Things I Need to Know About Equality

What are the variants of egalitarian views?

View	Summary	Evaluation
Formal Equality of Opportunity Equality of opportunity among all citizens	In a political economy with equal opportunity, each person's prospects as producer depend only on (1) their initial stock of resources, (2) their ability and willingness to provide goods and services that others value, and (3) how lucky they are in the face of economic shocks. For example, the state would have a duty to abolish market-distorting monopsonies because it would prevent someone willing to sell goods from being able to do so (the monopsony may declare they would only buy from one producer). Other factors such as race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, or religion are irrelevant to the determination of one's life prospects in the public sphere beyond their effect on one's abilities and willingness to offer what others are willing to exchange for money.	<u>Needs more than just equality of opportunity by law; the behaviour of citizens also need to align with such principles for it to work</u>; this is in contrast to Rawls' fair equality of opportunity which only requires the basic structure to be fair <u>Allows for too much inequality</u>: This basic idea is compatible with children benefitting from the inheritance they receive from parents (they are designated to have higher initial stock of resources). So, many theorists who subscribe to this idea would view such a requirement insufficient. People's birth circumstances can have profound effects on their life chances (e.g. if people are born rich, they tend to be "luckier" and can withstand more economic shocks because they have deeper pockets) but Formal Equality of Opportunity does not provide a framework in correcting these looming problems.
Fair Equality of Opportunity Equality of opportunity among citizens who are able to exercise public reason	Fair Equality of Opportunity, an idea proposed by Rawls, amends the socialisation process to make people who are naturally endowed with talent in something and those who have the willingness to do the same thing have the same chances at succeeding. Those who are willing to be good at maths will have the means of schooling offered to them so that they can become as good as maths as those who have a natural talent for mathematics and do not try. Of course, if one is both naturally talented and is willing to put in the effort one gets better at it than someone without the talent and just puts in effort. Hence, Rawlsians would advocate for a public school system and universal basic income to guarantee a similar level of educational and economic opportunity for everyone. Affirmative action, for example, can be interpreted as a strategy to support fair equality of opportunity.	Rawls applies the requirement of fair equality of opportunity to the basic structure in his principles of justice but it seems that society cannot achieve fair equality of opportunity until the familial level is regulated too. Parents have different endowments so children will benefit differently from interacting with their parents. E.g. if a child has a French father and a British mother who each speak their native languages to their children, the child has greater opportunities in life because of their bilingual upbringing compared to a child who only exclusively knows French. Yet, the allocation of parents to children is morally arbitrary.

View	Summary	Evaluation
Level Playing Field (Luck Egalitarian Equality of Opportunity) Equality of opportunity among citizens	The only inequalities that are acceptable are such that those who are unlucky in brute luck terms could have become as well off as anyone else by pursuing a course of action it would have been reasonable and not impossible for them to take we can be reasonable in holding them responsible for not pursuing it. Hence, luck egalitarianism has been described by Cohen (2009) as advocating "socialist equality of opportunity." Put another way, "the playing field is levelled when unchosen circumstances of individuals are equalised, so that individuals can reasonably be held responsible for their choices that determine their eventual places in the social hierarchy." (Arneson 2015) The purpose of educational policy, then, is to ensure support for those who have lower natural ability such that they exit school with as much perseverance and ambition as those born well-endowed with natural talents. See *Equality of Resources*	See *What are the problems associated with resource egalitarianism?*
Equality of democratic citizenship and civil liberties Equality of ability to vote and run for office among mentally competent adult citizens	Top public officials and law makers (positions that matter in a democracy) should be selected democratically by majority vote in elections where all mentally competent adults each have the same number of votes and all are eligible to run for office. The democracy operates against a background of freedom of speech, assembly, association, and citizens are guaranteed a wide right to religious practice. This notion falls into the wider category of relational equality.	<u>Allows for too much inequality</u> People differ on their ability to influence democratic outcome based on their race or wealth. For example, racism alters perceptions of Black candidates such that their achievements are trivialised. Alternatively, if one is rich, one can secure more media platforms; their views can therefore be overrepresented in a way that crowds out other people's messages. Rawls instead suggests that equal participation should be adopted instead to account for such disproportionate influence. Under equal participation, "any individuals in society with the same ambition to influence the political process and the same talents of political persuasion and organisation should have equal prospects of influence on the democratic political process." (Arneson 2013)

