceptable, it is unintelligible: for to say that a policy partially infringes the rights

of certain individuals is to talk nonsense. There are degrees of frustration, degrees of satisfaction of a desire: a right is either safeguarded or infringed.

We may see testimony, if of an obscure character, to the true nature of the political problem in Rousseau's famous formulation of it—"trouver une forme d'association qui défende et protège de toute la force commune la personne et les biens de chaque associé, et par laquelle chacun, s'unissant à tous, n'obéisse pourtant qu'à lui-même, et reste aussi libre qu'auparavant."<sup>7</sup> Rousseau's mistake is to talk of freedom in this connexion. For man's freedom is not unrestricted by his subjection to the laws of the state. Rousseau should, instead, have spoken of rights; for in the state man's rights are, or should be, unfringed.

After these preparatory remarks I now want to return to my original question—In situations where people have equal rights to do certain actions, and not all people can do these actions, what demands should we make of the mechanism that determines what people may do in order that the rights of all be safeguarded?—and in particular to the problem that is the most famous instance of this, that of Democracy—Everyone has an equal right to control legislation, not everyone can control legislation, what mechanism can be evolved that will determine who controls legislation without any infringement of the rights of all to control legislation?

Discussions of the subject abound in the literature of political thought—particularly since that growth of interest in American political and social experience which dates from the middle of the last century. However, such discussions have often been marred or distorted by neglect of the two points that I have endeavoured to bring out. In the first place, a number of thinkers have been under the impression that the rights of all to control legislation are safeguarded if and only if all succeed in controlling legislation: that mere failure to control it entails that the right has been infringed. We find this assumption in,

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<sup>7</sup> J.-J. Rousseau: *Du Contrat Social*, I, ii.



for instance, Burke, who argues from what would be the absurd consequences of recognizing political rights to the non-existence of such rights.<sup>8</sup> We find the view in the Idealist thinkers, who assert the existence of political rights, and attempt to deny the absurdity of the consequences by arguing that people can control legislation without appearing to do so.<sup>9</sup> And again we find this view in John Stuart Mill who regards the problem of politics (a practical, not a metaphysical problem) as that of finding a way whereby everyone can control legislation. His attitude towards rights emerges clearly in *Representative Government* where he regards anyone whose vote has not gone directly to the election of a candidate as disfranchised.<sup>10</sup> Now it may be that certain ways of "eliminating" people's votes do infringe their political rights, do disfranchise them—but it is surely wrong to think that all ways do. Furthermore, if we regard people's political rights as rights to control legislation and not just to elect representatives (as surely we must), then on Mill's view we should equally have to say that anyone whose representative was outvoted on a particular issue, was deprived of his rights, which is surely ludicrous. Proportional Representation may be the only way of securing people's political rights: but if it is so, this does not strictly follow from a mere consideration of the nature of these rights.

Secondly, there has of recent years been an effort by certain thinkers to assimilate the problem of democratic legislation to a "welfare" problem. So for instance Kenneth J. Arrow writes:

"In a capitalist democracy, there are essentially two methods by which social choices can be made: voting, typically used to make 'political' decisions, and the market mechanism, typically used to make

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<sup>8</sup> Edmund Burke: "An appeal from the New to the Old Whigs, etc." *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke* (London n.d.), Vol. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Bernard Bosanquet: *The Philosophical Theory of the State* (2nd ed., London, 1910), *passim*.

<sup>10</sup> John Stuart Mill: *Representative Government* (London, 1861), Chapter VII.

‘economic’ decisions . . . The methods of voting and the market . . . are methods of amalgamating the tastes of many individuals in the making of social choices.”<sup>11</sup>

Now, it is certainly true that we could regard democracy in this light, as a method of maximizing satisfaction of certain desires, *i.e.*, those desires which could be expressed in legislation. And we might then come to support it as a “rational” or “good” form of government, or in Mill’s words “the ideally best polity”. But such a view and such advocacy is, I think, nowadays rather uncommon. Most supporters of Democracy would hold that men had political rights (*i.e.*, rights in political matters) and argue for Democracy on the grounds that it alone took a true view of these rights, *i.e.*, an egalitarian view. For such people the problem of Democracy would not be “to construct a procedure for passing from a set of known individual tastes to a pattern of social decision-making, the procedure in question being required to satisfy certain natural conditions”<sup>12</sup>, but, as I have already said, to construct a mechanism for passing from a set of individual rights to a pattern of social action which does not infringe those rights.

What conditions, then, must such a mechanism satisfy? My answer, briefly, is that it is impossible to specify these conditions *a priori*. This I shall endeavour to substantiate in two ways: first by consideration of a likely suggestion of what these conditions might be, and secondly on general grounds.

It might be thought that though the task of devising a mechanism for the safeguarding of rights is not the same as that of devising a mechanism for the maximization of satisfaction—in that the specifications on which one would be working would not be the same in the one case as in the other—still the outcome might be the same in that the

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<sup>11</sup> Kenneth J. Arrow: *Social Choice and Individual Values* (New York, 1951), pp. 1–2. For a similar approach, see D. Black: “On the Rationale of Group Decision-Making,” *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 56, February, 1948, pp. 23–34, and “Un approccio alla teoria delle decisioni di comitato,” *Giornale degli economisti e annali di economia*, Vol. 7, N.S., 1948, pp. 262–84.

<sup>12</sup> Kenneth J. Arrow, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

same mechanism would do for both purposes. And this idea has a great deal of plausibility to it. For we can regard the exercise of a right as always a case of the satisfaction of a desire: so, if, for instance, I exercise my right to pick up a coin in the street, I might be regarded as also satisfying my desire to pick it up. Now it might therefore be thought that the obvious practical interpretation of safeguarding everyone's rights in a certain direction is to maximize the satisfaction of everyone's desires in that direction. No longer would it be thought that the two policies are identical, but it might be held that the one is the obvious way of achieving the other. And indeed the plausibility of this view is well attested to by the all but universal preference of Democracy for Representative Government: for representative government is on the whole a sound method of maximizing satisfaction of wants.<sup>13</sup> Another way of putting this view would be to say that the condition we demand of any mechanism for safeguarding individual rights is that "rationality" which economists demand of any mechanism for aggregating individuals' desires.

