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Extracts from

Chapter 2

Dimensions of Equality: A Framework for Theory and Action

The idea of equality

Looked at in a very general way, equality is a relationship, of some kind or other, between two or more people or groups of people, regarding some aspect of those people's lives. If equality were a simple idea, it would be obvious what this relationship is, who it is about and what aspect of their lives it concerns. Unfortunately, none of these are obvious, and that is why there are many different conceptions of equality.

For a start, the idea of equality is sometimes applied to individuals and sometimes to groups. When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, it is referring to each and every individual person. But for good reasons, equality is often discussed in terms of groups, such as women or ethnic minorities. And of course there are many different and overlapping groups, even in relatively homogeneous societies. Equality between men and women, for instance, would not necessarily involve equality between middle class and working class people, or equality between disabled and non-disabled people. So the first question about equality is 'equality between whom?' (Young, 2001).

Having decided whether we are interested in equality between individuals or between such-and-such groups, the next question is what aspect of their lives are we concerned with. Should we be interested in whether people have equally good lives overall – in their overall well-being or 'welfare'? Or should we have more tangible

aims, like equality of income and wealth? Should we focus on outcomes such as educational attainment, or on the opportunities people have for achieving these? The question here is 'equality of what?'

Even the task of defining the relationship of equality can be approached in different ways. The clearest case is where two groups or individuals have the same amount of something, like the same incomes. But this is a limited model of equality. The aim of ensuring that everyone's basic needs are satisfied is surely an egalitarian one, even though this may not involve an equal distribution of anything in particular. Again, it is widely considered egalitarian to give priority to the worst off, even if this does not go so far as to ensure that everyone is *equally* well off. And it is a recognisably egalitarian position to say that there should be a much *more* equal distribution of income, even if no one thinks that incomes should be absolutely equal. To take a different kind of example, a relationship in which a husband dominates his wife is clearly an unequal relationship. But is domination really a matter of having different *amounts* of something (Young 1990, ch. 1)? So the third question is 'what type of relationship?'

Thus, equality can be defined in terms of both individuals and a wide variety of groups, it can relate to many different dimensions of people's lives, and it can refer to many different types of relationship, all of these differences having some kind of basis in the idea of treating people as equals. It follows that far from being a single idea, equality refers to countless ideas, which may have very different implications and may even be incompatible (Rae et al 1981). Another consequence of this variety of ideas of equality is that what we think of as an egalitarian political outlook may be better expressed in terms of a set of related principles of equality rather than in terms of a single principle. It may even be that different types of egalitarian consider their views

to be based on the same fundamental principles of equality, and differ most in terms of what they think these principles entail.

Over the last century, there have been many attempts to define equality and to classify types of egalitarianism. The framework developed here is only one alternative, which we think is particularly relevant to contemporary developed societies and to the interdisciplinary and practical project of equality studies. We try to relate it to some of the major theorists of equality, but they do not all fit in very neatly. That is because the categories are meant to distinguish broad approaches to equality rather than to analyse particular theories, and broad classifications always involve a certain amount of simplification and generalisation. Theorising about equality is constantly challenged both by new academic work and even more importantly by social movements of the marginalised and oppressed. The framework below is meant for now, not forever. It is meant to be open enough to allow for different interpretations and perspectives. And it is designed to be relatively *á la carte*: to allow for someone to have liberal egalitarian views in one respect, while believing in equality of condition in another.

Basic equality

Basic equality is the cornerstone for all egalitarian thinking: the idea that at some very basic level all human beings have equal worth and importance, and therefore are equally worthy of concern and respect. It is not easy to explain quite what these ideas amount to, since many of the people who claim to hold them defend a wide range of other inequalities, including the view that some people deserve more concern and respect than others. Perhaps what is really involved in basic equality is the idea that every human being deserves some basic minimum of concern and respect, placing at

least some limits on what it is to treat someone as a human being. At any rate, that is how we will define basic equality here.[1]

The minimum standards involved in the idea of basic equality are far from trivial. They include prohibitions against inhuman and degrading treatment and at least some commitment to satisfying people's most basic needs. In a world in which rape, torture and other crimes against humanity are a daily occurrence, and in which millions of people die every year from want of the most basic necessities, the idea of basic equality remains a powerful force for action and for change. Yet taken on its own, it remains a rather minimalist idea. On its own, it does not challenge widespread inequalities in people's living conditions or even in their civil rights or educational and economic opportunities. It calls on us to prevent inhumanity, but it does not necessarily couch its message in terms of justice as distinct from charity. These stronger ideas only arise in more robust forms of egalitarianism, of the sort to which the rest of this chapter is devoted.

It is surprisingly hard to provide any *arguments* for basic equality. Most people take it for granted that inhuman treatment and destitution are wrong; these ideas seem to be built into the very idea of morality. They are in any case the common assumptions of nearly all modern political outlooks. We will not survey all these outlooks here. Instead, we will concentrate on a variety of ideas which are particularly important for our times and which can all claim to be genuinely egalitarian.

Liberal egalitarianism

Liberalism has itself been interpreted in many different ways, all of them embracing basic equality but varying quite a lot in terms of the other types of equality they believe in. We mean to include among liberal egalitarians only those liberals who move well beyond basic equality: positions which might be called 'left liberalism' and

which are often found in social democratic political movements. Liberal egalitarians typically define equality in terms of individuals rather than groups. But beyond this common assumption, liberal egalitarians hold a wide range of views.[2]

Equality of what?

Liberal egalitarians vary considerably in their replies to the question, 'Equality of what?'[3] What ultimately matters, surely, is people's well-being: how well their lives are actually going. So in thinking about equality, one's first impulse is to call for equality of well-being. Unfortunately, that principle faces some serious problems. First of all, people have very different conceptions of what their well-being consists in – very different values concerning the good life. It would be wrong to define equality in a way that reflected only one view about what matters in life. A second major problem is to build into egalitarian principles an appropriate recognition of people's responsibility for their own lives. Even a basic respect for individuals implies a respect for their ability to make important choices in their lives, which may work out for better or worse. By contrast, strict equality of well-being would seem to commit us to taking collective responsibility for every aspect of people's lives. For these reasons, all contemporary egalitarian theorists have moved at least one step away from the idea of equality of well-being, emphasising in one way or another the conditions that enable people to pursue their own aims rather than well-being itself. But they disagree on how these conditions should be specified.

Below, we identify some of the key factors that affect nearly everyone's well-being or quality of life. We treat these as five *dimensions of equality*: respect and recognition, resources, love, care and solidarity, power and working and learning. In choosing these five dimensions, we hope to provide a framework which not only helps to map the differences between liberal egalitarians and equality of condition, but also

makes it easier to analyse inequality and to develop institutions and policies for the future. We recognise that the five dimensions do not necessarily pick out every aspect of equality and inequality that may be of sociological or political interest. But we think it is sufficiently broad to cover most of the issues that contemporary egalitarians are concerned with.[4]

What kind of relationship?

A key assumption of liberal egalitarians is that there will always be major inequalities between people in their status, resources, work and power. The role of the idea of equality is to provide a fair basis for managing these inequalities, by strengthening the minimum to which everyone is entitled and by using equality of opportunity to regulate the competition for advantage.[5] Liberal egalitarians vary in both these respects. For some, the minimum to which all should be entitled barely differs from basic equality. Others have a more generous idea of the minimum, for example by using an expanded idea of what count as basic needs, or by defining poverty in relation to the normal activities of a particular society. The most ambitious liberal principle is Rawls's difference principle, which states that 'social and economic inequalities' should work 'to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged' members of society (Rawls, 1971, p. 83; 1993, p. 6; 2001, pp. 42-43).

