

**Department of Politics and International Relations**  
Political Theory core lectures  
Hilary Term 2003

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**Freedom and Equality 1**

1. **Aim of the lecture**  
*To look closely at the familiar argument*
  - if each is free to do or to be
  - then equality between individuals will be compromised
  - more freedom, less equality; more equality, less freedom.
  
2. **Equality**  
Moral Equality  
Political Equality  
Social Equality
  
3. **Freedom**  
Physical constraints  
Social constraints
  - incentives
  - psychology
  - social, psychological and material lacks*Is an incentive structure a constraint on freedom?*  
*Can a lack or absence be a constraint on freedom?*
  
4. **The argument**
  - if people are free
  - then they will deploy their agency
  - modern moral equality presupposes agency
  - inevitably some will accumulate and others lose
  - the only way to maintain equality of life chances is by authoritative reallocation
  - authority subtracts agency from the individual
  - so there is a trade off between equality of life chances and freedom
  
5. **Formal and substantive**  
Formal expression of equivalence  
Principle that 'each to count for one and none for more than one'  
What context?
  - in the sight of God
  - before the law
  - in any given social context
  
6. **The importance of formal equality**  
We never need justify treating two people equally, but we always have to justify treating two people unequally

7. **Social equality**

What are the social conditions under which inequality between men and women can come to be taken for granted?

Unequal treatment

Unequal holdings

- Legally entrenched status – denial of formal equality
- Clear distinction between formal and substantive equality
  - no logical relationship
  - no conceptual relationship
  - no social relationship

**References**

S I Benn *A Theory of Freedom*

Robert Nozick, *Anarchy State and Utopia*

Bernard Williams 'The Idea of Equality' in *Problems of the Self*