ON THE CURRENCY OF SUFFICIENTARIAN JUSTICE:

Defining what is enough and some considerations on priority

above the minimum threshold.

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by

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ABSTRACT:

This thesis will discuss what ought to be enough. How should sufficientarians define the currency of suffiency and where should sufficientarians establish the minimum threshold? Should priority be given to anybody above the minimum threshold?

To answer these questions, this thesis argues that we need a pluralist understanding of sufficiency based on freedoms, capabilities and opportunities in order to determine what is enough and where to establish the minimum threshold. According to this thesis, it is not enough to simply base the currency of sufficientarian justice on only one currency such as resources or welfare.

In order to answer the last question, it will also discuss the concerns of sufficiency regarding benefits and priorities above the minimum threshold. Traditionally the negative thesis of sufficiency has not opened up for such considerations, but this thesis will make an objection to that. Here it is argued that, sufficiency might need to consider putting some restrictions in place above the minimum threshold, by giving secondary priority to socially useful projects and preventing individuals to suffer from unfair disadvantages.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis is, by and large, a product of who I am today. And most formative for who I am today of course, is my family – and to them I am grateful for always supporting and believing in me. I would also like to thank my girlfriend Tainá, for supporting and motivating me throughout this process.

My interest in political theory and philosophy was sparked during my graduate studies by Raino Malnes, so to him, I am grateful for actually making the topic an interesting one. It was truly amazing, and more stimulating, seeing a professor give lectures with an overhead projector and markers, instead of using a powerpoint in the 21st century.

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student, planning this thesis.

With that said, none of the above persons should be held liable for errors or shortcomings in this thesis – I am the sole party to be held responsible for any such errors. Questions and comments are most welcome by e-mail.

Håkon Olsnes, May 17th 2016
Oslo, Norway.

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INTRODUCTION

Distributive or social justice is the domain in political theory and philosophy concerned with what the distribution in society looks like. When discussing distributive justice, we are in fact discussing the guiding principles or structure of society (Rawls 2005 [1971]: 7). How should the major institutions be arranged and to whom should we distribute and redistribute (if at all to anybody) that, which is valuable, either in the form of material goods and resources, primary goods, subjective welfare or opportunities? Rawls (2005 [1971]: 9) defines this as social justice.

In order for us to think about how social justice can be achieved, we need to determine two things: one, what is justice and what do plausible just institutions or mechanisms look like, and two, what is it exactly, that there will need to be a just distribution of in society, what is it that is valuable and necessary for human beings?

On the matter of justice, much can be said - we could think that a distribution based on equality or utility (if so, for whom?) is the proper one. When discussing justice, Hume (1983: 27) writes:

> The good of mankind is the only object of all these laws and regulations. Not only is it requisite, for the peace and interest of society, that men's possessions should be separated; but the rules, which we follow, in making the separation, are such as can best be contrived to serve farther the interests of society.

My interpretation of Hume's words, is that when proposing theories of distributive justice, we are making the rules for the separation of different possessions or values. Hume also says that these rules should be such that they serve the interests of society – this is up for interpretation however, and advocates of different views will claim that their view is in the greatest interest of society.

With this in mind then, is a distribution with an *ultraminimal state* where the only function of the state is to protect everyone, and where no paternal interference with the distribution is allowed the right one?[1] Is a Rawlsian distribution based on the difference principle, where inequalities are allowed as long as it benefits the least advantaged group the proper one?[2] Should we differentiate between individuals and distribute based on collective, individual or special needs or expensive tastes?[3] If so, how do we determine priority, or who deserves compensation, if we are to differentiate between those individuals in need of compensation and those who are not, how should we do it? What about sufficiency, can we legitimately claim that the distribution is just insofar as we have distributed a sufficient amount of something to individuals qualifying for compensation?[4] These are among the most common questions raised with regards to how society and the institutions should be arranged in order for distributive justice to be achieved.

The aim of this thesis is not to solve all the matters up for discussion above (it would be too much to handle!). I will mainly discuss one strand of distributive justice, namely sufficientarianism. Under sufficientarianism the main idea is that the goal of distributive justice has been achieved when we have ensured that everybody are sufficiently well off.

[1]For more on this see the discussion on *"The minimal state and the ultraminimal state"* in Nozick (2010 [1974]: 26-28).

[2]For more on this see the discussion on *"Democratic Equality and the Difference Principle"* in Rawls (2005 [1971]: 75-83).

[3]See for example G.A Cohens discussion on this 2011: 81-115.

[4]Under a sufficientarian framework, those qualifying for compensation are normally those who are insufficiently well off.

However, there are different approaches as to how we must go about in achieving this ideal and determining when people are sufficiently well off. Some claim that the conditions of sufficiency have been fulfilled when people have been raised to a good enough level (Frankfurt 1987) or minimum threshold based on resources, other theories are contentment-based (Huseby 2010) stating that people have enough when they are content (but limiting excessive contentment, by imposing a maximum[5] threshold under which it is given moral priority, making it more urgent to compensate the less well-, or insufficienctly well off), Crisp (2003) proposes a sufficiency ideal based on an compassionate impartial spectator and Axelsen and Nielsen (2014) for example propose a sufficiency ideal which states that sufficiency has been achieved when people are free from duress. With disparities like these in theory, how can we as sufficientarians define and determine, correctly, what is valuable and how much of it is enough (i.e where should we establish our minimum threshold)? We observe that enough, in the sufficientarian literature, does not have one singular meaning.

My impression is that sufficientarians (and theorists of distributive justice in general), have been too fixated with the idea that what is to be distributed should be resources and welfare, particularly resources. The advantage of using resources as the proper currency for the distribution is that resources are relatively easy to quantify and divide, which in turn makes it easier to evaluate if the distribution is just or not. Welfare is a little more problematic, but can also be seen as ideal. The tricky part related to measuring welfare however, is that, different individuals can derive different levels of welfare from different conditions, so that universal principles of sufficiency based on welfare can in fact affect individuals differently. However, even if both

[5] Huseby actually uses the term 'maximal threshold'.

welfare and resources can be measured, it is really rather difficult to establish when somebody has enough, given interpersonal differences[6], and I am not even sure if resources and welfare should be the only things people should have enough of, as I shall discuss later. Some might reckon themselves well off living in a shack with their loved ones, while others can only be satisfied while sipping to old wine and eating plover's eggs (Dworkin 2002 [2000]: 84-85).

The fact that sufficientarians do not agree upon a common currency makes sufficientarianism a little less straightforward as a theory of distributive justice. In order for it to develop further, as a fully fledged theory, sufficientarians must solve this problem. Even if we could establish a sufficiency threshold based on resources or welfare, I argue we could not defend the idea that resources or welfare are the only things desirable for sufficiency, thus we cannot solely take on a resourcist or welfarist approach.[7] Because it seems that being sufficiently well off is not only limited to resources or welfare, I argue that, in order to attempt our best at developing a framework for sufficiency we need a pluralist description of what is valuable and how much of it is enough. This I think, is because, if we base our account of sufficiency on a monist definition of what is enough, for example resources, this will have erroneous implications later on, for example upon deciding where to establish our sufficiency thresholds and with regards to their operational dynamics.

I propose that we take a look at a pluralist definition of what is enough. The units of sufficiency under pluralism, however, are not uniform and identical. The implication of this is that we cannot compare 1 unit of sufficiency

[6]Consider this example: some might be sufficiently well off with a loaf of bread, while others, whose bodies burn more calories, may need more than one loaf of bread in order to be sufficiently well off.

[7]Because we would have an objectionable insufficiency in our sufficientarian approach.

to 1 dollar, for example. This also implicates that they cannot be quantified, divided and distributed as traditional units of resources or welfare would. Another general concern for sufficiency as I see it, is if, and if so, how we should distribute above the minimum threshold. Must we accept that anything goes above the minimum threshold or should we regulate the distribution with maximum thresholds (or something else) in order to ensure that the distribution is not only sufficient, at a minimal level, but also intuitively just?

My objective in this thesis is thus: I will argue that sufficientarians have not correctly defined what it entails to be sufficiently well off (or alternatively, where we should establish the minimum threshold and what we should have enough of) and that we need a pluralist description of sufficiency in order to define this correctly. Without a better definition of what it entails to be sufficiently well off, I claim, the subsequent thresholds and mechanisms we apply to govern the distribution could plausibly be erroneous, because the dynamics of these thresholds in the first place depend on what is to be distributed. I will also argue that the claim of the negative thesis of sufficiency, namely that we do not need to consider differences above the minimum threshold is objectionable. I claim that in a pluralist version of sufficiency we can give space to other values above the threshold, once people have enough.

In order to analyze this, I will first discuss relevant methodology and give a brief introduction to distributive justice. In the first chapter I will discuss some critiques of egalitarianism and prioritarianism, how sufficientarianism escapes these same critiques and one critique specifically posed to sufficiency. Then in the second chapter, I will discuss the currency of sufficientarian justice try to figure out what ought to be desirable for sufficiency and in the third chapter I will discuss what it entails to be sufficiently well off. In the fourth chapter once the premises for sufficiency has been outlined, I will discuss the different thresholds and ask if we can accommodate priority for other important distributional values, but while always giving lexical priority to sufficiency.

PRELIMINARIES

METHODOLOGY

Writing political philosophy can at first, appear be a daunting task without a clear cut scientific method. Cohen (2011: 225) writes:

> PEOPLE LIKE ME, who have been trying to do philosophy for more than forty years, do in due course learn, if they're lucky, how to do what they've been trying to do: that is, they do learn how to do philosophy. But although I've learned how to do philosophy, nobody ever told me how to do it, and, so far as I would guess, nobody will have told you how to do it, or is likely to tell you how to do it in the future. The most charitable explanation of that fact, the fact, that is, that nobody tells philosophy students how to do philosophy, is that it is impossible to explain to anybody how philosophy is to be done. The only way to teach people how to do it is by letting them watch, and listen, and imitate. The least charitable explanation of the self-same fact, the fact that we don't teach you how to do philosophy, is that those of us who have learned how to do it struggled so hard to get where we now are that we're now selfishly reluctant to give you some of the fruit of our struggle for free: we think you, too, should suffer. Probably there's some truth in each explanation.

As we can see, there is no *right way* to do political philosophy. However, it is important to be clear when making statements and about what assumptions apply. The methodology applied in this thesis will therefore primarily be of a normative character adhering to reflective equilibrium.

