

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

READING GUIDE #12

WHY EQUALITY MATTERS

WHEN doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

READING

Scanlon, T. M. (1996, February 22). The diversity of objections to inequality. *Lindley lecture*. University of Kansas. <https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/handle/1808/12409>

QUESTIONS

As you read, keep these questions in mind:

1. Throughout his lecture, Thomas Scanlon distinguishes between *intrinsic* (“substantive”, “fundamental”, “truly egalitarian”) and *instrumental* reasons for equality. What exactly is the difference between these two sorts of reasons?
2. In section I, Scanlon considers five different reasons for equality. (He summarizes them on p. 6.) What are these five reasons? How are they different from each other? Which ones (if any) are supported by intrinsic egalitarian reasons and which (if any) are not?
3. According to Scanlon in section II, what role do each of these five reasons seem to play in John Rawls’ justification of the Difference Principle?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.