

Letters

Why Equality?

Dwight Ingle, an authority on physiology, has chosen to deal with a topic that is philosophical and political in nature ("Racial differences and the future," 16 Oct., p. 375). I am forced to question his competence as a social thinker. His heuristic expression of ideas is fraught with emotion, displays a superficial knowledge of current methodology in the field of social reform, and demonstrates serious misunderstanding of the concept of equality as well as the Negro cause.

To argue that people are literally equal is naïve. Few intelligent people do so. But to argue that equality is meaningful only in the context of legal and moral rights is to drastically oversimplify the concept. Adherence to a philosophy of equality is highly useful. Paradoxical as it may seem, it is a philosophy that sustains individuality and nourishes an open and mobile society. It is this aspect of the belief that Ingle ignores.

Let us take just one example—education at its best. If a teacher chooses to accept the concept of equality when confronted with a child who is performing below average, her course is clear. She must devise methods to raise his performance. To do this it is absolutely necessary to meet the individual needs of that child. If he is capable of being "equal" then she must know precisely what has to be remedied to bring this state about. And since all children are, in fact, different, the remedy for one child must differ from the remedy for another. Because this is a philosophy of optimism, the child is always encouraged to attempt more difficult and more varied tasks in an attempt to discover the real depth and breadth of his capabilities. Unless the door is left open, unless we allow children to prove themselves, given our present knowledge we can never know what the maximum potential is. When children are approached otherwise, as is too often the case,

they are awarded opportunity according to a predetermined judgment of the teacher, the guard against teacher error in judgment is eliminated, and the result is a shocking attrition of human resources. Perhaps some day science will devise the infallible intelligence test—a test of individual, not group, capacity. When that day arrives, the task of the educator will no doubt be simpler. But until that day arrives we have no choice but to adhere to the conventional wisdom of the times.

Education is but one example. Another is in the area of selection. Unless we act *as though* people are equal, we are faced with the awful task of deciding who is superior. To cite the recent example of Nazi Germany obviates the need for further comment.

It is somewhat confusing to determine the purpose of Ingle's inquiry. What can be gained by knowing whether or not Negroes are inferior? Certainly a knowledge of average group capacity cannot help the educator who must devote his efforts to individual fulfillment. Certainly this knowledge can not help the employer who must hire individuals, not groups. Inquiry into the nature of human behavior and capacity is valid and potentially useful. But Ingle's inquiry is in terms of race. He does not propose a study of social misfits in general, which by his own admission would cut across class and racial lines. His motive seems to be to refute what he considers to be a major voice in the Negro protest—one that cries out for reward without regard to qualification. I strongly object to Ingle's complete misrepresentation of the Negro cause. The demands of Negroes are quite simple. We want to be treated like anyone else. We want our children to know, to the extent that white children know, that the world is open to them. Although there is wide disagreement about means to this goal, the goal most certainly has not been lost in the debate. We are in the throes of a revolution, and revolutions en-

gender violence, anger, and frustration. Heated and irrational views are bound to be expressed, but they do not seem to confuse those white people who are certain of their moral values and have made peace with their fears. The fact that Ingle chooses to stress the arguments of an unrepresentative group reveals his own fear and lack of moral commitment.

Ingle would prefer to have neither forced integration nor forced segregation. This would be lovely, indeed. However, to long for such a happy solution is to resort to the childish device of wishing away reality. Yes, there are communities which have opened their doors to Negroes, and some employers are beginning to question discriminatory hiring policies—these are signs of progress. But the signs are few. The Negro is still faced most often with a choice between remaining in the ghetto or forcing his way out. Perhaps if the Negro waits another generation or two there will be further progress in white morality—this is a moot point. However, the Negro has no intention of waiting; he has no desire to witness his children struggling against the impossible circumstances that have confronted him.

Ingle is perfectly correct to remind us that integration will not solve the Negro's problems. God knows these problems are highly complex and their solution will require the utmost patience and wisdom. But, although integration will not solve the Negro's problems, his problems cannot be solved without integration. Without integration, the Negro has no hope. Unless he *sees* himself living and working among whites, he can only despair that the white world—the successful world—is a world he cannot share.

Ingle longs to achieve equal rights "with a minimum of conflict," which would indicate that he feels threatened by change and is not willing to sacrifice any measure of comfort for the sake of social justice. Revolutions, by definition, involve conflict. Our variety involves "a minimum of conflict" to the extent that relatively few lives are lost and our political structure remains intact.

Ingle proposes various therapeutic social measures, all of which are old hat. The need for nursery education is fully realized by educators and social leaders, and steps in that direction have already been taken. Youth programs most certainly do exist for underprivileged and "bad" boys and

girls. I am not sure why Ingle ignores the multitude of settlement houses and similar organizations as well as massive anti-poverty measures which are being taken by federal, state, and local agencies. He has a special admiration for 4-H clubs, which abound in rural areas. Of course in the rural area where Negroes are numerous, namely in the South, 4-H clubs are segregated. Slum clearance, while highly desirable, has been found to serve mainly as a morale booster. It does not cure social ills.