But I think we can see that this will not work by considering an extreme case. Let us suppose that there is a community of a hundred voters who every year must choose from out of a hundred alternative courses of political action the policy for the ensuing year. Let the voters be  $V_1 \dots V_{100}$  and the courses of action  $C_1 \dots C_{100}$ . Now every year the poll shows that the political desires within the community are quite static. Regularly  $V_1 \dots V_{99}$  distribute their first preferences between  $C_1 \dots C_{99}$  so that every course of action is the first preference of one and only one voter: and regularly  $V_{100}$  expresses his first preference

<sup>13</sup> It does, of course, give rise to some incongruities, *e.g.*, the "paradox of voting" quoted by Arrow, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3: "Suppose there is a community of three voters, and this community must choose among three alternative modes of social action . . . Let A, B and C be the three alternatives, and 1, 2 and 3 the three individuals. Suppose individual 1 prefers A to B and B to C (and therefore, A to C), individual 2 prefers B to C and C to A (and therefore B to A), and individual 3 prefers C to A and A to B (and therefore C to B). Then a majority prefer A to B, and a majority prefer B to C. We may therefore say that the community prefers A to B and B to C. If the community is to be regarded as behaving rationally, we are forced to say that A is preferred to C. But in fact a majority of the community prefer C to A."

for  $C_{99}$ . Every voter is indifferent between every course of action other than that preferred. (If we are to take seriously interpersonal comparisons, we must make the further supposition that all voters are equally sensitive.) Now, if we are concerned with the maximization of satisfaction of desires, we should without doubt expect  $C_{99}$  to be adopted every year as the policy for the coming year. That would be the "rational" social choice. For the adoption of any other course would clearly produce greater frustration, *i.e.*, it would frustrate ninety-nine voters instead of a mere ninety-eight. However, I think that there is no doubt that if we believe that every voter has a right to select the policy of the community, then we should not be prepared to abide by this decision. We should feel that it infringed the rights of the unsuccessful voters, and that in a situation where the desires of all were so diverse and so evenly distributed between the alternatives, some such mechanism as choice of policy by lot would be fairer.

Now what is this characteristic of "fairness"<sup>14</sup> that we expect of our mechanism? Here we have, I suggest, a clear instance of it in practice, and yet no amount of reflection upon this particular case seems to throw any light upon it as a characteristic. We decide that it is present in one arrangement and absent from another by means of a process that seems to escape all our attempts to formulate it. Experience, and knowledge of the world, and knowledge of human nature, all seem to help us, but we cannot say how.

This inductive argument is confirmed by general considerations. For what our mechanism is required to do is to ensure that there is no infringement of anyone's political rights: but political rights are, as we have seen, privileges or liberties, not claims or rights proper: and in consequence non-infringement of them is not a matter of certain specific duties being observed: it is a matter of the competitive

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<sup>14</sup> I think that it will be apparent that the notion of "fairness" that I am discussing has nothing to do with that recently discussed by Professor R. B. Braithwaite in his *Theory of Games as a tool for the Moral Philosopher* (Cambridge, 1955). For the problems that he is concerned with are a sub-class of welfare problems, *i.e.*, those where collaboration between the competitors is feasible. It is significant that the notion of "rights" finds no place in his vocabulary.

system within which they are exercised not being subject to undue interference or coercion. But what amounts to undue interference or coercion seems to be a matter we cannot decide in advance of political experience.

It might indeed justly be thought that the progress of political thought lies in the ever-widening consciousness of new obstacles to the enjoyment of our rights where these compete. At any given moment we may create a mechanism to determine who shall be allowed to do what, which can guard against known threats to liberty: but there is no way of anticipating future discoveries.

### III

I have left myself almost no space to say anything about the justification of the principle of Equality or its relation to the other principles of the Liberal tradition. These are of course connected matters, for to ask whether one principle is related to another is to ask whether one entails or is entailed by the other, and to find that one principle is entailed by another is often enough to find its justification, or at any rate *a* justification for it.

My own opinion is that the principle of Equality can be regarded as the fundamental principle of Liberalism. We have seen already how the principle of Democracy can be interpreted as a special instance of it. And the principle of Liberty is made superfluous by it. For the substance of every claim that men should be free in a certain matter could be rendered by claiming that in this matter they have equal rights. And, contrary to an established view, this can be extended outside the sphere of social justice where every assertion of a right is, as it were, a sketch or a demand for a law, to those areas of private life, such as sexual behaviour, where a correct view of these rights demands not the introduction of a law, nor even its reform, but its abolition.

## EQUALITY.

*By* ISAIAH BERLIN.

### II.

“ EVERY man to count for one and no one to count for more than one.” This formula, much used by utilitarian philosophers, seems to me to form the heart of the doctrine of equality or of equal rights, and has coloured much liberal and democratic thought. Like many familiar phrases of political philosophy it is vague, ambiguous, and has changed in connotation from one thinker and society to another. Nevertheless, it appears, more than any other formula, to constitute the irreducible minimum of the ideal of equality. Moreover it is not self-evident in the sense in which many simple empirical propositions seem so; it has not been universally believed; and it is not uniquely connected with any one philosophical system. The notion of each man counting for one and only one, does not depend on belief in rights, either natural or positive, either divinely bestowed or adopted by convention. The statement that each man is to count for one may, of course, be conceived as flowing from the recognition of natural rights possessed by all men as such—rights “inherent” in being a man at all—whether innate, or conferred at birth by a divine act—and so an “inalienable” element in the “ultimate structure” of reality. But equally it can be held without any metaphysical views of this kind. Again, it may be regarded as a rule, whether universal or confined to certain defined classes of persons, deriving its validity from a system of rights based on specific legal enactments, or custom, or some other identifiable source of human authority. But again, it need not depend on this. One can perfectly well conceive of a

society organised on Benthamite or Hobbesian lines, in which rights did not exist, or played a small part, and in which the principle of "every man to count for one" was rigorously applied for utilitarian reasons, or because such was the will of the despot, or of the majority, or of the legislator or whoever held sovereignty in a given society. It is doubtless true that the most ardent champions of equality were, in fact, believers in human rights in some sense. Some were theists who believed that all men had immortal souls every one of which possessed infinite value and had claims which consequently must not be set aside in favour of objectives of lower value; some of these in addition believed in absolute standards of justice, divinely sanctioned, from which the doctrine of equality was directly deducible. Others were liberals and democrats, some of them deists or atheists or others ignorant of, or opposed to, the Judaeo-Christian tradition, who believed in the principle of equality *a priori*, as being revealed by natural light or whatever other source or method of knowledge was regarded as being the most certain. This was the foundation of the faith of the framers of the declarations of human rights in the American and the French revolutions; and has indeed been perhaps the strongest single element in egalitarian doctrines from the days of the Gracchi to the socialists and anarchists of modern times. But the connection between "counting for one" and the doctrines of Christian theology or the French *philosophes*, or this or that view of reason or of nature is rather more historical and psychological than logical. At any rate it is not one of mutual entailment. For this reason it may be of some use to enquire what this principle will look like if it is detached from its normal historical and psychological setting—whether it possesses any inherent plausibility of its own, and whence it derives its universal and perennial appeal.

