Why Freedom Implies Equality

PAUL SPICKER

ABSTRACT *Equality and freedom have been represented as conflicting values. In this paper, I propose to argue that the idea of freedom has clear egalitarian implications.*

Freedom is commonly represented as being negative or positive, but it has both senses in ordinary usage, and the distinction fails adequately to explain the relationship between views on freedom and poverty. An alternative representation of the concept distinguishes individual freedom, based on the autonomous individual, from social freedom, which sees freedom as a social relationship.

Equality implies the elimination of disadvantage. Freedom is a redistributive idea, implying that the freedom of some must be restricted to increase the freedom of others. Although the individual concept of freedom is restrictive, equal treatment and equality of opportunity are largely compatible with it, and even equality of outcome can be reconciled with it to some degree. The social concept of freedom is broader, extending the scope of redistribution to all forms of social disadvantage. This demands a high degree of equality; it also defines the boundaries of the pursuit of equality, which is justifiable in so far as it increases freedom.

Freedom is not, therefore, in conflict with equality. Certain egalitarian assumptions are part of its normative base, and it actively requires a degree of redistribution.

The pursuit of equality has been presented as conflicting with the freedom of the individual in two main ways. First, it is said to change the relation of the individual to the state. In order to achieve equality, it is necessary for the state to intervene in people's lives, both to redress existing disadvantage and to prevent further inequalities from arising. Liberal thinkers have held that there is a province of individual action, and of relationships in small groups, in which the state has no concern, and any intrusion into this province is an invasion of individual liberty. Secondly, egalitarianism implies some form of redistribution, the removal of the advantages of one person in order to remedy the disadvantages of another. Raphael writes that,

> the legal requirement to give up a proportion of one's income to the State means that one is not free to do as one likes with the money. [1]

He is quite content to accept this conflict; freedom is, after all, only one possible moral value of several, and redistribution of this kind is fundamental to the provision of basic welfare services. Others, like Hayek [2], are less sanguine: a state which assumes collective responsibilities cannot avoid requiring citizens to undertake certain duties towards it, duties which may constitute an unacceptable infringement of personal liberty.

The extent of this conflict, however, is greatly exaggerated. In this paper, I propose to argue that the idea of freedom, far from being opposed to equality, is bound up with it. Certain egalitarian assumptions are part of its normative base, and it actively requires a degree of egalitarian redistribution.

Two Concepts of Freedom

Consider the following examples. They are based in contemporary problems in the United Kingdom.

(A) Albert has been discharged from a psychiatric hospital after a long stay. He has no accommodation because the flat he rented privately was let to someone else after he went into hospital. He has no money, and so is claiming Supplementary Benefit, a means-tested welfare payment, on a daily basis. He receives less than he would if he had a regular address, and has to queue for a part of each day in the social security office. His history of mental illness, and his interrupted work record, make him virtually unemployable.

He has no change of clothes, and he smells. He cannot spend time in many places, like shops or the local library, which he will be thrown out of if he tries to go in. He is liable to be moved on by police, and possibly arrested as a vagrant.

(B) Barbara is divorced. She has two children, aged four and two, and she lives alone with them in a two-bedroom flat. Barbara's income, at about £48 a week, is scarcely adequate for her needs, and her ex-husband, whose employment is intermittent, often fails to pay maintenance when it is due, which leaves her at times with under £28 a week. Barbara cannot get work because of the children, and she could not afford a childminder because it would cost more than the wage she can bring home. She has no skills. She is effectively tied to the house; she cannot leave the children alone and usually cannot afford to go out with them. If she were to leave the children for any extended period she would be subject to scrutiny by the social services. Her basic options, when she needs money, are loan sharks, prostitution, or going without food.

(C) Charles, aged 50, used to be a skilled worker in a shipyard, but his skills have been made redundant. He has a family with three children, two still at school. At first, he was particular about the type of work he would look for, but as months went by he was ready to look for anything. He is now on Supplementary Benefit, and has had to get by on a greatly reduced income. His age, the local employment situation, and the length of his unemployment make it highly unlikely he will ever get a job. He hasn't chosen to be unemployed, but no-one will take him on. He feels a sense of helplessness, and has stopped trying. He is liable to surveillance and investigation to ensure that he keeps to the conditions of benefit. And he may even ultimately be prosecuted for failure to support his family: poverty, in Britain, is a criminal offence.