In this section dealing with methodology, I will discuss the method of reflective equilibrium for normative reasoning, which is also what I will apply in this thesis for the most part. I will also discuss the use of thought experiments, and to what extent it is desirable to use these as a methodology in political philosophy.

Reflective equilibrium

Reflective equilibrium was suggested by John Rawls (2005 [1971]: 47-53), and later more thoroughly examined by Norman Daniels (1979). Reflective equilibrium puts the philosopher's inferences and intuitions into a system, while considering the available data and principles. It takes the form of logic and evaluation of arguments. What can we put forth as acceptable (logically and morally) contrasted with the arguments and the principles of the material being analyzed, how do the conclusions we reach contrast with the conclusions of other theories and critiques? Do the conclusions reached have any unwanted implications, if so, can we live to accept them, or do we need to take one more spin and rework the theory completely or partially?

Briefly stated, *reflective equilibrium* allows for one's judgments to create an understanding of what is right (or for example, morally acceptable) *after examining* relevant arguments and principles. Explained better below:

> The method of reflective equilibrium is an attempt to produce coherence in an ordered triple of sets of beliefs held by a particular person, namely, (a) a set of considered judgments, (b) a set of moral principles, and (c) a set of relevant background theories. Following this recipe we do not merely settle for the best fit principles or inferences made under *narrow equilibrium*. (Daniels 1979: 258)

As we have seen, reflective equilibrium is quite sound and reasonable, but while using this framework we run the risk of being prone to one general critique, namely that, we can not know whether or not we are biased when making our inferences. Unless we are fully informed, we cannot know this for sure, but we can reasonably assume that an adult possessing average, healthy faculties and who is relatively knowledgable about the matter at hand, will be able to reach the most plausible conclusions, given the available data and information.

It might well be that, our initial convictions persist (or not), after examining various other accounts or arguments. The result of our reflections, can then be said to be something more substantial than just an initial conviction or hunch (which never was the result of any great deliberation). When we have made inferences under *reflective equilibrium*, these can be said to be more robust and justified, as they have emerged under more rigid conditions (and not merely revealed themselves to us through spurs of inexplicable creativity) - they have been tested against critiques and arguments where applicable. In this way, they are more likely to remain reasonable and plausible. As we discover, this resembles any other scientific method of induction and accumulative theory building in the long run. We try to reason with what we have, we make assumptions and posit arguments under the best conditions available, when we fail, others will tend to be there to correct our accounts, so that some time in the future, the "truth" or the most reasonable account, given the current arguments and conditions can be discovered.

Thought experiments

Another point to make about methodology is on the use of thought experiments. In political philosophy thought experiments are common and can be useful in order to substitute real experiments. In this way we can control for variables and imagine what could plausibly happen under certain conditions, given that the scenario have been minutely sketched out beforehand. Jakob Elster (2011) discusses thought experiments and identifies three paradigmatic positions: Conceivabilism, Realism and Actualism.

Conceivabilism claims that, as long as a case is conceivable (in any world), it is legitimate to make use of for testing moral principles.[8] Realism states that as long as a case could plausibly occur in this world it is legitimate as a test for moral principles and claims that only cases that have manifested themselves are relevant to use as thought experiments.

In this thesis I will try to limit myself when making use of imaginary cases, and say that both realism and conceivabilism can be relevant to put our principles and intuitions to the test. However, when making use of such methods, we should not be able to rig our cases beforehand in order for our conclusions to automatically come about by our assumptions.

Furthermore we should not apply extremely outlandish cases about which we cannot have any competence, by doing so we would be running the risk of not being able to: "*imagine these outlandish cases, [and thus,] we might never be able to identify the true moral principles we need*" (Elster 2011: 254) as we would not be able to fully imagine the dynamics of the world in question. Another problem with extremely outlandish examples is that even though we are faced with the same example, our interpretations of it might vary a lot, if they are stated unclearly, because of this we should also proceed with caution, or at least, if we are to use such examples, we must minutely define the assumptions before stating our example.

[8] Axelsen and Nielsen's (2014: 5-6) imaginary case of *Succeedia and Squandaria* would be an example of a relevant conceivable case. It is not plausible in our world, but nevertheless, it seems valid as a thought experiment.

We should also be cautious about using thought experiments that are over the top morbid. For example, examples entailing removing limbs or murdering babies.[9]

DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE AND COMMON TERMINOLOGY: A BRIEF SUMMARY

In the first part of this section, I will briefly mention some basic terminology and theory about values, teleology and currencies, before I go on to present the general traits of distributive justice and some of the different approaches to it.

In the latter part then, I will focus mainly on sufficientarianism as this is the main distributive theory of justice to be discussed in this thesis.

Terminology: A brief remark on values and currencies currencies

Here, I will make a brief remark about the role of values in such theories. Usually, a theory of distributive justice is named after the value it regards most highly (i.e utilitarianism, egalitarianism, sufficientarianism, prioritarianism). However, values can be regarded important in different ways, and the manner a value is regarded important constitutes the goal or the teleological endpoint of the theory. We can regard a value important in two different respects: intrinsically (or non-instrumentally) and instrumentally (Rønnow-Rasmussen 2015).

Saying that a value has intrinsic value, that has value in itself, is simply

[9] Thanks to my supervisor for this advice.

another way of stating that the value is valuable for the theory in itself, detached from other aspects of the theory. I could as an example say that equality has intrinsic moral value – it is good for the sake of equality when the distribution is equalized, but not for anything else.

Non-instrumental value on the other hand, differs from intrinsic value in such a way that our value of choice is conducive to something else the theory of choice regards as desirable or valuable. For example, take equality again. We could say that we are not interested in equality in itself, but we acknowledge the positive empirical effects of equality on a society, thus we value equality for the sake of it's positive effects on our distribution, rendering it more just.

In theories of distributive justice, there is also much talk about currencies. Simply defined, a currency, is not that which is valuable for the theory, but it is what it is valuable to distribute for the theory. It is the item distributional considerations are founded upon. It can be resources, welfare, capabilities or opportunities, and so forth. For an egalitarian theory, we could for example say that it is important that people have an equal amount of money. It would not matter for the currency if the theory regards the value in focus as intrinsically valuable or instrumental, the currency is merely that which we are regarding as valuable to distribute – the distribuendum, or if we have more, distribuenda.

Distributive justice

Ever since the ancient greeks have theories of distributive justice been concerned with who gets what, when and how. The core concern of distributive justice is the distribution of goods in society, what should it look like and how it can be justified?

Philosophers, economists and political scientists have been studying this issue for a long time. Utilitarianism for example advocate that we should maximize utility (for happiness, or pleasure and freedom from pain) in society as a whole, permitting harsh conditions for some unfortunate souls if it was for the greater (Kymlicka 2002: 10-11), and marxists for example advocate that the just distribution is to give the proletarian workers the products of their labour (Kymlicka 2002: 169) or over the means of production so that they would not be forced to sell a product (or a piece of themselves, resulting in alienation) where the input had been their blood, sweat and toil.

When Rawls published his theory of justice in 1971, the modern day discussion on distributive justice had begun. His work denounced utilitarianism as a theory of distributive justice and argued that his institutional framework and his difference principle were morally superior and more just. According to Rawls, we were only to accept inequalities or giving priority to the well off, if an embetterment for the least advantaged followed, the structure of society was to be agreed upon in the original position. This spurred other debates. Critiques of Rawls claimed that his theory was inegalitarian because it allowed inequalities in welfare or opportunities, only primary goods were of a concern for Rawls' theory(Kymlicka 2002: 91), Robert Nozick (2010 [1974]) on the other hand, claimed Rawls ignored private property rights and that the state should not have a responsibility to redistribute anything other than security, and proposed a more libertarian framework.

Egalitarians and prioritarians were those who spurred the debate on sufficientarianism. Prioritarians claimed to have demonstrated that egalitarians could not seriously believe in an ideal attaching intrinsic value to equality per se (Parfit 1997; Frankfurt 1987). Prioritarians then proposed to always give priority to bettering the conditions of the worst-off (on behalf of the well off) when distributing that which is valuable. There is also another line of prioritarian thought worth mentioning - the idea that priority should not only be given to the worst off, but instead priority should also be given to those that are better off, through some weighted aggregate, where priority decreases, the better off somebody are (Holtug 2010: 202). Sufficientarians agree with the prioritarians that as a rule the worst-off[10] should have priority, but they introduced the maxim that this was to apply only up until one specific threshold, and advocate the idea that at some point enough is enough (Huseby 2010). In other words, sufficiency proclaims that, for justice to be achieved and in order for our theory to be morally acceptable, we do not need an equal distribution of goods.

My discussion will take this idea of sufficiency as a given. We do not need to defend the idea of allocating what is desirable equally to all because of moral concerns (Frankfurt 1987: 21). I find the idea that what is important and desirable as a moral ideal for distributive justice and that everybody should be sufficiently well off, more convincing than that everybody ought to have the same. If everybody are sufficiently well off, I do not see why it should be of moral importance to strive for perfect equality. I will discuss this in more detail in the first chapter.

Harry Frankfurt was among the first to propose the *doctrine of sufficiency* as an alternative to egalitarianism (atleast as an alternative to economic egalitarianism), based on the idea that what matters from the point of view from morality is not that everyone has the same, but that everyone has enough

[10] I want to point out one distinction: prioritarians argue that priority should be given to whoever is worst-off at a certain time, whereas traditional sufficientarians, would probably claim that everybody under the sufficiency threshold should have an equal right to compensation (unless we adopt some kind of Huseby's version of sufficiency, namely that, it is worse, the further somebody are negatively situated relative to the sufficiency threshold).

(Frankfurt 1987: 21). Drawing heavily upon Frankfurt's work, Paula Casal (2007: 298-304) formulated the two theses of sufficiency below:

> **Positive thesis of sufficiency:**
> The positive thesis stresses the importance of people living above a certain threshold, free from deprivation.
>
> **Negative thesis of sufficiency:**
> The negative thesis denies the relevance of certain additional distributive requirements.

As we can see from the theses above (if Paula Casal is right), from the point of view of morality, sufficiency emphasizes the idea that *1) people insufficiently well off should be compensated in order to reach a minimum threshold through the application of the positive thesis, and 2) that above this threshold, no moral concerns should give us any reason to interfere with the distribution.* The implication of the negative thesis, or the implication that sufficiency is deemed to be passive, is up for discussion. Sufficientarians need not accept the negative thesis (or some passive version of sufficiency) in it's entirety. Huseby (2010) for example proposes a version of sufficiency conforming to the negative thesis, where there are two thresholds: one minimal and one maximal. In his version of sufficiency it is then worse to be insufficiently well off based upon to what extent that people are insufficiently well off[11].

