

FIVE REASONABLE PEOPLE

THE UNDERLYING STRUCTURE OF MORALITY

CHAPTER 7. EQUALITY AND ITS SURPRISES

If you feed a monkey cucumber slices it will be quite pleased. But then if you feed grapes to the monkey in the next cage, the first monkey will get angry and throw the cucumber at you.¹ It seems even animals have a notion of social equality.

Though equality is a social concept familiar to everyone, it entails surprising problems, to which WOLT presents surprising answers.

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BACKGROUND TO EQUALITY

Equality is arguably the hottest political potato of all. People seem more aware of equality than other significant concerns, such as power, freedom and justice.² Perhaps this is because equality is more obviously associated with status—which seems to mean just about everything to social animals.

¹ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=meiU6TxysCg>

² Power is complicated and treated in [Chapters 10](#), 11, 12; freedom and justice are simple and treated in [Appendix 1](#).

To examine equality scientifically we need to hypothesise a relationship between two (or more) contrasting concepts and draw the consequences. Two concepts of equality are readily available: *equality of opportunity* and *equality of condition* (also called equality of outcome). Philosophers have been comparing these for at least a century.

The two kinds of equality must have been an implicit source of contention since the dawn of humanity. To make the distinction *explicit*—simply naming the two—is itself a start toward clarifying, however there is much muddled thinking on equality.

To discipline that thinking we can adopt the usual WOLT process as set out in Chapters 2 and 3 and in [Appendix 1](#), to wit: regard the two kinds of equality as extremes and apply the “hypothetico-deductive” method of the physical sciences. This will set out the possible relationships between the two equalities and we will be able to deduce some consequences.

Equality of condition is what we ordinarily think of as equality; it is what that cucumber-throwing monkey wants. In terms of extremes, it is conceptually simple; it means all people should be of equal power and wealth: an orchestra can have no conductor and no one may drive a flasher car than anyone else.

Equality of opportunity is perhaps more complex; it would obtain if every person, at the beginning of life, or perhaps at the beginning of adult life, had equal opportunity to succeed. This would require that everyone be equally clever and attractive and that wealth and family connections would be of no advantage.

These extremes, like all valid theoretical concepts, cannot exist in reality. They are easy to mock and often are. That the perfect is out of reach does not rule out striving in its direction and in the real world much effort is put into approaching both forms of equality. For example, democracy requires every adult to have equal voting power and many countries substantially

achieve this equality of condition. With a view to facilitating equal opportunity, in most countries children must go to school. The option of not attending school is almost nowhere accepted.

Equality (and confusion over whether *opportunity* or *outcome* is meant) is a permanent and prominent social issue, central to public policy, and we should expect the two kinds to fit WOLT.

INFERRING THE FOUR SOCIAL TYPES

We already know there are four social types so instead of starting with the two equalities and deducing four types from first principles, let us take a lazier approach and see how the equalities might *fit* the four types.

The Type 3 dreams of *equality of condition*. The 3s object to the way difference in status or resources leads to disadvantage and coercive dominance. For their part, the 1s will reject equality of condition because any measure to ensure it will be coercive interference undermining the incentive for individuals to put in an effort to improve self and society.

The Type 1 demands *equality of opportunity* because everyone should have the same chance to “get ahead,” which means increasing *inequality* of condition. Rewards should go to those who apply themselves, not to those who receive unearned benefits or to those who start out in a privileged position. A competition where some have an initial advantage is a sham. The 3s reject equality of opportunity as it encourages people to compete to get the better of each other, which results in disharmony and unequal outcomes.

So here, as in most matters, the 1s and the 3s are diametrically opposed. Given these positions, let us allocate equality of condition to the X axis and equality of opportunity to the Y axis as in Table 7.1.

So much for the 1s and 3s. According to Table 7.1, the 4s want neither kind of equality and the 2s want both.

Do those allocations ring true? In the 4s' world which runs on fate and luck, opportunity is meaningless and there is no way to affect outcomes. So the pragmatic 4s know there is no equality and no point wanting it.

Table 7.1 Equality of opportunity and condition on YX

Equ. of opportunity	Y		Equ. of condition
	Yes	No	
Yes	1	2	X
No	4	3	

If the 1s, 3s and 4s fit, then the 2s, who regulate the 1-3 conflict, have to fit. The 2s, positive on all three axes, apply Z to resolve the Y-X conflict. That is how society works. So the 2s *must* fit as per Table 7.1. Yet how can Type 2 be saying yes to both equalities? Isn't hierarchy the very embodiment of inequality? How can hierarchical 2-ism pretend to any equality at all, let alone achieve both equality of opportunity and equality of outcome simultaneously?