I should like to suggest that there is a principle of which the egalitarian formula is a specific application: namely, that similar cases call for, *i.e.*, should be accorded, similar treatment. Then, given that there is a class of human beings, it will follow that all members of this class, namely, men, should in every respect be treated in a uniform and identical

manner, unless there is sufficient reason not to do so<sup>1</sup>. But since more than a finite degree of social and personal uniformity is in practice difficult or impossible to achieve, the principle ordains that the rule should be applied in, at any rate, important respects—those respects in which the type of treatment accorded to each other by human beings makes a great deal of difference to them, affects them deeply, forwards or frustrates their desires or interests in a significant degree. The assumption here seems to be that unless there is some sufficient reason not to do so, it is “natural” or “rational” to treat every member of a given class (in this case, men) as you treat any one member of it. To state the principle in this way leaves open crucial issues: thus it may be justly objected that unless some specific sense is given to “sufficient reason”, the principle can be reduced to a trivial tautology (it is reasonable to act in manner X save in circumstances Y, in which it is not rational, and *any* circumstances may be Y); furthermore that since all entities are members of more than one class—indeed of a theoretically limitless number of classes—*any* kind of behaviour can be safely subsumed under the general rule enjoining equal treatment—since unequal treatment of various members of class A can always be represented as equal treatment of them viewed as members of some other class B, which in extreme circumstances can be so constructed as to contain no more than one actual member; which can reduce this rule to vacuity. There obviously can exist no formal method of avoiding such reductions to absurdity; they can be rebutted only by making clear what reasons are sufficient and why; and which attributes are alone relevant and why; and this will depend on the outlooks and scales of value of different persons, and the purposes of a given association or enterprise, in terms of which alone general principles can retain any degree of significance—whether in theory or practice.

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<sup>1</sup> In this formulation the principle will cover both of the forms of equal rights to property distinguished by Mr. Wollheim, i.e., both absolute equality of property, and equality conditional upon specific qualifications, say, sufficient means to enable a man to buy it, or legal rights of inheritance, and the like. The notion of “sufficient reason” can be made to cover almost any type of situation, and is suspect for that very reason.



In concrete cases we distinguish good reasons from bad, central characteristics from irrelevant ones. Some inequalities (say, those based on birth) are condemned as arbitrary and irrational, others (say, those based on efficiency) are not, which seems to indicate that values other than equality for its own sake affect the ideals even of passionate egalitarians. A part of what we mean by rationality is the art of applying, and combining, reconciling, choosing among general principles in a manner for which complete theoretical explanation (or justification) can never, in principle, be given.

To return to the principle in the form in which it is normally applied: if I have a voice in settling the destinies of my society I think it unfair that all other members of it should not also have a similar voice; if I own property, it is unfair that others (situated in relevant respects as I am) should not do so too, and if I am allowed to leave it to my children in my will it is unfair that others should not have a similar opportunity; if I am permitted to read or write or express my opinion freely it is wrong, unjust, unfair, etc., that others should not be permitted to do so too. If someone is not to be allowed to do these things, or have these advantages, then sufficient reasons must be given; but no reason need be given for not withholding them i.e., for an equal distribution of benefits—for that is “natural”—self-evidently right and just, and needs no justification, since it is in some sense conceived as being self-justified. A society in which every member holds an equal quantity of property needs no special justification; only a society in which property is unequal needs it. So too with the distribution of other things—power or knowledge, or whatever else can be possessed in different quantities or degrees. I can justify the fact that the commander of an army is to be given more power than his men by the common purposes of the army, or of the society which it is defending—victory, or self-protection—which can best be achieved by this means; I can justify the allocation of more than an equal share of goods to the sick or the old (to secure equality of satisfactions), or to the specially meritorious (to secure a deliberately intended inequality); but for all this I must provide reasons.

If I believe in a hierarchical society, I may try to justify the special powers or wealth or position of persons of a certain origin, or of castes or classes or ranks, but for all this I am expected to give reasons—divine authority, a natural order, or the like. The assumption is that equality needs no reasons, only inequality does so; that uniformity, regularity, similarity, symmetry, the functional correlation of certain characteristics with corresponding rights of which Mr. Wollheim speaks, need not be specially accounted for, whereas differences, unsystematic behaviour, change in conduct, need explanation and, as a rule, justification. If I have a cake and there are ten persons among whom I wish to divide it, then if I give exactly one tenth to each, this will not, at any rate automatically, call for justification; whereas if I depart from this principle of equal division I am expected to produce a special reason. It is some sense of this, however latent, that makes equality an ideal which has never seemed intrinsically eccentric, even though extreme forms of it may not have been wholly acceptable to either political thinkers or ordinary men throughout recorded human history. There seem to me to be at least two conceptions which are involved in this love of order, each of which Mr. Wollheim has touched upon (although not by name or directly). These are the notions (*a*) of rules, and (*b*) of equality proper. I should like to say something about each of these.

(A) *Rules*. All rules, by definition, entail a measure of equality. In so far as rules are general instructions to act or refrain from acting in certain ways, in specified circumstances, enjoined upon persons of a specified kind, they enjoin uniform behaviour in identical cases. To fall under a rule is *pro tanto* to be assimilated to a single pattern. To enforce a rule is to promote equality of behaviour or treatment. This applies whether the rules take the form of moral principles and laws, or codes of positive law, or the rules of games or of conduct adopted by professional associations, religious organisations, political parties, wherever patterns of behaviour can be codified in a more or less systematic manner. The rule which declares that tall persons are permitted to cast five times as many votes as

short ones creates an obvious inequality. Nevertheless, in the framework of this inequality it ensures equality of privilege within each of the two discriminated classes—no tall man may have more votes than any other tall man, and similarly with short men. This is Mr. Wollheim's first sense of "equality", in which, although the commodities or liberties, be they power or property or status, may not be owned in equal quantities or to an equal degree by everyone, yet every member of each class has an equal right to that which has been accorded to the class as a whole. This type of equality derives simply from the conception of rules as such—namely, that they allow of no exceptions. Indeed what is meant by saying that a given rule exists is that it should be fully, *i.e.*, equally fully, obeyed by those who fall under it, and that any inequality in obedience would constitute an exception, *i.e.*, an offence against the rules. In so far as some minimum degree of prevalence of rules is a necessary condition for the existence of human societies (and this seems to be an almost universal, but still empirical, law), and in so far as morality, both personal and political, is largely conceived of in terms of rules, the kind of equality with which obedience to rules is virtually identical, is among the deepest needs and convictions of mankind. In this sense equality is co-extensive with social morality as such—that is to the degree to which social morality is conceived as a system of coherent, *i.e.*, not internally contradictory (and, according to some moralists, mutually entailing) sets of rules. A plea for equality in this sense is therefore a plea for life in accordance with rules as opposed to other standards, *e.g.*, the *ad hoc* orders of an inspired leader, or arbitrary desires. In this sense, then, to say that inequality is wrong is, in effect, to say that it is wrong to obey no rules in a given situation, or to accept a rule and break it; and a situation in which some men, for no stated reason, and in accordance with no rule, consistently obtain more than other men with the same, or sufficiently similar, relevant characteristics (however this is determined) is then described as being unfair. To provide no reasons for breaking a rule is described as irrational; to give reasons for

obeying rules—save in terms of other rules—is regarded as unnecessary—rules are their own justification. In a moral system which entirely consists of rules, and is definable in terms of them, adequate reasons for breaking rule X must take the form of rule Y, which in certain circumstances may come into collision with Rule X, and, in accordance with Rule Z, will then cancel or modify it or, at any rate, be allowed to do so. A society which accepts a morality, whether personal or social and political, analysable into sets of rules of varying orders of stringency, some independent of each other, some connected by relations of entailment or mutual exclusion, may then be open to at least three kinds of criticism.

