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Education and equality

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ABSTRACT
The idea that all human beings are or ought to be equal has high standing amongst the most hallowed Western cultural traditions. There is now a huge literature about the relationship between education and equality which, I believe, has obscured more than it has illuminated the realities of the social and economic situation. In this paper I propose to take a fresh look at some of the issues involved. In particular, I want to consider what might be meant by concepts such as 'equality', 'equal opportunity', and 'education'; what some influential writers have said about them; how they might connect with certain historical situations; and, of supreme importance, whether equality is possible under capitalism. My perspective is historical, since I have come to think that, in order to understand where we are, it is necessary to discover how we got there. Certainly, there is already a 'respectable' tradition of (Marxist) analysis in this country. But I have nowhere found any attempt at the sort of comprehensive look at the political economy of education whose barest outline I attempt to sketch here.

The idea that all human beings are or ought to be equal has high standing amongst the most hallowed Western cultural traditions, as the French and Russian revolutions sufficiently attest. More recently, talk of equality seems to have been superseded by talk of equality of opportunity, the notion that all bars to 'upward' movement, especially to occupations carrying high status and income, ought to be removed, thus making it possible for anyone to succeed in some relevant sense as far as s/he is able to. And, since educational level has been seen tor a century or so as the main facilitator of social and economic ascendancy, education has come to be valued as the most central institution concerned with equal opportunity.

There is now a huge literature about the relationship between education and equality which, I believe, has obscured more than it has illuminated the realities of the social and economic situation. I do not propose in this paper to review that literature, but rather to take a fresh look at some of the issues involved. In particular, I want to consider what might be meant by concepts such as 'equality', 'equal opportunity', and 'education'; what some influential writers have said about them; how they might connect with certain historical situations; and, of supreme importance, whether equality is possible under capitalism.

My perspective is historical, since I have come to think that, in order to understand where we are, it is necessary to discover how we got there. Moreover, much of my material and its analysis is about events in Britain, which may seem surprising since I am a New Zealander. Any surprise may be lessened by the reflection that the issues discussed are sharper in Britain, have gene rated a very substantial literature to draw upon, and in any case reflect social and economic conditions which

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have some parallels here and, I guess, will provide more in the readily foreseeable future.[1] In another sense, I do not need an excuse; since my primary intention is not to present a finished product but rather to stimulate reflection and inquiry on the part of others. I certainly believe it to be of the first importance to find out how far New Zealand is along the road of advanced capitalism; the extent to which State intervention has mitigated its worst evils; whether the commitment of the first Labour government to equality means anything at present to decision-makers and, it so, what anyone is doing about it.

Certainly, there is already a 'respectable' tradition of (Marxist) analysis in this country, examples being the work over many years of Wolfgang Rosenberg in the *Monthly Review* and elsewhere, and the more recent critique by David Bedggood.[2] But I have nowhere found any attempt at the sort of comprehensive look at the political economy of education whose barest outline I attempt to sketch here, though a recent paper by John Freeman-Moir is a remarkably useful beginning.[3] I hope others will feel impelled to conduct their own investigations and make their own analyses, though I do not suppose that I shall altogether refrain from doing so.

I.

The alleged relation between education and equality may be put succinctly, If inadequately, in the form of two quotations:

> Equality is easy to define and measure; it occurs when every income receiver gets the same sum in income.[4]

> (John Stuart) Mill … like Adam Smith before him ... looked to a massive dose of education ... to make more alike those who were unlike, and to enable society to usher in that perfect equality of opportunity for every man that was so desirable.[5]

In these quotations are the three concepts I wish to consider: 'equality', 'education' and 'equality of opportunity'. The first is specified precisely enough, though in a form that would not meet with universal approval. The other two are not spelt out at all. Yet since equality is frequently said to be a fundamental objective of educational and social policy in Western democracies, it seems important to get as clear as may be just what is being talked about. Important because unless we are clear about such things, we have no way of deciding such questions as: does education procure equality? can it? how can an education system be so arranged as to maximise equality? And these questions plainly go to the utility of such policies. So the initial problem must be to determine what might be meant by 'equality'.

However they may otherwise differ, all versions of equality that I have encountered seem to include 'sameness' among their characteristics. But the nature of that sameness varies very widely in both substance and generality. Thus Bowen's account is both substantive and specific: equality means having the same income.[6] Equally substantive but more general is the version given in ancient Roman law: all men are by nature equal ('omnes homines natura equales sunt'). It is important to note that this is not a moral but a legal principle and was enunciated to deal with the relations between Roman citizens and foreigners from other Italian states resident in Rome. The Romans had their own civil law (jus civile) which over time proved inadequate to deal with legal disputes between Roman and foreigner and foreigner and foreigner in Rome. They therefore developed a Law of Nations (jus gentium) which gradually came to be conceived of as a Natural Law (jus naturale). Hence, though for Roman jurists the jus naturale was legal and regulatory, subsequent thinkers, especially Christians, elevated it to the status of a transcendent moral principle. Sir Henry Maine had this to say of it:[7]

> There cannot, I conceive, be any question that to the assumption of a Law Natural we owe the doctrine of the fundamental equality of human beings. That 'all men are equal' is one of a large number of legal propositions which, in progress of time, have become political.