View	Summary	Evaluation
Libertarianism Equality of natural rights among human beings	Libertarians, most notable John Locke, hold that every person has equal basic or natural rights that apply independently of institutional arrangements. Locke (1960): Each person has the right to do whatever they choose with whatever they legitimately owns insofar as they do not violate other people's rights to be free from harm, be by force, fraud, damage, coercion, whether it be to themselves or their property. On this view, each adult has full-ownership of themselves; meanwhile, children have the right to be cared for. If an agent owns something. they have the right to exclude others from the use of the thing and to control its use oneself. One important case in which this ideal obtains is in the case of self-ownership. Most notably, this view of rights enshrines the existence of property rights, which arise when self-owning persons confront unowned property. The Lockean Proviso holds that "one's appropriation and continued holding of a part of the Earth as one's private property is morally permissible provided that all persons affected by this claim of ownership are rendered no worse off by it than they would have been if instead the thing had remained under free use" (Nozick 1974) When there is crowding, the Lockean Proviso suggests we take turns in appropriating the resources. There are two key interpretations of Locke's account which differ on their approach to intergenerational ownership rights. If, for example, the person who has discovered this unused land and then comes to own it is dead, right-libertarians would hold that whoever finds that plot of land first can come to own it, even if they were just lucky. Left-libertarians, in contrast, hold that each new generation should have a right to an equal share of land.	<u>"Worse off" is too vague</u> Property may be appropriated by inefficient people (beach example; see *Things I need to Know on Rawls, Justice and Liberalism*) ALSO Worse off in what terms? Monetary? Welfare? Whose money or welfare should we count; do subsequent generations matter? <u>Under-provision of public goods</u> Public goods are non-rivalrous and non-excludable by nature so it is unprofitable for a private agent to provide since others can free ride on it; yet, if it were to be free, it would not be provided as people would expect other citizens to contribute to it; the Lockean proviso does not offer a solution to this issue Lockean reply: if those private goods are the goods that truly matter – those that individuals have a basic right to – then society ought to provide those goods to the individual Problem: does not solve the fact that no one is willing to provide it; merely stipulates that they are important and ought to be provided <u>Right-libertarianism allows for too much inequality</u> If someone was born in the densely populated slums, they have a much thinner chance of finding previously inappropriate land. Under right-libertarianism, then, the poor – who tend to live in densely populated conditions – are disproportionately disadvantaged in gaining property ownership, though this is not a problem fro the left-libertarians. A libertarian reply could be that any value equality has is trumped by the value of self-ownership. Yet, we can argue that inequality undermines self-ownership for those who are very poor, because although individuals enjoy self-ownership, they are subject to bargaining disadvantages/obstacles to their freedom which render their self-ownership meaningless.

View	Summary	Evaluation
Wealth and Income Equality Equality of wealth and income among citizens	Wealth is a stock while income is a flow. Usually, it will be insufficient just to call for income equality because most rich people make money out of their wealth, not their income.	See *Should money be the egalitarian currency?*
Basic Functioning Capability Equality Equality of capability (hence effective freedom) among citizens	See *What is basic functioning capability equality?*	See *Should capability be the egalitarian currency?*

View	Summary	Evaluation
Equality of Resources Equality of resources among reasonable people	Resource egalitarianism combines responsibility with an initial equality in the distribution of resources. Resources can be material goods or latent goods such as talent, the latter of which makes the case of resource egalitarianism interesting because it cannot be readily transferred. Rawls (1971) argues in favour of equality of primary goods (external goods). Primary goods are goods that agents that a *reasonable* person would want more of. The priorities within the set of primary social goods are to be determined by considering what people, as free and equal citizens, need most. Rawls deals with differences in natural endowments of talents in his second principle of justice, which does not channel an egalitarian spirit. Dworkin (2000) also deployed a resourcist ideal of equality, combining equality in both talents and external goods with responsibility. According to Dworkin, the measure of how much resources one hold is how much others is willing to give up to get it, so competitive market prices are a good measure of how well-endowed one is. Taking into account the fact that individuals differ on their natural endowment of talents, Dworkin proposes as hypothetical insurance market where individuals can choose how much they want to be insured against being poorly endowed, hence turning the brute luck allocations into option luck. A thought experiment where individuals are given the same amount of tokens and are asked to auction for their most preferred bundle is also run. A tax and transfer policy is then to be applied in real life to in as much as possible achieve the hypothesised outcomes.	See *What are the problems associated with resource egalitarianism?*

