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Source: *Ethics*, Vol. 87, No. 1 (Oct., 1976), pp. 1-17

Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2380118>

Accessed: 28/05/2013 07:28

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# Socialist Justice

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## I. LIBERTY AND ITS WORTH

So long as society is regarded as founded upon agreements, egalitarian economic doctrines tend to appear unjust. The price of each person's consent is fair compensation for his contribution, and a greater contribution warrants greater compensation. Even the equal exertion of unequal talents and capacities should mean greater rewards for the more gifted. Within such a framework the problem of social justice is largely one of determining institutional structures in which benefits received adequately repay benefits conferred, and these structures are subject only to the constraint that the liberty which provides the context of consent should not be unnecessarily infringed. For the spectrum of laissez-faire philosophies which constitute classical liberalism the problem is relatively trivial: Compensation for effort is adequate, and the distribution of social goods equitable, as long as each person is free to seek his own gain in his own way. The distribution will not, of course, be equal, but since equity and equality are distinct, the interests of justice are served by guaranteeing liberty alone. Insofar as the problem of justice is conceived in terms of a reconciliation between liberty and equality, indeed, the expression "social justice" is on this view a misnomer. Social policies which ignore the incompatibility of liberty and equality are oppressive and thus inherently unjust.

There is, of course, a kind of equality which all champions of liberty defend. The established human rights and civil liberties, such as equality before the law and the equal liberties of citizenship, represent clear cases for which there is no conflict between freedom and equality. But such equalities can be construed in an entirely formal way and may thus lack any relationship to the actual welfare of persons. Equality so understood is entirely compatible with the bleak view of human relationships suggested by the classical view of liberty, and the conflicts in question arise primarily when equality is understood in a distributive or material rather than juristic or nominal sense. Within the latter rubric, two egalitarian reactions to laissez faire can be distinguished—one still recognizably liberal, one socialist.

The first approach retains the framework of free individual choice while arguing that within a system of cooperation rational men will recognize a universal right not only to liberty but also to substantial social goods. Especially when the ancient notion of giving every man his due is understood in the light of the complex interdependencies of modern social organization, it seems imperative to devise principles of distribution which are distinct from, but compatible with, the claims of individual liberty. The problem of finding an agreeable conception of justice which combines distinct notions of liberty and equality—so formidable from the perspective of classical liberalism—is solved in outline by reinterpreting the classical view. All liberal individualists suppose that the political and economic sectors of society can be distinguished and that each person's welfare is best served by maximizing political freedoms while tolerating expedient economic disparities. By assigning all questions of liberty to the political sphere and all questions of distribution to the economic, egalitarian liberals can maintain that manipulations of the economic sector need constitute no significant infringements of liberty. Justice, therefore, does not preclude and may demand deliberate efforts to reduce or eliminate economic differences and other disadvantages related to them.

Socialism rejects the liberal problem of social justice by rejecting the conception of society from which it arises. If agreement is not the cement of society, then the problem of a fair distribution is not rightly posed as requiring some accommodation of fairness with liberty. If societies are not properly conceived on the model of a hypothetical agreement or tacit consent, moreover, there is no particular plausibility to the idea of free choice independent of social conditions. Nor, therefore, is it appropriate to distinguish a sphere of liberty from a sphere of equality and inequality. On the contrary, it will seem evident that political and economic phenomena interact so strongly that liberties suffer whenever there are substantial differences of wealth. Socialism replies to liberalism, in short, that liberty and equality are indistinguishable. Both the classical view that they are antagonistic and the modern view that they are reconcilable are wrong. Socialists need not value liberty any less than do those who arrogate its banner, but they insist that without equality there can be no genuine liberty and justice for all. Such equality cannot, of course, be strict if each is to receive goods according to his need. Nor can it be effected simply through redistribution. The conditions of equality include profound social changes and, in particular, change in the nature of work. Only when work constitutes meaningful and satisfying activity for everyone will each have a reason to work which does not involve the divisive demand for compensation in proportion to contribution.

There is a conception of work which models it on the notion of strategic or instrumental rationality central to the liberal tradition. It is something that we do in order to achieve ends independent from it. Work is the means necessary for obtaining whatever we really want, and working hours have a tendency to become time out of life—the time spent in order

to have the enjoyments that make life worth living or at least to secure the subsistence which makes life possible. So conceived, the primary value of work for a person, and its primary motivation, is the return on one's labor, and one has reason to work only so long as it is necessary to satisfy one's desires. On such a view the alienation decried by young Marx is hardly more than a formal property of rational action. If, however, work is regarded not as a means to some other end but as an end in itself, one arrives at a different conclusion. Work is then in each person's interest—it *is* each person's interest—and there is reason to do it independent of how well it pays. From this point of view, labor which lacks inherent satisfactions seems oppressive and thus not an activity of free men. Whereas the view of work as primarily instrumental represents it as a necessary condition of free action, the alternative view warns that such work tends to be meaningless labor, legitimate grounds for resentment, and an imposition of unjust institutions. Justice clearly requires that the character of work match the second conception if the first represents oppressive and unfree activity; but where resentment at the nature of one's work cannot be shown to be legitimate the first conception is sufficient. Since resentment is a moral attitude, the answer to this question depends upon a view about how attitudes are properly assessed.

