

## EQUALITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY

In the wake of the French Revolution, the triplet of “liberty, equality, fraternity” emerged as a moral compass for the secular society of its time. Something similar has happened today in regard to “**equality, diversity, and inclusion.**” For most pundits and social activists, at least in the West, these three values function as self-evident moral truths of absolute value that ought to guide our behaviour at both the personal and institutional level. But this can be questioned.

**First, let us consider equality.** Fostering equality is indeed a high moral value in the measure that all people are identical in dignity and are equally deserving of respect. The American Declaration of Independence: “*All men are created equal and are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights.*” All people are to be considered one and the same before the law and provided, as far as possible, with parity of opportunity in the educational, economic, and cultural spheres.

But is equality an absolute value? No. Many inequalities already exist within human society. Differences in sex, religion and culture are being endangered. Personal differences such as intelligence, creativity, skill, courage could be eliminated but only through a brutally imposed *levelling out* process. A blanket imposition of equality across all of our society would result in a massive violation of justice. Certain indigenous cultures in our present day world are under threat of erasure. The emerging 'cancel culture' of today is also an example of this. It smacks of totalitarianism.

**Now, let us look at diversity.** Arguably the oldest problem in the history of philosophy is that of 'THE ONE AND THE MANY'. I believe it is fair to say that, in the last forty years or so, we have massively emphasized the “many” highlighting variety, difference, and creativity, and tending to demonize unity as oppression. The cultivation of diversity may well be a moral value but not at the expense of overall unity which binds a society together and gives it a common sense of purpose.

In that sense diversity is not an absolute value? When the many is over-emphasized, we lose any sense of the values that ought to unite us. Our very Christian culture is threatened. This is obvious in the stress today on the individual’s right to determine his or her own values and truths, even to the point of dictating one’s own gender and sexuality. People succumbing to this agenda loudly demand that their decisions be respected and their stances tolerated, but the long-standing cultural ties which bind a nation together are given short shrift.

**And finally, let us cast a glance at inclusivity.** This is probably the one most treasured in the secular culture of today. At all costs, we are told over and over again we should be inclusive as there is an obvious moral value to this stance. Every one of us has felt the sting of unjust exclusion, that sense of being on the wrong side of a social divide, not permitted to belong to the “in” crowd. Hence the summons to include rather than to exclude, to build bridges rather than walls, is entirely understandable and morally laudable. Nevertheless, inclusion cannot be an absolute value.

Perhaps this principle can be seen with greatest clarity in regard to the Church. On the one hand, the Church is meant to reach out to everyone—as is suggested symbolically by the Bernini colonnade outside of St. Peter's Basilica. Yet, at the same time, the Church is a very definite society, with rules, expectations, and internal structures. By its nature, therefore, it excludes certain forms of thought and behaviour. Cardinal Francis George was once asked whether all people are welcome in the Church. He responded, **“Yes, but on Christ's terms, not our own.** For instance the church excludes women from ordination because it sees it as incompatible the will of Christ. For the same reason it prohibits same sex so- called marriage in church.

Having shown that none of the three great secular values are in fact of absolute value, are we left in 'no man's land' guided solely by our own moral compass? No! In point of fact, the supreme value that trumps every other value can be clearly named. It is LOVE. Love always wills the overall good of another which is the very nature and essence of God Himself.

Are equality, diversity, and inclusivity valuable? Yes, precisely in the measure that they are expressions of love but love sometimes means we say 'no' and exclude certain things. In the gospel there is ample evidence where people are excluded – the foolish bridesmaids arrived late and were barred from the wedding reception, the man without his wedding garment was thrown out into the dark, the unforgiving servant was shown little mercy and the goats on Christ's left hand

were excluded from Paradise. These people actually excluded themselves. Christ excludes no one.