HIERARCHICAL EQUALITY

Actually, hierarchy can just as well be viewed as formalising the two kinds of equality. In a hierarchy the personnel holding a given rank have equal *condition* (that being almost the definition of rank) and they have equal *opportunity* to compete for promotion to the next rank. There is no competition between different ranks; people compete only with their peers and those who win a promotion all have the same outcome; they then have equal opportunity to compete with their new set of equals for the next level of equal outcomes.

Thus hierarchy achieves both equality of outcome and of opportunity through *equality under rules*, rules which set the ranking system and stipulate equal treatment of equal people.

In the literature on equality (which is enormous), equality of opportunity and equality of condition are seen as being in opposition and much treatment is of one or the other (and much is partisan). No one has noticed that *equality under law* (a concept more from the politics and legal studies literatures but going back to ancient Greece) achieves both at once. The scholarly literature on bureaucracy (of which there is plenty) does not mention it, and the academic literature on human social hierarchy is practically non-existent,³ so it will be a surprise, to both lay and learned, that 2-ism, the regimented, ranked, hierarchical, social structure, realises equality of opportunity and equality of outcome simultaneously.⁴ Yet this is just what hierarchy is designed to do.

In the real world, 2s are very fussy about equality. If you and I are of the same official rank but my desk is larger or my carpet thicker, you will be indignant. If you have more years of service and I am promoted before you, you will be outraged.⁵

³ One reason for the academic obliviousness to hierarchy would be that it is distasteful to the pervasive 3-ism of most social science and obnoxious to the 1-ism of economics. Another reason may be that it is uncomfortably close to home given the very hierarchical nature of universities with their levels of professors, lecturers and assistants, and their categories and sub-categories of administration personnel, all with their graded salary schedules. No hierarchy welcomes examination, and self-examination may be perceived as disloyalty.

⁴ If money be the measure of *condition* then in reality, 1-ism can be far more unequal than 2-ism. CEO remuneration in private enterprise may be hundreds of times more than a cleaner, whereas a general in a military hierarchy gets only about ten times more than a private.

⁵ You may address your grievances to your superior who will notify the allocations and promotions committees of the apparent breach of proper process. The respective committee chairpersons will then advise your superior, who will advise you, that the matter has been prioritised and sub-committees have been proposed to report on

Though the 2s are much fussier about equality than the 1s or 3s, both 1s and 3s would expostulate that the very last thing the hierarchical 2s can claim is equality. To that the 2s could respond, were they so inclined (which they are not, for power is not wielded by chatter), that by taming the heartlessness of competition without spoiling the incentive of personal ambition, and by using division of labour to coordinate cooperation, 2-ism better realises both kinds of equality than the simplistic extremes of opportunist 1-ism or aggrieved 3-ism. No 3-ist egalitarian utopia can match the precise equality of condition that a given rank can provide, where all wear the same uniform displaying the same badge of authority. And no 1-ist libertarian fantasy can compare with the perfect equality of opportunity provided by the prospect of promotion to the next rank.

So Table 7.1 is correct. The two kinds of equality are in conflict and, as always, 2-ism is the way to regulate their coexistence.

HIERARCHY: PRACTICAL LIBERALISM?

To have both kinds of equality at the same time has been a major aim of liberal⁶ philosophy since well before the two equalities were clearly identified. The very last thing liberal philosophers expect (or want) is a hierarchy. Indeed, liberalism began, nearly three centuries ago, as a reaction to overweening 2-ism. So WOLT is saying something new. This is what a theory is supposed to do: tell us something new, something we didn't know; in this case, that hierarchy is the means by which equality of opportunity and equality of outcome can obtain simultaneously.

allocation and promotion procedures and in due course you will be informed as to whether you should lodge a formal complaint.

⁶ Classic liberal, not the modern American leftist sense. Page T4 of [Appendix 3](#) has an overview of the origins of classical liberalism.

WOLT says there are only four social types, so hierarchy must be the *only* way both equalities can be present at the same time. That means the liberal hope of having both equalities without hierarchy is impossible for it would be positive on both Y and X and negative on Z which is incoherent.

But is it really the only way? This lazy treatment did not *deduce* the four types but instead presupposed the WOLT framework and then looked to see how the two kinds of equality would fit to it. Given the inherent slipperiness of words, might the fit be due to some devious reasoning? Is Table 7.1 really the only framework for equality?

Actually, simply fitting concepts should suffice: we have seen that the types of equality do fit and so the relationships are revealed. Fitting types is generally easier than deducing from first principles and there are many pairs of issues which you can fit to the four social types but which are too vague, too general, or too specialised to serve to rigorously deduce the types. So a clear fit ought to be enough. The WOLT framework has been established and re-established and confirmed so many times ([Appendix 1](#)) with no exceptions that we really don't need to take every pair and reinvent the theory from taws.