John Rawls observes that "a theory of justice is . . . a theory of the moral sentiments,"<sup>1</sup> and it is to be expected that views which differ as profoundly as liberalism and socialism will tend to have theories about moral sentiments which differ in ways corresponding to their respective views of man's relationship with society. Such differences need not be immediately apparent, since so far as social ideals are concerned it may be difficult to distinguish the two political theories. Rawls's liberalism incorporates a decided tendency to equality and contemplates the social ownership of means of production with relative equanimity. It recognizes the importance of meaningful work and acknowledges the way in which classical liberalism became an apologia for man's inhumanity to man. In so doing it seems to avoid the semantical and ideological extremes of socialism as well as laissez faire, rejecting the view that inequality means a lack of liberty on the left hand as well as the view that it is equality which has this consequence on the right. But this apparent advantage also obscures important problems. So moderate a course presupposes the possibility of grafting welfare onto liberty in a way that avoids both a dogmatic preference for equality and the outright contradictions which socialists find in individualistic philosophies.<sup>2</sup> It is by no means clear how egalitarian tendencies can be

1. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 50–51.

2. For such charges of dogmatism, see Robert Nisbet, "The Pursuit of Equality," *Public Interest*, no. 35 (1974), pp. 103–20; and Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), chaps. 7 and 8. Note that the holist account described below counts against any individualist theory—whether liberal (like Rawls's) or libertarian (like Nozick's).

justified unless distributive considerations form a constitutive part of liberty. Such perennial unclarity can hardly be resolved without an adequate assessment of the merits of individualist and holist models of mankind. In the past, debate confined to vague distinctions has necessarily proven indecisive, but Rawls's characterization of theories of justice suggests a more manageable treatment of the dispute. Are moral sentiments, and human attitudes generally, better understood in terms of individual psychology or in terms of social phenomena? The socialist view of human nature which is supported by the latter alternative is at least as plausible as its liberal competitor. A few additional contrasts prepare the way for development of the socialist view.

When society is bifurcated into political and economic sectors a theory of justice needs principles to describe both, and anyone who rejects the bifurcation will easily find evidence in support of his assumption that such principles must be inadequate. The liberal welfare state seems never to provide sufficient benefits to remedy the disadvantages they are meant to correct, and the problem is most readily explained by reference to the incoherence of the liberal conception. C. B. Macpherson argues that the two principles which define Rawls's conception of justice are incapable of being satisfied together. Since concentrations of wealth are demonstrably detrimental to equal liberty, no principle of liberty can be satisfied unless there are economic transfers from the wealthy to the poor. But a principle of distributive justice stating that economic inequalities must benefit the least advantaged requires a limit to these transfers: Inequalities have these benefits only because the incentives they provide increase social productivity to an extent advantageous to all, and damage to incentives may work against everyone. These requirements seem inconsistent because no limit on transfers compatible with the second principle could be high enough to prevent accumulations of wealth detrimental to liberty. Since any such accumulation restricts liberty, any limits on transfers will have this result.<sup>3</sup>

This argument overlooks important structural properties of Rawls's theory, and it is unconvincing in any case. Even granted that concentrations of wealth endanger equal liberty, it is difficult to maintain that moderate accumulations of wealth actually restrict liberty unless it is also shown that their social effects can be understood in terms of oppression, exploitation, discrimination, and like grounds for resentment. Where there is oppression liberty is evidently infringed, but only in this case are inequalities clearly inequitable. So long as the poor become better off in absolute terms as the rich get relatively richer it may be very difficult to identify any damage to freedom. A Marxist social scientist might, to be sure, use class inequalities as criteria of hidden exploitation, but he would thereby forfeit any claim to have scientific evidence in support of his claim. In so doing, as in resorting uncritically to "false Consciousness," he would divorce oppression and exploitation from what men actually feel and thus sever the desirability of

3. C. B. Macpherson, *Democratic Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 93.

liberty from any account of human attitudes which might explain its value. Where one group of men is in servitude to another the fact must be discernible by all sides and not only by those who share the insight of a particular social theory.