View	Summary	Evaluation
Equality of Welfare Equality of Welfare among all people	People should have equal amounts of human good gained over the course of their lifetime, whether it be gained by themselves or given to them by others. Human good, as Parfit (1984) puts, is what an individual gets insofar as her life goes well for herself regardless of what one would make of their lives from a rational standpoint. We also know it as welfare, well-being, or utility. What counts as good differs across different welfare egalitarian accounts. Hedonists, for example, take pleasure and the absence of pain to be the good; happiness could also be viewed as one's satisfaction of one's life at that moment and how their life has progressed so far (Sumner 1996). Some theorists argue that what matters for welfare is desire satisfaction, or life aim fulfilment (if one were worried about running into problems of cognitive errors in estimating the effects of an act on one's life).	<u>Measuring equality in welfare over one's life-course is problematic</u> A sickly baby who only lives for a month would have to be showered with intense welfare before they die, but it is practically impossible to do so. A healthy baby would gain more welfare even if they were to die at the same age. <u>Leaves too little room for individual responsibility</u> The welfare egalitarian would find themselves pouring social resources into people who use them wastefully. This is less of a problem intuitively if it is because someone is ill or handicapped (e.g. if someone with Parkinson's disease spill half of their food all the time because their hand are shaking) but it is wasteful if the people who waste food are just negligent people (e.g. someone who left some vegetables in the fridge for too long it goes bad so they could not extract welfare from consuming it). To fix this issue, some scholars such as Cohen (1989) modify equality of welfare to equal opportunity to welfare.

View	Summary	Evaluation
Relational Equality	Relational egalitarians hold that distributive egalitarian principles are mistaken in their focus, thereby fetishising what does not matter. Ultimately, what they aim at are social and distributive arrangements that can sustain a society of free, equal people, a society in which individuals all relate as equals – the relational egalitarian aim. Relational inequality arises when the state fails to treat interests of each citizen as equal (deontic view). On this view, if someone is so poor they are marginalised and not viewed as social equals, we have a violation of relational equality so relational egalitarians will work to correct it, for example by ensuring some equal distribution of money. In comparison to other theories, we see that the emphasis is placed on equalising the relations between individuals in society, not on the distribution of money per se. More specifically, Scheffler (2010) conceptualises relational egalitarianism to ensure the equality of rank, power, and status, which are instrumentally and intrinsically valuable. The distribution of goods, on the other hand, is merely instrumental to achieving relational equality.	<u>Relational egalitarianism is compatible with radical inequalities</u> Imagine a society which is justly equal in terms of distribution and relations. Then an earthquake happens suddenly and unexpectedly, making a small portion of the population lose their homes. Distributive equality says that this inequality is unfair/unjust – those affected by the earthquake are worse-off just due to brute luck (and thus we should try to correct it). However, relational equality says that this inequality is acceptable so long as the relations between people haven't been affected. <u>Relational egalitarianism leaves too little room for responsibility</u> Suppose a gambler has calculated his propensity to win and decides to enter the gamble. Unfortunately, he loses out and become significantly poorer than the average person. Luck egalitarians would permit the gambler to be poor since his position is a result of his option luck, but relational egalitarians would disallow this self-inflicted poverty because it would reduce the political influence the gambler has as a poor person (e.g. there are opportunity costs associated with going to vote that a poor person struggles to shoulder), compared to others. By making citizens inconsistently responsible for their acts, relational egalitarians face the problem of moral hazard where the imprudent force the prudent to pay for their bad choices. <u>Overplays the importance of social relations</u> Relational egalitarians would justify the guarantee of some level of nutrition to the population on the grounds that it allows for people to have equal relations, which seems to entirely miss the fact that nutrition is essential to one being alive or having a wide range of other capacities.

Should money be the egalitarian currency?