And

> Where the Roman jurisconsult had written 'aequales sunt' (they are equal), meaning exactly what he said, the modern civilian writes 'all men are equal' in the sense of 'all men ought to be equal'. The peculiar Roman idea that natural law coexisted with civil law and gradually absorbed it, had evidently been lost sight of, or had become unintelligible, and the words which had at most conveyed a theory concerning the origin, composition, and development of human institutions, were beginning to express the sense of a great standing wrong suffered by mankind.[8]

The most important influence in this profound shift of meaning was, of course, the Christian church. And the shift was most elegantly characterised in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas.[9] Aquinas distinguished between what he called positive law (which included civil law in the Roman sense) and Divine Law (the reason existing in the mind of God). This distinction is nicely encapsulated by Jesus in his saying: Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's. Mediating between these is Aquinas's notion of natural law, which in this formulation becomes such apprehension as is available to Man of Divine Law. In this way we have some sort of a test of the adequacy of human law, given through a (somewhat abstract) concept of natural justice. In a very fundamental sense, cases in modern courts involving issues of equity or natural justice have their origins in Roman law and the Christian gloss upon it. What is being said here is that 'al l men are (ought to be) equal' has suffered two translations. Not only does it presuppose that all men are equal 'in the sight of God' (though St. Paul at least has women consistently subservient to men) but also that they ought to be treated equally by earthly tribunals. That is, we have a burgeoning concept of equity, of distributive justice, of justice as fairness, i.e., of equality as sameness. At this point we seem to have a concept of equality which is extremely general if somewhat lacking in substance. Equality in this sense, especially in its Christian connotations, immediately introduces questions about rights. For if people are to be treated as equal in the sight of God or under the civil law, it follows that they have a 'natural right' to be so treated (whether one accepts 'natural' in the Roman or Thomistic sense).

But this transformation of the notion of equality as the invocation of natural rights belongs not merely to a Christian tradition but to a more romantic belief in a perfect State of Nature, whose most famous expositor is Jean-Jacques Rousseau. His notion, according to Maine, is the theory of the Roman Jurists turned upside down:[10]

> The Roman had conceived that by careful observation of existing institutions parts of them could be singled out which either exhibited already, or could by judicious purification be made to exhibit, the vestiges of that reign of nature whose reality he faintly affirmed. Rousseau's belief was that a perfect social order could be evolved from an unassisted consideration of the natural state, a social order wholly irrespective of the actual condition of the world and wholly unlike it. The great difference between the views is that one bitterly and broadly condemns the present for its unlikeness to the ideal past; while the other, assuming the present to be as necessary as the past, does not affect to disregard or censure it.

If we are to consider how equality might fare under a state of nature, we should look at two views antecedent to those of Rousseau, viz., those of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. Unlike Rousseau, neither of them seems to have conceived of an actual stat e of nature, either a Golden Age of which modern society is a perversion or any other sort, but they did have clear notions of what such a state would be like. For Hobbes, perhaps the most pessimistic of all political theorists, in a state of nature:[11]

> ... there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no culture of the earth, no navigation nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth no account of time; no arts, no letters, no society; and, which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man; solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

Moreover, Hobbes saw this state of affairs as a direct consequence of the natural equality of man. Quite unlike the Roman jurists or the Christian philosophers, equality for Hobbes was a physical fact. What he is saying, in effect, is that no matter what differences there may be among men with respect to strength, wit, guile and the like, no one is so superior that he cannot, one way or another, be brought down. Hence, a state of nature would simply be an endless struggle of man against man:[12]

> Nature has made man so equal in the faculties of body and mind, as that though there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body or of quicker mind than another, yet when all is reckoned together, the difference between man and man is not so considerable as that one man can thereupon claim to himself any benefit to which another may pretend as well as he. For as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination or by confederacy with others that are in the same danger with himself.

The only way that Hobbes saw to escape this dismal situation was for al l men, for the sake of survival and security, to make a social compact among themselves to be ruled by an absolute monarch. Hence, by an ironic twist the natural equality of man leads inevitably to despotism.[13]

Locke, a person of much more sanguine temperament, published his most important political writings in the years following the bloodless Glorious Revolution of 1688, in which he was himself heavily involved.[14] One might, therefore, expect him to have a more optimistic view of human nature than Hobbes. And so it proves. Locke says of man in a state of nature (and in a document that was to influence profoundly the framers of the American Declaration of Independence) that it is a state:[15]

> … of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another, there being nothing more evident than that creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of Nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another, without subordination or subjection ...

Thus, Locke presents us with an account of the natural equality of man which is strikingly similar to that of Rousseau, a person with whom he could have had almost nothing in common. Yet so powerful were Rousseau's writings that even the conservative Henry Maine was moved to write of:[16]

> … that remarkable man who, without learning, with few virtues, and with no strength of character, has nevertheless stamped himself ineffaceably on history by the force of a vivid imagination, and by the help of a genuine and burning love for his fellow-men, for which much will always have to be forgiven him.

Rousseau was an atheist. We may therefore suppose that when he writes of the natural equality of man he means us to consider man as human being simpliciter, i.e., without religious, supernatural or transcendental overtones of any sort. With this in mind let us hear him:[17]

> … as there is hardly any inequality in the state of nature, all the inequality which now prevails owes its strength and growth to the development of our faculties and the advance of the human mind, and becomes at lost permanent and legitimate by the establishment of property and laws.

The argument here is that men are naturally equal and that such inequality as exists owes itself to human institutions.

Disregarding for the moment the definition given by Bowen (which in any case may be subsumed by some of the others), this journey in the history of ideas yields us four quite different versions of the concept of equality:

1. equal treatment under the law (jus naturale)
2. equality in the eyes of God (the Christian tradition)
3. equality of ability (Hobbes)
4. equality of right as a human being (Locke, Rousseau, American Declaration of Independence).

Except for the idiosyncratic account by Hobbes, which relies upon an elusive human nature, these ideas have all found expression within the Western tradition. Al l of our judicial systems would claim that everyone is treated equally by legal institutions, though differential access to expensive lawyers and the actual operations of courts might provoke some scepticism. And it is hard to deny that we are all equal in the sight of God, since none of us knows who or what S/He is or how S/He operates. Nonetheless, there can be no doubt that this Christian tradition has been extremely influential, even though we may now render more to Caesar than we like or he deserves. Unquestionably, this same Christian tradition is of extreme importance to our acceptance of the fourth account of equality of right as a human being. This has been enshrined in Article I of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ('All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights') and may be taken as the basis for subsequent discussion.[18]

II.