In the absence of manifest exploitation Rawls can deal easily with Macpherson's charge: "The inability to take advantage of one's rights and opportunities as a result of poverty and ignorance, and a lack of means generally, is sometimes counted among the constraints definitive of liberty. I shall not however say this, but rather I shall think of these things as affecting the worth of liberty, the value to individuals of the rights that the first principle defines."<sup>4</sup> Of course, this is not simply a convenient way of speaking. It bares the liberal heart of Rawls's theory. Nevertheless, so long as such a distinction can be maintained, no strong connections between wealth and liberty will be demonstrable. If poverty, ignorance, and other lacks were counted as limitations on freedom itself, then the demand for equal liberty would include a demand for all feasible equality in the distribution of other social goods. If social and economic disadvantages were considered to decrease liberty itself rather than the value of rights which constitute liberty, then there would be no sense in talking of first maximizing equal liberty and then applying principles of distribution. In this case there could indeed be an antagonism between principles of the sort espoused by egalitarian liberals, since any inequalities permitted by principles of distribution would be prohibited by the principle of liberty. If liberty were identified with its worth, moreover, a principle of liberty would make essential reference to the social goods subject to distribution, and there would be no clear distinction between parts of the social system governed, respectively, by principles of liberty and of distribution. The conception of justice defined by such principles would be a socialist rather than liberal one.

The liberal conception is secure so long as inequalities are not experienced as unjust constraints, or so long as they would not be so experienced if all the relevant facts were known. Liberal theory, furthermore, commands a powerful argument for saying that differences should be regarded as the very opposite of constraints, hence for retaining a separate principle of distribution. Such a principle is warranted not merely by the contribution which differences make to the material welfare of the poor but also by the contribution they make to the value of liberty for everyone. Given the relationship between economic goods and the ability to make use of one's freedoms, the value of liberty is greatest in a society in which inequalities make everyone materially better off. Since each person's effective liberty as well as standard of living is enhanced by such an arrangement, any other organization would be evidently irrational.

There is a temptation to brand appeal to the advantages of inequality as disingenuous. A just society is one whose members are governed by a sense

4. Rawls, p. 204.



of justice. It is, therefore, one in which persons desire to act from the principles of justice which define this sense—including the principle, in Rawls's view, that inequalities work to the benefit of those who have the least. But surely, we are inclined to argue, to desire that inequalities have this result is to desire to benefit the least advantaged, and this desire is best satisfied by agreeing to an equal distribution. One who insists upon his personal advantages rather than striving for the socialist ideal, consequently, cannot be just. However, the inclination to argue in this way rests upon a confusion. The principle of distribution entitles one to certain advantages on condition that the arrangement work to the benefit of others. To desire to abide by the principle is thus to desire to abide by such arrangements; it is not necessarily to desire to benefit anyone else. The principle of just distribution only places certain conditions upon entitlements; it does not require philanthropy. Any plausible theory of justice must assume a limit on the strength of social and altruistic motivation and suppose that, while individuals are prepared to act justly, they are not prepared to abandon their interests.<sup>5</sup> Hence a liberal conception need neither be mendacious nor collapse into the socialist one.

Liberalism cannot be convicted of disguised selfishness, but neither can socialism be charged with unrealistic selflessness. No socialist need retreat before the criterion of plausibility just stated, for he envisages a revolution of social circumstances such that the incentive argument has no application and no interests of any needy group are benefited by differences of wealth. Given a conception of work as inherently rather than instrumentally desirable activity, justice will be realized only when not merely wage slavery but also unsatisfying work has been abolished. Until this has happened, as critics of the liberal welfare state well recognize, one may have more reason to avoid work than to do it. So that some will not take advantage of the rest, work must be in everyone's interest; and the quality of work must provide sufficient incentive to make a contribution. There is no suggestion here that anyone is prepared to abandon his interests and no conflict with any known fact of human psychology. Nor, to this point, is there any conflict of political philosophies. To the extent that liberalism and socialism are content to describe quite different social circumstances there is no real contest between them. There is only a dispute about the use of the word "justice." For the socialist, liberalism portrays a not-yet-just society; for the liberal, socialism depicts a society beyond justice since the dominant motivations there obviate problems of distribution. Yet there remains a difference in ideals. It arises from disagreement about the nature of liberty, the nature of work, the nature of rationality, and about human nature and psychology. The depth of these differences suggests that they can be adequately elucidated only with the help of logical analysis, and it is here that contrasting theories about attitudes provide illumination. A political theory

5. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

needs the backing of a theory of attitudes which explicates the logical status of such central notions as equity and exploitation, and the adequacy of the one theory depends upon that of the other. By understanding the structure of competing views of human attitudes we are better able to assess the political ideals they support.

