Social Equality

- Many liberals oppose social equality/social justice
- Believe in equality of opportunity and the idea of a meritocratic society – inequality exists because some are more talented than others, thus they are better rewarded
- A meritocratic society is socially just because people are judged on merit, not fixed characteristics

Classical – believe in meritocracy as unequal individuals shouldn’t be treated equals

Modern – social justice. John Rawls said that some inequalities cannot be tolerated, therefore the state is justified in intervening to solve them

Tolerance

A principled unwillingness to impose on the views of others in a situation where one could

Voltaire said “I detest what you say, but will defend to the death your right to say it”

Accepting diversity and pluralism because human beings are all unique

However, tolerance can allow people to act or think in immoral ways. ‘Wrong’ behaviour is tolerated

Justifying Toleration

- J.S. Mill said that tolerance grants us self autonomy. Intolerance restricts the range of individual choice and creates despotism of custom. Individuals shouldn’t be forced to follow majority opinion.
- Benefits society – J.S. Mill said that all ideas should be tested in free competition against rival ones, good ideas displace the bad ones in a marketplace of ideas

Limits of Toleration

- Difficult for liberals to tolerate intolerant views. Can’t accommodate ‘deep diversity’ such as forced marriage, female dress codes as they prioritise individual rights over group rights (‘paradox of tolerance’ – Karl Popper)
- See liberal democracy as the sole legitimate political system. Willing to ban fascist groups that try to overthrow liberal democracy