On the face of it (and taking into account what was said in the introduction to this paper), one would suppose that the consideration of equality as such leads automatically into discussion of equality of opportunity. In fact, they are very different concepts, the latter being extremely complex and involving issues other than simple equality. Insofar as they are linked, one important bridge between them is the notion of rights. I am not concerned here with rights as such, but a useful source for discussion of the latter is to be found in the work of Snook and Lankshear.[19]

In the present context, we must traverse two related concepts: equality of opportunity and equality of educational opportunity. For some considerable time, the conventional wisdom has been that the second leads to the first as cause to effect. Indeed, a couple of generations of educational and social reformers have based their lives' work on this assumption. I wish to argue in this section that their views, influential as they have been and are, misconceived in a quite fundamental way the nature of the relations between education, society, the economy, and the polity.[20]

The doctrine is clear enough. It can be condensed into six statements, each of which builds with the others into an apparently unassailable logical system.

1. Equality (in the sense in which we are now discussing it) is the most desirable state for human beings and one, moreover, to which our humanity entitles us.
2. Given a socio-economic system in which wealth, status, and power flow to those most adapted to life under industrial capitalism, equal opportunity consists in providing everyone with an equal chance to make the necessary adaptation.
3. Since the criteria for close adaptation include technical skills and information, a background of high education is required.
4. It is therefore necessary to so rearrange educational provisions that everyone capable of acquiring these technical skills and information be put in a position to do so.
5. Therefore, everyone must be provided with equality of educational opportunity.
6. Therefore, a system of universal education must be instituted.

Now, there is a difference between those who think these things are necessary and those who think they ought to happen, and another difference between these and the people who can make them happen. In short, it seems important to understand the motives of various groups, with differing objectives, who nevertheless espoused the same cause. In England, which I am taking as the paradigm case, there were three major groupings.[21]

1. Liberal Whig reformers and politicians, some of whom appear to have had a genuine concern for others and a desire to improve the circumstances of the working classes - at least up to a point.

At the same time there was, at least during the early part of the nineteenth century, a real fear of a working-class revolution. Many politicians foresaw the coming necessity of universal franchise (for males at any rate) and, because it is not easy to control people who do not understand what one says or cannot read what one writes, some sort of universal schooling looked to be politically necessary.

> I believe it will be absolutely necessary that you should prevail on our future masters to learn their letters.[22]

Popularised as 'we must educate our masters ', Lowe's remark became a political catchcry and illustrates well the naked political pressures that in part resulted in Forster's Act of 1870, which made universal primary schooling possible.

2. Another motive was an economic one, stemming from the demands of capital for people with technical and technological skills. Britain was the spearhead of the Industrial Revolution and managed to get by for a century or so by utilising the genius of a few talented individuals. Thus, in the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851, the British won all but a few of the hundred prizes offered for manufactures. But at the Paris Exposition sixteen years later, they won only a handful, being scooped by France, Germany, and the United States. This failure led directly to the setting-up of technical schools and the civic universities. It also marked the beginning of an attitude that has characterised British educational decision-making to the present day, viz., an obsession with 'economic efficiency'. Of course, the drive to tap the 'pool of ability ', in order to get that final marginal graduate for the industrial machine, did mean that many able working-class boys 'made it' through educational institutions into positions of considerable status and income. And it did create a 'new' middle class - or people who, though they did not own capital and had nothing to sell but their labour power, nevertheless could offer services which were in great demand and financially rewarding - at the cost of splitting the working class in two. The interests of this 'new' middle class - technicians, technologists, scientists, professionals - came to be identical with the interests of those who hired them, and in this way the more able and articulate voices were largely lost from the working class. And it should not be forgotten that the architects of the programme of equality of educational opportunity were not, by and large, interested in equality, were not concerned to espouse the interests of the working class. Rather, they were after economic efficiency and the defusing of what many saw as a revolutionary situation. In short, they were after social control. And the working class tell right into their hands.

3. Undoubtedly, there was widespread literacy among the working c lass long before universal primary schooling. Indeed, E.G. West[23] has argued that by 1851 few children had received no schooling. Nevertheless, it was not compulsory, attendance was irregular, and the quality of most of what went on was, to say the least, indifferent. However, there was a large number of literate working-class men who, despite establishment attempts to improve their minds, persisted in following their taste for politically subversive literature. Thus, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors looked at the circulation figures tor all the periodicals in a Newcastle shop in 1851.[24] He found nine (which he termed 'infidel and chartist') with a circulation of 1,612; one ('chartist only') with 600 borrowers; four ('hostile to present institutions and of immoral tendency') 1,656; three ('religious and moral and containing useful information') 688. It was this state of affairs that caused Thomas Love Peacock to have one of his characters say satirically (in Nightmare Abbey): 'How can we be cheerful when we are surrounded by a reading public that is growing too wise for its betters?'

Attitudes among establishment supporters were curiously mixed. All agreed upon the need to frustrate subversive and revolutionary thought and activity among the working class, but there was much less agreement that education was the best way to go about it.

> (The more the workers are in structed) the less liable they are to the delusions of enthusiasm and superstition, which among ignorant nations, frequently occasions the most frightful disorders ... They are more disposed to examine, and more capable of seeing through the Interested claims of

> faction and sedition and they are, upon that account, less apt to be misled into any wanton or unnecessary opposition to the measures of government.[25]

By contrast,

> … schools of atheism and disloyalty abound in this country; schools in the shape and disguise of Charity schools and Sunday schools, in which the minds of the children of the very lowest orders are enlightened - that is to say taught to despise religion and the laws and all subordination.[26]

In general, however,

> … most moderate and liberal op inion favoured elementary education tor the labouring classes, provided that it was strictly limited in content, strongly disciplinary in tone, and was not employed as an instrument for social levelling. Teaching reading attracted almost universal approval, especially when associated with explicit moral and religious instruction and due stress on subordination. Writing and arithmetic were more controversial, and unqualified approval of teaching all three 'Rs' was a mark of a liberal or even radical outlook. Fear of over-educating the poor and thus giving them ideas above their station remained one of the great obstacles to improving elementary education until well into the present century … [27]

Nor were teachers exempt from the necessity of using the schools to maintain a rigidly stratified society. In training pupil-teachers, Her Majesty's Inspectors were required to