- Wealth VS Income
  - Wealth is a stock
  - Income is a flow
- YES

- Money gives one effective freedom to engage in a wider variety of activities and experiences compared to a world without it (exchange economy)
    - Response 1: the range of things the individual can purchase is still constrained by laws and cultural norms
        - If something is not up for sale then one cannot purchase it
        - If something is illegal, then as a citizen under the social contract, one cannot purchase it
    - Response 2: The added freedom to purchase some things are just trivial (e.g. my life is not made significantly better if I had the option to buy an additional sticker set on a messaging app than I have been previously)
- Having equal rights to money, then, would imply (to some extent) equal freedom for citizens to make their life choices
- NO
    - The redistributive process by which wealth and income equality can be arrived and sustained is a serious violation of Lockean rights
        - People have a right to self-ownership, so people have a right to the products of their labour or talents
        - To tax, then, is to disrespect this fundamental right to self-ownership people possess
        - Waltzer (1983): suppose we start at an equal distribution; people would, over time, make choices that eventually give rise to an unequal distribution; to maintain the equal distribution would mean we have to interfere with people's liberties and decision-making
        - Reply: some rights and liberties are less important than equality
    - The pursuit of monetary equality will remove citizens' incentive to make money, which would reduce the amount of money people make in the long run, but the effective freedom we have also depends on the amount of money we have; thus, making citizens equal on monetary terms reduces the effective freedom they have in the long run
    - Having equal wealth and income is not sufficient for making people equal
        - People with Type I diabetes would have to spend money on insulin shots
        - Having the same level of purchasing power to others does not make them as well off as others since a portion of their income will have to be spent on medication, so there is less disposable income they can freely consume
        - Aiming for wealth or income equality fetishises money. In practice, we do not care about money apart from what it enables us to do, for example to afford necessary medical treatment; surely egalitarians should care about equality in the space of what ultimately matters to people rather than the means to that.

What is basic functioning capability equality?

While one has the formal freedom to travel to Antarctica, one typically will not have the means to do so. Hence, one does not possess the effective freedom to travel to Antarctica.

Egalitarians who base their principles on capability hold that what matters is effective freedom, not formal freedom. Sen (1992) is perhaps the most prominent in this field, positing that society should sustain basic capability equality.

Identification of one's capability set should be taken with care since individuals' capability sets place constraints on another's capability set. For example, since university seats are limited, one person going to university places some limits on another's ability to go to that university too.

Sen allows for one's capabilities to increase or decline even when the increase or decrease in the agents' freedom is not up to them. To illustrate this point, the capabilities that would open up to me post-pandemic is not up to me but also up to scientists and public health officials in rolling out the vaccine programme.

A "basic capability" is one of the capabilities needed for a minimally decent life, but exactly what this is differs across the various theories. One view is to link basic capability to what one needs to enjoy a flourishing life (Nussbaum 1992). Another view is to tie basic capability to what is needed to participate in a democracy (Anderson 1999).

Capabilities may be the product of nature or society. Naturally caused capabilities are such as the capability to find a romantic partner, which may depend on one's physical features (e.g. how

attractive one looks). Socially caused capabilities can be identified by analysing two alternative policies; if one policy brings about an inequality in capabilities but another does not, then that capability is socially caused.

Elizabeth Anderson (1999) claims that the relevant capabilities to equalise are those that are socially caused: "The proper negative aim of egalitarian justice is not to eliminate the impact of brute luck from human affairs, but to end oppression, which by definition is socially imposed."

Should capability be the egalitarian currency?

<u>We cannot justify why freedom is more important than resultant distributions</u>
The idea of basic capability equality is an attempt to ensure equal effective freedom, but further justification is needed as to why we should equalise freedom and not the outcomes. For example, if we both give A and B freedom to eat a slice of cake and only B eats the cake, since A does not like cake, we have wasted a slice of cake by giving it to A. The fact that A had the freedom to eat cake too did not make her better off either. So it is a misplacement to ground equality on freedom.

More freedom may also detract from welfare. Welfare theorists argue that what one wants is a good life, not more options. Sometimes having too many options detracts one from living a good life. For example, if we equally allowed people of all talent levels to appear in a movie without auditioning them in, those who are passionate in acting but in other circumstances would not make the cut would embarrass themselves to the public such that they may prefer to not have appeared at all.

