

Is williams right in thinking that equality requires us to have a 'relevant reaso...



I think that Williams' notion of equality is a very important one because it doesn't try to deal with the issue of what has to be changed in the structure of the society (like a Marxist might argue), or doesn't try to come up with a universal solution, but tries to find a way of acting and thinking that should be common to all people to help reduce the margin of inequality that is such a predominant characteristic of our society on a world scale. The argument that equality requires us to have a relevant reason for treating people differently is very strong since it is based on two fundamental principles: the first that all men are equal, in that they all share humanity and have the same basic needs, like eating, need for shelter, etc., and that they are all beings with certain common characteristics and therefore deserve the same treatment; these characteristics are those feelings that every man inevitably is born with: pain, anger, love, hate and so on. The second principle is that all men should be equal; this does not mean that all men should be treated alike in every situation, but that there is a fundamental flaw in the contemporary social structure that doesn't take into account certain parts of the population; this means that there should be an equal distribution of, or possibility of achieving, certain goods between men. The distribution of goods is based upon two different inequalities: inequality of need and inequality of merit. It is easy to see that distribution of goods according to need is pretty simple, as it is based on the satisfaction of the existing desire. The more needy should have priority of access to the good in question (for example medical treatment) rather than people who don't need it. A problem here arises when two (or more) people have the same need, but they don't have the same necessary conditions to satisfy that need; in Williams'

example of medical treatment it would be the possession of sufficient

<https://assignbuster.com/is-williams-right-in-thinking-that-equality-requires-us-to-have-a-relevant-reason-every-time-people-are-treated-differently/>

money. Since medical treatment requires money, the rich ill and the poor ill will be necessarily treated differently. These are the kind of inequalities that we can see in most societies and it's these that have to be dealt with to try and reduce the margin of unfairness. Williams here makes an important distinction between " a man's rights, the reason why he should be treated in a certain way, and his power to secure certain rights, the reason why in fact he can get what he deserves" 1. The importance of this statement is clear when we look at the reality of things: the most important aspect of equality isn't the mere existence of these rights, but if they are really respected and the way they actually operate in the real world. This adds to the relevance of reason what Williams calls the " operativeness" of this same reason, and the two combined seem to give an appropriate account of what equality requires to be satisfied in respect of need. " When men are treated differently, a relevant reason should be given, which should be socially operative.