> ... improve their habits and manners, to promote a sense of order and de corum, a respectful obedience to their parents, teachers and superiors, to cultivate an intelligent disposition to fulfil the duties of their station in life, and to enable them to see how their interests and happiness are inseparable from the well-being of other classes of society.[28]

And the teacher, once trained, was not permitted to forget his uneasy situation. His house should be

> by no means too large, so as to exalt the teacher too much in the scale of society, but he should be taken out of a cottage, and put into a decent residence, which would be calculated to make those persons lower than himself inclined to show a proper feeling of respect for the school master who teaches their children.[29]

Similar attitudes were displayed towards the education of working-class adults, exhibited aptly through the establishment of Mechanics' Institutes during the 1830s and 1840s in almost every sizeable town. These were sponsored and run by middle-class groups and appeared to have two main aims. Explicitly, they made a (largely abortive) attempt at technical training. But they seem also to have been designed to attract working men away from their clubs and other associations, especially those of a political character. In the event, they undercut themselves by refusing to permit discussion of controversial issues, by censoring libraries and reading rooms, and so driving away the more thoughtful and articulate members. In any case, many of the l atter recognised them for what they were:[30]

> … what faith can the people have in the professions of men who, while they talk of instructing them, are devising and executing the most infamous of laws for restricting the freedom of opinion, the right of public meeting, and the free circulation of knowledge? How can they trust the sincerity of those persons who would mould them into more tractable and ingenious machines tor the production of wealth, but would deny them any political power to determine how that wealth should be distributed? And how can they who make a profession of liberality suppose the working classes are so blind and ignorant as not to see through their speciousness and hypocrisy, when their speeches, votes, and conduct on al l questions affecting the rights and interests of labour, prove them either staunch supporters of the present oppressive and fraudulent system, or humanity-mongers who would make the millions comfortable slaves, ignorant of the rights and privileges of freemen, and content at al l times to obey the desires of their political and spiritual masters?

The burning drive of such working-class advocates as Lovett and Collins was of course in the service of their belief in the natural right of man to equality and democracy, spelt out most

powerfully in Thomas Paine's Rights of Man, a book which may fairly be described as the Bible of this particular attempt at working-class revolt. Though the Chartists were only one of several groups, it remains true that working-class activism was generally aimed at equality and that al l of them, whether 'democrats , rationalists, cooperators, Chartists, socialists, or ... communists'[31], saw universal education as integral to their struggle. Not all, however, conceived of an education provided by the state. Lovett, for one, feared it - even under universal suffrage - demanding that government provide the means but that local people should decide the form.[32]

> ... too many of those who stand in the list of education promotors, are but state-tricksters, seeking to make it an instrument of party or faction. We perceive that one is for moulding the infant mind upon the principles of church and state, another is for basing its morals on their own sectarianism, and another is for an amalgamation of both; in fact, the great principles of human nature, social morality, and political justice, are disregarded, in the desire of promoting their own selfish views and party interests.

Lovett and others at like persuasion saw the move towards equality in terms of a 'moral force', working towards universal education and suffrage. In this sense they had much in common with those members of the establishment who were also committed to working-class education but who needed to believe 'educated working men were socially and politically reliable'.[33] Both sides were drawn together when, in 1848, huge and often violent Chartist demonstrations, under the leadership of Fergus O'Connor, swept England, coinciding with a wave of violence across Europe. This year marked the col lap se of anything approaching a working-class revolution in England, though not, of course, the end of demands for equality, universal education, and the vote.

III.

I have referred to the demands of capital and how, among other things, they resulted in the creation of a 'new' middle class. It is now necessary to consider these events in somewhat greater detail, especially with respect to their impact on the working class.[34]

Though the full impact of the British indifference to scientific and technical education was not felt until 1867, some technological deficiencies had been noted before 1851.[35] For instance, British fabrics were being sent to France for dyeing, the French techniques being superior. 'The foreigner thinks it is our water and sunshine, but we say it is our chemistry'.[36] The most influential critic of the universities' attitudes was Albert, the Prince Consort, who helped to establish in London the Royal College of Chemistry in 1845. However, as Ashby notes,[37] 'One unhappy consequence of this narrowly pragmatic attitude to science was that scientific education tended to be regarded as more suitable for artisans and the lower middle classes than for the governing classes'. Thus, the way was now open for able working-class boys to Improve their prospects, social and economic, through advanced education and training. The major factor here was Britain's worsening position vis-a-vis the more technologically developed United States and Europe, an advance which had been achieved (in the case of the first) by lack of a stratification system that denied opportunities to most and, in Europe, an interest in science for its own sake rather than for economic ends. 'In France', writes Ashby, 'science had been fashionable; in England it became popular'.[38] In short, because of international competition for markets and the requirements of capitalist accumulation, the labour supply-demand equation came to be weighted in favour of those with the education and the scientific technical and organisational knowledge and skills required to put them ahead of the pack. In this way, two apparent transformations occurred: one was the shift from ascribed to achieved criteria for social status; the other a qualitative shift to equality of educational opportunity. As to the first, what is being said is that, unlike the time when a person's position depended upon one's origins (class, race, sex, etc), such that upward mobility was al l but impossible, industrialisation changed all that. Now, the possibility of matching reality to aspiration depended simply upon achievement, and the path rested upon a base of high education and training. Indisputably, this worked for many people, at least until well into this century.[39] Whether it has continued to work to

any marked degree is less clear.[40] In any case, a methodological distinction of very great importance to our present concern needs now to be made, viz., that between status and class.

