

Bork on Radical Egalitarianism & Individualism

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. "Egalitarianism":

A belief in human equality especially with respect to social, political, and economic rights and privileges.

Kohn, Herbert. From Archetype to Zeitgeist. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1992; p. 229:

The distinction between equity and equality is a very important one in discussions of rights. Equality refers to an amount of quantity, while equity adds to equality the element of fairness. An example will illustrate the major, and often neglected, distinction between these two ideas:

Consider two groups of people, one extremely wealthy and the other extremely poor. Suppose that, in their society, both groups have equal rights to shop in any store, eat in any restaurant, and ride on any form of transport they can afford. Equality of opportunity exists in all areas of life for these people. However, it is possible to argue that the arrangement, though it provides for equality, is unfair. The poor simply can't take advantage of their equality and the arrangement is not equitable.

Some people argue that the only responsibility a society has to its citizens is to provide for equality. Others claim that equality is meaningless in the life of the poor without equity.

Judge Bork very precisely describes what he calls the "defining characteristics of modern liberalism" in:

Bork, Robert H. "Introduction." In *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*. New York: Regan Books, 1996; pp. 5-7 passim:

The defining characteristics of modern liberalism are radical egalitarianism and radical individualism. [Radical egalitarianism demands] the equality of outcomes rather than of opportunity. [Radical individualism demands] the drastic reduction of limits to personal gratification. These may seem an odd pair, for individualism means liberty and liberty produces inequality. [On the other hand] equality of outcomes means coercion and coercion destroys liberty. If they are to operate simultaneously, where they would compete, the two must be kept apart. Thus, they function in different areas of life.

Radical egalitarianism reigns in areas of life and society where superior achievement is possible. However, reward for superior achievement is neutralized by coercion towards a state of equality [i.e., quotas, affirmative action, etc.]. Radical individualism is demanded where there is no danger that achievement will produce inequality. Radical individualism wishes to be unhindered in the pursuit of pleasure. This finds expression especially in the areas of sexuality and the popular arts.

Sometimes the impulses of radical individualism and radical egalitarianism cooperate. Both, for example, are antagonistic to society's traditional morality—the individualist because his pleasures can be maximized only by freedom from authority, the egalitarian is antagonistic to society's traditional morality because he resents any distinction among people or forms of behavior that suggests superiority in one or the other.

NOTE: Put in our vernacular, "I want freedom to pursue my trends while having the necessary budget to sustain them, both without having to compete, meet standards, achieve, or take responsibility for either my performance or my behavior."

Radical egalitarianism necessarily presses us towards collectivism because a powerful state is required to suppress the differences that freedom produces. That raises the sinister and seemingly paradoxical possibility that radical individualism is the handmaiden of collectivist tyranny. This individualism attacks the authority of family, church, and private association. The family is said to be oppressive. It is denied that the church may legitimately insist upon what it regards as moral behavior in its members. Private associations are routinely denied the autonomy to define their membership for themselves. The upshot is that these institutions, which stand between the state and the individual, are progressively weakened and their functions increasingly dictated or taken over by the state. The individual becomes less of a member of powerful private institutions and more a member of an unstructured mass that is vulnerable to the collectivist coercion of the state, thus does radical individualism prepare the way for its opposite [i.e., the Nanny State].

Modern liberalism is powerful because it has enlisted our cultural elites, those who man the institutions that manufacture, manipulate, and disseminate ideas, attitudes, and symbols—universities, churches, Hollywood, the national press, foundation staffs, “public interest” organizations, much of the Democratic and Republican parties, and large sections of the judiciary, including all too often, a majority of the Supreme Court.

Why do the churches go along with this? Because their leadership is made up of men who do not have the courage demonstrated by Christ in the Incarnation, a courage born and nurtured by an inventory of doctrinal wheel-tracks which would not court compromise nor flag in the face of persecution!

Paul suspected such an attitude was not present in the soul of Timothy when he admonishes him in:

2 Timothy 1:7 - God has not given pastors a spirit of cowardice but of power and of love and of self-discipline.

By means of this virtue love and self-discipline, the courage to stand fast under the enabling power of the Holy Spirit can be mustered in the face of unjust persecution. When once done such vigilance brings public humiliation, divine power enables the believer to persevere and to do so without shame.

2 Timothy 1:12 - For this reason I am caused to suffer these things but I am not ashamed ...