## II. MORAL ATTITUDES: SOME ANALYSES

Liberalism is characteristic of both utilitarian and contractarian theories. In spite of their important differences they share a general conception of attitudes which socialists implicitly reject. Bentham regarded attitudes and emotions as structureless feelings, and later utilitarians were not able to correct him. All attitudes, he insisted, are pleasures and pains caused by certain perceptions. The pains of the moral sanction, or ill name, for example, are those accompanying recognition that others regard one with aversion. Pains are all alike, but they are differently called according to their different causes or associations.<sup>6</sup> Of course, this is absurd. We have different feelings under different circumstances and do not simply call the same feeling by different names. Rawls quite rightly regards many of our attitudes as having a definite internal structure in terms of which differences among feelings can be explained. Moral emotions, such as guilt and indignation, are, on his view, defined by principles of right and can be identified in terms of these constitutive principles. They are feelings which can be experienced only by persons who accept such principles and thus have an internal or intellectual structure which Bentham did not acknowledge. The essential similarity between the two views is that in neither are attitudes to be likened to assertions. Even for Rawls they are noncognitive in having their basis in principles which are chosen rather than in beliefs which are subject to tests of truth and falsity. We are subject to diverse emotions when we have adopted various principles, but these emotions are not subject to verification in the manner of factual beliefs. A choice of such principles need not be arbitrary or idiosyncratic, since it may be made in the light of basic human wants and needs: given knowledge of such facts, certain principles are rational and others are not. Even rational principles, however, are expressions of individual decision rather than statements of testable belief.

Bentham and his followers did not acknowledge the intellectual structure of attitudes because no consistent utilitarian could do so. The conception of attitudes as featureless is vital for the defense of the principle of utility as the sole principle of value. Utilitarianism is inconsistent with there being attitudes constituted by diverse principles which define a multiplicity of ends rather than some single goal of utility. If, as utilitarianism no doubt correctly supposes, value is a function of feeling or attitude, then

6. Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1948), p. 161.



if various feelings are defined by logically independent principles there is no basic feeling common to them all which can be identified as the sole arbiter of value. The intellectual structure of attitudes admits a variety of justifications for attitudes and makes possible a number of distinct inherent goods. Safety is a good for persons who feel fear, since fear includes a notion of danger and the desire to escape it. Likewise, giving comfort and making recompense is part of the good of anyone who feels pity and guilt, respectively. And such attitudes are adequately justified when one is in danger, when someone suffers excessively, or when principles of right have been violated. The contractarian rejection of utilitarianism rests upon a logical analysis of attitudes—one which is obviously superior to the crude teleology of hedonism or to any other theory that purports to identify a single ground of choice. It explains how there can be value in justice which is not simply the value of means to some other end.

Rawls's analysis of moral attitudes has two parts. It identifies their structured character, and it interprets this structure in terms of personal principles. The second part of this analysis is controversial, though, in fact, no consistent contractarian could take seriously the alternative possibility that attitudes are constituted by testable beliefs. In defending this thesis it is useful to note how the role of principles in liberal philosophical psychology explains an otherwise mysterious feature of Rawls's contractualism: the need to place one's attitudes and ideals behind a veil of ignorance.<sup>7</sup> Contractors must be denied knowledge of these facts about themselves, else they would fail to be rational. The structure of moral attitudes subjects them to conditions of rationality which would be violated were genuine contractors to know their feelings. Resentment, for example, is rational on the contractarian view only when the principles of justice definitive of the attitude are apparently violated. This means that if one is still deliberating about what principles of justice to accept he could not rationally feel resentment, since he would have no way of determining that any given behavior was contrary to an acceptable conception of justice. Rational resentment is impossible before a conception of justice is arrived at, and since the contract situation is one in which persons reach such a conception, resentment and other moral emotions must initially be excluded. Moral attitudes need justification and rational men will not have them otherwise; but justification requires moral conceptions already on hand. Hence no view which admitted rational attitudes in the beginning could provide a contractarian account of justice.

The need to exclude moral attitudes from one's initial deliberations does not obviously extend to other structured attitudes. Fear and pity are more naturally characterized in terms of certain conceptions or points of

7. See Brian Barry, *The Liberal Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 15, for one expression of such bafflement: "[W]hat is to stop us accepting that the 'circumstances of justice' are what Rawls says they are, and then putting into the original position human beings with their actual moral notions?"

view than in terms of principles: we conceive ourselves as in danger or see another person as suffering. Nevertheless, we do tend to assess such emotions in terms of shared conceptions of danger, suffering, and the like, and, insofar as other modes of assessment are lacking, the rationality of natural attitudes can be determined only outside of the deliberations characteristic of a social contract. Hence (subject to a later qualification) fear, pity, and envy, no less than guilt, resentment, and indignation, must be denied a place in the original considerations of isolated rational beings.