In much modern writing on 'social class', the criteria used for the determination of class are, in most countries, the groupings used in the census classification of occupations. Thus, we rank people as 'administrative-executive' 'professional-technical' and so on 'down' the line. On this basis (and it might be no accident that the people doing the rankings happen to be in the upper echelons of such schema for classification), class is decided simply on one indicator, occupation. Undoubtedly, this makes life easy tor the sociologist, but it hardly makes sense of the complex ways in which we accord prestige and deference to others. Noting this, some people have made attempts to construct indices of 'socio-economic status', using a combination (an index) of indicators such as education, occupation and income.[41] Now, to the student of Marx or of working- class history or trade union organisation, this concept of class makes hardly any sense at all. For to them class was a tout ownership of the means of production - and nothing else. To see how this confusion came about it is convenient to refer to the work of one of Marx's earlier commentators Max Weber.[42]

Weber addressed himself to questions about power. Very generally, he conceived of three main kinds of power: economic, social, and political. The first he called 'class', considered for the most part in the same way as Marx. Social power he called 'status' and political power 'party'. And he thought that all three kinds of power tended to coalesce within the same individuals.[43] The link between Weber and modern sociology is to be found in the work of William Lloyd Warner and his associates in the United States.[44] These people understood very well the Marxist notion of class (which they rejected) and the nature of power and their programme was to try to elicit the empirical correlates of the ways in which people perceived the operations of power and influence within their own life situations. Thus, in a smallish town in which social economic and political differentiation was quite visible, they asked numbers of individuals representing various interests to identify other individuals or families as belonging to different social strata. In this way, they arrived at an agreed-upon division of the population into six strata, ranging from upper-upper to lower-lower classes. They went on to look for objective factors which would correspond to the classification that had been arrived at independently. And they found those factors to be such things as wealth source of wealth residential area, occupation, education, and so on. On this basis, they were able to erect an Index of Status Characteristics (ISC) which accurately distinguished the six groups from one another.[45] Subsequently, the ISC was applied by them and others to other communities, with varying degrees of success, the worst being in large cities. But the important point tor us here is that in later sociological writings the ISC became a surrogate tor the power relationships it represented and eventually a substitute for them. In this way, the empirical referents of status came to be identified with class. Moreover, as noted earlier, even the ISC has largely dropped out of use, having been replaced by some easily managed index such as a combination of occupation, education and income, or even some almost totally impoverished indicator like occupation. To take an analogy from chemistry, it is as if a chemist were to take a litmus test as the evidence for some reagent's being an acid, rather than as an indicator of acidity for which there are quite independent measures. Chemists do not usually make this sort of mistake, but sociologists frequently do. Thus, to identify, say, occupation with class is to ignore the reality of which occupation is merely one (not very useful) referent. And it is to trivialise the issues that concerned Marx and the British working class.[46] Thus, when we write of upward mobility and the emergency of a 'new' middle class, we might be saying no more than that a substantial increase occurred in the ranks of the petit bourgeoisie, while the basic class structure remained unchanged. However, it is important to recall that the class interests of such people are likely to be identified with the interests of those they serve, and at the expense of others in their class of origin. That is, members of the same class may be pitted one against the other in a contest in which most will lose and in which the contestants are unevenly matched with respect to the criteria for success. And this is one possible meaning to give to the notion of equality of educational opportunity. Certainly, the contest has been much more open during the past forty years or so (though the ranks may have recently begun to thin). Yet that openness has rested upon

a basis of economic efficiency, of demand for qualified manpower, as evidenced by the Hadow Report, the 1944 Butler Act, the Robbins Report, and some of the arguments for the move to comprehensive reorganisation.[47] To be sure, these arguments have long had an obligate of liberal reformist rhetoric which, never mind the sincerity of its utterers, has merely shown up the contradiction that under. capitalism equality of opportunity, educational or otherwise, is necessarily incompatible with equality simpliciter. Tawney's bitter commentary underscores the point.[48]

> It is possible that intelligent tadpoles reconcile themselves to the inconveniences of their position, by reflecting that, though most of them will live and die as tadpoles and nothing more, the more fortunate of their species wit I one day shed their tails, distend their mouths and stomachs, hop nimbly on to dry land, and croak addresses to their former friends on the virtues by means of which tadpoles of character and capacity can rise to be frogs. This conception of society may be described, perhaps, as the Tadpole Philosophy, since the consolation which it offers for social evils consists in the statement that exceptional individuals may succeed in evading them.

The accuracy of Tawney's remarks is attested by the dismal failure of the two major attempts during the last fifty years to restructure secondary education in the direction of greater equality of educational opportunity. We refer to the tripartite system generated by the 1944 Act (the Butler Act), and the later move toward comprehensive reorganisation brought about by Circular 10/65.[49] The consequences of these changes have been more than fully discussed and we do not propose to go into them there. We wish simply to reiterate that, so long as social and economic rewards (by definition the province of a minority) accrue to those having high education and training; and so long as educational institutions operate as sorting mechanisms for allocating relative merit, it will remain necessarily true that education and equality continue to be mutually incompatible.

IV.

I go on to ask if there is at least one other account that may be given of the concept of equality of educational opportunity, and if it can sensibly be related to equality as we have described that notion. I believe there is, but that its working out would require views of education, economy, and society very different from those held by most of us.

A. F. Kleinberger[50] traverses a number of widely held views about education and equality and finds them al l defective, concluding that 'there is no reasonable sense in which the notion of equality can serve as a guiding principle for educational policy'. But this is because he assumes the existing relationship between education and capitalism, viz., that school is preparation for life and work within industrial democracy. Once that assumption is challenged, as it is here, then at least one of his descriptions immediately becomes arguable. This is what he calls the 'equivalence of the different and unique'. It amounts to providing al l children and young people with full opportunities for developing their peculiar talents, qualities and inclinations to the limits of their individual capacities , i.e., the equal right of all to be different from one another. In terms of school organization, all interests, inclinations, talents are taken to be equal in value and right to cultivation. Hence, there is a requirement for a huge diversity of institutions, facilities, methods, and the like, with no differences or rank or prestige. No selection oral location may be practised, though this does not preclude counsel ling by parents, teachers, etc. Students, of course, draw up their own programmes, al locate themselves to courses and schools, and may make changes in mid-stream.[51]

This sort of programme (sic.) may seem revolutionary, but in fact it does go on in parts of the United States, to some extent in France, and in grades 7-9 of the Swedish system. Furthermore, it conforms in detail with the avowed aims of the first Labour government in New Zealand, enunciated by the then Minister of Education, Peter Fraser, in 1938.[52]

> The Government's objective, broadly expressed, is that every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right, as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted and to the fullest extent of his powers.