Liberal equality of opportunity means that people should in some sense have an equal chance to compete for social advantages. This principle has two major interpretations. The first, non-discrimination or 'formal' equal opportunity, is classically expressed in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789) as the principle that all citizens 'are equally eligible for all positions, posts and public employments in accordance with their abilities' (Art. 6). A stronger form of equal opportunity insists that people should not be advantaged or hampered by their social

background, and that their prospects in life should depend entirely on their own effort and abilities. Rawls calls this principle 'fair equal opportunity' (1971, p. 73; 2001, pp. 43-44).[6]

To make these ideas more concrete, we now look at the five dimensions of equality, and at some of the ways in which liberal egalitarians have applied the ideas of a minimum standard and equal opportunity in each case.

1. Respect and recognition: universal citizenship, toleration and the private sphere

A fundamental element in the thinking of liberal egalitarians is their commitment to 'social' equality in the sense of recognising the equal public status of all citizens and of tolerating individual and group differences, so long as they respect basic rights. The principle that in the public realm we all share an equal status as citizens is a long-standing democratic belief. The idea is that regardless of our relations in other, non-public spheres – – the economy, religion, family life, private associations – we should relate to each other as equals when we are interacting politically as citizens. In this public sphere, we should abstract from all those differences of class, gender, ethnicity and so on which differentiate us from each other, and meet on the basis of our common identity as citizens. This principle of equal status is reflected in such practices as universal suffrage and the decline in the use of differentiating titles (Walzer 1983, ch. 11; Miller 1997).

The idea of toleration is another deeply entrenched part of the liberal tradition, arising from the religious conflicts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The citizens of modern, pluralist societies disagree in may ways about what matters in life and how we should live, and these disagreements are embodied in their different religious commitments, cultural traditions, sexual preferences, family values and so on. We have different 'conceptions of the good', as it is sometimes put. Each of us

may deeply disapprove of the values of others. But rather than act to suppress these values and to impose our own, we should tolerate them and 'live and let live'. This toleration is embedded in freedom of conscience and opinion and in the protection of personal relationships from outside interference. It supports the idea that the basic constitutional arrangements of our societies should as far as possible be impartial among these different beliefs.

These elements of the thinking of liberal egalitarians are related to the distinction they make in the name of personal freedom between those aspects of human life that are subject to social and legal regulation and those which are protected against any such interference, a distinction sometimes phrased in terms of the 'public' versus the 'private'.[7] The idea of religious toleration was facilitated by thinking of religious belief and practice as a private concern that was not an appropriate object of public regulation. Another less explicit and now more controversial exemption was the realm of the family, allowing for male dominance of family affairs regardless of the degree to which women were able to achieve equality in other areas. Neither of these exemptions has been absolute – religions aren't allowed to perform blood sacrifices, husbands aren't allowed to murder their wives. But the public/private distinction, coupled with the principle of toleration, has protected important spheres of life from egalitarian challenges.[8]

Although these ideas of universal citizenship, toleration and the private sphere are meant to define a sense in which every member of society has an equal status, they are generally considered by liberal egalitarians to be compatible with huge differences in social esteem. Everyone has a right to the status of citizen, but social esteem has to be earned by achievement and is therefore inevitably unequal. In this regard, as in others, it is more accurate to think of liberal egalitarianism as combining the idea of a

minimum entitlement with the idea of equal opportunity than to see it as committed to strictly equal respect (cf. Walzer, 1985, ch. 11).

2. Resources: poverty relief and the difference principle

The second dimension of liberal egalitarianism concerns the distribution of what can be called resources in a wide sense of the term. The most obvious resources are income and wealth, and these are the resources that liberal egalitarians typically concentrate on. Assuming that significant inequality in the distribution of resources is inevitable, liberal egalitarians again aim to regulate this inequality by combining a minimum floor or safety net with a principle of equal opportunity. The minimum floor is a logical extension of the basic egalitarian commitment to satisfying basic human needs and is a central idea of the modern welfare state. Quite where the floor should be and how it should be defined are continuing issues for liberal egalitarians, illustrated in debates about whether poverty is 'absolute' or 'relative' and whether it can be defined entirely in terms of income or has to include other resources. The key point is that liberal egalitarians are more concerned with eliminating poverty than promoting equality of resources.

A more demanding liberal egalitarian principle, at least in theory, is Rawls's difference principle. Like other liberal egalitarians, Rawls assumes that there will be major economic inequalities, explaining that 'the function of unequal distributive shares is to cover the costs of training and education, to attract individuals to places and associations where they are most needed from a social point of view, and so on' (1971, p. 315). But rather than aiming simply at bringing everyone above the poverty line, the worst off should be brought as high up the economic scale as possible. How far this approach takes us towards full equality of resources depends on the degree of inequality necessary to perform the function Rawls sees for it. So it is hard to judge in

practical terms quite how much the difference principle departs from an anti-poverty position.[9]

Because liberal egalitarians take inequality of resources to be inevitable, they are concerned to ensure that the competition for advantage is as fair as possible and that it is governed by equal opportunity. One of the most difficult problems for liberal egalitarians is that this is a forlorn hope. Major social and economic inequalities inevitably undermine all but the thinnest forms of equal opportunity, because privileged parents will always find ways of advantaging their children in an unequal society.

3. Love, care and solidarity: a private affair

The third dimension of equality we want to identify is conspicuous by its absence from the work of most liberal egalitarians. It is the dimension of love, care and solidarity. When we think of the conditions human beings typically need for even a minimally decent life, it is clear enough that relations of love, care and solidarity belong on the list, a point too obvious to labour. But when we turn to the work of liberal egalitarians, there is little discussion of this important good. One line of feminist criticism of liberal egalitarianism has taken this absence to be a symptom of a misplaced emphasis on justice, and has contrasted this approach with the idea of an ethic of care (see for example Behabib, 1992, ch. 6; Held, 1995; cf. Kymlicka, 2002, ch. 9). But in our view, it is an important issue of equality, and therefore of justice, to ask who has access to, and who is denied, relations of love, care and solidarity, whether these relations are reciprocal or asymmetrical, and whether societies operate in ways which help to satisfy or frustrate this human need. Quite how to characterise equality in this dimension, and how to promote it, are difficult questions. But that is different from ignoring it altogether.

The most plausible explanation of the liberal egalitarian neglect of love, care and solidarity is that liberals see these as private matters which individuals should work out for themselves. That stance sits uncomfortably with the fact that many of the institutions of liberal societies are both dependent upon and have a direct impact on these relationships. One of the central concerns of contemporary feminism has been to emphasise the degree to which all societies rely on the love and care typically provided by women to children and other dependents. More generally, the emotional support people get from family and friends plays a vital role in sustaining their capacity to function as workers and citizens. At the same time, the organisation of work and transportation has an obvious impact on the amount of time workers can spend with their families. And the way the state organises residential facilities for disabled people, or denies accommodation to Travellers or homeless people, has a huge impact on their personal relationships. So it is not surprising that this is an area of tremendous importance in the everyday lives of people in liberal societies. As with the issue of work, the concerns of ordinary people are ahead of those of liberal egalitarian theory.