There is some debate as to whether these conditions constitute a limitation of freedom. 'Freedom' seems to be a contested concept, but unfortunately its conventional characterisation fails to identify the reasons for disagreement. Freedom is commonly divided into 'negative' and 'positive' concepts. 'Negative' freedom refers to the absence of coercion, "the deliberate interference of other human beings within the area in which I could act" [3]. Poverty is not equivalent to coercion. Berlin writes:

> Coercion is not... a term that covers every form of inability.... It is argued, very plausibly, that if a man is too poor to afford something on which there is no legal ban—a loaf of bread, a journey round the world, resource to the law courts—he is as little free to have it as he would be if it were forbidden him by law.... If my poverty were a kind of disease, which prevented me from buying bread... as lameness prevents me from run-

> ning, this inability would not naturally be described as a lack of freedom...

Poverty, he concludes, could only be considered an infringement of freedom if it was held to result from the actions of others [4].

The second concept, 'positive' freedom, may be understood in two different senses: the power to act as one chooses, and 'self-mastery'. The distinction between them is that whereas one may have the power to act, the motivation to act may itself be unfree—like the behaviour of the drug addict whose will is sapped by his addiction. It may be that poverty limits one's ability to master one's actions—a view associated, for example, with Oscar Lewis's descriptions of a 'Culture of poverty' [5]. Weale argues it is not realistic to suppose that individuals whose capabilities are restricted through poverty are fully autonomous [6], and there is a limit to which people in circumstances like those of Albert, Barbara and Charles can be seen as self-determining. A person who is malnourished or who suffers poverty for a long period does not always act rationally. There are, for example, common psychological consequences of long term unemployment—including lethargy, and a failure to exercise choice—which imply important limitations on autonomy [7]. However, the evidence on this point is contentious, and it is in any case difficult to determine how far an argument of this kind is specific to conditions of poverty; freedom, in the terms of 'self-mastery', can scarcely be measured or compared.

The argument that poverty restricts positive freedom rests in its material basis. It limits directly one's power to act, by limiting those areas in which autonomy can be exercised. Poverty is in essence a lack of resources; resources in exchange are generally represented by money. A person with more money has, by virtue of that fact, more choice, whether in the short term through greater disposable income or in the long term through the exercise of greater command over resources. The material choices of the rich necessarily include, and surpass, the material choices of the poor. Both rich and poor, as Anatole France wrote, are free to sleep under the bridges of Paris; but only the poor do. Because people who are poor have less choice, less control over their lives, they are, in the terms of positive freedom, less free.

The distinction between negative and positive freedom is a useful one, because the writers who consider freedom tend to stress either negative or positive aspects, but it is also misleading in important respects. The classification rests on the assumption that the elements of freedom can be separated from each other. MacCallum argues against this that all freedom is necessarily composed of the freedom *of* a person *from* restraints *to* do something [8]. This is an analytical rather than a normative proposition: it does not tell us where the emphasis should fall, but it identifies the essential features of the concept. Negative freedom does, in practice, have to take into account a person's capabilities; it must also consider a person's choices, the alternatives available to him. Freedom, Berlin argues, depends on the number of options a person has, how accessible each option is, and on the relative importance of different opportunities to a person's life [9]. Budgen & Johnston, writing about handicap, point out that although in some cases there is no choice at all, there are others where the alternatives are wholly unacceptable, and more still which are 'non-eligible'—basically not to be chosen, because the act is intrinsically undesirable, because there are problems associated with it, or because the consequences are unattractive [10]. In case 'B', Barbara does have options, but they are non-eligible. The effect of poverty is to limit both the range and quality of material choices. Even if a person is not actually prevented from doing what he is unable to do, it takes

little to appreciate that the fewer and harder a person's choices, the more vulnerable he is to coercion—a problem which is evident from all three cases. This does not mean that people are made less free simply by virtue of having less choice, but that as soon as their options are considered in a social context, they are likely to be.

Equally, a concept of 'positive' freedom which failed to consider choice as well as capability would be difficult to reconcile with any use of freedom as it is currently understood. Freedom requires choice. But people like Albert, Barbara and Charles are unable to make major choices. On the face of it, both negative and positive concepts of freedom seem to imply that poverty may be a restraint on freedom—the first indirectly, the second centrally. It would be possible to argue that the kind of choices which poverty denies are not very important in comparison with, say, freedom of speech or religion, but this is not usually the direction which arguments have taken. Material choices do matter. The "maximisation of opportunities" which Berlin considers a requisite of freedom seems to demand some redistribution of power or resources, though the precise nature of this redistribution is far from clear—Berlin describes the process as "agonizing" in its implications [11].