I do not propose here to make an analysis of these aims, but do suggest that such an analysis would show that our education system is a long way from their fulfilment. However, this account is said by Kleinberger to be on all fours with the views of John Dewey, whom he quotes thus: 'everything that in a given situation is an end and good at all is of equal worth, rank and dignity with every other good of any other situation'; a remark Kleinberger is inclined to construe as meaning that al I talents and subjects are equivalent because they are all equally worthless. Now this comment is at best a misunderstanding and at worst a distortion of Dewey. Moreover, it presupposes that Kleinberger has a scale of academic values, as indeed he goes on to imply:

> without a scale of educational and academic values, why on earth is it at all important to be taught and educated and to provide all with equal opportunities for it.

And,

> It would be absurd to insist that all mountains are of equal height just because only a few people are obliged and able to climb to the top of Mt. Everest.

It would indeed, but these rhetorical flourishes and bad analogy merely serve to obscure the failure on the part of Kleinberger to present us with and argue for his hierarchy of values. Plainly, he aligns himself with mainstream philosophers of education such as Paul Hirst and Richard Peters and perhaps I may be forgiven tor supposing that his justifications are probably no better than theirs.[53] It is not, perhaps, offering too much violence to the facts to suggest that every attempt to create a hierarchy of values in terms of knowledge and skills owes rather more to the proponent's biography or to perceived economic advantage than to any internal justification.[54] At any rate insofar as the account of the equivalence of the different and unique coincides with the educational thought of Dewey, I simply side with Dewey.

The question that now arises is the extent to which the kind of educational arrangements I here espouse[55] can be brought into mesh with the demands of the economy for variously-qualified labour. One answer is to suggest that if everyone is taught to do as well ass/he can the things/he does best the result cannot but be beneficial to any conceivable economic order. I shall not, however, adopt this course at present, if only to avoid the objection that the developed talents of individuals may not, at some point or within some particular economy, coincide with demand.

This latter view obviously presupposes some sort of 'manpower planning' arrangement. For reasons that it is impractical to spell out at this point, I do not think the objection has much merit, but will let the point go for now, except to note one contrast that might be crucial, viz., my view supposes an input from education into the economy, while the objection presupposes a directing input from the economy into education.

The present concern of this paper is not how or whether my notion of education is economically viable but rather how equality of opportunity in education (as described above) can coexist with social and economic inequality. And the short answer is that under present arrangements (i.e., late capitalism) it cannot. This does not mean that one logically excludes the other but rather that we labour under twin beliefs which nullify the possibility and which are seldom called into question. These are (i) that some positions and occupations have more 'importance' than others, such that (a) they can be ranked, and (b) their rank justifies the differential social and economic rewards accorded them; (ii) social and financial Incentives are required to get people to work hard. As to the first, the most discussed account is that given by Kingsley Davis and Wilbert, E. Moore.[56]

These sociologists argued that, given that al I societies have to deal with tile four functional problems outlined by Talcott Parsons,[57] positions and occupations may be ranked on each of these dimension and, by some curious arithmetic, a composite profile constructed to give us a measure of relative functional importance. Maybe so, but apart from measurement problems, i.e., deciding which positions go where in relation to the rest on any one dimension, the whole procedure leads to circularity. For instance, the Governor-General is our most highly-paid and socially prominent public servant but it is hard to see his functional importance in terms of more than, possibly, one of

these goals (integration) - unless we are to say that his status and income demonstrate his Importance.

Likewise, it is difficult to believe that a millionaire land speculator has more functional importance than a builder's labourer whose job creates real wealth. Indeed, most of us would tend to see the importance of the former as parasitic, since, whatever he may think of himself, his major social function is to prevent poor people from acquiring accommodation at a price they can afford. As to incentives, it seems necessary to explain why so many independent tradesmen, shopkeepers. and the like, persist in their small businesses for less financial gain than if they were employed by others. This matter is not, however, conclusive, for we have no developed psychology of incentives and it is not, of course, in the interests of the highly-paid to acquire one.[58] Social incentives there may be G Such evidence as there is tends to be slight. For instance, M.E. Spiro found that, in the communes he studied, administration, because it had no special status, was unwanted and people had to be drafted into it.[59] However, this may mean no more than that, having acquired the need for status through al I their cultural and social experiences, people seek those positions through which it is conferred and eschew those which offer no such rewards.[60] That is, this may be a case of reverse causation. And so might everything said throughout this paragraph. No one has ever demonstrated a basic human need for high status and income - as a matter of logical necessity it is inconceivable that anyone could - nor indeed a built-in acquisitiveness. Might it not therefore be the case that these perceived needs result from a set of socio- cultural conditions which, with whatever difficulty, might be changed?

At any rate, no sufficient justification has been given for the differences found in social and economic statuses, and since these run counter to the demand for equality we are now driven to consider possibilities for change; which brings us full circle, i.e., right back to where we began, with Ian Bowen's definition of equality as everyone's having the same income. Now this, as suggested earlier, is a minimal demand insofar as it fails to take account of all the other inequalities among people, even though some of them are related to income differences. But it is also a maximal demand insofar as it does not low for different needs, and pays no attention to such differences in productivity as may be attributable to financial incentives. By non-income differences I intend to refer to those inequalities in horizons of opportunity, knowledge and perceptions of what is possible, taste, leisure pursuits, and all the other appurtenances of the middle-class lifestyle. By no means are these all income-dependent, but, though more directly the result of differences in home background and education, the indirect influence of income is easily discernible. Nor do I wish to suggest that this lifestyle is universally desirable; merely that middle-class people have a choice, poor people do not, and this is inequitable. Differences in need might perhaps be taken care of through some such arrangement as the 'social wage' advocated more than ha If a century ago by the Guild Socialists in Britain.[61] Under this regime one's minimum income would be determined by one's family commitments and the like, the twin assumptions being cooperative ownership of the social product and people contributing to the creation of that product according to their ability. In short, it follows Marx's *cri de coeur*: from each according to his abilities. to each according to his needs. As for incentives, the examples of the independent professional, tradesman and shopkeeper at least al low the possibility that when a person owns the product of his or her own labour, s/he is sufficiently motivated to work for it. Nor, it seems, does the New Zealand Prime Minister, Mr. Muldoon, believe in financial incentives. The Auckland Star recently carried a story about two school children who wrote to Mr. Muldoon asking why the money ear-marked for the purchase of two frigates should not be spent on education. He is said to have replied that 'more money would not make better teachers, since teaching required dedication and motivation and these qualities could not be bought'.[62] This account may, of course, be generalized to a vast range of occupations, especially when workers have the use-value of their production and are not generating surplus value to feed the endless demands of the Law of Capitalist Accumulation. It heartens me greatly to have such powerful support, and from a most unexpected quarter, for my thesis. The point may be sharpened in the event that Mr. Muldoon or someone like him were to claim that teachers are more

