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TALENT AND SUCCESS

Though it may offend our sense of justice to find that of two men who by equal effort have acquired the same specialized skill and knowledge, one may be a success and the other a failure, we must recognize that in a free society it is the use of particular opportunities that determines usefulness and must adjust our education and ethos accordingly. In a free society we are remunerated not for our skill but for using it rightly; and this must be so as long as we are free to choose our particular occupation and are not to be directed to it. True, it is almost never possible to determine what part of a successful career has been due to superior knowledge, ability, or effort and what part to fortunate accidents; but this in no way detracts from the importance of making it worthwhile for everybody to make the right choice.

In a free society a man's talents do not "entitle" him to any particular position. . . All that a free society has to offer is an opportunity of searching for a suitable position, with all the attendant risk and uncertainty which such a search for a market for one's gifts must involve. There is no denying that in this respect a free society puts most individuals under a pressure which is often resented. But it is an illusion to think that one would be rid of such pressure in some other type of society; for the alternative to the pressure that responsibility for one's own fate brings is the far more invidious pressure of personal orders that one must obey. — *F. A. Hayek in The Constitution of Liberty*, p. 82.