I do not want to follow this line of argument too far, because although I believe it would lend support to my case, I do not feel it accurately reflects the terms in which the debate has been framed. The ideas of negative and positive freedom do not help to explain why there should be a fundamental dispute about the effect of poverty on personal freedom. Writers like Hayek and Friedman do, in practice, emphasise the importance of capability and choice, but this does not mean that they see any necessary connection between freedom and poverty, and they find no inconsistency in arguing for a free society in which people may be poor [12]. They are able to do this because they begin from a different conceptual base.

The distinction between positive and negative freedom is less important than one between *individual* and *social* freedom. These are models of freedom, rather than discrete concepts; they are commonly thought of as parallel to each other [13], but there are important differences between them. The idea of individual freedom starts from the premise that each person should be self-determining. The basic criterion is autonomy. An individual is free if he is making his own decisions, subject only to his own capabilities. Though the emphasis falls on protection from coercion, the concept is both negative and positive—it assumes that a person is not restricted, and that he makes his own decisions. Albert, Barbara and Charles have not evidently lost their power to think or act for themselves. A person who is poor, disabled or homeless is still self-determining, and so is still free. The presumption of autonomy implies that the primary responsibility for one's circumstances rests with the individual. It is possible, in consequence, to link individual freedom with pathological explanations for poverty, which argue that poverty results from a person's own characteristics or actions. Poverty, by this model, is not so much a restriction of freedom as the consequence of it.

Intervention in a person's life, for his benefit or even to increase his freedom, is not legitimate without his consent because it interferes with his autonomy. Watson argues, for example, that,

> unsolicited (social work) intervention of any kind in the affairs of an autonomous individual is justified only where there is a danger of serious harm to others [14].

This seems to me representative of the individual approach, though it is limited in

two respects. First, I think it goes too far in requiring a 'danger of serious harm' rather than an interference with other people. Heavy breathing down telephones, painting graffiti on walls or stealing milk bottles hardly cause serious harm, but we don't usually consider that people should be at liberty to do them. Social work intervention may, in the appropriate circumstances, be less damaging to freedom than the alternatives. Second, intervention can also be justified to enable people to become autonomous. The education of children, and (more arguably) the compulsory treatment of mentally ill people, are illustrative cases. They cease to be justifiable when they limit autonomy—which leads us to distinctions between education and indoctrination, or medical treatment and institutionalisation. The defence of the autonomy of the individual is paramount.

Social freedom, by contrast, sees freedom primarily as a relationship between people. A person's capacity is seen in the context of his social environment; both his own ability to act, and the effect of others upon him, are forms of power. "Freedom", Tawney argues, "is always relative to power" [15]. Like the individual conception, this encompasses both negative and positive senses of freedom. The difference between individual and social freedom rests more in one's interpretation of the nature of social action than in the identification of conceptually distinct elements. Social freedom stresses, not self-determination—which can be exercised by an individual in isolation—but the relative power to act; not the absence of interference, but the relative power of others. Because people who are homeless, disabled or poor are unable to escape from their situation, they are not free [16]. In the same way as the individual concept may be linked to pathological explanations, the social view may be associated with structural views, which attribute poverty not to the responsibility of the individual but to the structure of a society [17].

Intervention may be justified to liberate them from their restricted circumstances. Freedom can be increased by increasing power. Financial resources, because they enable a person to act, are one source of power. A person with more money has more choice, and is therefore more free. Equally, because power is relative, a person's freedom may be increased by limiting the power of others. Barry argues against this that,

> to enslave someone is not normally said to increase the slave-owner's freedom, though it certainly decreases the slave's [18].

Taylor-Gooby replies that,

> It is perfectly sensible to describe slave ownership as enhancing the master's freedom so long as it enables him to do things that he wants to do [19].

This represents a difference between advocates of individual and social views of freedom.

Barry is, I think, correct when he says this is not the way we use the term, but he is correct for the wrong reasons. The statement looks odd because we are used to thinking of 'freedom' as referring to people who are adversely affected by someone else's actions. The idea of freedom, as it is commonly understood—in both individual and social forms—is biased towards the disadvantaged. I intend to argue that both models have egalitarian assumptions at root. In order to justify this contention, I have first to explain what is meant by the concept of equality.