Two characteristic features of liberal individualism (as opposed to utilitarian liberalism) are evident in this result. First, the rationality of attitudes is evidently not that of actions. The structure of attitudes gives them tests of rationality which are not those of instrumental reason. The rationality of guilt and fear is not determined by the way in which these attitudes promote other ends but by the appropriateness of the principles or conceptions which define them. Nevertheless, because questions of the rationality of attitudes are excluded from the contract situation, that is a situation in which only instrumental reason operates. Persons are pure strategists there, and they invite parody as narrow economic animals. Second, persons so portrayed are abstract individuals and lack significant relationships with others. By implication, only persons capable of forming rational attitudes as well as rational strategies are social beings, and only social beings are capable of forming rational attitudes. It is a virtue of Rawls's account, as of Rousseau's, that it recognizes these facts quite clearly. The facts are essential for explaining the value of community and for rejecting the socialist parody of liberal man. By expressing one's arrival at principles constitutive of moral attitudes in terms of agreement, contractualism expresses the fact that these attitudes must be denied to rational individuals abstracted from society; but in establishing its individualism in this way it also establishes the conditions of inherently valuable social relationships.

The individualist account is badly flawed, however, by being unable to sustain the distinction between instrumental and emotional reasoners. Individualists typically, though not explicitly, introduce one significant qualification to the instrumental conception of initial rationality. Even if abstract individuals are not resentful or compassionate they are always regarded as prudent. Yet prudence is no less a structured attitude than any moral emotion. It is not identical with instrumental reason, since it incorporates a conception of persons which the latter does not. Whereas instrumental reason aims at the satisfaction of whatever interests one happens to have, prudence identifies certain interests as one's own. Prudence includes the principle that one be provident; it includes a conception of oneself as a being with integrity through time and in so doing identifies one's future interests as worth promoting in the present. The price of not doing so is irrationality, since failure to take such steps constitutes a failure to adopt the means to ends which any prudent person has. Rational persons, if they are prudent, formulate a plan of life and follow it. It is noteworthy, however, that this statement is a conditional one—a person who lacked a concep-

tion of himself as having integrity through time and who adopted no principle of providence would be under no obligation of reason to care for the future—and it may be wondered if the condition can be satisfied in a contract situation which excludes other structured attitudes.

Of course, our self-conceptions are in fact largely determined by our social environment. Our concern for the future is strong in proportion to our expectations about influencing it or being able to influence it, and the extent of our prudence and sense of self is closely tied to the exigencies of income and opportunity which determine this ability.<sup>8</sup> In fact, therefore, the prudence accorded to rational contractors is the expression of social conditions in which the distribution of income and opportunity is already extensive. The demands of reason cannot be specified in terms of a self-interest identifiable independently of such conditions, since self-conceptions are inseparable from the prudence occasioned by actual circumstances. Nor, it would seem obvious, can conceptions of justice be specified independently of existing conditions. If prudence and self-conceptions are governed by social facts, so too should moral attitudes and conceptions of other persons be governed by such facts. Principles essential to guilt and resentment will always express actual relationships among persons, and it seems clear, therefore, that there is no particular set of principles which any man both rational and moral can be expected to acknowledge.

It would be natural to reply that such facts are beside the logical point: To note that attitudes and their constitutive principles are constrained by social circumstances is not to show such factors to be relevant to the appropriateness of attitudes and emotions. On the contrary, the reply continues, we must abstract from the transitory contingencies which shape and prejudice our attitudes in order to formulate justifiable principles. But this reply will not do, for there is no alternative to assessment in terms of contingencies. If prudence is defined by a principle of providence or a particular sort of self-conception, the conception is a metaphysical one. That is, neither empirical fact nor instrumental reason requires it. There is nothing necessarily mistaken or irrational about a person who is satisfied to live only for the moment, and it is rational to abide by a principle of providence and to formulate a life plan only if one sees oneself in the manner characteristic of prudence. There is no independent rationale. The self-conception needs the support of the attitude as much as that conception is essential to prudence, and possession of that attitude depends on there being conditions favorable to it.

Before developing the holist analysis of attitudes suggested by these observations, one other liberal departure from the individualist account ought to be mentioned. When liberty is conceived of as something good in

8. See Edward C. Banfield, who links an "attenuated sense of self," a conception of the future as "something fixed, fated, beyond [one's] control," and lack of "opportunities to rise by effort and enterprise." Enhanced conceptions tend "to follow increases in income and opportunity" (*The Unheavenly City* [Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1970], pp. 53–58).

its own right rather than simply as something valuable for the realization of other ends, then we must be ascribed a tendency to make good use of it. If our aims and interests were generally low and banal we would lack concern for self-esteem and dignity, and the desire for the liberty which allows us self-expression and development would lack an intelligible place in our lives. Any theory which ascribes inherent value to liberty thus incorporates a distinction between higher and lower pursuits and with it a conception of value which is not defined simply in terms of what we happen to want and the best means to get what we want. There is, of course, a tendency among liberals to deny this, since it is difficult to reconcile with the idea of man as first of all a strategist; and both the idea and its denial find expression in Rawls's "Aristotelian Principle" which says that, as a matter of fact, human beings desire more complex activities to simpler ones. But this principle does not state a matter of brute psychological fact. It has a rational explanation which is damaging both to those who doubt its truth and to Rawls's own account.