<u>Roemer (1996): The basic capability equality approach does not appropriately register the importance of personal responsibility</u>
Suppose we deem having $1000 an amount of money that is required for basic functioning. A gambler can gamble away all that amount in a night and society would have a duty to reimburse him such that he has at least $1000 – the amount required for having a basic capability to live in that society.

<u>Securing equality of basic capability involves the state being perfectionist</u>
In determining what the important basic capabilities are, at least in Nussbaum's sense that they are the conditions for a flourishing life, we must decide on what leads to a flourishing life. If the state decides on one notion of a flourishing life that is controversial then the state is perfectionist. The problem with this is that equality, controversially construed as such, would not be accepted by the citizens.

If the state had instead only required equality in things that matter to flourishing but pertaining to non-controversial elements of flourishing, the equalising policy would be guaranteeing equality in too few dimensions. The role of the state is minimal and not very helpful as a result.

What are the problems associated with resource egalitarianism?

<u>Resource egalitarianism allows for too much inequality</u>
People vary enormously in their personal traits. These traits interact with their circumstances and material resources to determine what they can do with a given resource share.

A Ralwsian reply: Carter's (2001) response to this criticism is that it is not the government's business to assess people's personal traits and judge what they can do with the given resources. The state is merely obliged to guarantee equality in the necessary resources.

<u>Resource egalitarianism raises privacy concerns</u>
Investigation may be needed to determine which outcomes are the result of brute luck and which outcomes are the result of option luck. Citizens are thus subject to this constant scrutiny by the state; Wolff (1998) calls this disrespectful process a "shameful revelation."

The luck egalitarian response to this concern is to say that there is nothing shameful in being worse off due to brute luck. Yet, there *is* shame in being worse off due to option luck and people do experience it as a result of such investigations. A way to reconcile the luck egalitarian case is

to realise that there is a plurality of values in society and equality is only one among them. Our values for privacy can justify why such investigations are unduly.

Luck egalitarianism, in its principles, involve pity and disrespect
Anderson (1999) criticises luck egalitarians, claiming that they see victims of brute luck as inferiors, feel pity towards them and so offer help. Luck egalitarians, according to her, locate the advantages within the person (judge by how worse off they are) rather than socially produced disadvantages, such as lack of universal design in buildings which stops wheelchair users from being able to be autonomous in their daily lives. The compensation is also offered in monetary terms instead of offering social change; monetary compensation is inappropriate in many circumstances (e.g. if one is a wheelchair user in a remote village with dirt tracks, having more money than the average person is still unhelpful in making their neighbourhood wheelchair accessible)

Arneson (2000) responds to this criticism by claiming that it is unclear whether luck egalitarianism entails the attitude of pity. It may be the case that they offer help simply because luck egalitarians reject the unfair distributions brute luck produces. Secondly, nothing in luck egalitarianism necessarily locates inequality within persons; it is compatible with tackling social inequalities too. Thirdly, luck egalitarianism is consistent with a wide range of currencies so it is not necessarily the case that compensation is monetary.

Arneson (2013): what individuals decide tends to differ across counterfactuals so tests based on hypothetical situations are inappropriate methods of arriving at an equal distribution
Dworkin's work on the topic progresses from deciding the equal resource allocation on (1) the insurance decisions people actually make to (2) the insurance decisions people would have made under imagined equal circumstances to (3) the insurance decisions the average member of society would have made under hypothetical equal circumstances (e.g. one knows that being handicapped would impact one's life in so and so ways but one does not know if they would be handicapped). The problem lies in conception (3); what people do in counterfactual circumstances differ greatly so it is a bad method to arrive at a generally preferred resource egalitarian distribution.

It is difficult to determine if something is a product of brute luck or of option luck
While brute luck may assign an individual with a higher chance of contracting lung cancer, their risk of getting it also depends on their life choices, such as whether or not they smoke. The distinction between the two is not as clear as Dworkin envisages it to be.