Were we to construct a more adequate liberal-egalitarian approach to love, care and solidarity, the natural place to start would be with the ideas of a minimum standard and equal opportunity. We would have to consider how to ensure that every member of society had access to an adequate range of loving, caring and solidary relationships, and to address those aspects of our societies which frustrate this important human need. We would also have to consider whether social arrangements systematically work in ways that make it harder for some groups of people to meet these needs than for other groups, since this would be contrary to equal opportunity. Attending to love, care and solidarity in this way would recognise these issues and the

institutions that affect them as public concerns. But in keeping with the general shape of liberal-egalitarian ideas, we would consider it inevitable that some people would have much more satisfactory access to relations of love, care and solidarity than others.[10]

4. Power relations: civil and personal rights and liberal democracy

The fourth dimension of liberal egalitarianism concerns relations of power. The protection of basic civil and personal rights against the powerful, particularly the state, is a central and long-standing idea within liberalism. These rights include the prohibition of slavery, of torture and of cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment. They encompass equality before the law, protection against arbitrary arrest and a right to the due process of law. Also included are such rights as freedom of movement, the right to own property, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of association. These civil and personal rights are familiar features of modern liberal regimes and can be found in such documents as the American Bill of Rights (1789, although it took another 75 years and a civil war before slavery was prohibited), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the European Convention on Human Rights (1950) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976). Quite what is included in these rights and how they are interpreted has varied. But taken overall, they are one way of setting limits on the degree of inequality of power any society should tolerate.

Liberalism also has a long-standing association with democracy and a certain conception of political equality. The principle that every citizen has an equal say through the ballot box, and the extension of this principle over the past two centuries to all social classes, to women and to ethnic minorities, is clearly an egalitarian idea, and it plays an important role both in reducing economic inequality and in expressing

the equal public status of all citizens. But we need to contrast these equal political rights with the fact that economically and culturally dominant groups have much more influence on public policy in all liberal democracies than disadvantaged groups. Liberal democracy also assumes that there will necessarily be a power gap between ordinary voters and the people they elect. Elections are seen, primarily, as a method for choosing and limiting the power of decision-makers rather than as a means by which the people engage in self-rule in any meaningful sense. A further feature of liberal democracy is its concentration on what is generally considered 'politics', neglecting power inequalities in the economy, the family, religion and other areas.[11] Liberal democracy and the conception of political equality that goes with it are thus themselves in line with the general idea that liberal equality is about regulating inequality rather than eliminating it. They provide, as before, both a basic minimum and a kind of equal opportunity – largely formal in character – for achieving and exercising power.

5. Working and learning: occupational and educational equal opportunity

Work is a central fact of human life, but it is double-edged. In some respects it is a burden, something people have to be induced to do by threat or reward. In other ways it is a benefit, not just because it is a major factor determining status, resources and power but because it provides opportunities for social contact, personal satisfaction and self-realization. Work is immensely varied, consisting of all forms of productive activity, whether paid or unpaid and whether in the formal economy or not. It includes the work people do in households, voluntary bodies and in political organisations. If liberal egalitarians were interested in equality with respect to work, they would need to consider these factors with care. But as with other dimensions of equality, they assume that there will be major inequalities of work.

Perhaps surprisingly, liberal egalitarians have paid little attention to minimum standards. The idea that everyone has a right to work, under minimally decent conditions, is common enough in the modern world. For example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that 'Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment' (Article 23, sec. 1). The International Labour Organization (ILO) has developed these ideas in its Constitution, its Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and in its promotion of Decent Work (ILO 1941, 1998, 1999, 2001). But that idea does not feature much in the writings of liberal egalitarian theorists. Nor, taking work as a burden, do liberal egalitarians have much to say about either the minimum or maximum burden any member of society should bear.[12]

The process of learning is closely related to work, because work always involves learnt abilities and therefore appropriate education and training is a necessary condition for decent work. But there are many other forms of learning, relevant to the whole range of human activities. Like work, learning is both beneficial and burdensome. It can be a joy, and can open up all kinds of doors, but not all learning is fun: it often involves hard work. Another similarity with work is the wide range of contexts in which learning takes place, not just in the formal educational system but in families and playgrounds, in workplaces and politics. Learning has attracted considerable interest from both liberal and more radical egalitarians, particularly in relation to the formal educational system. As ever, the key liberal egalitarian concern is with equal opportunity, although the idea of achieving certain minimum educational standards, of a universal right to basic education, also features in the writings of liberal egalitarians.[13]

The central liberal-egalitarian principle for dealing with working and learning, then, is equal opportunity. The 'formal' interpretation of equal opportunity inspires anti-discrimination legislation which makes it illegal to deny education or work to people because of their religion, sex or other specified characteristics. Rawls's principle of 'fair equal opportunity' has stronger implications, implying that the educational system should try to compensate for the obstacles people from working class and other disadvantaged backgrounds face in developing their talents. Since most educational systems do too little in this regard, another implication of fair equal opportunity is the development of 'affirmative action': policies for helping members of disadvantaged groups to compete for and obtain education and jobs. The reasoning is that if members of these groups are under-represented in, say, universities or the professions, this must be because they have not had equal opportunities to develop their abilities. Affirmative action is a way of improving the balance at a later stage, ensuring greater equality of opportunity overall.

The emphasis placed by liberal egalitarians on equal opportunity means that it is left to the operation of 'fair' social institutions – in particular the market and the family – to decide who ends up in which occupations and how tasks are distributed among these occupations. The benefits and burdens attached to different kinds of work are taken as given, even though this has the effect of consigning some people to lives of unmitigated toil.

Reform of existing social structures

The discussion so far has concentrated on the key principles endorsed by liberal egalitarians, but the picture would be incomplete without discussing how they think of these principles as being implemented: what social structures or institutions are necessary to put these principles into practice? The vision liberal egalitarians have of

the how the world operates and of the possibility of change seems to be based on the assumption that the fundamental structures of modern welfare states are at least in broad outline the best we are capable of. In saying this we do not mean to imply that liberal egalitarians think that we live in the best of all possible worlds or that there is little we can do to improve the way we manage our societies. But we think they are convinced that certain key features of modern welfare states – including representative government, a mixed economy, a developed system of social welfare, a meritocratic educational system, a specialised and hierarchical division of labour – define the institutional framework within which any progress towards equality can be made, and that the task for egalitarians is to make various adjustments to these structures rather than to alter them in fundamental ways.[14] It is partly because these structures inevitably produce inequality that liberal egalitarians think that inequality is unavoidable, and that the egalitarian agenda must be defined in terms of regulating inequality rather than eliminating it.

Justifying liberal equality

The views of liberal egalitarians represent a tremendous challenge not just to the inequalities of pre-capitalist societies but also to the entrenched inequalities of the contemporary world. Can this challenge be morally justified? Many of the arguments put forward by liberal egalitarians are rooted in the idea of basic equality, the claim of every human being to basic concern and respect. If we are to take these ideas seriously in the context of modern societies in which people have complex and diverse needs and differ profoundly in their moral and political beliefs, we must surely take steps to tolerate their differences, to protect their personal freedoms, and to enable them to participate in decision-making. The ideas of concern and respect also support the principle that everyone should have a decent standard of living, including the

resources necessary to exercise their rights and freedoms. The most distinctive idea of liberal egalitarians, equal opportunity, can be seen as a way of showing basic respect and concern for human beings as rational agents with differing talents and ambitions. Of course, these remarks are not a fully developed argument for liberal egalitarian ideas: they merely indicate the ways in which many authors have attempted to construct one. In any case, the principles of liberal egalitarians are in fact widely accepted in contemporary welfare states (Miller, 1992). But are these principles strong enough? We argue below that they are not.