1. I may accept the rules, and complain that too many exceptions are being made without specific rules to back the exceptions. If I merely object to the exceptions as such, I am merely complaining of the infringement of moral or social laws, as such. If the exceptions fulfil the desires of some people to the detriment of the fulfilment of the desires of others—for example where the desires are for some commodity in scarce supply, be it property, or power or status, or the fruits of civilisation, then, if there is no rule governing such distribution (or if there is a rule but exceptions to it are made arbitrarily, *i.e.*, without being deducible from, or justifiable in terms of, other accepted rules) I complain, in addition, of unfairness, *i.e.*, that similar cases are being treated dissimilarly, when the whole essence of the rules is that this should be avoided.

2. I may complain that the rules themselves are bad or iniquitous. This may take several forms: I may complain that a given rule offends against some other rule or principle which seems to me more important or morally superior. A rule consistently favouring the tall as against the short, would offend against the rule which I regard as superior, according to which physical characteristics must not be considered in, let us say, the distribution of honours; or against a rule which lays it down that all men, or all Englishmen, or all members of the Aristotelian society, must be treated as being equal in this regard. Then again someone may say

that equal treatment only for members of the Aristotelian society offends against equal treatment for all Englishmen, or that equal treatment for all Englishmen offends against the principle of equal treatment for all Europeans, or all men. In short, a rule may be condemned as offending against some wider rule to which it is then regarded as forming an irrational exception. Or it may be attacked on the ground that it conflicts with some rule not necessarily wider but merely incompatible with it; in cases of such conflict egalitarianism seems to entail that any rule which includes under it a larger number of persons or a larger number of types of persons<sup>2</sup> shall always be preferred to rules which ensure identical treatment only for smaller numbers or a smaller number of types; and a society will not be egalitarian to the degree to which in the formulation of its rules, or in its system of deciding which rules win in cases of conflict, it is influenced by principles other than those of the intrinsic desirability of identical treatment of the largest possible numbers of persons or classes of persons; for example if it is bent on the maximisation of happiness, which may well entail gross inequalities<sup>3</sup>. And of course there are many other goals or values which may deflect the course of strict egalitarianism, as, for instance, the desire to encourage the arts and sciences, or a predominant desire to increase the military or economic power of the state, or a passion for the preservation of ancient traditions, or a strong taste for change and variety and new forms of life. All these may or may not breed rules that conflict with the principle that every man is to count for one and only

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<sup>2</sup> A policy of equal treatment for the largest number of persons may easily conflict with a policy of equal treatment of the largest number of classes of persons. Thus a reformer bent on abolishing discriminatory legislation may find himself faced with a choice between incommensurables, *e.g.*, of emancipating either one large class of "inferiors", say, the poor, or several such classes, say, religious or racial minorities, which between them contain fewer members than the single large class. The first policy will give equality to more human beings; the second will abolish a greater number of class distinctions. Since either course can correctly be said to increase equality, and both cannot (for some practical reason) be adopted, the choice of a conscientious egalitarian will depend on the type of equality preferred. As it stands the question before him cannot be answered.

<sup>3</sup> With the exception, I suppose, of those societies in which the desire for equality is itself so much stronger than all other desires, that inequality automatically breeds greater misery than any other possible arrangement.

one. This principle will indeed be preserved by the mere existence of rules within each area dominated by the rules themselves; but rules cannot guarantee its extension each beyond its own field. For the rules themselves may create inequalities, and the conflict between the rules still greater ones. To say, as we often do of a rule, that it is itself unfair, is, in effect, to say that it contradicts some other rule with a wider area of equal treatment—a rule which, if obeyed, will ensure that a larger number of persons (or classes of persons) shall receive similar treatment in specified circumstances. But to say of the rule that it is bad or iniquitous need not mean this; it need mean only that it is in conflict with some other rule or principle not necessarily itself tending towards greater equality. In case this seems too abstract, let me illustrate: although Bentham's doctrine about each man to count for one was in fact embodied by him in his utilitarian teachings, it seems plain that equality is not itself entailed by utilitarian principles, and might, indeed, on occasion conflict with them. Thus it can be argued that societies organised hierarchically, certain types of mediaeval society, for example, or theocratic societies or even societies founded on slavery, may conceivably offer their members a greater degree of happiness (however this is calculated) than societies in which there is a greater degree of social or economic equality. When Montesquieu or Rousseau, for example, declare that the objection to slavery is not that it makes men unhappy—for it may not—the slaves may prefer to remain slaves—but that it is slavery, that men have no right to enslave other men, that it is unworthy of human beings to create such forms of life, they are pleading for equality for equality's sake. They are in effect saying that any society which has rules or laws enjoining or permitting slavery, even though its members may be happier than if they had been free, and even though Aristotle may be right and men exist whose faculties are realised best in slavery, is yet a society to be condemned, not for breaking the rules under which it lives, but for obeying the wrong kind of rules, pursuing the wrong kind of values. And this implies that equality, that is to say, the rule that each man is to count for one and for no more than one, whether in the

distribution of property or in the number of votes he has in the sovereign assembly, or in the opportunities for education or pleasure, or in whatever respect, is an end in itself, in possible conflict with other ends, but higher than they, and, in cases of conflict, to be preferred.