Equality

Equality is not, as some critics would have it, 'sameness'. There is nothing 'unequal' about the fact that some people have blond hair and others have black. People are 'unequal' when some have an advantage over others. The fundamental inequalities of society—like class, status, power and the distribution of resources—refer, not to differences between people, but to relationships of advantage and disadvantage. The object of egalitarian policies is to change these relationships. There are also basic dissimilarities between people which lead, in certain circumstances, to disadvantage —physical features like height, strength, and most important, race and sex—but the crux of the pursuit of equality is to remove the disadvantage, not to eliminate the differences themselves. Hartley's critical parable, *Facial Justice* [20], attacks a position which no-one holds.

Egalitarian policies are commonly framed in one of three ways. There is *equal treatment,* the prevention of disadvantage in the exercise of social rights. There is the removal of disadvantages in competition with others, which is *equality of opportunity.* And there is the complete removal of disadvantage in practice—*equality of* result. This is not an exhaustive classification [21], but it represents some of the main attributes of egalitarianism in an applied context.

Equal treatment implies treatment by a rule, but disadvantage in treatment is not removed by adherence to a rule *per se.* Dworkin tries to distinguish equal treatment, "the right to an equal distribution of some opportunity or resource or burden", from treatment as an equal, which is the right "to be treated with the same respect and concern as anyone else" [22]. This is a confusion, which comes from thinking of equal treatment as treating people the same. The idea of equal treatment is not generally used in this way: we may think of the health service as treating people equally, but as Benn & Peters remark, "we should not wish rheumatic patients to be treated like diabetics" [23]. When equal treatment is identified as treatment without disadvantage, the purpose of Dworkin's distinction collapses. The argument for equality is an argument for treatment without favour, without prejudice. Titmuss writes:

> There should be no sense of inferiority, pauperism, shame or stigma in the use of a publicly provided service: no attribution that one was being or becoming a 'public burden'. Hence the emphasis on the social rights of all citizens to use or not to use as responsible people the services made available by the community in respect of certain needs which the private market and the family were unable or unwilling to provide universally. If these services were not provided by everybody for everybody, they would either not be available at all, or only for those who could afford them, and for others on such terms as would involve the infliction of a sense of inferiority and stigma [24].

The second main form of equality is equality of opportunity. The idea is potentially ambiguous. Rae points out that it can be "prospect-regarding", implying that people are able to participate equally in a contest which any could win, or "means-regarding", which implies that they have equal means to achieve the end [25]. In the former sense, equality of opportunity is barely equivalent to equality of treatment; in the latter, Schaar notes,

> the formula can be used to express the fundamental proposition that no member of the community should be denied the basic conditions necessary for the fullest participation in the common life [26].

The debate on equality of opportunity has centred around such issues as access to higher education and jobs of high status, like being a doctor—positions for which people compete in a selective market—with the object of giving disadvantaged groups equivalent access to the rewards available in society.

The aim of equality of opportunity is a limited one, and it has been substantially criticised. Schaar argues that it allows the less competent individual to go only "as far as he could have gone without the aid of the doctrine ... to the bottom rung of the social ladder—while it simultaneously stimulates him to go further" [27]. Tawney refers to the prospect of a thousand donkeys "induced to sweat by the prospect of a carrot that could only be eaten by one" [28]. We might think of equality of opportunity as a game of musical chairs: there are places for lots of people, but by no means enough, and someone has to lose. There are also fears that the existence of inequality perpetuates the disadvantages of the lower status groups. Tony Crosland, a major critic of the concept of equality of opportunity, who (perversely) is often represented as one of its leading advocates, argued that,

> in Britain equality of opportunity and social mobility ... are not enough. They need ... to be combined with measures ... to equalise the distribution of rewards and privileges so as to diminish the degree of class stratification, the injustice of large inequalities, and the collective discontents which come from too great a dispersion of rewards [29].

Egalitarian policies may, consequently, aim for equality of result as an extension of the desire to limit disadvantage in society.

These different approaches to equality represent a progressively extending commitment to intervention. Each is motivated by the same guiding principle—though they do differ in the extent to which they prevent or compensate for disadvantage.

Freedom and Equality

The individual conception of freedom is far from inconsistent with the removal of disadvantage. Historically, the idea was used as the basis of an ideology which attacked traditional privileges, and it is difficult wholly to divorce a concept from its radical origins. It is, in the first place, an assertion of the rights of the individual held against the rest of the world. A person is disadvantaged in these rights if he does not have them, or has rights of an inferior kind.