Basic equality, liberal egalitarianism and human rights

One of the most powerful political advances of our times has been the development of an international movement in support of human rights. Defined over several decades of activism and international negotiation, the human rights agenda is widely seen as setting universal minimum standards for the ways people can be treated, particularly by governments. The idea of human rights is a fundamentally egalitarian idea, resting as it does on the Universal Declaration's claim that 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights' (Art. 1).

In relation to our spectrum of egalitarian views, the human rights agenda clearly encompasses basic equality. It is also closely connected to liberal egalitarianism because it is primarily concerned with the setting of minimum standards and promoting key principles of non-discrimination. Some of the principles proclaimed by liberal egalitarians are more demanding than those included in the major human rights documents. For example, Rawls's principle of fair equal opportunity and his difference principle are both stronger than anything found in the Universal Declaration or the European Convention on Human Rights. But liberal egalitarians and human rights activists have broadly similar aims. This fact alone should remind us of the

strength of the case for liberal egalitarianism and the degree to which its principles have achieved widespread support.

Equality of condition

Liberal egalitarianism is based on the assumption that major inequalities are inevitable and that our task is to make them fair. The idea of equality of condition sets out a much more ambitious aim: to eliminate major inequalities altogether, or at least massively to reduce the current scale of inequality.[15] The key to this much more ambitious agenda is to recognise that inequality is rooted in changing and changeable social structures, and particularly in structures of domination and oppression. These structures create, and continually reproduce, the inequalities which liberal egalitarians see as inevitable. But since social structures have changed in the past, it is at least conceivable that they could be deliberately changed in the future. Exactly how to name and analyse these structures and their interaction is a matter of continuing debate, but one way or another they clearly include capitalism (a predominantly market-based economy in which the means of production are privately owned and controlled), patriarchy (systems of gender relationships which privilege men over women), racism (social systems which divide people into 'races' and privilege some 'races' over others) and other systems of oppression.[16]

This emphasis on social structures in explaining inequality affects the way equality of condition should be understood. In contrast to the tendency of liberal egalitarians to focus on the rights and advantages of individuals, equality of condition also pays attention to the rights and advantages of groups. In contrast to liberal egalitarians' tendency to concentrate on how things are distributed, equality of condition pays more attention to how people are related, particularly through power relations. In contrast to the tendency of liberal egalitarians to treat individuals as

responsible for their successes and failures, equality of condition emphasises the influence of social factors on people's choices and actions. These contrasts should not be overstated, but they do affect how equality of condition is defined, as will become clearer by looking at its central ideas.

Discussions of equality sometimes contrast the liberal idea of equality of opportunity with the idea of equality of outcome. Although the distinction has a point, it can be misleading, since equality of condition is also concerned with people having a wide range of choices, not with their all ending up the same. The difference is in how equal opportunity is understood. Liberal equal opportunity is about fairness in the competition for advantage. It implies that there will be winners and losers, people who do well and people who do badly. An 'opportunity' in this context is the right to compete, not the right to choose among alternatives of similar worth. So two people can have equal opportunities in this sense even if one of them has no real prospect of achieving anything of value. For example, a society in which only 15 per cent of the population attend third level education could in this liberal sense give everyone an equal opportunity to do so, even though in a stronger sense it would clearly be denying the opportunity for third level education to 85 per cent of the population.

Equality of condition is about opportunities in this stronger sense, about enabling people to exercise what might be called *real* choices among *real* options. In the dimension of respect and recognition, it is about the freedom to live one's life without the burden of contempt and enmity from the dominant culture. In the dimension of resources, it is about having roughly the same range of resource-dependent options as others. In the dimension of love, care and solidarity, it means promoting circumstances in which everyone has ample scope for forming valuable human attachments. In the dimension of power, it means the roughly equal ability of each

person to influence the decisions that affect their lives. In the dimension of working and learning, it means ensuring that everyone is enabled to develop their talents and abilities, and that everyone has a real choice among occupations that they find satisfying or fulfilling. Inevitably these fields of choice will lead to different outcomes, but these outcomes, precisely because they are the result of choices among alternatives of similar worth, and thereby leave people with roughly similar prospects for further choices, represent the best interpretation of the idea of equality of condition. To make these ideas more precise, we return to the five dimensions of equality.[17]

1. Equal respect and recognition

Like liberal egalitarianism, equality of condition includes the principle of universal citizenship as an expression of the basic equality of status of all citizens. Where it differs from liberalism is in relation to the ideas of toleration and the public/private distinction. The liberal tradition's commitment to respecting and tolerating differences is one of its great strengths. However, critics of liberalism have pointed out that toleration is not always quite what it seems, since it is perfectly possible to tolerate someone while retaining a sense of one's own superiority. Thus, dominant cultures can 'tolerate' subordinate ones, but not vice versa. The dominant view is still seen as the normal one, while the tolerated view is seen as deviant. There is no suggestion that the dominant view may itself be questionable, or that an appreciation of and interaction with subordinate views could be valuable for both sides.[18]

For these reasons, supporters of equality of condition tend to talk about the appreciation or celebration of diversity, and to say that differences from the norm are to be welcomed and learned from rather than simply permitted. They urge us to be

glad to live in a multi-cultural society, to live among people with different sexual orientations, and so on. While this shift from 'tolerate' to 'celebrate' is of real value, it can mislead us into thinking that it is wrong to criticise beliefs we disagree with, that the politically correct view is to cherish all difference. That could not possibly be a coherent position, if for no other reason than that not every group is prepared to celebrate – or even to tolerate – others. In fact, one of the common themes of writers who want to celebrate difference is that the dominant culture itself needs to be critically assessed, particularly if its sense of identity depends on belittling others. And since it seems to be the case that all cultures are shaped by oppressive traditions, none can be considered to be above criticism.

This conclusion is strengthened by a significant difference between liberal egalitarianism and equality of condition concerning the definition of the 'private' sphere, the area of life that ought to be protected from regulation by either law or social convention. Equality of condition accepts that some aspects of life should be protected from public scrutiny, but it rejects the idea that whole spheres of life are exempt from principles of justice. In particular, it highlights the oppression of women and children inside both families and religions (Okin, 1989; Cohen, 2000; Nussbaum 2000; Kymlicka 2002, ch. 9). If we are truly committed to equality of recognition, we cannot cordon off these important spheres of life from critical scrutiny. By redefining the contrast between public and private, equality of condition widens the scope for criticising and transforming both dominant and subordinate cultures.

In the end, we show more respect for others by engaging critically with their beliefs than by adopting a laissez-faire attitude. The real task is to engage in such criticism in an open and dialogical spirit, recognising the real effort that the privileged must make to understand the voices of members of subordinate groups and to open

their own ideas to critical interrogation. Such a dialogue often reveals that there is more common ground between apparently divergent views than meets the eye, and that there are centres of resistance within even the most oppressive cultures. We have adopted the label 'critical inter-culturalism' for this relation of mutually supportive and critical dialogue between members of different social groups. A commitment to such a dialogue does not of itself resolve all the difficult issues raised by cultural conflict, but it creates a space in which they can be addressed.[19]

We noted above that liberal egalitarians are generally quite comfortable with inequality of social esteem. Perhaps this is because most liberal egalitarian theorists are members of high-status professions. The world looks very different from the point of view of those with low social status, who are in a position to recognise more clearly the contribution of accident, indoctrination and fashion in deciding who is due high esteem and who is not. For as long as human beings exist, there will always be attitudes of admiration and disdain, and these can play an important role in recognising and encouraging valued behaviour. But the idea of equality of condition calls on us to limit their range. Without such limits, inequality of esteem is all too easily translated into inequality in all of the other dimensions of equality.