One salient fact about our psychological constitution is the capacity for interest as well as interests. Interest is another structured attitude, and it is typically evoked by things found to be complex, varied, novel. To be interested in something is, for instance, to find it novel. In addition interest includes a desire to deal with its object, to come to know it, and as we come to know a thing its initial novelty wears away; it may no longer seem complex to us. If our capacity for interest is still to find an outlet, and if we are to be spared from boredom and monotony, the attitude must find new objects—novel ones—or novel aspects of old objects. As it does so we ascend a chain of increasing complexity for quite clearly comprehensible reasons. As we advance, our judgments about novelty develop in accordance with the knowledge and experience we gain. Our structured interests thus depend essentially upon our history, as does the justification of these interests. Those things are worthy of our interest which are novel in our experience, complex given our acquired capacities, and the like. Reason bids us attend to those things which are properly interesting to us, given the state of our education. This is not, of course, instrumental reason, for it tells us not how to satisfy our attitude but what it is rational to have that attitude toward.

Some desires we simply have, others are integral to structured attitudes. The latter desires are not brute wants which assail us but depend intimately upon the process of development which has made us the persons we are. The Aristotelian Principle is thus rationally explicable in a way which makes the notion of ahistorical rational individuals patently absurd. Now it does not follow from this alone that the notion of an acultural rational individual is an equal absurdity. To speak of a person is to speak of an individual-with-a-history, but liberal philosophers may insist that it is not obviously to speak of an individual-in-society. One can intelligibly maintain that the only proper standard of rational interest (or any other structured attitude) must be expressed entirely in terms of an individual's own experi-

ence. On such a view, those things which we acknowledge to be interesting are so in virtue of their being interesting to each individual. There is no standard of interestingness independent of particular persons. Likewise, even if fear and pity are assessed according to shared conceptions of danger and suffering, these conceptions are finally to be explained in terms of similarities of personal experience, aversions, and sympathies. The basic standard, on such a view, is that of the individual. The exclusion of natural attitudes from a contract situation may thus be an expression of the development rather than the social character of the conceptions supporting these attitudes.

While such an individualistic account of our attitudes can be consistently developed it is by no means indubitable. Our shared conceptions may be better understood than in terms of a coincidence of individual viewpoints. It is equally possible that those things which are interesting, fearful, and so on, are made so by social norms of experience and that the basic standard is a social one. The latter view is the one we would expect of a holist model of man and society, and it is the one appropriate to socialism.

Whereas sophisticated individualists recognize that many attitudes possess a formal structure which makes them subject to tests of rationality, socialists should suppose that such attitudes are fully cognitive and subject to tests of factual correctness. Liberal theory, we noted, understands the rational character of moral emotions in a manner consistent with individual autonomy by representing their structural elements as principles or conceptions which resist verification in the manner of factual statements. So long as the principles constitutive of one's various attitudes are consistent with each other and with one's basic ends, they are regarded as justified. Ultimately, assent to such principles depends upon choice or agreement, so that attitudes on this view are understood in terms of individual decisions and contracts. Such a view is mistaken, however, if the structural elements of attitudes are properly construed as beliefs—as assertive states based upon experience and subject to confirmation by reference to an extraindividual standard. Thus, to a view of resentment on which the attitude is defined by principles of right there may be opposed the view that resentment includes the belief that some person or situation is unfair. If attitudes are genuinely cognitive states and subject to tests of correctness, then those attitudes are justified whose defining beliefs are expressed in demonstrably true propositions. And if this is so then individual decision has no more place in questions of right than it has in questions about empirical fact.

The crucial point in the analysis of attitudes appropriate to socialism is that the appropriateness of attitudes should rest upon correspondence with fact. The assessment of attitudes, hence an account of justice, should depend upon considerations which are in this sense objective. This is not to say, though, that the facts by which beliefs about fairness and unfairness are verified should be construed as straightforwardly empirical—that is, as facts of the sort which justify beliefs about colors, quantities, human powers and frailties, and similarly discriminable phenomena. A theory which



represented attitudes as verifiable by reference to facts of this sort would be evidently naturalistic: it would say that certain dispassionately observable facts entail the correctness of certain attitudes—an evidently evaluative conclusion from factual antecedents. Such an analysis would, like a socialist one, be antiindividualistic, since it would restrict justifiable attitudes to those with objective support and thus preclude personal choice as a ground for any structured attitude. But in identifying grounds of justification in nature rather than society, such a theory would be antiholist as well. And it would almost certainly be incorrect. This judgment need not depend on the cumulative weight of seven decades' criticism of naturalistic theories. It is enough to note that, for the same reasons that the self-conceptions characteristic of prudence cannot be justified by evidence available to unfeeling observers, the notion of fairness characteristic of resentment lacks the basis in universally acknowledgeable fact possessed by concepts of colors and human powers. Such notions express points of view typical of a disposition to certain attitudes; they are not notions of things naively perceived.