[11] For example, somebody somebody at -10 would be worse-off to sufficientarians accepting this definition, than somebody at -5, if the threshold is situated at 5 (Huseby 2010: 180). Because of this, he claims that people's level of contentment will eventually play a role and give us moral grounds for interference with the distribution, by way of the maximal sufficiency threshold (Huseby 2010: 181).

Holtug and Lippert-Rasmussen (2007: 28) claim that the essence of the negative thesis is not as plausible as it at first may sound. We might, in some cases have reasons for objecting to it.

Now, let us assess, how sufficientarians determine exactly what is enough. Sufficientarians have the habit of determining what this distribution of welfare, opportunities or resources (or whatever else may be distributed) should look like, through the use of threshold mechanisms, where the individuals under the threshold value are the ones being given priority for compensation because they can be said to be the insufficiently well off under a sufficientarian framework. This however, is not as straightforward as it sounds, initially. Determining this good enough level is maybe the biggest challenge to sufficientarians (Benbaji 2006; Casal 2007). What is the nature of this threshold? Could it be something like Rawls' social minimum (2005 [1993]: 276-278)?

When trying to agree upon a threshold, sufficientarians acknowledge that what must be worthwhile for human beings is not merely to live, but to live freely and manage to make rational decisions for themselves, concerning their well-being (Arneson 1989). This is all good and plausible, but it doesn't answer our question, it does not help us defining the threshold precisely. Usually sufficientarians stipulate this threshold rather vaguely, such as saying that the threshold is where enough is enough, or where one is free from pressure and non-domination, where one has one's basic needs met etcetera.

It implies however, that being sufficiently well off has some moral value and that being insufficiently well off is bad, from a moral point of view. But why is this so? Why is it that, once people are above a certain threshold, they do no longer deserve to be given priority? Is it because they automatically become free to live and act as human beings? If the threshold is at 10 and we have a scenario where Jane has 9 and John has 10, we would have to compensate Jane and lift her up to the threshold so that she can properly function as a human being? This seems valid enough, but what exactly is it that makes Jane sufficiently well off at 10 and not at 9, what is it exactly that enables her to function as a human being? What is the sufficientarian panacea? Why is 10 so much more desirable than 9? How do we find that threshold? It is rather difficult to stipulate exactly where the threshold should be set at all times and in every society. I will not pursue these questions any further, in this section, as this will be the topic of the second and third chapters, for the most part.

1 THE ADVANTAGES OF SUFFICIENCY AS AN IDEAL FOR DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

In this chapter, I will assess one critique of egalitarianism, namely the levelling down objection, and also one critique of prioritarianism, which bases itself on the aggregation problem. I will also see how sufficientarianism deals with these two critiques, posed to egalitarianism and prioritarianism, before I take a look at one critique of sufficientarianism, which states that sufficiency is flawed, because under sufficiency, nobody will ever be able to rise above the minimum threshold – it is the new maximum.

The main idea behind discussing these critiques is to demonstrate to the reader why we ought to desire sufficiency, over equality and priority and also to show that sufficiency can withstand a critique as well, levelled against itself. The various ways, in which sufficiency escapes these critiques, are all good reasons, in my opinion, demonstrating why sufficiency is the better alternative, for distributive justice. After all, if sufficiency did not prove to demonstrate any advantages vis-a-vis the other theories, we would not have any weighty reasons for desiring it as a theory for distributive justice.

I will start the discussion by giving an outline of egalitarianism and showing how it fails to deal with the well known levelling-down objection. After this, I will move on to discuss prioritarianism and the problem of aggregation, and how sufficientarianism seems to be the better alternative.

1.1 EQUALITY AND THE LEVELLING DOWN OBJECTION

Now let us turn to egalitarianism. Equality has for long been the standard of considerations on what is just – it has been thought that having one's equal share of a given good is inherently just and morally good, because equality in itself is as just as just can be. Because individuals are supposed to be equal and deserving of equal consideration, it would be unjust if somebody are worse (or better) off than others through no fault or choice of their own (Temkin 2003).

However there is one prominent critique against the idea of egalitarianism. The one I will discuss here, is the levelling down objection[12] posed to egalitarians, and maybe Temkin in particular by Derek Parfit. Below I will discuss this critique, how it impacts egalitarianism on the one hand, and how sufficientarianism is practically immune to this objection, on the other.

The levelling down objection is a critique of egalitarianism and the idea that equality has intrinsic (moral) value. It challenges egalitarianism by proposing the following implication: if we have a society where two individuals exist – A and B. Individual A has a welfare level of 10, whereas individual B has a welfare level of 5, half the welfare of individual A, as in figure 1 below.

For the sake of this example, I will assume that welfare is not something that can be distributed from one individual to another. The only possibility to manipulate welfare would be to interfere with the enjoyment of it. Is it better for society as a whole if equality in the distribution is achieved by interfering with individual A's enjoyment of welfare? If we were to equalize the distribution and interfere with his/her enjoyment, we could deny him/her

[12] Often referred to as *The Slogan* as coined by Temkin (2003: 776).

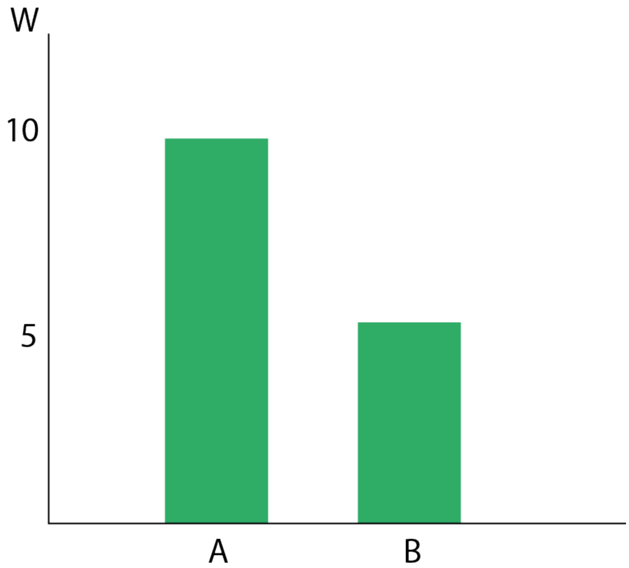

Figure 1: The distribution before levelling down has occurred. Individual A has 10 units of welfare while individual B has 5.

the use of 5 welfare units. When A is denied the use of 5 welfare units, A and B both enjoy a welfare level of 5.

If you intuitively think that the better society would be the one where everybody, in the end, have the same level of welfare for their enjoyment, because equality has intrinsic value to you, you ought to adopt the scenario where we have denied A the use of 5 units of welfare, as in figure 2. The catch here though, is that we have actually done something negative to achieve equality. We denied individual A the use of 5 units of welfare (which, I suppose, should have a value as well) just so that he would be equally as "bad off" as individual B, as depicted in figure 2. This is absurd, but only if you do not think equality intrinsically valuable. If you do not accept interfering with individual A to level him down to individual B's level, you cannot claim that equality has intrinsic value and at least in welfare terms, you accept the distribution, in which there is more welfare, but less equality.

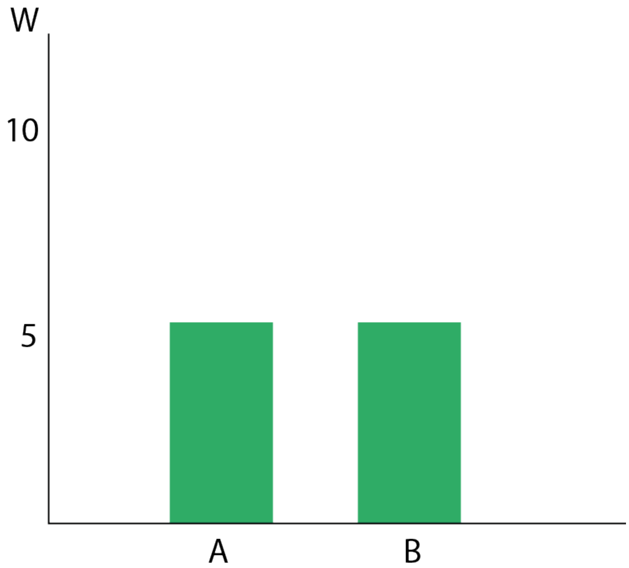

Figure 2: The distribution after levelling down has occurred. Individual A now has 5 units of welfare and is on an equal level of welfare as that of individual B. Equality has been achieved.

Temkin's response however is something he calls the raising up objection. Briefly stated, Temkin (2003) argues that we imagine an the implications of the levelling down objection, but reversed. Consider a scenario where A and B both have 5 units of welfare in the first instance.[13] Now, imagine that some miracle berries are discovered, so that individual A is able to live significantly longer than B, and thus resulting in a higher level of aggregated welfare for A. Should we then accept this inequality or should we deny the miracle berries to individual A, for the sake of equality? Temkin thinks that we should not accept it because it is unfair. However, I am not sure whether this is a good justification for equality. If we reduce equality to fairness, what then, is the intrinsic value of equality? Are we not desiring equality for the sake of fairness if we are convinced by the raising up objection?

[13]Temkin does not operate with welfare, but with life.

While the levelling down objection impacts egalitarianism in such a way that, if we choose to stand by it, will have absurd distributive implications for our distribution, we can not pose the same argument against sufficiency.

The implication of the levelling down objection for sufficiency, when faced with a world where individual A has a welfare level of 10, and individual B has a welfare level of 5 – would be dependent on what is sufficient. For example, sufficientarians, could maybe claim that, really, having only 5 units of welfare is sufficient, so we would have no moral reason for interfering with the distribution as both groups would be above the minimum threshold, which could be at 2 units of welfare for example.