3. Finally, someone may attack a society not indeed for breaking the rules that it affects to respect; nor yet for living by rules that are bad, or in conflict with some other ends or ideals which the critic regards as of greater moral authority; but that it lives by rules at all, that it is rule ridden. And if it is pointed out to him that a certain minimum of rules is an empirical necessity for the preservation of any degree of human organisation, then he may retreat to the position that the rules in use go far beyond this minimum, and that a morality not compounded out of rules, but consisting of the pursuit of some ideal in a spontaneous and imaginative way, analogous to the creative activity of a painter or a composer, or to even less disciplined forms of self-expression, where both the use and recognition of rules is at a minimum, is to be preferred. It is salutary to be reminded that moral and political outlooks are not co-extensive with systems of moral or political rules. The Romantic attack upon the moral systems both of rationalists and empiricists at times took precisely this form of denunciation of the propositions and imperatives of the classical ethical systems, not because they were mistaken or deleterious, but because they were general. The romantic philosophers, particularly in Germany<sup>4</sup>, assailed their predecessors for imposing rules, amalgamating cases, whether individual characters or moral situations or moral actions, that were necessarily unique and incommensurable, under the umbrella of some universal formula. They attacked all those who seemed to them bent on forcing the teeming multiplicity and variety of human activity into a Procrustean bed of symmetrical sets of moral rules, which, precisely because they were rules, tended to represent differences as being relatively unimportant, and similarities

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<sup>4</sup> This, or something like it, was also advocated by M. Bergson in one of his last works—that on the Two Sources of Morality and Religion.

as being alone relevant; and especially those who, so it was maintained, by following a false analogy with the natural sciences, ignored, or misrepresented vital individual differences, in virtue of which alone things and persons possessed their unique value, and did this in order to achieve an egalitarian society, dominated by rules—a society directed against the existence of all those elements which the Romantics regarded as alone worth preserving.

All three types of attack upon a given social or political order are, to say the least, relevant to the belief in equality. Let me recapitulate them: they take the form of saying—

- (a) that rules are broken for no sufficient reason; or
- (b) that the rules are themselves bad or iniquitous or otherwise inadequate; or
- (c) that the rules are deplorable simply because they are rules.

Of these (a) represents the most direct demand for equality, for any protest against exceptions, because they are exceptions, is a genuine plea for equality; (b) springs from a demand for equality only if the rules are attacked on the ground that they are in conflict with other rules aimed at producing a greater degree of general equality; (c) is a direct attack upon the ideal of social equality as such. It is clear that this ideal is not solely the equality which all rules entail as such (even though it may derive much force from an intimate connexion with moral systems to which universality, order, rules, laws, etc., are central), since otherwise rules could not themselves be criticized as leading to inequality, as we have seen that they can be. What then is this ideal?

## II.

### (B.) *Equality proper.*

In its simplest form the ideal of complete social equality embodies the wish that everything and everybody should be as similar as possible to everything and everybody else. It may serve to make this concept clearer if we try to conceive of some of the characteristics of a world in which



no type of egalitarian would have anything to complain of. I doubt whether anyone has ever seriously desired to bring such a society into being, or even supposed such a society to be capable of being created. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the demands for human equality which have been expressed both by philosophers and by men of action who have advocated or attempted to reform society, can best be represented as modifications of this absolute and perhaps absurd ideal. In the ideal egalitarian society, inequality—and this must ultimately mean dissimilarity—would be reduced to a minimum. The greatest single cause of complaint has been disparity in the possession, or enjoyment, of characteristics or commodities which have been strongly desired by men at most times—such as property, political or social power, status, opportunities for the development of faculties or the obtaining of experiences, social and personal liberties and privileges of all kinds. And the attack has taken the form of maintaining that a society in which some men are much richer or stronger or freer than others; in which some men possess the power of acquiring what they want and of preventing others from acquiring these same things or other things which they in turn want; or in which some men are paid homage and deferred to and permitted to live as they wish in ways and degrees which set them off from other men; all these are societies which offend either against the principle of natural rights, which according to those who hold this principle, belong to all men as such; or against some rational principles whereby these differences may indeed be justified, but only by the provision of sufficient reasons for instituting or maintaining them. Disputes occur about what these rights are; or what reasons are sufficient or good; and whether such characteristics as differences of birth or of colour or of religion or of wealth are true sources of unequal rights, or furnish good reasons for instituting political or social or other similar inequalities. There is, of course, a significant difference between these two ways of approach. Those who believe in natural rights differ mainly in establishing what these rights are, how their existence can be verified, whether all of them belong to all men, or only

some to all, or only some to some; and whether equality is desirable in fields other than those covered by the claims created by the existence of natural rights. The other school—those who appeal to reason (though historically their views have overlapped with and become inextricably mingled with those of the believers in natural rights) if they are to be consistent, must believe that equality should stretch over the entire field of human relations, and be modified only when there is sufficient reason to do so. Then disagreement may arise as to what constitutes a sufficient reason, and how great a modification a given reason justifies, and so forth. The first school, if it is consistent, will not object to inequalities, providing these do not infringe natural rights. But the second must protest against any inequality, unless a sufficient reason for it is produced. It is the latter, therefore, who go further, and are nearer to the extreme ideal which I should now like briefly to mention. Apart from the crucial question of what are and what are not sufficient reasons in such cases, it seems plain that inequalities of wealth or power are merely some among the possible inequalities which can excite opposition; they tend to be so prominent because they matter—affect human lives—more deeply, as things are, than other forms of inequality. But this is not always necessarily so. Even the most convinced social egalitarian does not normally object to the authority wielded by, let us say, the conductor of an orchestra. Yet there is no obvious reason why he should not. And there have been occasions—few and far between—when this has actually happened. Those who maintain that equality is the paramount good, may not wish to be fobbed off with the explanation that the purpose of orchestral playing will not be served if every player is allowed equal authority with the conductor in deciding what is to be done. Inequality in the organization of an orchestra there patently is; the reason for it is the purpose of orchestral playing—the production of certain sounds in certain ways which cannot, in fact, be achieved without a measure of discipline which itself entails some degree of inequality in the distribution of authority. But a fanatical egalitarian could maintain that the inequality of

the players in relation to the conductor is a greater evil than a poor performance of a symphonic work, and that it is better that no symphonic music be played at all if a conductorless orchestra is not feasible, than that such an institution should be allowed to offend against the principle of equality. To be more serious, the unequal distribution of natural gifts is a well-known obstacle to economic equality: in societies where there is a high degree of equality of economic opportunity, the strong and able and ambitious and cunning are likely to acquire more wealth or more power than those who lack these qualities. The fanatical egalitarian will look on this with horror; and because differences of natural talent will always tend towards the creation of inequalities, if only of prestige or influence, he will consequently wish—if equality is the paramount goal—to root out the evil at the source. He will tend to wish so to condition human beings that the highest degree of equality of natural properties is achieved, the greatest degree of mental and physical, that is to say, total uniformity—which alone will effectively preserve society, as far as possible, from the growth of inequalities of whatever kind. Only in a society where the greatest degree of similarity between the members occurs—where physical characteristics, mental endowment, emotional disposition, and conduct, are as uniform as possible—where people differ as little as possible from each other in any respect whatever, will true equality be attainable. Only in such a society will it be possible to reduce to a minimum those differences of treatment, or of power, or of position, or of natural or acquired characteristics, that are liable to lead people to complain that they have not what others have, and to ask for reasons why this should be so. It may be that the creation of so uniform a society, whether or not it is intrinsically desirable, may not, in fact, be feasible. It may also be that even the attempt to approach it as closely as is humanly possible, requires a degree of radical reorganization which cannot be carried out without a highly centralized and despotic authority—itsself the cause of the maximum of inequality. Some convinced egalitarians have, as everyone knows, in practice accepted this as unavoidable,