Points of view need not be regarded as logically unverifiable visions. They may be characteristic of a society and confirmable by reference to expectations prevailing in society. The alternative to justifying attitudinal beliefs in rational agreement or natural fact is their verification in social fact. Any argument for the correctness of this alternative will prove long and complicated, for there can be no easy refutation of well-entrenched and logically consistent individualist assumptions. A plausible holistic competitor of individualistic and naturalistic theories can, however, be stated in fairly short order. The main idea of a theory which supports a distinctively socialist sense of justice must be that the agreements characteristic of members of a society depend upon the character of each society rather than upon observation of broadly natural fact or upon considerations which would be persuasive to any rational calculator. The main problem of such a theory is showing that there can be a sound nonnatural and nonindividual basis for such agreement. While we say that someone's resentment is justified if we agree that he is a victim of unfairness, agreement is not a test of truth, and without a standard of correctness independent of social agreements the factual character of such judgments cannot be established.

Such a standard will be found, if anywhere, in the common experiences of a society. Experience which we all share establishes a body of social norms and expectations by reference to which attitudes and the beliefs they contain can be justified. Evidently, we regard those persons as excellent and admirable who exceed the norm in certain respects; those persons excel who exceed our expectations. Similarly we consider piteous not everyone who suffers a pain but only those who suffer more than our experience teaches us must be borne by anyone. In general, we make such evaluations on the basis of expectations made reasonable by social experience. Those persons are unqualifiedly admirable or piteous whose superiority or suffering contrasts with prevailing norms, and the independence of such norms from



particular individuals establishes the existence of a standard for testing judgments which makes those judgments factual. To put the point more modestly: such patterns of appraisal do represent our actual practice of evaluation, and the holist view suggests that a correct theory of evaluation is more likely to correspond than to conflict with this practice. We assess our attitudes less in terms of our own experience than in terms of the common experience of society. We will retract a claim of interestingness if we are shown that something novel in our limited experience is actually commonplace. Will an adequate theory of attitudes not reflect these actual patterns of evaluation?

### III. EQUITY AND EQUALITY

The implications for justice of an affirmative answer are straightforward. We regard those situations as fair which treat the interests of everyone involved equitably, but the criterion of equitable treatment is not some set of principles which must prove acceptable to any rational person. The criterion is rather a certain correspondence to acquired expectations. If we expect those born with wealth to prosper while less fortunate persons remain poor we may well consider this just; the claims of property will be recognized. But if we expect to be able to exercise established liberties as fruitfully as any man we will consider leveling economic doctrines to accord with equitable treatment of each person's interests. This is not to say that if we expect to be cheated then cheating is fair. The expectations which count have a decidedly normative element; they are morally legitimate expectations. Such expectations, however, can hardly be separated from what we expect because it is normal—empirically legitimate expectations, expectations very like predictions. Under conditions in which we always expected attempts to cheat us we might well not regard cheating as we now do. Rather it might be a recognized feature of social interactions that persons took certain kinds of advantage of others wherever possible. Cheating would be a kind of gamesmanship and not exploitative or unfair. It would constitute neither disrespect nor disregard for the interests of persons who willingly tolerated the arrangement. Of course, there are also cases in which some are helpless victims of cheating. One may belong to a group whose members can do nothing about it, who expect it and resent it. This is evident oppression, since one tolerates a situation not because it is fair but because one must. Inequalities of wealth and effective liberty may be similarly unfair and oppressive. In order to be so they need only fail to correspond to expectations which have been generated by the evident possibility of a more equal distribution of social goods and by the rhetoric of liberty and equality for all.

Insofar as normative and normal expectations are inextricable and the latter are justified by existing social forms and practices, there is evidently a standard of justice independent of individual opinion. The belief-like states characteristic of resentment and related moral emotions may thus be capable of verification by reference to facts. They may, that is, be genuine

beliefs whose existence is incompatible with individualist conjectures about the basic reference point for evaluation. Even if a theory which identifies such facts is vindicated, to be sure, the holist victory over logical individualism could not by itself entail the need for organization on socialist principles. Not only can the validity of a holist analysis of structured attitudes be consistent with collectivist aspects of a conservative defense of privilege; it can also be entirely consistent with the legitimacy of liberal principles of organization. Liberal institutions might satisfy everyone's expectations.

