

The Idea of Natural Inequality*

The Auguste Comte Memorial Lecture, 1979

The mind of man is far from the nature of a clear and equal glass, wherein the beams of things should reflect according to their true incidence: nay, it is rather like an enchanted glass, full of superstition and imposture . . .

FRANCIS BACON

When we talk about inequality among men we mean various things. We mean in one sense that human beings are unequally placed, that they have unequal opportunities and that they are unequally rewarded; this kind of inequality is easily recognized and can easily be shown to exist in any society, simple or complex, past or present. But we also mean in another sense that men and women have unequal abilities, that they are unequally endowed, and also perhaps that they are of unequal worth; the proof of this kind of inequality is difficult, one might say impossible.

Those who make the case for natural inequality will readily concede that people sometimes appear to be unequally endowed because in fact the opportunities available to them are unequal. No society is perfect, and in every society some individuals suffer more than others from a variety of contingent circumstances. But, they will go on to argue, this is not all that there is to it. For, according to them, it should be possible to remove the existing distortions or imperfections, at least in principle, and when this is done we will still be left with certain irreducible inequalities of endowment. Viewed in this light

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The Idea Of Natural Inequality And Other Essays

Patrick Vollmar



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The Enigmatic Realm of **The Idea Of Natural Inequality And Other Essays**: Unleashing the Language is Inner Magic

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