2. Equality of resources

In contrast to liberal egalitarianism, equality of condition aims at what can best be described as equality of resources. Like liberal egalitarianism, it recognises income and wealth as key resources. But the idea of resources naturally includes a number of other goods which people find useful in achieving their aims in life. For example, Bourdieu (1986) has emphasized the importance to people's prospects of what he calls social and cultural capital. Social capital consists of the durable networks of social relationships to which people have access, while cultural capital includes both

people's embodied knowledge and abilities and their educational credentials. A person's resources also include non-financial conditions for their access to goods and services, such as their right to public services and their right not to be excluded from privately provided goods and services by discriminatory treatment. Finally, resources include environmental factors such as a safe and healthy environment, the geographical arrangement of cities, the accessibility of buildings, and so on.[20]

Equality of condition accepts the urgency of satisfying basic needs and providing a safety net against poverty. But its wider understanding of resources helps us to recognise a wider range of needs than some liberal egalitarians are inclined to attend to and to take a less market-oriented view of how these needs should be satisfied. For example, people with physical impairments not only need higher incomes than those without these impairments, but also changes in the physical environment which promote their inclusion into the activities that others take for granted.[21]

Beyond the level of need, equality of condition aims for a world in which people's overall resources are much more equal than they are now, so that people's prospects for a good life are roughly similar. Because of the multi-faceted and disputable nature of well-being, and the complicated relationship between resources and prospects for well-being, we cannot hope for any precise account of equality of resources. It certainly cannot be equated with the idea that everyone should have the same income and wealth, because people have different needs and because there are so many other important resources to take account of. There is also an egalitarian case for permitting modest inequalities in income to offset inequalities in the burden of work. Otherwise people who work hard would be worse off than those who don't.[22]

But if these are the only kinds of reason that would justify *inequality* of income and wealth, it follows that people who have similar needs and who work in similarly

demanding occupations for similar amounts of time should have similar income and wealth. This principle implies, for example, that there should be no significant differences in income and wealth between manual workers and office workers, women and men, or people of colour and whites, and that public services should serve these different groups equally well. So equality of condition would certainly involve a dramatic change in the distribution of income and wealth and in access to public services. In adopting this view, we reject the liberal belief that substantial inequalities of resources are inevitable.[23]

3. Equality of love, care and solidarity

All human beings have the capacity for intimacy, attachment and caring relationships. We can all recognize and feel some sense of affiliation and concern for others, and we all need, at least sometimes, to be cared for. We value the various forms of social engagement that emanate from such relations and we define ourselves in terms of them. Solidary bonds of friendship or kinship are frequently what bring meaning, warmth and joy to life. Being deprived of the capacity to develop such supportive affective relations, or of the experience of engaging in them when one has the capacity, is therefore a serious human deprivation. Being cared for is also a fundamental prerequisite for human development. Relations of solidarity, care and love help to establish a basic sense of importance, value and belonging, a sense of being appreciated, wanted and cared for. They are both a vital component of what enables people to lead successful lives and an expression of our fundamental interdependence.

Bubeck (1995), Kittay (1999) and others have pointed out that caring is both an activity and an attitude. In caring for others, we act to meet their needs in a way that involves an attitude of concern or even love. This duality is characteristic of the wider

field of relationships of love, care and solidarity. Love involves acting for those we love, not just feeling for them. Solidarity involves active support for others, not just passive empathy. So out needs for loving, caring and solidary relationships are needs to be enabled to do something for others as well as to feel for them.

These facts show that, at the very least, an adequate conception of equality must involve a commitment to satisfying the basic need for love, care and solidarity. But as with other dimensions of equality, the question arises of whether securing a basic minimum is enough to aim for. Equality of condition surely involves a more ambitious goal, a society in which people are confident of having, if not equal, then at least ample prospects for loving, caring and solidary relationships . To achieve this goal, it is necessary to change structures and institutions which systematically impede people's opportunities to develop such relationships, including the organisation of paid work, processes of gender-stereotyping and the gendered division of labour, attitudes and institutional arrangements concerning disability, and of course the burdens of poverty and deprivation. Societies cannot *make* anyone love anyone else, and in this sense the right to have loving, caring and solidary relations is unenforceable. But societies can work to establish the conditions in which these relationships can thrive. As noted below, a key element in this task is to make sure that the work involved in providing love and care is properly recognised, supported and shared.

4. Equality of power

A central obstacle to equality of condition is the pervasive network of power relations in all societies. In recognition of the dangers of state power, equality of condition retains the liberal commitment to basic civil and personal rights, including the right to personal private property. But since the general right to private property

enshrined in some declarations of rights, including the Irish Constitution (Arts. 40.3.2 and 43), can be used to protect the economic power of the privileged, equality of condition has to involve a more limited definition of what this right involves. And because social structures often involve the systematic oppression of social groups, equality of condition may entail creating certain group-related rights, for example the right of members of a linguistic minority to educate their children in their first language or the right of an ethnic minority to political representation. This is not a blanket endorsement of the right of social groups to behave in any way they choose towards their members, which would go beyond even liberal forms of the public/private distinction. It is a recognition that specific group-based rights may sometimes promote equality of power.

As discussed earlier, liberal democracy has a strictly limited impact on power inequalities, leaving dominant groups largely unchallenged in the political sphere and neglecting many other types of power altogether. Yet it is precisely these power relations which sustain inequality between privileged and oppressed groups. Equality of condition responds to these limitations on two fronts. First of all, it supports a stronger, more participatory form of politics in which ordinary citizens, and particularly groups who have been excluded from power altogether, can have more control over decision-making. Strengthened local government, closer accountability for elected representatives, procedures to ensure the participation of marginalised groups and wider access to information and technical expertise are some of the elements of this radical democratic programme.

The second aspect of equality of power is to challenge power in other areas, such as the economy, the family, education and religion. The agenda here includes democratic management of individual firms and democratic control over key planning

issues for the local, national and global economy. It involves rejecting the power of husbands over wives and questioning the power relations between parents and children. It means a democratic, co-operative model of education. It implies that the power structures of religious organisations are just as open to question as those of the secular world.

In both cases, the aim is to promote equality of power rather than to contain inequalities of power, recognising that power takes many forms, is often diffuse and has to be challenged in many different ways.

5. Working and learning as equals

As mentioned earlier, work is in some respects a burden, in others a benefit. In contemporary societies, both the burdens and benefits of work are unequally distributed, and those who shoulder the greatest burdens often receive the least benefit. The burden of menial work is generally accompanied by the lowest possible wages and working conditions. The burdens of caring in individual households are typically unpaid, unrecognised, and carried out with little support (Kittay, 1999; Daly 2001). Equality of condition involves reversing these inequalities, so that both the burdens and the benefits of work are much more equally shared, and that the conditions under which people work are much more equal in character. As we have suggested, where some people continue to take on greater burdens, it is consistent with the idea of equality of condition for them to receive greater benefits. The aim should be to ensure that people are roughly equally well off taking both burdens and benefits into account.