and have defended the institution of violent inequalities and the total suppression of many normal human claims as a necessary prerequisite for the creation of an ultimate equality. The moral and practical value of this is not relevant to the issue before us. What seems worth emphasising is that so long as there are differences between men, some degree of inequality may occur; and that there is no kind of inequality against which, in principle, a pure egalitarian may not be moved to protest, simply on the ground that he sees no reason for tolerating it, no argument which seems to him more powerful than the argument for equality itself—equality which he regards not merely as an end in itself, but as *the* end, the principal goal of human life. I do not suppose that extreme equality of this type—the maximum similarity of a body of all but indiscernible human beings—has ever been consciously put forward as an ideal by any serious thinker. But if we ask what kinds of equality have in fact, been demanded, we shall see, I think, that they are specific modifications of this absolute ideal, and that it therefore possesses the central importance of an ideal limit or idealized model at the heart of all egalitarian thought.

To examine some of these modifications. There are those who believe that natural human characteristics either cannot or should not be altered and that all that is necessary is equality of political and juridical rights. Provided that there exists equality before the law, such normal democratic principles as that of one man one vote, some form of government arrived at by consent (actual or understood) between the members of the society, or at any rate the majority of them, and, finally, a certain minimum of liberties—commonly called civil liberties—deemed necessary in order to enable men freely to exercise the legal and political rights entailed by this degree of equality, then, according to this view, no interference in other regions of activity (say, the economic) should be permitted. This is a common liberal doctrine of the last century. If it is complained that in a society where a large degree of political and legal equality is ensured, the strong and the clever and the ambitious may succeed in enriching themselves, or

acquiring political power, “at the expense of”—that is to say, in such a way as to keep these goods from—other members of the society, and that this leads to patent inequalities, liberals of this school reply that this is the price for ensuring political and legal equality, and that the only method of preventing economic or social inequalities is by reducing the degree of political liberty or legal equality between men. This amounts to an admission that we must choose one of several ways of treating men as counting for only one; that they can be “counted for one” only in some respects, but not in others. For we are told, with considerable empirical evidence, that to count men for one and only one in every respect whatever, is impracticable, that the full degree of, let us say, legal and political equality often results in economic and other forms of inequality, given the different endowments of men, and that only in an absolutely uniform, robot-like society, which no one wants, can this be effectively prevented. Those who believe this commonly maintain that the only inequality which should be avoided is an inequality based on characteristics which the individual cannot alter—unequal treatment based, for instance, on birth, or colour, which human beings cannot alter at will. Given that all human beings start off with equal rights to acquire and hold property, to associate with each other in whatever ways they wish, to say whatever they will, and all the other traditional objectives of liberalism, and with no special rights or privileges attached to birth, colour and other physically unalterable characteristics, then even though some human beings, by skill or luck or natural endowment, do manage to acquire property or power or ascendancy which enables them to control the lives of others, or to acquire objects which the others are not in a position to acquire, then, since there is nothing in the constitution of the society that actually forbids such acquisitiveness, the principle of equality has not been infringed. This is a pure form of *laissez faire* society which its proponents freely admit may lead to inequalities, but defend upon the ground that it gives an equal opportunity to all, a career genuinely open to all the talents—whereas any attempt to secure a greater degree of ultimate equality

can only be obtained by interfering with this initial equalisation of opportunity for all. In effect, this is, of course, tantamount to a plea for liberty at the expense of total equality; for it is only pure anarchists who believe that the maximum degree of liberty is wholly compatible with the maximum degree of equality in all important respects, and are called mistaken or utopian to the degree to which this proposition has in fact been falsified by experience. The distinction between general rights and special rights of which Professor H. L. A. Hart has spoken<sup>5</sup> and to which Mr. Wollheim refers, seems to be relevant to this kind of belief. One could easily conceive of a society in which all special rights (rights based on contract or on paternity, for example) will be instances of general rights—particular cases of them—because in such a society, at least in theory, any member can enter into a contract, any member can be a father, any member can enrich himself. There are no rights which belong to individuals in virtue of some characteristics—birth or blood or colour—which other members cannot in principle possess. In this schema certain types of traditional inequality have certainly been ruled out. But to maintain that this is the kind of society that true egalitarians desire would be disingenuous; for if one asks why some types of equality are protected in this case, initial equality whereby all men start off theoretically equal, while other types of equality are not protected, e.g., economic or social equality—equality in respect of whatever men can acquire by their own efforts, the answer is that the criterion of equality has plainly been influenced by something other than the mere desire for equality as such, namely, desire for liberty or the full development of human resources, or the belief that men deserve to be as rich or as powerful or as famous as they can make themselves—beliefs which are not connected with the desire for equality at all.

It is at this point that it becomes clear that in considering what kind of society is desirable, or what are “sufficient reasons” for either demanding equality or, on the contrary,

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<sup>5</sup> *Philosophical Review*, 1955.

modifying it or infringing it in specific cases, ideals other than equality conspicuously play a vital role.

This is clearly noticeable even in the writings of the most impassioned champions of the widest possible equality. Almost every argument favourable to equality, and in particular the assumption that everything that is scarce should be distributed as equally as possible unless there is strong reason against it, is to be found in the writings of Condorcet. The doctrine of equality in the Declaration of the rights of Man and Citizen which heralded the French Revolution owes at least as much to him as it does to Rousseau or other thinkers. Yet even Condorcet contemplates the necessity for the government of human beings by men of enlightenment, above all by experts, men versed in the new, not yet created sciences of the behaviour of men—sociology, anthropology and psychology—who alone can create an organisation in which the greatest number of the desires of rational men will not be frustrated, as they have been hitherto, by prejudice, superstition, stupidity and vice. Yet this élite is plainly to have greater powers than those whom they are to govern disinterestedly. And the reason for this is not merely that without this true equality cannot be achieved for the majority of men, but also that certain other ends must be striven for, such as happiness, virtue, justice, progress in the arts and sciences, the satisfaction of various moral and spiritual wants, of which equality, of whatever kind, is only one. Condorcet does not himself seem to be troubled by the problem of whether the quest for equality will clash with the need to seek these other ends, for, in common with many thinkers of his day, he took it for granted all too easily that all good things were certainly compatible, and indeed interlocked, with each other. We need not go into the reasons for this peculiar belief which has dominated much western thought at all times. While the principal assumption which underlies it is the view that since political and moral questions are factual in character, they are each answered by one true proposition and one only (otherwise they are not genuine questions); and since no true propositions can be inconsistent with one another, all the propositions which describe what

should be done (no logical distinction is drawn between normative and descriptive statements by these thinkers) must be compatible with one another, and in the perfect harmony which Nature is thought to be, not merely compatible, but mutually entailing and entailed—for that defines a system, and Nature is known *a priori* to be such a—indeed *the*—harmonious system.

