I am very grateful to Harry Brighouse and Erik Olin Wright for the careful scrutiny to which they have subjected my little book *Equality*.\(^1\) It is flattering to receive such detailed critical attention, even if I do not agree with the arguments directed against my book. Brighouse and Wright make many valuable and thoughtful points in the course of their review article. In a brief reply, it would seem best to focus on the issues that they raise that directly concern anticapitalist political strategy. With one exception, addressed in a footnote, I shall take the philosophical criticisms that they make – for example, concerning the relationship between Rawls’s First and Second Principles of Justice, and in defence of the proposition that there are trade-offs between equality and liberty – under advisement. In the meantime, it seems more urgent to consider what leverage radical egalitarianism, whatever its precise philosophical articulation, has on the contemporary social world.

\(^1\) Brighouse and Wright 2002.
Debating equality

It may perhaps be helpful first to situate *Equality*. From a theoretical perspective it was intended to be a critical but sympathetic interrogation of egalitarian liberalism, as represented by John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin, Amartya Sen, Brian Barry, et al., along with their analytical Marxist interlocutors (notably G.A. Cohen and John Roemer). I undertook this for three reasons:

(i) The issue of equality and inequality is of increasing political salience: New Labour’s appeals to notions such as equality of opportunity and meritocracy have helped to bring egalitarianism back onto the political agenda. More fundamentally, the growing global gap between rich and poor is one of the driving forces behind the contemporary movement against capitalist globalisation.

(ii) Egalitarian liberalism offers a theoretical lens through which critically to examine the progress and achievements of New Labour. Brighouse and Wright do not basically dissent from my diagnosis that Gordon Brown’s strategy for reducing inequality by enhancing individuals’ market capacities is inherently flawed, though they argue that ‘the government needs to be judged on what it does’, which in turn involves ‘looking at the detail of its policies relative to the other policies available to it’. To my mind, I have followed this approach, not merely in *Equality* but also in texts such as *Against the Third Way*, where I acknowledged the limited redistribution achieved by some of Brown’s policies within a context of widening inequality.

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2 Here is the exception promised above: Brighouse and Wright claim that ‘Callinicos seems to suggest that the Sen-Cohen egalitarian principle is more congenial to anticapitalism than either resourcist or welfarist approach, insofar as it implies much greater redistribution of income and wealth’ (Brighouse and Wright 2002, pp. 202–3). This is false. Nowhere in *Equality* do I say this, and I am not aware of implying it anywhere else. I agree with Brighouse and Wright that ‘[a]ll the standard proposals for equalisation … imply radical redistribution of wealth and income. None of these equalisation proposals can be carried out to the point where they accomplish egalitarian justice without seriously challenging capitalist institutions’ (Brighouse and Wright 2002, p. 203). That was one of my main points in *Equality*. This is not to say that there are no differences in the practical implications of the different proposed bases for egalitarian interpersonal comparisons: it is for this reason that I support the refinements proposed, at least to some degree on parallel lines, by Sen and Cohen: see Callinicos 2000, Chapter 3, and 2001c.

3 Brighouse and Wright 2002, p. 207.

4 See Callinicos 2001a and 2001b.