or less unique and that others lack 'dedication and motivation', therefore requiring financial incentives. If this be true, the image it conjures up of work under industrial capitalism is bleak indeed. One can only think with pity and horror of all those millions of workers at all levels, including prime ministers, spending a major part of their lives at work whose sole appeal Is the wage or salary it attracts. have long supposed this to be so for wage-workers but am much moved by the similar plight, if it be so, of those who tell them what to do.

I am saying, then, that a belief in genuine equality in education, if it is not to be self-stultifying, commits us necessarily to social and economic equality: that is, to socialism. To put the point conversely and evermore strongly, anyone who is not committed to socialism cannot consistently be committed to equality.

One final matter should be briefly mentioned. Opponents of socialism often seem to regard It as a Utopian (or subtopian depending on the point of view) dream, which it might well be, so well have we been hegemonized. In particular, they seem to think it would deprive us of al l the 'benefits' of capitalism, especially the products of high technology and the large-scale factory system. While one might argue on anti-materialist or conservationist grounds, and perhaps often correctly, that many of the supposed benefits are at best dubious, the fact remains that Marx himself favoured technical development and large-scale production. His objection was to its ' capitalist form (which) reproduces this division of labour in a yet more monstrous shape, inasmuch as, in the factory proper, the worker is transformed into a conscious appendage of a machine … '[63]

But,

> As we can learn in detail from a study of the life and work of Robert Owen, the germs of the education of the future are to be found in the factory system. This will be an education which, in the case of every child over a certain age, will combine productive labour with instruction and physical culture, not only as a means for increasing social production, but as the only way of producing fully developed human beings.[64]

While I do not know, because he did not say, just what detailed proposals Marx might have had for education, I fully agree with his aim. In any competition between him and apologists for capitalism concerning the promotion of genuinely human interests, it is easy to spot the winner.

References

1. It should be emphasised that I am not in any sense trying to write histories of the working c lass or of education in England. Such tasks are quite beyond me, and in any case are to be found in many other places. Rather, I attempt in a series of broad strokes to exhibit the ways in which the concept of natural human rights has historically expressed itself in one country through burgeoning demands for equality, especially insofar as education has been seen as the main avenue of progress. And by, I hope, a judicious selection of views and events, I have tried to offer adequate illustration of my analysis.
2. David Bedggood (1980) Rich and Poor in New Zealand (Sydney: Allen & Unwin)
3. John Freeman Moir (1981) Employable and quiet: the political economy of human misdevelopment. N.Z. Journal of Educational Studies, 16, 1, 15-29 .
4. John Bowen (1970) Acceptable Inequalities , (London: Allen & Unwin), 29.
5. ibid., 45.
6. While this account may seem very simple and nearly frivolous, it ought not to be despised. For, as we shall see, income differences are at the root of so many other inequalities that it is not hard to think that, were income inequalities to disappear, many others would follow.
7. Sir Henry S. Maine (1908) Ancient Law (London: Routledge), 76. The discussion on this point has drawn heavily on Maine.

8. ibid, 77. Parenthesis added.
9. See Etienne Gilson (1950) The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas (London: Gollancz), especially Part 3, ch. 1.
10. Maine, op . cit., 73.
11. Thomas Hobbes (1914) Leviathan (London: J. M. Dent), 64 - 5. While no words have been changed, capitals have been removed and punctuation modernised.
12. Hobbes, op. cit. , 63 . Changes as in Note I.
13. Hobbes was born in 1588, the year the Spanish armada sailed up the English Channel ('1 In 1588 twins were born: myself and fear') and published Leviathan in 1651, two years after the execution of Charles I. So he had justification for his pessimism.
14. See D. J. O'Conner (1952) John Locke (Harmondsworth: Penguin), Introduction.
15. John Locke (1924) Two Treatises on Civil Government (London: J.M.Dent), 118.
16. Maine, op. cit., 71 - 2.
17. J. J. Rousseau (1913) The Social Contract and Discourses (London: J.M. Dent), 22.
18. This is because each statement of what equality means produces procedural principles. Thus, (i) if equal treatment under the law is desirable, courts ought to give it; (ii) if we are equal in the sight of God, we ought to apply the Golden Rule to all our practices; (iii), if we are (as a fact) equally able to do one another in then (on Hobbes's account it makes sense for us to agree to some sort of absolute rule for the sake of survival; (iv) if we are 'free and equal in dignity and rights', our institutions ought to support that dignity and those rights.
19. Ivan Snook and Colin Lankshear (1979) Edu cation and Rights (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press).
20. We are about to discuss views that belong to western Europe and in dust rial capital ism. They should be read in that light. In a different kind of society, the necessities might also be different.
21. I take the ensuing discussion of the historical situation from the following sources: M. D. Shipman, Education and Modernisation; Brian Simon, Studies in the History of Education 1780- 1870; and Education and the Labour Movement 1870-1920; E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class; David Wardle, English Popular Education 1780-1970 and The Rise of the Schooled Society.
22. Robert Lowe, Viscount Sherborne, Speech in House of Commons on the passing of the Reform Bill, 15 July 1867.
23. E. G. West (1965) Education and the State (London: Institute of Economic Affairs).
24. R. K. Webb (1955) The British Working Class Reader 1870- 1948 (London: Allen & Unwin), Cited in: David Wardle (1974) The Rise of the Schooled Society (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul), 89.
25. Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, Book V, ch. 1, Art. 2
26. Bishop of Rochester 1800. Cited in H. Silver (1965) The Concept of Popular Education (London: McGibbon & Kee) 41.
27. David Wardle (1974) The Rise of the Schooled Society (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul) 90.
28. Circular letter to HMIS , March 1849, XLI I, Cited in John Hurt (1971) Education in Evolution (London: Hart-Davis).
29. Lord Wharncliffe in Journal of Education II, 1844. Cited in Hurt, op. cit.
30. William Lovett and John Collins Chartism: A New Organization for the People. In: Brian Simon (ed) (1972) The Radical Tradition in Education in England London: Lawrence & Wishart) 229-30.
31. Simon (ed) op. cit., 10.
32. In Simon (ed) op. cit., 247-48
33. David Wardle (1970) English Popular Education 1780- 1970 (Cambridge: The University Press) 28.

