

## Common Error No. 16 [1]

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### 16. "Equality is more important than freedom."



No. Freedom is more important. It is not a value which competes with others, but the source and condition of all values. Freedom gives people the chance to express themselves and their individuality. It is what makes them human. Animals can be cared for, fed and sheltered. Human beings are not pets or domestic livestock to be protected. They make moral decisions and act on them. They face the consequences of their actions and acquire responsibility and moral growth. All of this requires freedom.

People are not equal and never will be. Life would be dull if they were. They differ in strength, size and intellectual power. They differ in looks and in character. They differ in talent, and in athletic prowess and musical ability. They differ in the value of the services they can render to their fellow humans. If we pay them equally for services of unequal value, we lose the signals which tell people where to direct their efforts.

We can and should choose to make people equal before the law, and to say that they should all be treated equally by it. This expresses not a fact of life, but a determination on our part to create a just society and to respect the rights of all who respect the rights of others. The law looks at the criminal abuse of people's rights, rather than at the criminal, and prohibits it no matter who does it.

Some point to what they claim is a trade-off between people's freedom to live as they wish and their health and well-being. This is completely false, for without freedom there is nothing to trade. We might choose immediate pleasure at risk of long-term consequences, but that is not a choice between freedom and other

things; it is a choice only made possible by freedom. Without that choice we are no longer autonomous beings.

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