Still... we did arrive at a surprising result on a much discussed important social concept so perhaps it would be more convincing to play straight and *deduce* four types from the two equalities—and see whether they do indeed yield the four WOLT types. At this stage, deduction of the Types 1, 3, and 4, from first principles should be fairly straightforward so those three can be left as an exercise for the reader. It is the Type 2 which interests us here.

DEDUCING 2-ISM FROM EQUALITY

The conclusion that 2-ism instantiates both kinds of equality is new to social science and philosophy. We know coercive 2-ism can resolve the contradictions of Y and X; the question is whether hierarchy is the *only*

way to have both equalities at once. Here is a thought-experiment to show it.

Imagine a society where equality of condition obtains: everyone is equal. Now let equal opportunity be introduced. Some will grasp it and some will win. Conditions are now no longer equal. Not only are the winners ahead but their prizes probably also furnish them with extra opportunities. Equality has been shattered.

To restore equality winners will have to withdraw. After they withdraw, both kinds of equality will be restored to the remaining society of non-winners. For the winners themselves to have equality of condition, they must all have won identical prizes. And if equality of opportunity is to continue for the winners, they would need to have an equal chance at another common prize. This would be followed by another withdrawal of winners—and so on indefinitely.

To achieve these complications will require rules and obedience to them. This will entail rule enforcers which requires hierarchy. Thus it is proved: the two equalities together can only be realised with hierarchy. The common prize will, of course, be promotion to the next rank.

We see from this that where hierarchy is absent or deficient, winners will not be required to withdraw which will allow winners to compete with non-winners. The winners' enhanced status will give them the advantage through enhanced opportunity—and the inequality will be amplified; winners will become fewer, tending to monopoly, and the non-winners will multiply. As opportunity declines, “non-winners” will become “losers” and the society will experience spiralling inequality. Some losers will accept this as their fate, perhaps resentful like the monkey who is fed cucumber, and some will agitate for a fairer society. That is what will happen if hierarchy is deficient.

This leads to a somewhat paradoxical conclusion. Not only is hierarchy—the epitome of inequality—the only way to instantiate both equalities but it is necessary to *preserve* equality. In particular, where 1-ism is rampant and 2-ism inadequate, we can expect gross inequality. Evidently, the inequality which has grown so markedly in the Western economies in recent decades is caused by inadequate or ineffective hierarchy. In one sense, this is not a surprise as it is widely accepted that extremes of mal-distribution of wealth are countered by government regulation.

Throughout human history until two centuries ago, inequality was caused by too much 2-ism; now inequality is being caused by too little 2-ism.

1-ism all on its own collapses into gang warfare or vendetta or warlordism so a basic requirement of civilised, stable 1-ism is security. Where 1-ist influence suborns the governing hierarchy, inequality increases and so does discontent. To 1s the discontent is a crime or potential crime so they demand more security. The 1s can use their resources to collude with their tame 2s to expand the hierarchies of police and military. For the losers, taking a job at the bottom of security hierarchies (or of mafia hierarchies), may be their only opportunity to mitigate their inequality of condition. The countries of South America exemplify this situation.

The classical liberal project of wanting competition and cooperation without hierarchy, which amounts to wanting to be positive on X and Y but negative on Z, is in vain. Liberalism is a vast academic industry (which indicates how seriously the notion of equality is viewed) but no one ever had fire in the belly about liberalism and the liberal project is confined within the halls of academe. Presumably, it is its logical incoherence which makes it impossible to propose an actual, feasible program of liberalism comparable to, or competitive with, the enthusiasms of libertarianism (pure 1-ism), fascism (pure 2-ism), communism (pure 3-ism) or even democracy (rule by the people).

EQUALITY UNDER LAW—ON Z?

There is a theoretical loose end to tie up. WOLT says there are three axes and four social types and that every social concern are found there. Each axial issue is also a type characteristic (of the two types which are positive on that axis) but there are type characteristics that are not on an axis. For example, *competition* is a Y issue and also a Type 1 and Type 2 characteristic. But *individualism* is purely 1-ist, and *hierarchy* is a purely 2-ist; these types characteristics don't occur on any axis. We know *equality under law* is a 2-ist characteristic but is it just 2-ist or does it also lie on Z? That is, does it lie at the positive end of the Z axis? Wouldn't it be neat if the three widely recognised forms of equality fell on the three axes?

For anything to be on the positive end of Z it must be accepted by the 4s, and it must be rejected by the 1s and 3s. Do the 4s enjoy equality under the law? At first blush it seems implausible. Do both the 1s and 3s really reject equality under the law? That also seems implausible—but note that without WOLT such suggestions would never arise. And the case for them can be made.