The most fundamental change involved in equality of condition would be in the division of labour, so that everyone had the prospect of satisfying work. This would affect both the benefits and burdens of work, since tedious, unsatisfying work can be a

crushing burden and satisfying work has intrinsic benefits. The current division of labour is not sacrosanct. It is the result of economic structures which function primarily for the purpose of maximizing profits in a deeply unequal world. To be sure, human life depends on the completion of many tedious and disagreeable tasks and will continue to do so. But it is a matter of social organisation whether these tasks are concentrated in particular occupations or fairly shared among the population as a whole. The division of society into those who define tasks and those who merely execute them is unjust and needs to be radically reconceived (Young, 1990, ch. 7).

One of the forms of work that has been most neglected by liberal egalitarians is the work of loving and caring: work that is done primarily by women and is primarily unpaid.[24] Caring for others and forming and maintaining solidary relations takes time, energy and commitment. It is emotionally laden work, especially in the developmental stages of life, but also in adulthood (Delphy and Leonard, 1992; Bubeck 1995; Kittay 1999; Daly 2001). It takes an intense and prolonged engagement with others to be responsive to their needs, to establish and maintain relations of solidarity and bonds of affection, to provide moral support, to maintain friendships, to give people a sense of belonging and to make them feel good. Caring labour and love labour are demanding on our energies and resources (Lynch, 1989; Lynch and McLoughlin, 1995). Equality of condition requires that this work should be recognised, supported and shared. In particular, it entails a commitment to meeting the needs of those who provide care work to dependents (Kittay, 1999). It also implies a rebalancing of other work so that everyone is able to engage in the work of love and care.

Work is an important part of life, but it is not its be-all and end-all. Whether there is a case for a right to opt out of work altogether is a contentious issue that partly depends on the range of work options open to people and on the degree to which

society has enabled them to take on this work. We do not take a position on this here. But egalitarians must clearly be against social arrangements which impose such a burden of work on people that they have little space in their lives for pursuing other worthwhile ends. Working as equals must involve a limit to the demands of work.

Equality of condition does not entail the right of every person to the job of their choice. That would clearly be unrealistic. So who does what remains an important issue and equality of condition has to incorporate fair principles of occupational equal opportunity. There are other issues about work that are harder to think through, for example the role and distribution of voluntary and unpaid work in an egalitarian society. But the guiding principle is that the overall benefits and burdens of work should be as equal as possible.

These principles about work have important implications for learning because they require systems of learning that give everyone worthwhile occupational choices. But there are many other aspects of learning, including learning to develop personal relationships, to engage in literature and the arts, to participate in politics and so on. If equality of condition is about enabling people to exercise real choices, then learning is about self-development in its broadest sense. And since learning is itself an activity that takes up a great deal of each person's life, we need to think of how to make it more satisfying in its own right.

Challenge to existing structures

It seems clear enough that equality of condition challenges the basic structures of contemporary societies. As we discuss in more detail in chapter 4, these structures work systematically to generate and reinforce inequality. A predominantly capitalist economy continually creates and reproduces inequalities in people's resources, work and learning; it relies on and perpetuates inequalities of power and status; it places

tremendous strains on relations of love, care and solidarity. The cultural system embodies and reinforces inequalities based on gender, class, disability, ethnicity, 'race' and sexual orientation. Networks of care and solidarity – what we call the affective system – work together to the advantage of privileged groups while denying support to the most vulnerable. The political system reinforces the privileges of dominant groups throughout society. All of these systems pervade the social institutions that shape our lives.

Equality of condition would require quite different institutions and structures, developing participatory, inclusive, enabling and empowering ways of co-operating in all areas of life. The central aim of Parts II and III of this book is to contribute to the task of imagining and bringing about these changes.

Justifying equality of condition

Equality of condition presents a radical challenge to existing attitudes and structures, but many of the arguments in its favour come from basic and liberal egalitarianism. The most general way of putting the case is that the aims of both basic and liberal egalitarians are thwarted by inequalities of wealth, status and power which they refuse to challenge. On the face of it, it seems a simple enough task to ensure that everyone in the world has access to clean water and decent food, but layers of entrenched inequality make even these minimal goals unattainable. On the face of it, it seems easy enough to ensure that everyone's basic rights are protected, but in practice the rights of powerless and marginalised people are easily violated. Liberal egalitarians are eloquent proponents of equal opportunity, but equal opportunity is impossible so long as privileged people can deploy their economic and cultural advantages on behalf of themselves and their families – as they will surely continue to do, so long as the consequences of success and failure are so spectacularly different.[25]

Other arguments for equality of condition arise out of the internal tensions and contradictions of liberal egalitarianism. We have seen how the idea of toleration can involve the very inequality of respect it purports to reject. There is a similar contradiction in the 'incentive' argument for inequality, namely that when privileged people demand an incentive for helping the worst off, they are taking resources away from the very people they pretend to be concerned about (Cohen, 1991). Another tension arises in arguments for the liberal ideal of occupational equality of opportunity. This principle is often justified by appealing to the interest each person has in 'experiencing the realization of self which comes from a skilful and devoted exercise of social duties' (Rawls, 1971, p. 84). Yet it is clear enough that an unequal society provides precious few people with this experience.

Additional arguments for equality of condition come from reflections on the limited assumptions of liberal egalitarianism. In a curious way, liberal egalitarians seem to ignore the structured nature of inequality, the ways in which inequality is generated and sustained by dominant social institutions, and the influence of these institutions on people's attitudes, preferences and prospects. Thus when Rawls, for example, explains fair equal opportunity by saying that people's prospects 'should not be affected by their social class' (1971, p. 73; cf. 2001, p. 44), he seems to be accepting the idea of a class-divided society at the very same time as he is endorsing a principle which implies the elimination of class altogether. His work is also notorious for its neglect of gender.[26] A related problem is the liberal egalitarian emphasis on choice and personal responsibility, which plays an important role in supporting the idea of equal opportunity but tends to ignore the extent to which people's choices are influenced by their social position.

These, then, are some of the key arguments for equality of condition.[27] If they are sound, they show that although most of the principles of liberal egalitarianism are worth defending, they do not go far enough. Western societies in particular, and the world more generally, are deeply unjust and need to be radically rebuilt.

Dimensions of equality	Basic equality	Liberal egalitarians	Equality of condition
Respect and Recognition	Basic respect	Universal citizenship	Universal citizenship
		Toleration of differences	'Critical inter-culturalism': acceptance of diversity; redefined public/private distinction; critical dialogue over cultural differences
		Public/private distinction	
			Limits to unequal esteem
Resources	Subsistence needs	Anti-poverty focus	Substantial equality of resources broadly defined, aimed at satisfying needs and enabling roughly equal prospects of well-being
		Rawls's 'difference principle' (maximise the prospects of the worst off)	
Love, care and solidarity		A private matter?	Ample prospects for relations of love, care and solidarity
		Adequate care?	
Power relations	Protection against inhuman and degrading treatment	Classic civil and personal rights	Liberal rights *but* limited property rights; group-related rights
		Liberal democracy	Stronger, more participatory politics
			Extension of democracy to other areas of life
Working and learning		Occupational and educational equal opportunity	Educational and occupational options which give everyone the prospect of self-development and satisfying work
		Right to decent work?	
		Right to basic education	

Table 2.1: Basic Equality, Liberal Egalitarianism and Equality of Condition

Applying the framework to social groups

We have identified five key dimensions of equality, and have contrasted the ways these dimensions are treated by liberal egalitarians with their role in equality of condition (see Table 2.1). In applying these ideas, it is often useful to focus on particular disadvantaged and privileged social groups because it is usually as a consequence of their membership of social groups that individuals experience inequality of condition. In some group relations one dimension of equality may be more important than another, but groups that are unequal in one dimension are often unequal in others. We can see this particularly clearly if we look at the way the dimensions of equality intersect in the lives of particular groups.