It would be possible, of course, to argue that individuals are not equally entitled to freedom—that some people *should* have rights of an inferior kind, or no rights at all. But as Flew, who can hardly be taken as a passionate advocate of equality, notes,

> if I claim I have a right, on some ground, then I necessarily concede, by that same claim, a corresponding right to everyone else who satisfies that condition [30].

If freedom is not conceived as a social relationship, these rights must be inherent in the individual. If we are going to accept, as Nozick does, that men have rights by their nature, we have effectively acknowledged an initial degree of equality—a sense in which people cannot be legitimately disadvantaged [31]. This establishes a significant principle—the same principle which underlies the different approaches to

equality. Rae, rightly, notes that market liberals are not so much *anti*-egalitarian as *narrowly* egalitarian [32]. They admit equality in certain respects while seeking to resist its expansion in others. But if we are equal in our right to freedom, it seems to follow that steps to prevent disadvantage in this respect are legitimate.

The inherent liberty of the individual is necessarily compromised by living in society. The freedoms of one individual must be protected from the freedoms of others; as Hobhouse puts it,

> my right to keep my neighbour awake by playing the piano all night is not satisfactorily counterbalanced by his right to keep a dog which howls all the time the piano is playing [33].

There is a distinction, which most people would recognise, between liberty and licence. A person's liberty may legitimately be curtailed when it impinges on the liberty of others. The freedom to swing your fist, as a learned judge had it, ends where my nose begins. This accepts a degree of intervention in people's lives. It implies removal of the disadvantages of the weaker. And it does so *at the expense of the stronger*—making it redistributive in form. Even under the restrictive criteria of the individual concept of freedom, it is, effectively, an egalitarian proposition, enshrining in intervention and redistribution the very principles with which it is supposed to be in conflict.

Both intervention and redistribution can be justified, within the individual concept, to increase freedom. The finance of education, for example, is on the face of it a legitimate form of state expenditure, as it creates some of the preconditions of individual autonomy. But a limitation of freedom is not legitimate simply because it prevents disadvantage: this would be, as Flew calls it, "the politics of Procrustes" [34]. It is acceptable only in order to protect the autonomy of others, and it ceases to be legitimate at the point where it interferes with their autonomy or their rights. This implies only a limited acceptance of egalitarian ideas. Equality of treatment is generally compatible with the individual concept, not just because there is no conflict, but because they share a common conceptual base—an assumption of equal rights. Hayek, for example, accepts a minimal concept of social justice which applies equal rules to all as consistent with his views [35]. This does have important implications for welfare, as it is difficult to see how the restriction of liberty implied by some measures can be justified. Piven and Cloward cite the example of certain welfare recipients in the US, mothers on AFDC, who took the administration to court on the basis that the Constitution protected them against searches and surveillance. The court accepted that they had a right, but said that if they exercised it they must expect to lose their benefit [36]. This disadvantages the recipients, because it devalues their rights in comparison with others. It also represents a clear infringement of individual liberty. There is an alternative—which is to go hungry—but it is clearly non-eligible. There is no guarantee, from either the individual concept of freedom or the principle of equal treatment, that there will be a right to welfare. However, if social welfare is given it must be on terms compatible with the preservation of individual autonomy and the rights of the person.

Equality of opportunity is also consistent with the individual conception of freedom, in so far as it prevents restrictions on an individual's choice and capabilities. Anti-discrimination laws—like the Equal Pay Act, or the Race Relations Act—may limit the freedom of the employer, but they also represent a protection of the right of the individual to follow a course of action, subject only to his or her

capabilities, on the same criteria as others. I can see no inconsistency between the individual model of freedom and policies of this kind. Equality of result potentially implies a greater tension. Edmund Burke argues, I think correctly, that equal rights are not necessarily rights to equal things [37]. One person's freedom may procure different outcomes from another's, provided that this does not unacceptably limit other people. This represents the greatest extent to which the individual concept of freedom limits equality. But the proviso is important: if problems like poverty and homelessness are seen as the result of the actions of others—a tenable view, but one which few advocates of this concept would accept—a greater substantive equality would be, not simply compatible with freedom, but required in order to protect it.