Whether or not this is the correct explanation of this central assumption, Condorcet did not allow the possibility of a collision between various human ends. It was left to others to emphasise the fact that in life as normally lived, the ideals of one society and culture clash with those of another, and at times come into conflict within the same society and, often enough, within the moral experience of a single individual; that such conflicts cannot always, even in principle be wholly resolved; that this can be traced to empirical causes, and does not entail either such theological doctrines as those of original sin, or the relevant beliefs of Buddhist doctrines, nor yet such pessimistic views of human character as those of Hobbes or Schopenhauer, or the ideologies of modern irrationalism. It follows that when the pursuit of equality comes into conflict with other human aims, be they what they may—such as the desire for happiness or pleasure, or for justice or virtue, or colour and variety in a society for their own sake, or for liberty of choice as an end in itself, or for the fuller development of all human faculties, it is only the most fanatical egalitarian that will demand that such conflicts invariably be decided in favour of equality alone, with relative disregard of the other “values” concerned.

### III.

Equality is one value among many: the degree to which it is compatible with other ends depends on the concrete situation, and cannot be deduced from general laws of any kind; it is neither more nor less rational than any other ultimate principle; indeed it is difficult to see what is meant by considering it either rational or non-rational.



Yet the principle that every man shall count for one and no more than one demands a little more consideration before we finally abandon it as one of the ends pursued by men, needing neither explanation nor justification, being itself that which explains other rules or ethical principles. It seems, as we have seen above, intimately bound up with the belief in general rules of conduct. This belief may rest upon religious or metaphysical or utilitarian grounds, or derive from the love of order or system as such. However that may be, it often takes the form of a demand for fairness. The notions of equality and fairness are closely bound up: if as a result of breaking a rule a man derives benefits which he can obtain only so long as other men do not break but keep the rule, then no matter what other needs are being served by such a breach, the result is an offence against a principle best described as that of fairness, which is a form of desire for equality for its own sake. If I enter a train and do not pay for my ticket, and conceal this fact from the conductor and the other passengers, and give the sum withheld to a pauper whose situation is thereby improved materially, it may be argued that at any rate from a utilitarian point of view I have done what is right. The railway company will not know of its loss; nor would so small a loss noticeably decrease "its" happiness; I possess a strong will and shall not fall into bad habits; the collector has not noticed that he was not paid, and will not even so much as suffer from a sense of failure to carry out his duties; the passengers in their ignorance will not be led into temptation and demoralisation, nor will there ensue any weakening of confidence between the persons concerned in the transaction leading, in the end, to the discontinuance of the train service. The general sum of happiness—in this case *via* that of the subsidised pauper—will surely have gone up to a greater degree than if I had paid my fare to the train conductor. Nevertheless, quite apart from the morally relevant fact that, having entered into a quasi-contractual obligation to pay, I have broken my promise, my act would be condemned as unfair, for it would rightly be maintained that I can only gain advantage (or the pauper can only gain advantage) so long as the other passengers continue

to behave as they did before—since if my act were generally followed no one would pay, and the trains would stop running. So long as my advantage directly depends on the fact that others continue to obey the rule which applies to me as much as to them, so that I alone profit by the exception which I have made in my own favour, such a relaxation of the rule for my benefit would be rightly stigmatised as unfair (as well as dishonest); and although critical situations can be easily imagined in which it would be morally better that I should act in this way and break my contract, or cheat, yet it is clear that a person of normal moral sensitiveness would cheat in this manner only with considerable qualms—qualms derived not merely from the fact that he has broken a contract, but from the sense of the unfairness of what he was doing. Indeed liability to such qualms is among the very criteria of what we call moral sensitiveness. If, despite them, a man resolved to commit such an act, his moral justification would necessarily take the form of invoking, and attempting to balance the claims of, ends or values other than those of equality. He would be drawn in one direction by such considerations as the sanctity of promises; the social need to keep one's word and preserve the rule of law and the social order; the intrinsic desirability of avoiding unfairness; and so on. These factors he would have to weigh against such others as the desirability of increasing happiness (in this case of the pauper) or of avoiding the creation of misery; the claims, say, of scientific curiosity; the desire to follow some romantic impulse or vision of life, and so on. And the same kind of considerations will apply when exceptions are made to rules for "good" or "sufficient" reasons. The goodness of the reasons will depend upon the degree of value or importance attached to the purposes or motives adduced in justifying the exceptions, and these will vary as the moral convictions—the general outlooks—of different individuals or societies vary. I may consider it right to reward ability and achievement, and not, for example, honesty and kindness when they are accompanied by stupidity or ineptitude or failure. But others may well think this wrong, and the opposite morally right. I may think it right to reward the bearers

of celebrated names or the descendants of famous families as such; or to deny certain rights to negroes which I grant freely to Englishmen; and may try to defend this policy by maintaining that a society in which this is the normal practice seems to me intrinsically better, or more stable, or accord more closely with some pattern sanctioned by my religion, or my metaphysical beliefs about the structure of the universe, or the laws of history, whereas you will reject a society dedicated to such practices as iniquitous because, let us assume, you reject my religion, or my metaphysics; or because you believe me to be interpreting them falsely, or think that a society constructed on such principles is intrinsically bad, or politically precarious; or simply because you believe so passionately in equality for its own sake, that you are not deterred by the realization that the consequences which I (and perhaps you too) wish to avert may well be brought about by opposing my policies. There are many ways in which such basic disagreements can manifest themselves: one man or sect or political party may desire equality in one sphere of life, say in social or in legal relationships or legal status, and ignore the economic consequences; another may regard economic relationships as being supremely important, and be prepared to tolerate lack of social or legal equality for the sake of a given economic structure. Some may regard exceptions made in favour of specific gifts or genius as justifiable by social results. Others may regard this as unfair, but, in their turn, believe in some natural social hierarchy, like Burke, and demand full equality of treatment upon each rung of the ladder—the only “true” equality—but bitterly oppose as being contrary to the natural order any attempt to deny the existence or relevance of such rungs or hierarchies, with its accompaniment of demands for equal treatment for all<sup>6</sup>. Consequently when, as often happens, a man admits that a law is administered fairly—that is to say with due regard to the principle of equality—but complains that the law itself is bad or

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<sup>6</sup> Or, like Plato and Aristotle, insist only on the natural hierarchy and appropriate differences of treatment at each level, without apparently caring whether there is social or economic equality between inhabitants of the same level, implying clearly that within each class unbridled competition can take place. Classical thought seems to be deeply and “naturally” inegalitarian.