34. On problems of deciding what, in Marxist terms, is to be made of the 'new' middle class, see Rachel Sharp (1980) Knowledge, Ideology and the Politics of Schooling (London: Rout ledge & Kegan Paul), especially 57-60.
35. The material on technical change is derived from Eri c Ashby (1963) Technology and the Academics (London: MacMillan).
36. Ashby op. cit., 31.
37. loc. cit.
38. loc. cit.
39. Lipset, S.M. and R. Bendix (1959) Social Mobility in Industrial Society University of California Press, Ch. 2.
40. Anderson, C. Arnold A. Skeptical note on education and mobility. In: Halsey, Floud & Anderson (eds) (1961) Education, Economy and Society (Glencoe: Free Press). His point is that the rate at which people move up through education about equals that at which they move down through lack of it, so that the net vertical mobility rate is about zero.
41. See, for instance El ley, W.B. and J. C. Irving (1976) 'Revised Socioeconomic index for New Zealand. ' N.Z. Journal of Educational Studies, II, I, 25- 36.
42. Gerth, H.H. and C. Wright Mi I ls (1948) From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul) Ch. VI I, ' Class status, party'.
43. Though by no means always. For example, a 'faded aristocrat' may have status and political power without wealth, while the nouveau riche or arriviste may have wealth without status or political power. This account, in fact, allows us to locate the 'new' middle class with some precision as a grouping which may have social power (status) but for the most part lacks economic or political power. Yet in almost any modern discussion of 'class', they are likely to be rated highly.
44. W. Lloyd Warner, M. Meeker and K. Eell s (1949) Social Class in America: the Evaluation of Status, (New York: Harper & Row)
45. They also constructed a scale of Evaluative Participation (EP), but that is of slight immediate relevance.
46. These issues are immorality epitomised by the rhyming text used by John Ball for his sermon during the Peasants ' Revolt of 1381:

    When Adam delved and Eve span

    Who was then the gentleman?

47. There is no space here to discuss these developments in the detail they deserve. For a brilliant and penetrating account, see Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (1981) Unpopular Education: Schooling and Social Democracy since 1944 (London: Hutchinson)
48. R.H. Tawney (1931) Equality (London: Allen & Unwin) 108-9.
49. In Britain the Department of Education and Science must approve all expenditure on new schools. Comprehensive reorganisation was initiated without legislative change by this circular which stated that no secondary school building would be approved unless it was designed for comprehensive schooling. No public debate was called for (though in fact it did ensue), and no committee was set up to hear submissions. Instead, a major structural change was inaugurated by fiat.
50. A.F. Kleinberger (1967) Reflections on equality in education . Studies in Philosophy and Education, V., (3), 293-340.
51. Kleinberger gives this as an example of what equality in education might be like. But I suggest that it makes perfect sense to regard it in terms of the equal opportunity of children to be successful in their own terms within educational institutions. It does not, of course, guarantee later equality, of opportunity or anything else.
52. (1962) Report of the Commission on Education in New Zealand (Currie Report) (Welllington: Government Printer) II.

53. See P.H. Hirst (1974) 'Liberal education and the nature of knowledge,' in his Knowledge and the Curriculum (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul) R.S. Peters (1966) Ethics and Education (London: Allen and Unwin)
54. It is worth noting that even if such a hierarchy could be established, to use it in order to justify unequal treatment comes perilously close to the naturalistic fallacy, i.e., to suppose that 'is' (some state of affairs) implies 'ought' (that some action ought necessarily to follow).
55. That is, those attributed to Detley, which I accept.
56. K. Davis and W. E. Moore (1945) 'Some principles of stratification' American Socio logical Review V, 10 (2), 242-49.
57. Parsons argued, in 'A revised analytical approach to the theory of social stratification' (In: R. Bendix and S. M. Lipset (eds) (1953) Class, Status and Power. (Glencoe: Free Press) that al l societies must solve four fundamental problems; goal attainment (e.g. national security), adaptation (e.g. division of labour), integration (e.g., solidarity and morale), and pattern maintenance and tension management (e.g., renewal of cultural patterns through education and other rituals). Not only are these interrelated, they are also highly abstract categories, so that a lot of difficult argument would be required to show how they can app l y to something as specific as the function of the Governor-General or of any other position.
58. For evidence that self-employed professionals work from other than financial motives, see G. F. Break (1957) 'Income and Incentives to work'. American Economic Review, 47, 529-49.
59. M.E. Spiro Kibbutz (1956) Venture in Utopia (Harvard University Press).
60. This is a striking example with which to challenge the Davis-Moore account, since by any criteria administration is functionally very Important to the continuation of any society or organization. Yet in this case It has neither status nor significant reward.
61. N. Carpenter (1922) Guild Social ism (New York: Appleton)
62. Auckland Star, 23 February 1982, 12.
63. (1930) Capital, Vol. I, ch. XIII, 9. (London: Everyman's Library).
64. Ibid.