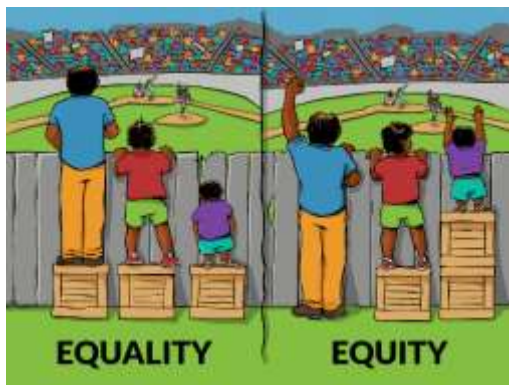


Philosophy report for Forum – Equality - May 2024

Our philosophy meeting focused on the theme of Equality put forward by Glen Scrivener, a Christian, in his book, *The Air we Breathe*. Scrivener starts his arguments with a quote from Lord Sumpton, 'I don't accept that all lives are of equal value.'

First, we defined Equality and proceeded to identify propositions put forward by pre-Christian philosophers. There are many types of equality and we decided that Scrivener was talking about moral equality: which is the principle that human beings, despite their differences, are to be regarded as one another's equals...often also called 'human equality' or 'basic equality' or 'equal worth' or 'human dignity'.

In pre-Christian times, moral equality was a bit thin on the ground if you happen to be a woman or a slave although many societies, such as the Greeks and the Romans, were very keen on developing equality for what they called "citizens", meaning adult males. However ancient Hebrews believed in equality for all people as they were all so far below God. Ancient Jewish law seemed to be similar, regarding people as equal regardless of age or class. The cartoon proved to be a talking point about the difference between equality and fairness:



Then we looked at philosophical proposals since the time of Jesus.

Celsus, a late 2nd Century anti-Christian philosopher, declared that Christians and Jews were too anthropocentric (human centred). He said they wrongly believed that man was put in charge. Nature is unequal.

We briefly considered the practices of monasticism, abolition of slavery and the 1689 Bill of Rights, much of which was based on the ideas of philosopher John Locke (1632 – 1704).

Rousseau (1712 – 1778) declared that all people should be free and equal, 'Man was born free and everywhere he is in chains.'

Kant (1724 – 1804) believed that all humans have equal worth and deserve equal respect.

Scrivener argues that in the Biblical story God created people in his image. Every human possesses an inviolable dignity and equality so that no one deserves to be trampled down simply because they are smaller, weaker or poorer.