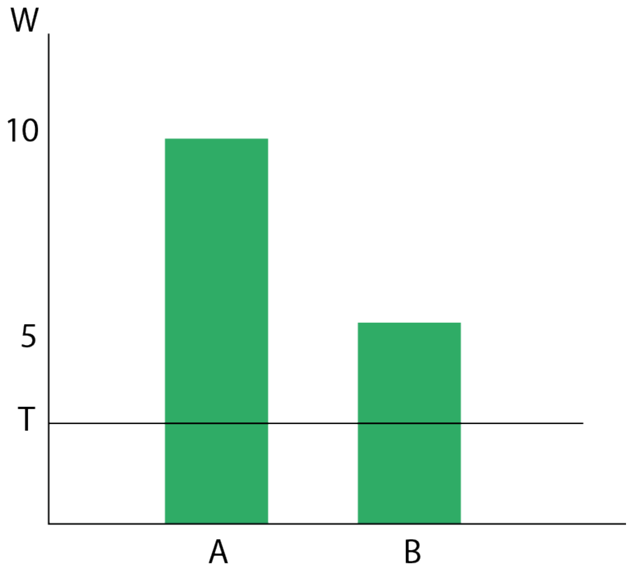

Figure 3: The distribution before levelling down has occurred. Individual A has 10 units of welfare while individual B has 5. As we see, the inequality is not objectionable from a sufficientarian point of view, as both individuals are above the minimum threshold.

If we were faced with the choice of having to determine which distribution is better (between the first distribution, where individual A and B have respectively 10 and 5 units of welfare, and the second distribution, where individual A which, before had 10 units of welfare, now only has 5 units) we would not have any reason to prefer either of the distributions, as sufficiency would be fulfilled, in both of the distributions. If we modified our sufficiency principle, so that having less than 10 units of welfare, was insufficient, we would now have reasons to prefer the first distribution, where indidviduals with 10 units of welfare did not qualify for compensation, whereas individuals with only 5 units of welfare would qualify for compensation.

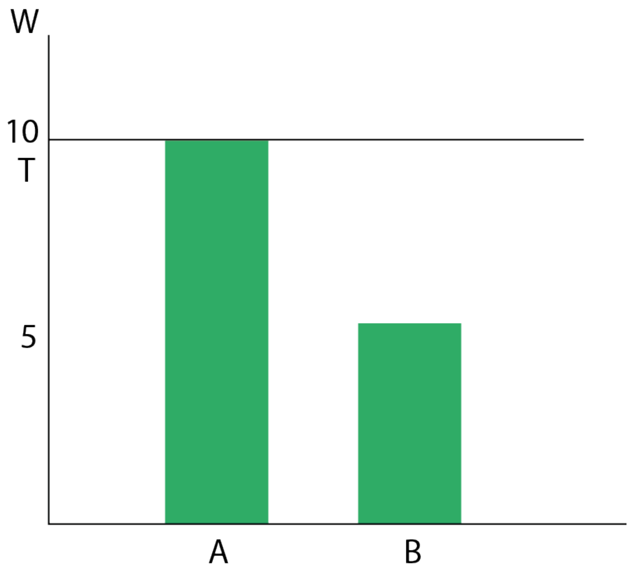

Figure 4: The distribution before levelling down has occurred. Individual A has 10 units of welfare while individual B has 5. As we see, the inequality is now objectionable from a sufficientarian point of view, as we have set the minimum threshold. Again this shows that it is not the inequality itself that is objectionable for sufficientarians, it is rather, what we regard as enough, which decides what is objectionable or not.

In this sense, I think sufficiency shows that it can deal with the levelling down objection, better than equality can because, we would not force somebody who are above the threshold, under the minimum threshold for the sake of comparative fairness.

1.2 PRIORITY AND BENEFITS TO THE BETTER OFF?

Prioritarianism is another theory of distributive justice giving priority to benefiting the worse off. As formulated below:

> **The priority view:**
> Benefiting people matters more the worse off these people are. (Parfit 1997: 213)

Parfit also states that, for prioritarians the moral importance of a benefit depends on how well off the person who receives the benefit is, in this sense, prioritarians do not give equal weight or utility to equal benefits, as the egalitarian or utilitarian would do (Parfit 1997: 213). This however, is not to say that the worse off should always have lexical priority. Holtug (2010: 202) demonstrates this, advocating a view where priority should also be given to those who are better off, through some weighted aggregate, where the urgency of benefiting someone decreases, the better off they are. That is, we will have weaker moral reasons to benefit persons who already are well off, but we can still have plausible reasons for benefiting them.

Prioritarians reasonably escape the levelling down objection posed to egalitarians above, because they value benefits at higher levels instead of at lower levels. Faced with the levelling down objection as a prioritarian, I would probably object to the critique and saying that even if we have a situation that is not optimal, we could not defend taking 5 units of welfare from individual

A, because, we would rob him of 5 morally significant units of welfare, without bettering the conditions of individual B. As prioritarians do not value equality for it's intrinsic value, the distribution would not become more valuable, even though inequality has been eradicated. It would all in all, have become worse for individual A, without improving the distribution with respect to individual B. From this follows that prioritarians do not evaluate the distribution depicted in figure 2, better in any respect than the distribution in figure 1. If prioritarians had to choose they would probably choose the distribution before levelling down, thus they escape the levelling down objection.

However, priority, is also, an aggregative principle (Holtug and Lippert-Rasmussen 2007: 137), which means that any sum of benefits at a low level, can be outweighed by a sufficiently large sum of benefits at a higher level – it does not give lexical priority to the worst off. It is to this trait of prioritarianism I will state my objection, and argue that sufficiency is the better theory.

The implication of priority being an aggregative principle is that, if increasing benefits for the rich, would outweigh the benefits we could give to the poor, we should reject benefiting the poor and hence benefit only the rich (Holtug 2015: 282). For example, if the billionaire could enjoy more welfare from $1000 than the poor person, say, because this is the money he lacks to strike an extremely valuable deal – the billionaire could receive a return on this $1000 investment of $1.000.000 and again maybe convert this amount into more jobs, and salaries for people worse off than him. Then, maybe the poor person can live on this amount for a month or more, which would leave him really well off, but the value of his vacation could not exceed the aggregated benefits of the deal the billionaire would strike. Below is the more classic example of this, as presented by Thomas Scanlon (1998 [2000]: 235):

> Suppose that Jones has suffered an accident in the transmitter room of a television station. Electrical equipment has fallen on his arm, and we cannot rescue him without turning off the transmitter for fteen minutes. A World Cup match is in progress, watched by many people, and it will not be over for an hour. Jones's injury will not get any worse if we wait, but his hand has been mashed and he is receiving extremely painful electrical shocks. Should we rescue him now or wait until the match is over? Does the right thing to do depend on how many people are watching—whether it is one million or five million or a hundred million?

I find this rather objectionable. To me it seems that there are lower level needs which must be satisfied before we have any weighty moral reasons to satisfy higher level needs, even if people, on an aggregate level people would derive larger benefits from getting their higher level needs satisfied. Even if priority takes this into account by weighing the moral importance of higher level benefits as relatively less important than lower level benefits, it seems plausible that some small benefits to the least advantaged ought to have lexical priority to larger (but trivial) benefits to the better off.

If we contrast prioritarianism with sufficientarianism we find that, they do resemble each other as both theories give priority to the worst (or less well) off. The two theories differ however, with regards to who they give priority to. Sufficiency always maintains that insufficiencies are unjust and that even if giving benefits to those above the threshold would outweigh (by way of some utility function) the giving of the same benefits to those below the minimum threshold, we must nevertheless give those benefits to the people below the threshold. Prioritarians do not require this, if the benefits of giving priority to millionaires could affect the benefit of giving priority to the least advantaged.

1.3 WHY SUFFICIENCY IS NOT THE SOCIAL MAXIMUM

Now, we have taken a look at some critiques of egalitarianism and prioritarianism and we have seen how sufficientarianism more or less manages to deal reasonably well with these critiques. Let us now examine a critique of especially posed to sufficiency. This critique tries to show that under sufficiency, we will never be able to rise above the minimum threshold, as we would use all our resources to those under the minimum threshold, and this would become the new social maximum, for our distribution.

Karl Widerquist interprets the negative thesis in such a way that it does not allow individuals above the minimum threshold to enjoy benefits (Widerquist 2010: 477). I do not think that the negative thesis restricts people above the threshold from enjoying benefits, this interpretation is in my opinion wrong. Rather, if we read the negative thesis carefully, I think it states that we have no relevant reasons for interfering with the distribution, and that we should strive for a distribution where everybody has enough.

According to Widerquist, everything that we can do to incrementally reduce the suffering of those below the threshold, must be done. This is in a way the opposite side of the coin of the aggregative implication, posed to prioritarians. According to Widerquist, an incremental decrease in the speed limit will reduce the risk of accidents, and will thus decrease the suffering of those affected by accidents and those below the sufficiency threshold. From a sufficientarian point of view, it does not seem that we should use all our resources to those under the threshold.

Huseby (forthcoming) discusses aggregation and distinguishes between negative and positive aggregation. Negative aggregation is the kind of aggregation prioritarians face, as we examined above. Sufficientarians face positive aggregation, as Widerquist implies we should not tolerate. Huseby claims that we should allow positive aggregation when it is constructive to socially useful projects. I think Huseby has a point and that maybe the positive aggregation he discusses in fact helps us solve the problem Karl Widerquist has with trivial benefits. Widerquist states that trivial benefits for the well off must not make us neglect the more pressing needs of the worse off. It might well be that the socially useful projects cannot be defined as trivial, and in this way, we can legitimately allow priority for such projects on behalf of benefits to the worse off, so that the social minimum does not necessarily become the social maximum Widerquist speaks of. In this way sufficiency can plausibly escape the problem of aggregation and give priority to the better off.

1.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have tried to show why we ought to adopt sufficientarianism as the main theory for distributive justice. I tried to show that both egalitarianism and prioritarianism are flawed theories when faced, respectively, with the levelling down objection and the problem of aggregation, and that sufficiency can deal with these critiques more easily for the time being. I also tried to show that adopting a principle of sufficiency which implies that we establish a minimum threshold to determine priority, is not the same as advocating the view that this minimum threshold must be the new maximum.

The distinction is that: benefits to the better off, can be allowed when they are of extreme importance to society, without which society cannot function, as opposed to allowing for benefits to the better of which are of no such importance, but only aggregatively outweighing the benefits the same resources can give to the insufficiently well off.

2 ON THE CURRENCY OF SUFFICIENTARIAN JUSTICE

Hopefully, some of the examples in the foregoing chapter were compelling and demonstrated why sufficiency is more effective in dealing with the critiques levelled against priority and equality, which in turn renders it more feasible as a moral ideal for distributive justice instead of equality or priority.