Also, we are characteristically influenced – even if not fully causally determined – by our wider circumstances such as our dispositions or the society we are part of. These factors often reflect unfair inequalities. Relevantly, people's decision-making capabilities depend on their level of intelligence which is arbitrarily assigned. Thus, brute luck also impacts the options we choose to take later on, including the our choice of the hypothetical insurance package.

Roemer (2002): The outcome of the hypothetical insurance market may be counterintuitive
Being severely and chronically ill may diminish one's ability to enjoy the pleasures money may bring (e.g. they find it harder to travel abroad) so one may subscribe to an insurance package which gives the ill person less money than the healthy person. This idea contradicts the intuition that these insurance will compensate the ill for their diseased life.

The resource egalitarian doctrine is fundamentally unfair if determinism is true
If determinism is true, resource egalitarians would be wrong to make people be responsible for their choices, since they could not have chosen otherwise, or indeed choose a different insurance package.

However, one enjoys the benefits of a good choice even if one is not causally responsible for it. Therefore, by the same logic, one can live the consequences of a bad choice if one is not causally responsible for it too.

Luck egalitarianism is too harsh

- Case 1: Negligent driver (Anderson 1999)
  • Luck egalitarianism would deny medical care to a negligent driver who suffers a crash.
  • Response 1: only denies free medical care; if the negligent driver has purchased insurance or is willing to pay for their medical costs then the luck egalitarian has no issue with them receiving treatment
  • Response 2: We live under value pluralism where equality is only one of many values. While equality does not give the reason for why we should give medical care to the driver, we may also have other values (e.g. universal right to healthcare) which means we should give the driver medical assistance
    - BUT by giving the negligent driver medical assistance we are using more resources on them than the safe driver; this seems unfair
    - Response: in a situation of scarcity, we would want to save the safe driver over the negligent driver, but in a situation without scarcity, our other values may take precedence over the luck egalitarian principles
- Case 2: Vulnerable carers
  • A single mother denies a job opportunity for the sake of her children
  • The luck egalitarian would deny her access to unemployment benefits since her unemployment is due to her own choices
  • Response: unemployment may not be a declinable gamble; she could choose to enter employment but it could be a logistically possible for her to do so *and* to ensure her children are cared for in a way that resource egalitarians would want children to be cared for (e.g. have some level education); if the gamble is not declinable then losing is not her choice

What are the problems associated with egalitarianism in general?

The problem of expensive tastes
Not all people are equally efficient at turning resource into welfare; a severely disabled person may gain less welfare from equal amount of money, for example. Welfare egalitarians would find themselves allocating a lot of resources to them as there is no limit to how worse off, or for a different case "wasteful" one can be.

Consider a different case: suppose Sarah has a very specific taste for water such that she can only drink mineral water from the Alps and no less; water that is not from the Alps will cause displeasure for her. Suppose water from the Alps is very expensive to secure and Sarah obviously has demands to be hydrated. The welfare egalitarian outcome is one such that society would have to try to secure water from the Alps for her because otherwise she will have very low welfare compared to others.

Levelling down objection
The welfare egalitarian would prefer distribution A(10; 10; 10) over B(10; 20; 30) when B gives a higher level of total welfare. This goes against other welfare-based theories such as utilitarianism.

When it comes to equality in capabilities, if resources are limited such that it is infeasible to provide support for individuals to develop capabilities, the egalitarian will find themselves limiting the capability of some to ensure similar levels of capabilities for people. Ultimately, this goes against their ideology, which holds that it is desirable to have more capabilities as one would gain more effective freedom. Their policy is self-defeating.

A way to reconcile this issue is to say that there is an inherent value in equality that outweighs these losses. Yet, it is difficult to convince ourselves that in extreme cases (e.g. a distribution of 10 utils each compared to 1000 utils to everyone but one person with 10001 utils) that egalitarianism should have so much moral weight attached to it that the 10 each distribution is preferred. A value pluralist reply could be that in such a case, other values takes precedence over the value for equality.

There is nothing inherently bad about inequality

- Parfit's divided world thought experiment shows that there is nothing inherently bad about inequality

- Suppose there were two societies that will never come into contact with one another but it is possible to redistribute resources between them
- Assume in one society each citizen equally have $10 and in the other citizens equally have $100
- Since the individuals in those societies will never come into contact with one another, there is no concern regarding equality

What is prioritarianism?