For Type 2s, equality under the law means (and the literature often expresses it so) that equal people are treated equally. This reflects the fact that the promotion rules vary according to rank. The rules apply equally—to everyone within a particular rank. The 1s object to this for it awards authority and privilege on the basis of ascribed status, not from earned achievement, and they will also object that it rules out competition between different ranks. 1s want equality of opportunity. To have opportunities dished out according to legal criteria conflicts with everything 1s hold dear. We can fairly conclude that 1s do reject equality under law.

The 3s would also object, complaining that equality under law results in inequality because it impacts people differently. Anatole France famously said:

“The law, in a majestic concern for equality, forbids both the rich and the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread.” More recently, Gong Xiantian of Beijing University Law School made a similar sardonic point when he said a new Chinese property rights law offered equal protection to “a rich man’s car and a beggar man’s stick.”⁷ China is one of the world’s most unequal countries. So the 3s see, and object to, the oppressive effect of equality under law—and the 4s feel it. It is not that the 4s enjoy equality under the law; they suffer it. Like practically everything in Foursville, it is not a preference but a felt compulsion.

The 4s have to cop equality under the law as an expression of the way their world works. Their situation was stated bluntly by the eighteenth century moral philosopher Adam Smith:

Civil government, so far as it is instituted for the security of property, is in reality instituted for the defence of the rich against the poor, or of those who have some property against those who have none at all. (*Wealth of Nations*, Part II)

Smith, who was no Type 3, has stated the 3-ist position, namely that the law, applied equally, oppresses. Modern 3s might illustrate this by pointing to the many places where minorities, such as indigenous peoples and other ethnic groups, are heavily over-represented in jails even though the law does not explicitly discriminate against them.

In sum, there is a good case that equality under the law is on Z, that it is not only a 2-ist characteristic. On Z or not, WOLT reveals connections and lets us perceive interrelationships we might otherwise not consider.

⁷ <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/12/international/asia/12china.html?r=1&th&emc=th&oref=slogin>

HIERARCHY IN DEMOCRACY

It was a surprise to find that hierarchy, the epitome of inequality, (i) explicitly recognises equality, (ii) is the only way to reconcile equality of opportunity with equality of outcome and, (iii) is necessary to preserve equality. Here, perhaps, is a further surprise: 2-ism, the opposite of democracy, is essential to democracy.

Hierarchy, a pecking order, manifest in animals as a readiness to dominate and a readiness to submit, would presumably have its roots in the care of offspring. However, irrespective of age or relationship, social living makes hierarchy logically inevitable. All life forms exploit and influence their environment; that is how they survive. An organism's environment includes its fellow organisms. The ability to exploit and to influence fellow-creatures varies from individual to individual. A species of animal that lives socially will recognise this variability—and that makes hierarchy. Hierarchy is an inevitable consequence of social living.⁸

Social animals deal with hierarchy according to the way they are made but human beings talk, so they complicate hierarchy with their opinions—and, as we know, the 1s and 3s disapprove of hierarchy. In the real world, the theoretical anti-hierarchy position of sophisticated, modern 1s and 3s is further complicated by the fact that they can't avoid conceding the need for the 2s' *rule of law* (as against the rule of man, meaning the whims of the ruler). In this they are recognising the necessity of rule and that order is better than disorder. To have order requires 2-ist enforcement.

Democracy, however defined, is unthinkable without equality under law. Whereas 1s and 3s will clamour to be considered democrats, 2s would scorn the label and we are led to the odd conclusion that in order for a

⁸ At least for individually-reproducing creatures. Ants and bees are intensely social and know no hierarchy.

society to be democratic and to function, it must be administered by people who do not consider themselves democratic and whom others do not consider democratic.

Some think that because hierarchy is not democratic and our species is by nature a hierarchical social animal, we must fight nature in order to have democratic societies. The evidence of history up until two centuries ago would support that view. And yet, if hierarchy is essential to democracy, then hierarchy is, in its way, democratic—whatever the hierarchs or anyone else may think. Democracy means rule by the people; that is, democracy is a form of rule and rule involves command and compulsion. The successful democracies have found a way to harness 2-ism to sustain democratic rule. In most countries however, 2-ism means autocracy and it is inimical to democracy—but then, so are 1-ism and 3-ism.

CONCLUSION

This chapter, in showing how *equality* can be analysed using the WOLT framework, came up with four surprises: (i) 2-ist hierarchy itself instantiates equality of opportunity and equality of condition simultaneously, (ii) hierarchy is the only way to reconcile the two kinds of equality (and so liberalism is a lost cause), (iii) hierarchy is essential to preserve equality, and (iv) hierarchy, which everyone considers undemocratic, is needed to administer democracy.

The other possible surprise, which by this stage the reader should not be surprised by, is that the relationship of equality to every other social issue can be mapped by ordinary hypothetico-deductive science theorising.□