One of my main concerns in this thesis is to find out what we should have enough of, as I stated earlier. That is, what should be the currency of sufficientarian justice? Should it be resources, welfare, subjective welfare, capabilities or something else? I will dedicate this chapter to investigate these questions.

My impression is that welfare and resources are not as plausible as currencies for sufficiency, as they first may seem. I will therefore explain why I think this is, and I will make an objection to using them as currencies of sufficiency in the first part of this chapter.

If resources and welfare are not the right currencies then, what should we regard as a plausible currency (or currencies)? It is not straightforward. In order to examine this question I will discuss this more in depth in the second part of this chapter by analyzing two accounts of sufficiency with distinct currencies.

2.1 AN OBJECTION TO RESOURCES AND WELFARE

In this section I will formulate some objections to resources and welfare and why I do not think they do the job when applied as the currencies of sufficientarian justice. In the first few paragraphs I will briefly present the two currencies, before dedicating two subsections below to state my critiques against the respective currencies.

Resources are intuitively, maybe the most plausible currency of distributive justice. The common perception is that, if one has resources it should also follow that one is well enough off - because resources are instrumental to most of the things human beings need. Intuitively then, it is important to have sufficient resources. Then, for distributive frameworks to measure how well off people were, resources seemed to be a plausible currency for distribution and to assessing someone's situation.

If we apply such a resourcist currency then, for just distributive schemes, we should be able to know how well off any given individual would be with any amount of resources, and thus able to assess someone's situation. I, however, argue that resources should not be the currency of distributive justice, because resources cannot be used in order to rectify all disadvantages.

Welfare is what an individual derives from some good or activity. As pointed out above, the resourcist approach implies that resources are instrumentally valuable because they will guarantee people's welfare levels. It might then, just as well, be better to assess how well off somebody are, by directly measuring their welfare levels. The implication while measuring welfare levels though, is that they are not solely objective, which means that we cannot access somebody's welfare level, without asking them directly (this is also at best a relative measure, because we cannot be sure whether or not the welfare level given by the subject is in fact correct). This is one trade-off welfare has with the resourcist approach. Due to this validity problem, another implication of the welfarist approach is that people who are well off might reckon themselves as bad off and vice versa. We could argue that the right way would be to objectively evaluate somebody's level of welfare, but it also seems intuitively wrong to say that he or she is well enough off with regards to welfare, even though he or she denies it.

2.1.1 Resources

What are resources? I find that resources usually imply money in theories of distributive justice. But it can mean anything a person might have as his or her own property. By most measures in distributive justice, resources will almost always be instrumental to attaining some goal. For many, they will be instrumental to attaining welfare. That is, resources are for many synonomous with welfare, because if you have an X amount of resources, you will be able to get an X amount of welfare.

Using resources as the currency for theories of distributive justice then, is not a bad idea. After all, we all need resources of some sort, whether we earn them, or are given them - resources are an important ingredient of being able to do anything.

However, when used as the currency of distributive theories, resources, in my opinion come short. I think that using resources as the sole currency for distributive frameworks is erroneous because they cannot solve all our problems. For example let us assume that resources are money, if this is so they cannot remedy all the disadvantages in society (Wolff and De-Shalit 2007: 26-27). To put it simply, this is because, not all of our disadvantages can be compensated for by “throwing money at the problem”.

To demonstrate: let us assume that an individual is fighting cancer. Giving him or her a significant amount of money would not make the cancer go away. It would, however, enable her to buy expensive cancer treatment and increasing the possibility of making her free from cancer.

Again though, if we think about this example one more time, are we not saying that resources are good because they buy treatment, which increases the chances for this individual to survive? If we restate the example, and assume that we have a state ensuring universal healthcare for it’s citizens, because being in good health is valuable, the individual could get access to this treatment for free. In such a situation, resources would not be important, from an individual point of view.[14]

Are we not, in fact presuming that resources should be the currency of justice, only because of the things it can be converted into? If we believe resources to be the sole currency of justice because of it’s positive instrumental effects, I think we are. If, however, like the second example states, health would be the currency of justice, we would not have to care about the distribution of resources, simply because it would not be relevant, how much resources one has, and again, we would have no reason to assume that resources ought to be the currency of sufficientarian justice.

There are however, some additional implications of the resourcist approach. The first is that people might derive different levels of welfare from their respective amount of resources, maybe two persons buy the same identical wines, whereas one of them enjoys it very much, while the other person will think it was a waste. The other implication is that people might prefer different goods, one person might prefer cheap thrills, while the other person

[14]This example presumes that the state has enough resources to pay for healthcare.

has expensive tastes. A third objection can also be that the price of a given good will vary in different markets, maybe the bare necessities are relatively more expensive in market A as opposed to market B – so a universal framework based on resources only, without taking these implications into account would not be as feasible as we would want it to. It could have too many unwanted implications, relative to the price of a good in a market and not the objective value of a good (Mill 2004: 169-172).

Thus, I argue that, if we base our assessment of how well off somebody are, only by referring to their available resources, I argue we have gone astray. Following from this then, a version of sufficiency basing the minimum threshold by way of resources, will erroneously determine what it entails to be sufficiently well off, or in other words, erroneously define the minimum threshold.

2.1.2 Welfare

Welfare is, to put it simply, the enjoyment or good an individual can derive from any activity or resource. Richard Arneson defines welfare as preference satisfaction and adds that these preferences should be rational preferences (Arneson 1989: 82-83). How much welfare individuals derive from an activity or resource, can vary from person to person. This is why welfare in most cases is thought to be the better alternative as a currency of justice, compared to resources. After all, how can we evaluate our distribution if we have distributed equally to the super rich individual A by giving him $1000 and also the cancer patient B $1000? They will probably not be able to derive the same levels of welfare from that amount of money, so if we are serious about having a currency which is also sensitive to differences in people's levels of welfare, we should use welfare as the currency of justice and give them whatever they need to derive their needed level of welfare.

Even though welfare, plausibly is a better currency for measuring how well off somebody are than money, it is not perfect. Welfare is also prone to the critique that, it cannot remedy all disadvantages in society. We cannot simply throw welfare at the problem to make it better, it would for example be absurd to give an obese child with a diabetes diagnosis more chocolate to make him or her feel good.[15]

Let me explain more in detail with an example: we have a society in which it is important that all people are well enough off in welfare terms. Imagine a slave, who is working long days in the field, he has time to relax and to study when not working, but he cannot leave the master's property. When asked about how he is doing in welfare terms, he answers that he is doing great and could not want for anything else. If our currency of justice is welfare, we would not have any grounds to interfere in this case. However, it seems evident, that this is not right. If this was right, humanity could be better off locked up in a welfare prison, where people were guaranteed a sufficient level of welfare, if they only gave up their freedom. Such a situation could be comparable to the situation in Plato's cave, where the persons in the cave think that they are as well off as they can be, while they in reality are merely prisoners (Reeve 2012: 463).

2.1.3 Conclusion

Thus, I claim that a sufficientarian ideal establishing a minimum threshold which is based solely upon resources or welfare misses the point. This is not to deny that resources and welfare are important aspects when we are to evaluate whether somebody is sufficiently well off or not, but in order to make

[15]Arneson's definition of welfare would probably not be impacted by this critique, as his definition of welfare is rational preference satisfaction.

a valid assessment of how well off people are, and to establish a good enough level, we need to know more about the individuals' situation, and what it entails to be sufficiently well off. This in turn, has some consequences for our currency of sufficientarian justice. If we cannot rely on resources or welfare to determine how we should distribute in order to achieve sufficiency, how can we do it? This implication helps us continue our discussion, as this is going to be the topic of the next section.

2.2 SUFFICIENCY OF WHAT?

I stated above that resources and welfare are not, in my opinion, plausible currencies of sufficientarian justice. If they do not do the job as currencies, what will? What can we then say is enough? Defining the currency of sufficiency is maybe the biggest challenge, sufficientarians face. Benbaji (2006: 331) writes:

> The challenge all versions of sufficientarianism have to address is quite heavy: how is the good enough level to be determined? What is the nature of this threshold?

What then, is enough? What is it that matters that people have enough of and why? When discussing the currency of sufficientarian justice, we could claim that enough is receiving $2000 from the government per month (if we accept resources), we could claim that enough is when we have enough welfare (if we accept welfare), we could claim that enough is when we are content with the welfare we have (Huseby 2010) or we could claim that enough is when we are free from duress (Axelsen and Nielsen 2014). These different accounts are all based on different currencies.[16] I will not investigate the

[16] There is also a third account, based on compassion, suggested by Roger Crisp (2003:

first two currencies in depth, as I more or less stated my case against them in the foregoing sections. However, I will take a closer look at the two latter accounts, as these might prove interesting for us, in searching for the "right" currency of sufficiency.

2.2.1 Subjective welfare

Huseby proposes a maximal threshold of sufficiency based on contentment.

He allows for subjective evaluations of one's own situation to have a role when assessing people's welfare levels (Huseby 2010: 181). This is because, he finds it plausible that objective assessments about somebody's life might be wrong when compared with the individual in question's own evaluation. Therefore, after people's basic needs of subsistence are met, what matters ought to be people's overall level of contentment (which for Huseby is: satisfaction with the overall quality of one's life).

We might ask whether an approach such as this will be impacted by the critique already posed to welfare? I do not think that it necessarily needs to be impacted with such force as pure welfare. One interesting detail in Huseby's account is that the minimum threshold he proposes includes the means of subsistence (Huseby 2010: 180), which means that people who are content also have their basic needs met. This makes his account of sufficiency able to withstand one of the critiques I posed to welfare, namely that people might objectively be insufficiently well off, even though they subjectively are well enough off. In his account, people who are content will also, always be sufficiently well off with regards to the bare necessities, so if they are content,

746). But, if I am not mistaken, compassion for him is not a currency, so to speak. It is merely what determines priority. He does not operate with an understanding of what the measures in his account of sufficiency represents.

it follows that they also, objectively are sufficiently well off.

One concern I would like to raise though, is the following. This view of sufficiency does not take into account important aspects such as the freedom of individuals for example. Even though people are sufficiently well off when they are content, this version of sufficiency does not rule out the possibility of having some that are well enough slaves. That is, we can imagine somebody having at least the means of subsistence and also being content with their situation (even though they are under captivity or in Plato's cave). I think this is a strong argument for considering pluralism including freedom as one of the components of good enough as an ideal for sufficiency. I think such a definition might render the idea of having a currency for measuring subjective welfare obsolete.