If a socialist acknowledges the logical foundations of his political philosophy in a holist analysis of structured attitudes, then he must be prepared to regard as absurd the assertion that "the crucial problem today is that relatively few people view income inequality as a serious problem."<sup>9</sup> If it is not viewed as a serious problem then one may reasonably be skeptical about the need to reorganize institutions along socialist lines. Given the relationship between modes of distribution and the expectations they justify, one may reasonably presume that oppression and exploitation do not exist and thus that there is no serious injustice. The forces of production are not fettered by forms of social relations, and there is no class which has only its chains to lose. The reasonableness of such skepticism is not decisive, however. Socialism has always noted how perceptions may be obscured by obsolescent metaphysical theories<sup>10</sup> and has aimed at raising the consciousness of an exploited majority to awareness of conditions which are not adequately appreciated. The aim is entirely consistent with the intimate relationship between prevailing attitudes and social realities which requires doubt about unperceived injustices. For it is the distinction between attitudes and the realities which justify them which gives the belief-like elements of attitudes their factual status and makes sense of the notion of false consciousness. The distinction holds open the possibility that actual conditions do warrant resentment or indignation even if they do not evoke it, and when this is the case the socialists' task is an educational one.

Education must be education to the facts, and here the holist analysis faces an inherent difficulty. Even the wealthy will grant the formal point that the inequalities of liberal society are contrary to liberty if they are oppressive, but they may be less prepared than members of other social strata to regard private property as an oppressive institution. Such charges cannot be substantiated solely by the resentment of the putatively oppressed or by the indignation of their champions, and if those accused are not conscious of any discrimination the charges will be rejected. Serious reform depends upon justifying resentment and indignation by reference to condi-

9. See Christopher Jencks, *Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), p. 263.

10. Not only socialists, of course. Keynes, for example, urges, "Let us clear from the ground the metaphysical or general principles upon which, from time to time, *laissez-faire* has been founded" (*The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes*, vol. 9, *Essays in Persuasion* [London: Macmillan Co., 1972], p. 287).

tions which anyone would acknowledge to be unfair. But the holist analysis suggests that there may be circumstances in which there is no possibility of any such acknowledgment. To the extent that societies are bifurcated along class lines the experiences and expectations of each class may be so different that neither could see any justifiability in the claims of the other. This possibility represents a revolutionary situation, not any recognition of social facts; and it is avoided not by education but by rising wages, improved working conditions, profit sharing, progressive taxation, and a general blurring of class distinctions. The result may be a common standard by which a liberal society can justify its inequalities of wealth and satisfaction.

But such concessions to liberalism should not be allowed to obscure the basic weakness of liberal theory which—if socialism is correct—explains its egalitarian drift. If the collectivist account of attitudes is right, then liberty is not easily abstracted from questions of distribution. The semantical oddity of identifying liberty and equality exists only so long as freedom is wrongly regarded as a condition identifiable independently of attitudes taken toward it. Liberty is not a neutral concept. It is, as its etymology indicates, a concept inseparable from human attitudes and relationships. We are free when others respect our interests and tolerate our actions, hence when we can be confident of our ability to act and have no reason to be selfish or small spirited. Liberty is related to such attitudes as respect, tolerance, confidence, and liberality in the same way that self-conceptions are related to prudence, novelty to interest, and danger and fairness to fear and guilt.<sup>11</sup> As such, liberty is not a state which can be understood apart from complicated expectations about possibilities for action and interaction. Insofar as such possibilities rest upon the means necessary to action, the expectations in question evidently include whatever broadly economic considerations are important to success. Questions of liberty cannot, therefore, plausibly be separated from questions concerning institutions of distribution. And a society which places great value upon liberty will not be able consistently to countenance the inequalities of liberty entailed by discrepancies of means. Given a state of affairs in which the material conditions of meaningful action depend upon economic incentives to work, such inequalities may be inescapable, but that only shows that such incentives need replacement by work which enhances self-esteem and satisfaction.

For a view which stresses the essentially social character of liberty, agreements and contracts have an important but decidedly secondary place. They cannot provide the foundation of social life, for social institutions are not adequately justified by agreements among self-interested persons, no matter how impartial. Such agreements would be irrational in that sense of reason which concerns our essentially social nature. Instrumental reason

11. For further discussion of such relationships, see Evan Simpson, "Aesthetic Appraisal," *Philosophy* 50 (April 1975): 189–204.

provides adequate grounds for individual choice only in the limited area in which the ends it advances are not assessable by reference to social fact. When ends are set by structured attitudes, strategies for their satisfaction are in order only to the extent the ends are justified. Since it is in terms of such attitudes that the notions of freedom and equity are actually understood, rational agreements about institutions cannot be made except from within a social context. Liberty and welfare, politics and economics, are so bound together that the question of liberty is also a question of equality. If one believes that liberty is essential for justice—the only tenable view in a diverse and changing society—one should recognize that justice means real equality. Only if one is not much concerned for the greatest possible equal liberty can justice and equality be separated.