- Prioritarians hold that "the moral value of achieving a benefit for an individual (or avoiding a loss) is greater, the greater the size of the benefit as measured by a well-being scale, and greater, the lower the person's level of well-being over the course of her life apart from receipt of this benefit." Arneson (2013)
- Prioritarianism takes the consequentialist/utilitarian doctrine and adds a layer of moral multiplier such that the worse-off one is (the lower current utility is) the more morally worthy it is to benefit them. In other words, the moral multiplier increases as one's current level of welfare decreases.
- Prioritarianism is a competing theory to egalitarianism
    - Prioritarians claim that it is the absolute level of welfare/resources/money etc. that matters, not the relative level as egalitarian hold
    - Thus, prioritarians can avoid the levelling down objection
    - People are better off under prioritarianism but egalitarians posit that there is some value to equality in itself

What are some problems associated with prioritarianism?

- Prioritarianism exacerbates inequality
    - Suppose new VR technology has been invented
    - If a poor person gets hold of it, they will accrue 10 utils from using it, since they have to work long hours and so have less free time
    - if it gets into the hands of the rich, on the other hand, it would result in a welfare increase of 100 utils
    - Suppose the priority attached to helping the poor gives a moral multiplier of 8
    - Prioritarians will compare 8x10=80 utils if the poor gets the technology with the 100 util gain if it had been given to the rich
    - Since 80<100, prioritarians will allocate the technology to the rich, who then gains 100 utils and so the gap between the rich and the poor (who remains at their initial level of utility) grows
    - We see that not only is the prioritarian committed to saying that we should provide extra resources to the rich, they are also committed to saying that there is no reason at all to give the resources to the poor.

What is sufficientarianism?

- Jeff Bezos, as a I write, has a net worth of $187 billion, which is $31 billion more than Elon Musk, who is currently estimated to be worth $156 billion. The $31 billion gap between the two seems to matter less than if you or myself were to suddenly gain $31 billion above and beyond out current wealth.
    - There seems to be diminishing marginal utility on wealth. If so, then we can think of a threshold which defines what level of resources "matters."
- Sufficientarians hold that it is morally valuable that "as many as possible of all who shall ever live should enjoy conditions of life that place them above the threshold that marks the minimum required for a decent (good enough) quality of life." (Arneson 2013)
- Sufficientarianism can be conceptualised as comprising of a positive and a negative thesis
    - Positive thesis: sufficiency matters as a requirement of justice
    - Negative thesis: anything other than sufficiency does not matter as a distributive requirement of justice
- The egalitarian transfer of resources from the rich can be justified in terms of enabling more people to exceed the threshold and achieve sufficiency
- Most egalitarians think sufficiency matters but for sufficientarians, only sufficiency alone matters

What are some problems associated with sufficientarianism?

- The threshold for sufficiency is arbitrarily defined
  - Suppose the threshold was defined such that numbers individuals live large distances below it and a select few live just below or just above it
  - The doctrine of sufficiency would call for the reallocation of the resources from those just above the threshold to those just under so that more people can live above the threshold
  - This contradicts with our moral intuitions which suggests that those furthest away from the threshold are those who have the most dire need for those reallocated resources
- It is unclear how much priority people under the threshold get in comparison to those above the threshold
  - Suppose there are two women going into labour at the same time; one is rich and lives above the threshold but the other is poor and lives below the threshold
  - The rich woman arrives in a taxi to the hospital but the doctor is notified of the poor woman going into labour by phone
  - If it happens that those under the threshold are held as significantly more important than those above the threshold, then the doctor would be justified in leaving the rich woman who was already at the hospital to assist the poor woman instead
  - Problem 1: this outcome is counterintuitive
  - Problem 2: to base our morality on an arbitrary guideline, such as the sufficientarian threshold, is problematic
- A version of sufficientarianism calls for the minimisation of the sum of total sum of the gaps between the level of lifetime well-being each person achieves and the sufficiency level throughout the history of the universe
  - Such a suggestion is problematic because the optimal solution to it is to prevent new generations from being born, since, unavoidably, some will fall below the gap
  - A similar problem arises if we formulate sufficientarianism as minimising the gap per person

References

Arneson (2013): https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/egalitarianism/