2.2.2 Freedom from Duress

Axelsen and Nielsen (2014) advocate another view of sufficiency and argue that people are sufficiently well off, when they have freedom from duress. Using their currency then, instead of contentment would in fact enable us to escape the implication we looked at in the foregoing section. Freedom from duress will not, as I understand it allow for somebody to be content if they are in captivity. This would place them under duress and would render them insufficiently well off.

> **The general positive thesis of freedom from duress:**
> Helping people obtain freedom from significant pressure against succeeding in central areas of human life is especially important from the point of view of justice. (Axelsen and Nielsen 2014: 7)

But freedom from duress also has some other implications, it is understood as *freeing people from pressure against succeeding* (Axelsen and Nielsen

2014: 7). This means that, their view does not advocate and understanding of sufficiency as contentment. In fact, freedom from duress, opens up for people being insufficiently well off with regards to welfare, if they are well enough off with regards to some objective central areas. They demonstrate this with an example regarding grass counting. In one world, people are content and derive welfare from counting grass, but lack sufficiency with regards to several central areas, and in the other world people are as content, but they derive their welfare from other means than grass counting.[17]

Sufficiency as freedom duress also states that people must be sufficiently free to succeed in life, in order for sufficiency to be fulfilled. In order to be free to succeed in life, Axelsen and Nielsen claim that:

> Central areas of human life, then, are the aspects of life that humans have in common—or, in other words, that play an essential role in any human life. These include capabilities related to basic needs such as basic health, decent housing, adequate education, and so on, but also more complex aspects that make up capabilities which are in the fundamental interest of all human beings in a social setting such as rational development and critical thought, respectful social relations, and political freedoms. (Axelsen and Nielsen 2014: 4)

When examining this excerpt, we note that Axelsen and Nielsen differentiate between two types of capabilities. They propose that some capabilities are related to basic needs, while others are in the fundamental interest of human beings. This implies that the minimum threshold for sufficiency as freedom from duress, has to include capabilities. To me it is not clear which

[17]Remember that this was the implication posed to Huseby (2010). If what matters for sufficiency is the level of contentment, we can in theory, be well enough slaves.

capabilities qualify as being central areas of human life, I will address this question later on.

2.3 CONCLUSION

Above, I have examined two different approaches in the search of what is enough. The first approach stated that we have enough when we are content. The second approach understands enough as freedom from duress. Defining enough as contentment is indeed a fruitful approach, because it makes sufficientarianism sensitive to people's own assessment of their overall quality of life, as opposed to only evaluating whether somebody are well enough off by relying on objective measures. However, including such a subjective measure has some unwanted implications for sufficiency.

Freedom from duress on the other hand does a good job in acknowledging the fact that what is to be distributed by sufficiency cannot be boiled down to something as one dimensional as resources or welfare. However, it comes up a little short in actually defining what matters for sufficiency.

I think that people are sufficiently well off when they are able to function properly as human beings. In order to function properly as human beings, I think humans need freedoms, opportunities and capabilities, because without them, human life can be reduced to merely living and breathing.

Thus, in the next chapter, I will propose that we take a look at another pluralist currency of sufficiency, which might make it easier to determine what a meaningful minimum threshold must contain.[18] In fact, my approach is not

[18]My approach is pluralist, in the sense that it is sensitive to several values. Both in the sense that being sufficiently well off, entails more than being sufficiently well off in only one respect, and that, above the minimum threshold, I will consider other important values which can plausibly ensure that the distribution remains just.

very different from the pluralist approach to sufficiency, proposed by Axelsen and Nielsen (2014). I hope to be a little less conservative in elaborating what a meaningful minimum threshold must contain, so I claim that their central areas and their definition of those, needs to be elaborated upon.

3 ON WHAT IT ENTAILS TO BE SUFFICIENTLY WELL OFF

In the end of the last chapter I claimed that resources and welfare are not sufficiently good currencies of sufficientarian justice. In this chapter I will argue that, the currency of sufficientarian justice must be that which makes us able to be fully functioning human beings.

First, I will present a list of things I think it crucial that we have enough of, drawing heavily upon Nussbaum's (2006: 76-78) capabilities approach, before examining them from a sufficientarian point of view. Then I will arrange them into capabilities, opportunities and freedoms so that they can become a part of our minimum threshold(s).

The outline is the following: in the first section of this chapter, I will discuss more precisely what the content of these good enough components ought to be, and also the nature of these. In the second section, I will discuss freedoms, capabilities and opportunities as higher level categories for that which we need to have enough of, in order to achieve sufficiency. Without these, I do not think we can be fully functioning human beings.

3.1 PREREQUISITES FOR BEING A FULLY FUNCTIONAL HUMAN BEING

I stated in the beginning of this chapter that I think the good enough level right for sufficiency is when we are fully functioning human beings. In this section I will discuss what we require in order to be fully functional. A definition of sufficiency based on being able to function properly as human beings is contingent upon how well enough off we are with regards to the components in this section.

Recall that Axelsen and Nielsen claim that being sufficiently well off is being free from duress. According to them, there are central areas of human life that are important to being free from duress. So, sufficiency for them is to be sufficiently well off with regards to those central areas that matter. I think their definition is a good start, but a little conservative. This is what I try to do better here. I will try to formulate a more specific list of that which they define as central areas. However, I do not label them as central areas.

What then does being well enough off with respect to these categories entail, if we are going to be more specific? I will now start the discussion on some of the most important contents of these categories. In developing these prerequisites I was heavily influenced by Martha Nussbaum (2006: 76-78) and her capability approach. That is, I used her list of capabilities as the base for being able to function properly as a human being. I also assessed whether they are really capabilities or something else. To me it is not evident that what she speaks of as capabilities are exactly that, some I think can be classified as opportunities and others as freedoms. Therefore, I think it right to rearrange her list of capabilities and reformulate them, so that they can be applied in a sufficientarian framework.

3.1.1 Sufficient Opportunity for Life

What is of most value to human beings? Maybe it is obvious, but it seems to me that what we cannot live without in any way, is life. Without life, we cannot enjoy any goods or feel any pain. All will be futile if there is no life. Hence, it seems to me that any definition of sufficiency must ensure a *sufficient opportunity for life.* What then, does this mean? How can we ensure sufficient opportunity for life? What I have in mind is that all human beings who are alive[19] should have a sufficient opportunity to continue living. This means having access to necessary health care when needed, regardless of whether we are old or young, and also, regardless of what actions we have taken. If we have put our life in jeopardy for example, either because of recklessness or self-realization, we should have access to treatment. It is important that we have life, in order to be able to be sufficiently well off. As an imperative then, without life, we do not have the possibility to be well enough off. Thus in order to have enough, we must have sufficient opportunity for life.

3.1.2 Freedom

The second item has to do with freedom. I think we should be able to move freely in society without the fear of being mugged, raped or victims of violence. This means that society (or the government) ought to provide sufficient policing in the streets so as to ensure law and order. Of course, the government cannot completely remove crime, but it should be able to deal with crime to the extent that the general public does not fear crime on a day to day basis. For what is life without security? Recall that my definition of sufficiency is that we are able to function as human beings; with this in mind, can we say that a life in which, we are under constant fear of being physically

[19] There is an ambiguity as to when life starts. If we assume that life starts in the womb, this will have some implications for the legality of abortion. As the sufficient opportunity for life apply to all human beings, we would have to also ensure this opportunity for unborn babies. I will however not discuss this in depth here, and rather assume that sufficient opportunity for life applies to all who are born.

or psychologically violated a life in which we can function properly as human beings? I do not think so. I will call this component sufficient freedom from violation.

3.1.3 Sufficient Opportunity for Education

Then comes education, or what I shall call *sufficient opportunity for education.* What distinguishes us from animals in a general sense is that we have a capability for learning[20] Learning is also imperative to succeed in life. If we cannot write or solve simple mathematical problems, we are going to have to rely on others to do this for us, and in a sense not independent. So, in order for us to be able to develop and use their mental faculties and take care of ourselves, all individuals ought to have access to sufficient education. This means that a sufficiently good public educational system should be available, for all.

3.1.4 Freedom of Speech and Affiliation

Freedom of speech and affiliation is another component of my definition of sufficiency. I think it right that everybody should be able to speak their mind in public, without being dictated by anyone. Offensive opinions should also be permitted, but only to the extent they do not conflict with the freedom from violation. Violating someone verbally in public can have grave consequences for that someone and also create a situation where that someone will not feel free to speak his/her mind and also feel afraid of being physically violated and in constant fear, depending on the verbal violation. This must

[20] It is true, we are not the only species capable of learning – dogs can learn to sit, look for narcotics, parrots can learnt to talk, etc, but we are after all the only species up until now, which are able to learn more complex theories.

not be permitted, as this plausibly leads to such insufficiences.

Affiliation implies both political and religious affiliation. It seems that people should be free to believe in whatever religion they feel comfortable with as this can greatly improve their lives. If a state agency should dictate what to believe in, this agency is in principle imposing a serious constraint on people's freedom and denying them the opportunity to lead a sufficiently good life. Humans have always believed in something, even now, in modern times, denying somebody the freedom to not believe in anything and force them to go to church every Sunday would significantly decrease their ability to function as a human being.

With that said, another important aspect of affiliation is political freedom. That is, being free to join whichever political party, interest group or trade union one may desire. This is almost like religion, and has to do with giving value to one's convictions. For example, if somebody with sufficient cognitive faculties, convinced about a cause or a purpose, could not join the political party of one's choosing, this would impair his/her ability to function as a human being. Also, as in the case with religion, it would be wrong to force somebody without political convictions or any desire to join a political party, to be politically active.

3.1.5 Sufficiently Healthy Psychological Capacities

This component, which I will label as a capability, deals with sufficient and sufficiently healthy psychological capacities. It could, maybe be part of the same component as life, but I do not think it is evident that being the physiological criteria for life, includes psychological capacities. One could be perfectly able to be alive, without any psychological capabilities. But the state of one's psychological and mental capacities matter to sufficiency understood as being able to function as a human being, because, it is something a human applies every day. It allows us to reason, make inferences and to plan, which in turn enables us to try and execute this plan so that we can have an opportunity of living the life we desire and satisfy our preferences. It would not be enough to simply be in a vegetative state for one's entire life, or maybe if one has traumas, that impede one's normal functioning. Say for example that one is for some reason scared of other people, and sit around at home all day. If this was chosen, it would be legitimate (because, then you would sit at home without anxiety and fear), but if some event early in life is responsible for this, I can not see how somebody can be sufficiently well off living with perpetual anxiety and fear of other people.