Disabled people are a diverse group whose experiences are shaped in many ways by different impairments. What they have in common is their experience of exclusion from activities that other people take for granted. This exclusion results to a large extent from a social environment that is designed to suit people without impairments. So a key inequality here is inequality of appropriate environmental resources. This inequality has the further effect of excluding disabled people from mainstream education and the labour force, affecting both their learning and work opportunities and their incomes. But disabled people are also strongly affected by a culturally constructed image of disability that marks disabled people as strange, as 'other': an image that is easily sustained on account of their exclusion from everyday social activities. All of these factors interact with the way that disabled people are subjected to the power of non-disabled people, not just in the political system but most clearly in institutions such as special schools and hospitals. Because these institutions have traditionally treated disabled people as helpless, they have reinforced their isolation and exclusion. Residential institutions for disabled people have also often contributed

to depriving them of relations of love and care, either through overt abuse or through discouraging disabled people from forming loving relations with each other. At the same time, the exclusion of disabled people from activities other people take as normal and the stereotyping of disabled people as asexual have limited their opportunities for developing relations of love, care and solidarity with others. Thus, disabled people are typically worse off than non-disabled people in every one of the five dimensions of equality.[28]

Gender relations are in some ways similar to those of disability and in other ways different. A central feature of sexual inequality is the gendered division of labour, which assigns some roles primarily to men and others primarily to women. Early childhood learning and the educational system teach boys and girls to accept these roles and to acquire appropriate skills and dispositions for performing them. The gendered roles are associated with differences in income: women earn on average significantly less than men, and of course receive no income at all for the unpaid work they are traditionally expected to do in the household. Women carry the lion's share of the work required for sustaining love and care, while men have greater opportunities for finding satisfying work outside the household and for achieving positions of power. A further dimension of gender inequality is a set of norms and prejudices that systematically belittles women and reinforces the gendered division of labour. The resources and economic power held by men, together with their higher social status, contribute to their near-monopoly of political power, power that is put to use in maintaining their economic advantages. Although the gendered division of labour provides women with the opportunity and indeed the duty to love and care for others, it can also work to deprive them of the love and care they need themselves. So women are in general worse off than men in all five dimensions of equality.[29]

A third example of the intersection of the dimensions of inequality is social class. Here again the division of labour plays a key role, subjecting working class people to the power of employers, depriving them of opportunities for satisfying and fulfilling work, consigning them to a lower standard of living and providing their children with worse opportunities for learning. Cultural norms that treat working class customs, accents and activities as inferior interact with these economic factors to reinforce the unequal status of working class people and to exclude them from political power. By contrast, people in dominant social classes enjoy high income, status and economic power. They have extensive opportunities for engaging and rewarding work and learning and can provide similar opportunities to their children. Their social, economic and educational advantages give them political influence as well.

How class affects people's opportunities for relations of love, care and solidarity is not well researched. Some evidence from Scandinavian countries indicates that companionship and solidarity are independent of material well being, but of course the level of material well being enjoyed in these societies is very high by international standards (Allardt, 1993). We do know that severe material deprivation can lead to emotional deprivation. For example, poor people are more likely to become homeless or to go to prison, and thus to suffer the deprivation of love, care and solidarity these experiences involve (Focus Point, 1993; O'Mahony, 1997). So class inequality has at least four clear dimensions and has shows some evidence of this fifth one.[30]

These examples could be multiplied by looking at relationships of 'race', ethnicity, sexuality, age and so on. The general point is that the ways societies are structured around differences of impairment, sex and class generate inequalities across all five of the dimensions we have identified for the groups they systematically privilege and disadvantage. Of course, some groups may be more disadvantaged in

one dimension than in others. For example, older people in some societies may suffer more seriously from a lack of love, care and solidarity than from poverty or powerlessness. But the general tendency is for social structures to work in a way that generates inequality in every group and between groups in all five dimensions.

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[1] It is sometimes objected that such a minimalist view is not a principle of *equality* at all. Our view is that its egalitarianism lies in its commitment to extending the basic minimum to all human beings, as opposed to considering some people to be beneath consideration.

[2] The paradigm case of a liberal egalitarian is Rawls (1971, 1993, 2001). Among other liberal egalitarians we would include Dworkin (2000, which includes work first published in the 1980s), Walzer (1985) and Williams (1962). Some key discussions of the ideas of liberal egalitarians are Barry (1989, 1995, 2001), Arneson (1989), Cohen (1989), Sen (1992) and Van Parijs (1995).

[3] Some relevant sources are Mortimore (1968), Rawls (1971, sec. 15, 1993, sec. 5.4; 2001, secs. 17, 51, 53), Landesman (1983), Norman (1987), Arneson (1989), Cohen (1989), Daniels (1990), Sen (1992), Nussbaum and Sen (1992), Fraser (1997a, 1997b), Phillips (1999), Levine (1998, ch. 2), Dworkin (2000) and Young (2001).

[4] The five dimensions are chosen for ease of exposition and to provide a coherent framework. Headings 1, 2, 4 and 5 correspond to the classic and ultimately inescapable Weberian trio of class, status and party (Weber, 1958), recently adapted by Fraser (1997a, 2000) and Jaggar (1998), although none of these authors distinguishes between work and resources under the heading of class/redistribution. The second, fourth and fifth dimensions broadly correspond to the three parts of Rawls's two principles (1971; 1993; 2001) and to the more radical positions taken by

Nielsen (1985) and Norman (1987). Phillips (1999) distinguishes between economic and political equality, including both status and power in the latter. One way or another, the five headings cover most of the goods discussed by Walzer (1985). Honneth (1995) brings both the first and third dimension under the heading of recognition. The discussion below is also indirectly influenced by the capabilities approach of Sen (1992) and Nussbaum (1995, 2000), especially in respect to emphasising enabling rather than outcomes and to highlighting the category of love, care and solidarity.

[5] There has always been some tension between these beliefs. Although some liberal egalitarians, emphasising equal opportunity, take the view that individuals who deliberately squander their advantages deserve no help from society, we think it is more accurate to the liberal egalitarian tradition to distinguish between equal opportunity and the safety net and to acknowledge the tension.

[6] A third conception of equal opportunity, which Roemer (1998) calls 'level-the-playing-field', maintains that individuals should not be helped or hampered by any circumstance outside their control. Depending on how it is interpreted, this view of equal opportunity goes well beyond the traditional views of liberal egalitarians in the direction of equality of condition. What it seems to share with traditional liberal views is a belief that once equal opportunity is in place, major inequalities of condition are legitimate.

[7] In fact, liberalism makes several different public/private distinctions. The distinction discussed is the one most relevant to liberal conceptions of equality.

