

Introduction to Ethics
Dr. Heather Salazar
Main Theses, Week 4

Nagel: “Equality”

1. “[E]conomic equality cannot be detached from the others [political, legal, and social equality]....” (106)
2. “[A]n equal distribution of [a good] will always have greater total utility than a less equal one.” (according to one argument) (107)
3. “Beyond a certain point, the pursuit of equality may sacrifice overall utility, or even the welfare of everyone in the society.” (107)
4. “The promotion of equality may require objectionable means.” (107)
5. “The three views [of utilitarianism, rights, and egalitarianism] share an assumption of moral equality between persons, but differ in their interpretations of it.” (111)
6. Utilitarianism with or without an objective standard is objectionable. (113)
7. “There can be no literal right to life....” (114)
8. The rights-based “ethic does not enjoin that violations of rights be minimized.” (115)
9. The rights-based approach is too minimal and leaves out the numbers of people affected. (115-116)
10. It is not necessarily the case that “all inequalities need justification [as Rawls assumes]” (119)
11. Furthermore, Utilitarianism does justify inequalities, although these justifications may not be helpful to individuals. (119-120)
12. Rawls’ Original Position begs the question against the Utilitarian views. (122)
13. “[N]o plausible theory can avoid the relevance of numbers completely.” (125)
14. “In a sense, the requirement [that Nagel suggests] is that you love your neighbor as yourself: but only as much as you love yourself when you look at yourself from the outside, with fair detachment.” (126)
15. “At the most basic level, the way to choose from many separate viewpoints simultaneously is to maintain them intact and give priority to the most urgent individual claims.” (127)