3.1.6 Environmental Sufficiency

The environment is something we all live in, and even though we do not think about it that frequently, it is what makes our lives possible living. As such, it is not a capability that we have, that belongs to us, it is a public good, that enables us to live. It greatly affects the quality we can derive from life. It ought to be clear then that, we should do what we can to ensure environmental sufficiency to all.

3.1.7 Sufficient Opportunity for Recreation

Sufficient opportunity for recreation Even though working is central to leading a good life, it ought not be the only thing we do. People should have sufficient time for recreation to dispose of as they please. Nobody should be forced to be on the assembly line from dawn till dusk, where the only part of their day, they dispose for themselves is the part used for sleep. This would violate my thesis of sufficiency stating that people should be able function properly as human beings. During recreational time, people can satisfy their preferences as desired, whether it be political work, relaxing, working out or something else.

3.1.8 Sufficient Opportunity to hold Public Office

This component states that participating in civic life and having the opportunity to hold public office, ought to be possible for everybody who wants to and manages to (i.e wins the election). It should also be possible for people to vote on the candidate of their own choice, without being pressured by third parties. Elections must also be transparent and legitimate. I call this sufficient opportunities for societal and political participation.

3.1.9 Conclusion

From examining this list, we note that there are many things, needed for human beings to have a sufficiently good life and function properly as human beings. Critics might claim that all these could plausibly be secured by having enough resources, or that they do not matter as long as there is sufficient welfare in our distribution. I also think that the first claim is a plausible claim, but if we base our account of sufficiency on having sufficient resources, we cannot in any feasible way make sure that these good enough levels will come about and be sufficiently secured – there is a possibility, but not a guarantee. As for the latter claim, that these capabilities do not matter if there is enough welfare, I am a little more skeptical. We could in such a situation, theoretically justify being well enough off slaves, in welfare terms, than having sufficient capabilities for societal participation.

Some remarks must be made with regards to the ingredients I have identified. I regard it as plausible, that they are, universally important and essential for human beings, that is, for them to function as human beings. Having an insufficient amount of any of these, would then render people insufficiently well off.[21]

What about their plausibility? Are they plausible as currencies for a theory of sufficiency, even though they would be harder to measure? I do not think that the fact that they are harder to measure, render them implausible as currencies of sufficientarian justice. This is just one of the trade-off that comes with pluralism. It is possible to formulate more precise definitions and solve some problems, but also, in this case, it becomes more complex in practice.

3.2 HIGHER LEVEL CATEGORIES: FREEDOMS, CAPABILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

In this section then, I try to organize the components of the foregoing section into three categories: capabilities, opportunities and freedoms. These can then be seen as the core components of my definition of sufficiency. Maybe these capabilities, opportunities and freedoms could be seen as that, in the terminology of Axelsen and Nielsen, are central areas. In my opinion there is at least a similarity, but I will not claim that they serve as proxies. I will now discuss these categories in more depth and justify why I think it is of a special concern for sufficiency that people are well enough off with regards to these.

To state it clearly then: I think that being sufficiently well off needs

[21] Of course humans could be able to live from a biological point of view without all of these capabilities, but I do think it justified to say that we cannot live a sufficiently good life without having these capabilities or central areas met.

to be understood as *being able to function properly as a human being.* If being well enough off must be understood as being able to function properly as a human being, then, when searching for a definition of the minimum threshold, we must define what it entails to be able to function as a human being. What then does it entail to be human? In my search for figuring out what it entails to be able to function as a human being, I have discussed several components plausible for this kind of sufficiency. I think that those components I discussed in the foregoing section, can be seen as crucial to defining what it entails to be human, and in turn, crucial to defining the minimum threshold of sufficiency.

If we think about the distinctiveness of their nature for a while, we might note that these can be divided into freedoms, capabilities and opportunities.

One implication of defining our threshold in pluralist terms, might be that such a threshold gives the impression of being set higher, because it could be more difficult to obtain, than a traditional threshold – I hope to show that this is not the case. However, with pluralism comes more complexity, so there is an evident trade-off between a monist version of sufficiency and a more complex one, where the threshold is defined in such a way that is has more components. This is why I try to organize the components of the first section into higher-level categories, so that, we are making our theory simpler in form, without losing content. I argue that we should be willing to sacrifice some of the simplicity with good reason, if that means getting closer to discovering what is enough.[22]

[22]This added complexity comes in the form of elaborating upon what should constitute the threshold. Normally, the threshold would be constituted by resources or welfare.

3.2.1 Freedoms

Freedoms determine whether one is free to do something or not. We have two kinds of freedoms, positive and negative. I will demonstrate the difference between them, by way of an example of example about crossing the street. I want to cross the street, so I decide if I want to do it or not. Nobody forces me to cross the street. I could then do as I please and go about crossing the street. However, I look to see if any cars are coming, the first street I cross is fine, I cross it without any problems. Now, I arrived at Lexington Avenue, the pedestrian lights are out and nobody is stopping. More or less a million cars pass by per minute. I am stuck at the avenue and unable to cross, even though I want to.

We observe that, when crossing the street, I was the one determining whether or not I wanted to cross the street or not - this is positive freedom, I was the one making the decision. At the avenue however, even though I wanted to cross, I could not do it, there were apparent obstacles keeping me from doing it - this is negative freedom, a third party kept me from doing something. Like Axelsen and Nielsen's definition of freedom – freedom from obstacles against succeeding.

There are two conceptions of freedoms, a liberal conception of freedom, which is based on an atomistic approach to political theory and a republican conception of freedom which is based on a holistic approach. He also distinguishes between these two values as being non-social and social. A non-social value, is whenever a value is not dependent on other social agents, if we have one individual in the world, this individual has all the freedom in the world, as it is not obstructed by anything and can do as it pleases. A social value on the other hand is dependent on certain social institutions in order to come about. For example, if we say that freedom is a social value, we can claim that freedom cannot come about, without some minimal societal institutions governing it.

Axelsen and Nielsen's account is grounded in freedom. It is, stated simply, that we should have enough freedom in those areas of life that are central, so that we can succeed. Also note that Axelsen and Nielsen's understanding of freedom from duress, does not only discuss the freedom one has from obstacles. Their understanding of freedom implies, that people have the capabilities to make use of their freedom. So, when I say that freedom is not enough for sufficiency, I am talking about a more general conception of freedom. Because of this, I will turn to capabilities in the next section.

3.2.2 Capabilities

A capability is something that pertain to the individual, so to speak. It says something about, what an individual is capable of doing. My interpretation of capabilities is something similar to that which is endowments to Rawls, say talent and abilities (Rawls 2005 [1971]: 62). For example, if I have the capability to run ten miles without getting exhausted, while my neighbour doesn't, we have different capabilities with regards to running ten miles. This is why, in a pluralist understanding of sufficiency, with freedom as an important component, we need to include capabilities as well. Even if we have freedom, we cannot act upon it, without sufficient capabilities. A threshold of sufficiency ensuring enough freedom, would do little good to the distribution if the social agents did not have the capabilities to put their freedom to good use.

Do we have other reasons for why capabilities are important to include in our minimum threshold, other than making use of them in order to exploit our freedom?

Nussbaum (2006: 155) writes that:

> Failure to secure these to citizens is a particularly grave violation of basic justice, since these entitlements are held to be implicit in the very notions of human dignity and a life that is worthy of human dignity.

As we can see, for Nussbaum, not having sufficient capabilities is also a violation of justice. This means that, that: even if capabilities are instrumental to enjoying freedom, it is not the only argument for regarding them important to social justice. I think this gives us even more grounds to include capabilities in our definition of the minimum threshold, than just having capabilities to exploit our freedom. After all, can we wholeheartedly say that a life without dignity is a life in which we can truly be able to live as human beings?

3.2.3 Opportunities

Opportunities are something that present themselves to humans. Let us go back to the street example. When I arrived at Lexington Avenue, I could not cross the street because it was full of cars. However, after a while, traffic stopped so that pedestrians could cross. Here, an opportunity presented itself, and I could freely choose whether I wanted to act on it or not, and I do not need to act on the opportunity in order to have it. This however, is maybe only limited to the component about having sufficient opportunity to hold public office. It is our choice whether we want to register as candidates or not (assuming that we are eligible as candidates).

Opportunities might however, not be limited only to choice. For example, we cannot decide whether we want to live. For example if we are to have sufficient opportunity for life, and we are not in a position to choose (either as fetuses or in a coma) somebody must decide for us, if they want to keep us alive or not. Having the opportunity then, implicates that we must be kept alive until we are able to decide for ourselves. The same goes for education, we cannot simply decide that we want to get an education. In order for us to decide this, an offer of minimal education must be maintained, so that we can have the opportunity to choose whether we want to or not.

3.2.4 The nature of these distribuenda

How then, do opportunities, freedoms and capabilities behave? *Prima facie* they are not things that a person can have, so how can we divide them, or rank cases? Also, how are we supposed to compensate somebody for the lack of an opportunity, capability or freedom?

Seeing as these higher-level categories cannot be divided as traditional resources or ranked as in traditional welfare cases, what can we do – and does the nature of these currencies pose a problem to sufficiency? Yes, and no. The difficulty with not being able to rank cases is that we cannot grasp how well off somebody are comparatively. Does this pose a problem to us? I do not think it would. In fact, it makes it easier when assessing the situation of somebody. In order to decide if somebody is sufficiently well off, we would only have to evaluate the case and infer whether that somebody is lacking. That is, is the individual lacking in a relevant category? If so, yes, she is insufficiently well off. If no, then we have no relevant grounds for doing anything.

Another difficulty for such an understanding of sufficiency is that all of the components above, are incommensurable.[23] That is, a specific freedom,

[23]For more on incommensurability see Chang (2015).

opportunity or capability cannot be remedied simply by giving someone more of something else.[24]

Figure 5: This figure depicts the incommensurability of the different distribuenda. As is depicted, we cannot compensate an insufficiency in capabilities by giving someone more than enough resources.

This does not really pose a problem to sufficiency, but it does implicate that compensating the insufficiently well off is going to be more difficult.

3.3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have tried to figure out what it entails to be sufficiently well off. That is, what do we need to have enough of in a pluralist version of sufficiency?