[8] The liberal protection of the family as a private sphere has in recent times been used to defend a wider variety of family forms, such as one-parent families and single-sex

couples. For arguments that it is incompatible with liberal principles themselves to treat the family as private see Okin (1989), Cohen (2000, ch. 9) and Nussbaum (2000, ch. 4)

[9] Rawls himself thinks of the difference principle as more demanding (1993, p. 229), but the same passage expresses his view that 'a social minimum providing for the basic needs of all citizens' is a 'constitutional essential', while the difference principle is a more controversial claim about 'basic justice'. (See also Rawls, 2001, 129-130, 158-162.) At first glance, Dworkin's (2000) principle of equality of resources seems much more radical than either the anti-poverty principle or the difference principle, and indeed he explicitly distances himself from the anti-poverty position as too subjective and undemanding (p. 3). But what Dworkin means by equal resources is a type of equal opportunity, and his hypothetical insurance market functions as a form of safety net.

[10] A few authors have attempted to incorporate love, care and solidarity into broadly liberal-egalitarian theories of justice. Walzer (1985) treats love and kinship as a separate sphere, based on freely exchanged love between adults but subject to a 'rule of prescriptive altruism' that expects family members to love and care for each other and so aims to guarantee them 'some modicum of love, friendship, generosity, and so on' (pp. 229, 238). Nussbaum (1995, p. 84) treats 'being able … to love, to grieve, to experience longing and gratitude' as one of the basic human functional capabilities that societies ought to support. In *Women and Human Development* (2000, esp. chs. 1 and 4) she argues for a partial theory of justice that aims at bringing everyone above a minimum threshold of capabilities, and identifies the family as a key social institution for attaining this aim in relation to love and care. Bubeck (1995) maintains that an

ethic of care needs to be complemented by considerations of justice and puts forward two principles of justice in care. Kittay (1999, p. 103) suggests that 'the good both to be cared for in a responsive dependency relation if and when one is unable to care for oneself, and to meet the dependency needs of others without incurring undue sacrifices oneself is a primary social good in the Rawlsian sense' which requires a separate principle of justice and calls for a connection-based conception of equality.

[11] There is a close connection between this limitation and the public/private distinction mentioned earlier.

[12] On the right to work, an exception is Arneson (1987, 1990), whose arguments on this issue are broadly liberal-egalitarian. Arneson argues for a right to 'decent' work, but against a right to 'meaningful' work. (For a critique, see Llorente 2002). Rawls comments briefly on the obligation to work (2001, sec. 53) and the issue arises explicitly in discussions of basic income (e.g. Van Parijs (1991, 1992, 1995, 2001), Baker (1992), Barry (1997), White (1997), Levine (1998, ch. 1)). But the issue of the obligation to work tends not to be integrated into liberal-egalitarian theories of social justice.

[13] The classic liberal egalitarian discussion is by Gutmann (1987), who endorses a 'democratic standard' for primary education involving a basic threshold plus a democratically definable version of equal opportunity (ch. 5). A similar view is adopted by Walzer (1984, ch. 8).

[14] Rawls (2001, secs. 41-42) criticises the limitations of the welfare state, contrasting it with both a 'property-owning democracy' and with 'liberal (democratic) socialism'. In this respect, he is at least partially exempt from the point made in this paragraph.

What remains unclear, as with the difference principle itself, is the degree of inequality Rawls considers to be inevitable.

[15] Among proponents of equality of condition we would include Schaar (1967), Carens (1981), Nielsen (1985), Norman (1982; 1987; 1991), Baker (1987), Okin (1989), Cohen (1981; 1989; 1991; 1995; 1997; 2000), Young (1990, 2001), Fraser (1989; 1997a&b, 2000) and Phillips (1999). There are of course many differences among these authors and some of them would reject some of the views we include in this section. Our aim here is to draw together what we see as their most important insights.

[16] These oppressive systems include structures which systematically exclude people with impairments from participating fully in their societies, structures which socially construct a division between 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual' persons and privilege the former over the latter, and systems which privilege dominant over subordinate ethnic groups. No attempt is made here at a complete list of oppressive relationships and no inferences should be drawn as to their relative importance. The key point is that equality of condition depends on a more radical analysis of the causes of inequality than liberal egalitarianism.

[17] Our discussion of equality of the dimensions of equality is meant to be relatively neutral among the more radical positions in the 'equality of what?' debate, and particularly between the answers provided by Arneson (1989), Cohen (1989), Sen (1992) and Nussbaum (2000), on the (somewhat debatable) assumption that none of these answers makes too strong a concession to liberal equality of opportunity. From Cohen's perspective, for example, one could see the five dimensions as specifying necessary conditions for true equality of access to advantage.

[18] Although John Stuart Mill is considered the paradigm of liberalism, his commitment to diversity is in this respect closer to what we take to be equality of condition (cf. Mill 1854, ch. 3). The example of Mill underlines the point that our classification is meant to indicate broad differences of principle and not to categorise individual thinkers.

[19] There are useful discussions of this issue in Parekh (1996; 1997, 2000), Nussbaum and Sen (1992), Nussbaum and Glover (1995), Jaggar (1998), Okin (1999), Nussbaum (2000) and Barry (2001a, esp. ch. 7; 2001b). Placed in the context of the other four dimensions of equality, it should be clear that critical inter-culturalism is not an invitation to accept inequalities in those other dimensions under the guise of cultural difference, but to develop a conception of recognition that complements those other dimensions of equality.

[20] In this section we are deliberately using 'resources' in a wider sense than that appropriated by Dworkin (2000) for what he calls 'equality of resources', since Dworkin's approach treats resources as a form of private property. The concept is too important to be monopolised by a particular theorist. It is also worth noting that 'social capital' as defined by Bourdieu is quite different from and pre-dates some other recent uses of this expression.

[21] There is a strong connection between basic needs in this extended sense and the capabilities approach of Sen (1992) and Nussbaum (1995, 2000).

[22] Some of the problems involved in thinking about work and income are discussed more thoroughly by Baker (1992). The incorporation of work into the idea of equality of condition and the recognition that inequalities of work justify compensating

inequalities of income provides an egalitarian answer to the New Right complaint (Nozick, 1974) that resources do not fall from heaven.

[23] A major question here is the alleged need for incentives; see Carens (1981), Baker (1987, ch. 9) and Cohen (1991; 2000) for relevant discussions.

[24] The position Mill takes in *The Subjection of Women* (1869) reveals a typically liberal attitude towards this kind of work. He says that in choosing to marry, a woman accepts the role of housewife and the duties that go with it. The question of whether this division of labour is just does not arise: all that matters is that the choice takes place under conditions of equal opportunity.

[25] Some of these arguments are put in more detail in Baker, 2003.

[26] The point about class was made as early as Macpherson's (1973) discussion and never really addressed. The classic gender-based critique of Rawls is Okin (1989). Rawls's later work (1993, p. xxix; 2001, pp. 64-66, 162-168) briefly acknowledges the issue of gender inequality but in a way which seems to continue to ignore its depth.

[27] For more arguments, see Nielsen (1985), Norman (1987), Baker (1987), Okin (1989), Young (1990) and Cohen (1981; 1989; 1991; 1995; 1997; 2000). One general upshot of these arguments is that, contrary to appearances, it is liberal egalitarians who are unrealistic or utopian, because their limited aims are in fact unrealisable in a world marked by severe inequality and because they neglect the real influence of social structures.

[28] Some relevant sources for the analysis of this paragraph are Combat Poverty, 1994; Shakespeare (1994), Shakespeare, Gillespie-Sells and Davies (1996). add further disability refs

[29] Daly, 1987; Nolan and Watson, 1999; Kittay, 1999; etc. add further feminism refs

[30] Phillips, 1999; Bourdieu, 1984; add further class refs