

# **(In)Equality of What?**

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WOMEN'S EQUALITY  
HUMAN RIGHTS AUTONOMY  
CALL FOR CHANGE VOTE  
SOCIAL ACHIEVEMENTS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY STRUGGLES  
APPRECIATION  
GIRLS WORLDWIDE MARCHES  
GENDER EQUALITY PROGRESS WOMEN  
RESPECT  
EQUALITY DETERMINATION POLITICAL ACHIEVEMENTS SOCIAL AWARENESS ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENTS HISTORY  
GRATEFUL WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOTHERS ACTS OF COURAGE  
MARCH 8 EMPOWERMENT EQUAL PAY STRONG  
BODILY INTEGRITY DEMONSTRATIONS



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# Extremely important

- Economy
- Democracy
- Health
- Crime
- Happiness
- Trust

All seems to be affected by our views held about equality and inequality

# Equality & Inequality

- *Essentially contested concepts* – many competing meanings
- Closely connected to *justice* and *fairness*
- Strong emotional and ideological connotations

”Just” or ”fair” is not (usually) the same as ”equal”.

There may be ”fair inequality”  
and ”unfair equality”

# Common denominator

- Like cases should be treated alike
- Equals being treated equally
- Everyone receiving their “just desert”

# Two basic types of (in)equality

**1. Procedural justice** – rules, procedures most important

- a) *Equality before the law, equal economic, civil, political rights, liberty*
- b) *Non-discrimination*

**2. Distributive (or social) justice** – outcomes, distributions most important

- a) Egalitarian (numerical) equality: everyone gets equal shares; Gini=0
- b) Proportional equality: distribution according to effort, skill, education, desert, need etc.; **RATIO**  
Gini>0

## A micro-level example:

### “Equal pay for equal work”

*Proportional equality*: wages differentiated depending on effort, skill, education etc.

Presupposes *procedural justice*: rules, procedures, transparency

### “Equal pay for unequal work”

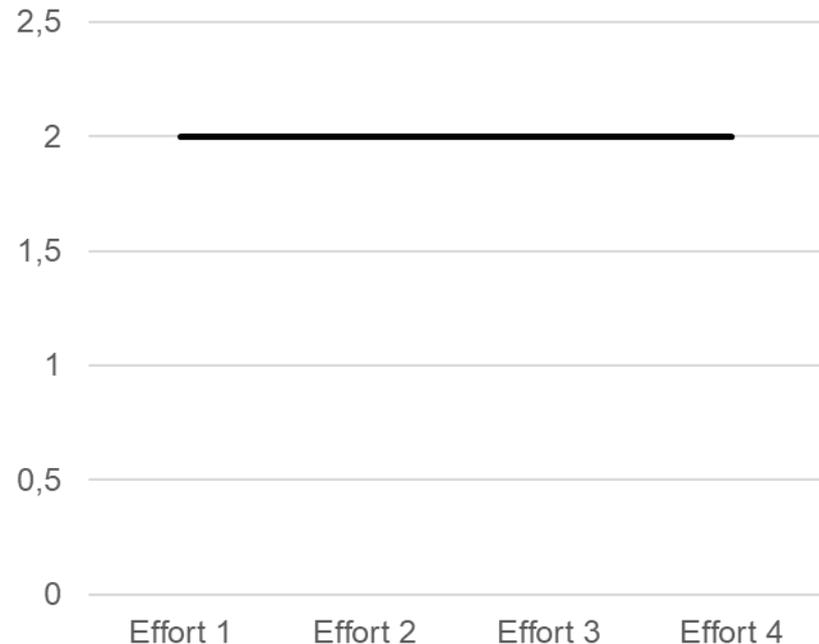
*Egalitarian(numerical) equality*: wages the same despite differences in desert, skill, education etc.

# Very different distributions

**Proportional equality**  
(*equal pay for equal work*)



**Egalitarian equality**  
(equal pay for unequal work)



## Macro-level: *Procedural justice*

Equal rights, the rule of law, protection of property rights, democratic rights etc.

→ Any distribution of income or wealth is fair as long as the rules are fair, no corruption, no discrimination etc.

**Fair? Just?**

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# Macro-level: *Distributional justice 1*

## ***Proportional equality:***

Income and wealth should be distributed according to effort, skill, education, desert, need etc. (Gini>0)

## ***Egalitarian equality:***

All incomes and wealth should be the same (Gini=0)

**Fair? Just?**

But **neither** is possible in an open market economy!

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# F. A. Hayek on "social justice"

"A quasi-religious belief with no content whatsoever", a vacuous concept that "has no meaning whatsoever, an "atavism" in the Great Society

*Law, Legislation and Liberty* (1973)

# Macro-level *Distributional justice 2:* *Equality of opportunity* (= “fair inequality”)

## ”Circumstances”

vs.

## ” *Individual accountability*”

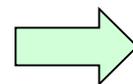
### *Levelling the playing field*

- “Limited” redistribution considered fair, just
- Ex ante, “before”
- *Education, basic income*
- *Capabilities* (Sen)
- *Minimax* (Rawls)
- But unclear degrees and spheres

**(In)Equality of What?**

### *Personal responsibility*

- Autonomous choice
- Ex post, “after”
- Market outcomes



Difficult to draw the line between the two:  
incentive effects, biological differences, IQ, educational effort, personal integrity, luck, risk taking etc.?

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# Conclusions

- Definitions are crucial!
- Gini-coefficient is a bad measure of inequality, fairness, justice etc.
- Procedural equality is most important
- But not enough...
- The challenge is to define “fair inequality”!