Ingle's final solution seems to be conception control, not for economic reasons, but to prevent reproduction by those "unqualified for parenthood." The implications of this proposal are political and moral. Ingle would evidently choose to risk a Brave New World rather than to live with the imperfections inherent in a democracy. I would not. To me, individual freedom is sacred. We do spend billions of dollars on crime, delinquency, and similar social ills. If the only alternative to this is to establish a board of judges to decide who is and who is not fit for parenthood, and thus to sacrifice the very heart of our freedom, then I consider these billions of dollars money well spent.

Science is inextricably bound to philosophy and politics. It is no accident that many nuclear physicists have become moral leaders. In our age, when science is both monstrous and wonderful, it is frightening to see among its ranks men such as Ingle, who lack political insight and philosophical discipline.

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I invite interested readers to examine my essay on "Racial differences and the future" for evidence that it was "fraught with emotion" and to examine Powell's letter for its relevance to the questions raised by me about biological problems.

Although the concept of equality is not meaningful in biology, I cherish the ideal of equal rights and opportunity for self-fulfillment which extends beyond the opportunity to make material gains to the achievement of dignity and self-respect. The idea that individualization of education aims for equality in achievement is pure demagoguery. Where have we heard it before? I remember: "Every man a king."

Intelligence ranges from idiot to

genius among whites, Negroes, and other "races"; and objective tests, imperfect as they are, are sufficiently good to identify the general level of aptitudes and intelligence in individuals. In most cases, it serves the best interests of the child to teach and train him according to aptitudes, interests, and drives.

I have never characterized an ethnic group as "inferior" or "superior." These terms can be meaningfully applied only to individuals. Although it is proper to refer to a genius as being superior in intelligence and a moron as being inferior in intelligence, these terms also connote human value, something that I do not wish to define in terms of intelligence. We would avoid some trouble and misunderstanding by keeping the words "inferior" and "superior" out of debates about average genetic differences among "races."

Contrariwise, and in apparent disagreement with Powell's concept of equality, I recognize differences in human values; the values of what men make of themselves range from the criminal and law evader to the saint, from the demagogue to the statesman, from the indolent to the worker, from the rake to the virtuous, from the lout to the gentleman. Judgment of human worth is necessary in a democracy. Shall America accede to those aggressive minorities who cry, "I am equal, give to me according to my wants?" Powell accepts the idea of revolution with conflict aimed at the forcing of integration. He does not admit that the behavior of the average Negro is a critical barrier to integration. He is not willing to guide integration according to individuality but asks that all participate as "equals." I hope for voluntary integration linked with an attack upon the reasons that it is resisted. Racial bias is one. Although larger numbers of Negroes are good neighbors, schoolmates, and employees, many are not. One cause of undesirable behavior is the cultural heritage of the average Negro. If average genetic differences are an important basis of Negro problems, we should have this information to use in guiding Negro advancement.

Powell does not grasp the meaning of my proposal that we aim to prevent the transfer of substandard culture by intensive attention to the child from birth or, better still, beginning with adequate prenatal care. The social measures presently practiced are palliative and feeble. This is one area in which we can learn something from

the Soviet Union—without emulating their political aims.

Powell is among those opposed to conception control, even among individuals unqualified for parenthood. (Some of the readers who are not biologists equate conception control with sterilization. The term "birth control" is commonly used, although none of the procedures has anything to do with the process of birth.) Many of the biologically and culturally disadvantaged mate only for pleasure and not for reproduction but lack knowledge of how to control conception. Those imperfections which the Congressman says we should keep in our society are the biological bases of human misery.

Although I hope for the evolution of knowledge and wisdom that will make possible a program of eugenics, I have not imagined that science and society are ready to undertake more than simple educational and advisory programs.

The knowledge of mind and body which we should seek and the methods of preventing human misery which we should debate and test by pilot studies could serve the advancement of all races and especially Negroes. We will not move ahead by saying, "Don't look, don't look, this issue is closed." It is my opinion that if America is guided by Congressman Powell, the role of government in education and social reform will impede rather than facilitate progress, and the Negro ghetto will continue to exist until some of the Negro leaders who are great and wise seek knowledge and truth as the way to freedom.

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Astrometry Overlooked

In the National Academy of Sciences report *Ground-Based Astronomy: A 10-Year Program* (see News and Comment, 13 Nov., p. 899), it appears that the panel of authors has overlooked a basic branch of "ground-based astronomy," namely, astrometry. I refer to all facets of astrometry: transit instruments, astrographs, double-star instrumentation, parallax instrumentation, and so forth. It is this branch of astronomy that provides all the positions, motions, and distances that are needed in developing the relations between the kinematical and the physical properties of the stars. Unfortunately, astrometry,