iniquitous, we cannot always be clear about what is meant. The critic may wish to say that the more fairly the law in question is administered, the more this frustrates a principle of wider equality in which he himself believes, as when a law based upon the principle of discrimination between coloured and white men is administered fairly, *i.e.*, with scrupulous regard to equal treatment within each category, but is thereby itself the cause of inequality between coloured and white men. But the critic may have other reasons for complaint. He may attack this law because it offends against some value other than equality—because it promotes misery, because it frustrates talent, because it makes for social instability, because it insists upon equality in what the attacker thinks unimportant matters, but ignores equality in what he regards as more important aspects of human life (the scale of importance being decided in terms of values other than equality itself); because it ignores the claims of a religion; because it fulfils the claims of religion; because it is obscure or vague or too difficult to obey; and for an infinity of other possible reasons. Very commonly, because as in the instance given above, it permits one kind of equality at the expense of another, which can be a matter of fine nuance. In Mr. Wollheim's very ingenious example, where all the members of a community have equal rights and one vote per head, and each votes for some end different from those of the others, but two members by constantly voting in the same way are enabled theoretically to overrule all the others, what we object to is not the inequality of such a system, for in legal and even in political, terms, complete equality is clearly ensured. The unfairness of which Mr. Wollheim speaks is caused by our recognition that in this situation too great a majority of the voters find themselves permanently frustrated; we desire to see some degree of equality, not only of choices but of satisfactions, and regard it as "fairer" if some system of chance, *e.g.*, lot, were adopted, which by equalizing the chances of success, would prevent, at any rate, this type of systematic dissatisfaction. We should regard a system in which each person were permitted to have "his day" as fairer still. This is a typical clash between two systems incompatible in practice, each of

which can claim to promote equality; one in the matter of the machinery of self-government, the other in the matter of the distribution of rewards. Similarly there is a conflict between those for whom equality means non-discrimination in fields of human activity deemed important (however these are identified) on the basis of unalterable characteristics, *e.g.*, origins or physical characteristics, and the like, and those who reject this as an inadequate criterion and desire equality of treatment to remain unaffected even by such "alterable" attributes as religious or political views, personal habits and the like. We seem to choose as we choose because one solution seems to us to embody a blend of satisfaction of claims and desires (or to contain or omit other factors) which we prefer as a total pattern to the blend provided by the other solution. Indeed the intervention of considerations of equity in the rigorous workings of some deductive legal system are due to our desire for justice that we are not always able to analyse too closely, into which the principle of "every man to count for one" does indeed enter, but without any clear understanding whether he is to count for one in the sphere of legislative rights, or of responsibility for action, or the receipt of benefits, or other respects, between any of which conflict all too easily occurs. And, of course, even in matters of equity the "counting for one" principle is, as often as not, modified by other ends and beliefs, in whatever combination they occur in a given culture or ethical system or within the outlook of an individual thinker.

Finally, those must not be forgotten who, as was said above, object to all rules as such and desire a society, whether this is practicable or not, governed in an unsystematic manner by the will of an inspired leader, or by the unpredictable movement of the *Volksgeist*, or the "spirit" of a race, a party, a church. This amounts to rejection of rules, and of equality as an end valuable in itself, and it is as well to recognise that this attitude is not as rare or as ineffective as liberal and socialist thinkers have sometimes assumed. In its conflicts with the traditional western principles of equality or justice or natural rights, or that minimum of civil liberties which is required to protect

human beings from degradation and exploitation, romantic irrationalism has at times won easily enough. I cite this only as a warning against the thesis that the commandment to treat all men alike in like situations needs no independent argument to support it, and that the proper criteria for what constitutes likeness cannot be doubted or conflict with each other, but are something taken for granted by reasonable men, a form of the working of natural reason which needs no justification, but is as self evident as the principle of identity or that red is different from green. This is far from being so; and the vicissitudes of liberal principles in the last, and especially this, century, seem partly due to the unwarranted assumption on the part of their defenders that those who reject these principles only do so through ignorance or intellectual indolence or mental perversity or blindness<sup>7</sup>. Belief in equality—fairness—the view that unless there is a reason for it, recognized as sufficient by some identifiable criterion, one man should not be preferred to another, is a deep rooted principle in human thought. It has been assimilated into many systems, those of the utilitarians and the theories of natural right, as well as various religious doctrines, but can be isolated from them, and has entered them less by way of logical connection, than by psychological affinity or because those who believed in these utilitarian or religious or metaphysical doctrines also in fact—perhaps from a craving for symmetry and unity that is at the root of all these views—believed in equality for its

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<sup>7</sup> As, for instance, by Locke, when in the *Second Treatise of Government*, he says “nothing more evident than that creatures of the same species and rank promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another.” This is the equality that the judicious Hooker is then praised for regarding as “evident in itself, and beyond all question.” This, of course, is the pure doctrine of Natural Law, which Locke himself questioned (in the same year) in the *Essay* where he tells us that “there cannot any one moral rule be proposed whereof a man may not justly demand a reason” and contrasts “that most unshaken rule of morality and foundation of all social virtue, ‘That one should do as he would be done unto’” which can “without any absurdity” be questioned and “a reason why?” demanded—with such genuinely senseless questions as why “it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be”. Locke’s hesitations and confusions mark the beginning of the breakdown of the notion that at least some moral or political principles are as self evident as those of logic or that “red is different from blue.” An excellent discussion of this and related topics is to be found in Professor Morton White’s article on *Original Sin, Natural Law and Politics*, in *The Partisan Review*, Spring, 1956.

own sake, and therefore considered any society which did not make sufficient room for this principle to be to that degree worth less than one that did. In its extreme form egalitarianism requires the minimisation of all differences between men, the obliteration of the maximum number of distinctions, the greatest possible degree of assimilation and uniformity to a single pattern. For all differences are capable of leading to irregularities of treatment. If this ideal is on the whole rejected in actual political doctrines, this seems mainly due to the fact that it conflicts with other ideals with which it cannot be wholly reconciled; indeed most ethical and political views are forms of less or more uneasy compromise between principles which in their extreme form cannot co-exist.

Equality is one of the oldest and deepest elements in liberal thought, and is neither more nor less "natural" or "rational" than any other constituent in them. Like all human ends it cannot itself be defended or justified, for it is itself that which justifies other acts—means taken towards its realisation. Many policies and views of life, themselves not particularly wedded to the ideal of equality, have been surreptitiously smuggled in under its cover, sometimes, as Mr. Wollheim suggests, with a certain measure of disingenuousness or hypocrisy. To isolate the pure ore of egalitarianism proper from those alloys which the admixture of other attitudes and ideals has at various times generated, is a task for the historian of ideas and lies outside the purpose of this paper.