The individual model of freedom, in sum, assumes equal rights; it is generally taken to apply to those who are disadvantaged in a coercive relationship; it requires a degree of redistribution, in the sense that some people bear costs for the benefit of others; and it can be reconciled to a number of egalitarian measures. Individualists who object to intervention in private affairs, or to redistribution, have some ground to do so in the cases where this interferes with personal automony, but in other circumstances any objection has to be based on arguments other than freedom.

Though the individual model is a coherent and, I believe, a widely held view, its assumptions are very artificial. Our choices and capabilities are not formed in isolation from society, and the conditions under which many basic freedoms are exercised—like freedom of assembly, economic freedom, or political participation—depend crucially on the forms of social organisation. The same applies to conditions which limit freedom. Problems like poverty, unemployment, homelessness and dependency reflect the distribution of resources and life-chances in society. The cases described at the beginning of this paper—those of Albert, Barbara and Charles—reflect not simply the problems of limited resources, but the relationship of poverty to social norms—expectations about personal capacity, home, work, and rôles in family support—which would make the examples inapplicable in a different social context. Wilding and George [38] reject the individualist approach as unreasonable in its formulation of rights in a social vacuum, unsociological and, because it fails to take into account the conditions necessary to allow people to be free, restrictive of freedom.

The social model of freedom sees the capabilities, powers and rights of the individual in the context of social relationships. It permits positive action to extend freedom by supplementing these capabilities or regulating the influence of others. If a person's capacity is limited, for example because he is workless, or because he doesn't have enough to eat, his power—and so his freedom—can be increased at the expense of others. In the individual model, it is justifiable to restrict any identifiable person or agency whose actions infringe the freedom of another person; freedom is redistributed from an advantaged individual to a disadvantaged one. In the social model, disadvantage is attributable not so much to identifiable individuals as to the structure of a society.

The social model of freedom has developed primarily as a critique of inequality in society, and its principal advocates have tended to emphasise the restriction of liberty which inequalities bring about. Tawney, for example, stresses the problems caused by social stratification and inequalities of economic power [39]. Engels writes that,

> the real content of the proletarian demand for equality is the demand for

> the abolition of classes. Any demand for equality which goes beyond that of necessity passes into absurdity [40].

At the risk of passing into absurdity, this seems to me quite inadequate. In the first place, it underestimates the extent to which people's abilities are limited by society. As Norman suggests, the position of women, the problem of racial disadvantage, cannot be simply attributed to class inequality and would not be swept away with the abolition of classes [41]. It ignores besides the question of structural dependency, one of the central issues of social policy. Disability is defined to a large extent by social and cultural norms. Old people are prevented from working and forced to take a dependent role. The financial dependency of single parents is largely the outcome of social norms of child-rearing combined with the inadequacy of women's wages. Unemployment stems from an industrial system relying on the mechanism of the market to match jobs to workers. Dependency is institutionalised in society, and the ability of dependent groups to control their lives is necessarily limited. The responsibility for increasing the freedom of dependent groups falls as a result on the other members of society—requiring redistribution as a condition of freedom. Secondly, the emphasis of this critique is negative rather than positive. The social concept of freedom is not simply a response to current disadvantages, but an appeal for

> the enlargement of personal liberties through the discovery by each individual of his own or his neighbour's endowment [42].

The realisation of this ideal implies both intervention and redistribution. Intervention is justified to increase the power of disadvantaged groups. Redistribution, at the expense of those who are advantaged by society, is legitimate if it increases the freedom of those whose capabilities are limited as a consequence of social organisation.

The attempt to bring about equality cannot be defended in these terms if it does not improve the circumstances of those who are disadvantaged. If, as Rawls argues, the power of those who are disadvantaged could be shown to increase in conditions of inequality [43], a restriction of the freedom of others in the press for greater equality would not be justifiable. And if people are restricted without this increasing the freedom of others, this has to be condemned as an infringement of their liberty. The concept of freedom provides a moral basis for the removal of disadvantage, but it also marks the limit of equality as an aim of social policy.

Freedom, then, implies equality. It does not imply it unequivocally and without reservation, but it does not seem at all exaggerated to describe it as an egalitarian value. Although this strengthens the case for egalitarianism, it is perhaps important to note that freedom is not the only value which is relevant to social organisation. Consideration of other values, like equity, efficiency, welfare and property rights may lead to some reservation about the general desirability of equality in principle.

Correspondence: Paul Spicker, Department of Social Studies, Trent Polytechnic, Burton Street, Nottingham NG1 4BU, England.

NOTES

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