I examined a list of capabilities as suggested by Martha Nussbaum and identified several important components, which could plausibly make up the

[24]Like when we discussed resources. We cannot pay somebody to give up on their freedom for political affiliation and assume that they will still be sufficiently well off.

content of the minimum threshold for sufficiency. By looking at the nature of these components, I also identified three categories. It seems to me that what ought to matter for sufficiency is that we have enough of capabilities, freedoms and opportunities. The implications we are accepting by using such categories as the currency for sufficientarian justice is that we cannot easily measure how well off somebody are comparatively, and that a lacking in any of these, cannot be made up for simply by giving the insufficiently well off more of something else.

4 THE SUFFICIENTARIAN FRAMEWORK: A PLURALIST TAKE

The foregoing chapter was for the most part, concerned with defining what ought to be the right currency for sufficiency, and how much of it is enough.

In this chapter, I will try to tie together the loose knots and formulate the account of sufficiency, I regard as the most plausible. I will discuss in detail how we should establish the minimum threshold with regards to our currency and what implications we must consider when establishing it.

I will also state my objection to the negative thesis of sufficiency and explain how we can open up for considerations above the minimum threshold by applying a shift thesis.

I will then propose a relative threshold based on sufficiency as fairness and also discuss how we must open up for allowing priority socially useful projects above the minimum threshold.

4.1 THE MINIMUM THRESHOLD

The minimum threshold I propose is based on the positive thesis of sufficiency, which states that it is important that from a moral point of view everybody should have enough. Taking the discussion in chapter 3 into account, about the currency of distributive justice, it then follows that people should have enough capabilities, freedoms and opportunities so that they can function properly as human beings.

I restate the positive thesis as:

The positive thesis of sufficiency:

It is important for sufficiency that people are sufficiently well off. Being sufficiently well off is understood as being able to function properly as a human being. Having enough capabilities, opportunities and freedom is a prerequisite for functioning properly as a human being. Thus from a sufficientarian point of view, it is important that all have enough of these.

Reading the thesis above, for this account of sufficiency it is crucial that people are able to fully function as human beings. The preconditions for somebody being able to fully function as human beings is that they have enough freedoms, opportunities and capabilities. An insufficiency with regards to any of these is to be reckoned as bad and insufficient from a sufficientarian point of view. Thus, the minimum threshold must ensure that human beings have enough of these.

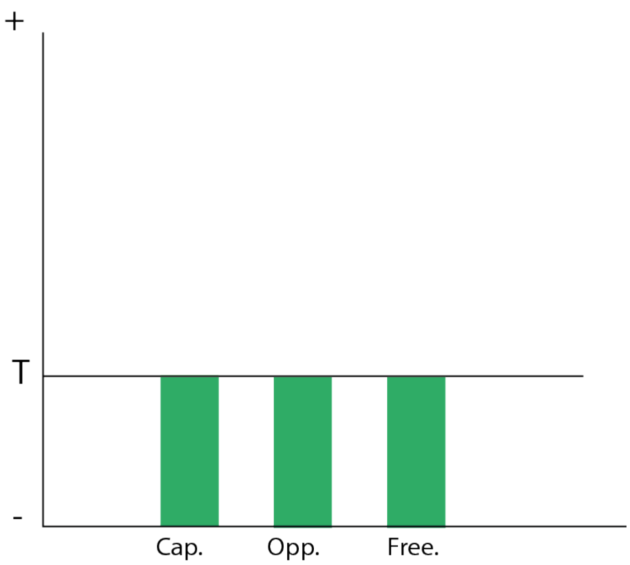

Figure 6: In this figure an individual sufficiently well off under pluralism is depicted.

As I see it then, we must have one minimum threshold with three criteria for sufficiency. These criteria are based on the higher-level categories. Implicitly then, the minimum threshold also include the subcategories discussed in section 3.1, such as for example the general freedom to move around and to be free from violence, freedom of speech and the freedom of affiliation. Capabilities include education and psychological health. Opportunities include life, recreation, environment and civic life.

What then is enough of these? As I have mentioned earlier, what makes it difficult to establish a minimum threshold based on capabilities, freedoms and opportunities, is that they do not exactly lie on a scale, divided into equally sized units. Therefore it is difficult to establish a minimum threshold with numerical values. Intuitively, I am also skeptical of looking for a numerical representation of good enough values of these distribuenda, because they are not, and have never been numerical. Even then, if we discovered a good enough numerical level — the numerical value of being a fully functioning human being, how then could we make sure that we actually brought people up to the threshold, without having means of also determining their value? I will leave this as an open question, apart from saying that, if these are to be measured I think we would have to do this based on some index. However, pursuing the numerical value of the good enough level is not something I will do. Rather, I will regard the good enough level as when somebody are not lacking, as discussed in chapter 3. That is, we do not need to stipulate a numerical value which is sufficient, I claim that we would have to evaluate, case by case if somebody is lacking or not in any relevant category.

This paragraph is going to be a small digression about measurement, if we cannot assert numerical values to these? I do not think we are able to measure these precisely at present, but we could employ statistics to give us an idea about how well a distribution ensures these ingredients for it's individuals. Take for example, sufficient opportunity for life, we could measure this through number of premature deaths in a distribution, doctor's density and how many of the individuals in the distribution have access to health care. The same could be done for security, what do the crime statistics say and are people in general afraid of leaving their homes? The same goes for education, is free public education offered, and of such a standard that people learn enough to function in society, levels of literacy could be used here. Religious and political affiliation and freedom of speech is harder to measure with statistics. It would have to be done through the use of surveys, but in a distribution where these freedoms are actually not sufficiently ensured, respondents would probably be afraid to give a truthful answer.

That however, was just a digression on how they could plausibly be measured, my intent in this thesis is not to measure them, so I will disregard that matter from now on.

4.1.1 Setting the threshold too high?

One objection (Axelsen and Nielsen 2014: 12) to bundling all these capabilities together, so that they comprise our minimum threshold, raises one plausible concern, that I will answer for now. It could be claimed that a scheme, as the one above, is basically raising the bar too high up, and that a high minimum threshold with resources as the distribuendum, would in essence, do just as good a job in securing enough for everybody – there would not be a difference.

I think that setting a resource threshold excessively high, could plausibly provide better than well enough levels for most people, in most situations. However, under such a scheme, people could still be insufficiently well off with regards to various capabilities, because after all, we would not be interested in capabilities.[25] If people were insufficiently well off under such a resourcist scheme, we could then not claim that it would solve our insufficiency problems with regards to capabilities. Also, bundling capabilities together as the minimum threshold is not the same as setting a high resource minimum threshold. The difference would lie in the contents of the threshold, as I have stated before. I we were to stipulate such a threshold, this threshold would guarantee enough. Capabilities can also have different good enough levels, some of them would require a high threshold, while others would require a lower threshold, all depending on what is sufficient for each of these different capabilities. We would under a framework, endorsing capabilities as the distribuenda be able to differentiate between different dynamics of these.

I do not think that by endorsing a form of pluralist approach we would need to set the threshold too high. If this was the case, almost nobody would become well enough off and sufficiency would lose some of it's meaning. If the threshold was impossible to attain, we would implicitly claim that there is no level of good enough, at which we can be content, we could reasonably attain. This seems absurd, because it does not seem that we need absurdly high levels of something in order to live a good enough life.

I think instead, that defining the minimum threshold in terms of capabilities, freedoms and opportunities, is better than setting a high resource or welfare threshold, because in this way, we achieve the good enough level easier. We do not need to waste an excessive amount of resources in order to maybe or maybe not achieve sufficiency, if we base the minimum threshold on these three categories, it will be easier to see exactly what is lacking, for

[25] This is noted by Axelsen and Nielsen (2014) when they discuss the incommensurability of the distribuenda under freedom from duress. More than enough resources could not make up for an insufficient level of affiliation, for example if one did not have the right to political participation.

somebody to be sufficiently well off, and also what is needed.

4.2 THE SUFFICIENTARIAN SHIFT

Traditionally sufficiency has not opened up for making considerations of priority above the minimum threshold. Remember that the negative thesis denies the relevance of certain additional distributive requirements.

It says that it denies the relevance of certain additional distributive requirements, that is, when some good enough level has been reached, sufficiency does not allow for making further considerations of priority. Above the minimum threshold, anything goes.

I do not agree with the negative thesis on this matter. I will now state why, I think we can allow for additional distributive requirements, to put it in the terminology of the negative thesis.

In order to understand why I think it plausible to give considerations of priority above the minimum threshold, let us for a while return to the roots of distributive justice. Distributive justice is concerned with how just the societal distribution of one or more distribuenda is. Most of the time, what is to be distributed is picked as the distribuenda, because it is good to some end. Either intrinsic or instrumental. Whether it is sufficiency, for the sake of sufficiency, or some goods promoting sufficiency. It is not wrong, to say that when whatever goal of the distributive theory of choice has been fulfilled, we do not have any more concerns for the distribution. I think, however, that from a moral point of view, even though the ideal of the theory has been fulfilled, when enough has come about, we can still have plausible moral concerns.

I propose that we take a look at a shift thesis, as proposed by Liam Shields (2012: 108).

The Shift Thesis:

Once people have secured enough there is a discontinuity in the rate of change of the marginal weight of our reasons to benefit them further.

I propose to restate the shift thesis:

Modified shift thesis:

Once people have secured enough we can have plausible non-sufficientarian reasons to benefit them, as long as this will not impact the insufficiently well off in a negative way. Legitimate non-sufficientarian reasons can be justified by reference to morals or by being instrumental to positive public goods.

By accepting this thesis, we can now give some priority to benefiting the sufficiently well off for reasons other than sufficiency, but only if this does not impact the insufficiently well off in a negative way. It resembles Rawls' difference principle, but it must not be mistaken for it. Remember that the difference principle stated that benefits and priority can be given to the most advantaged, if it leads to an improvement in the conditions for the least advantaged. The shift thesis as formulated above, however, does not require benefits for the insufficiently well off in order for us to benefit the sufficiently well off (although, some of the time it probably would), it merely states that benefiting the sufficiently well off must not worsen the conditions of those under the minimum threshold. Some might then object that, we could plausibly never benefit the insufficiently well off, if this was the case, but I argue that we have to be reasonable. The shift thesis only allows for benefits to the sufficiently well off, as long as we can in sound judgment argue for the advantage of giving them something.

4.2.1 Legitimate non-sufficientarian reasons for benefiting the sufficiently well off

If we can allow giving priority to the sufficiently well off, what then, constitutes reasons or concerns for doing so, what is to be classified as sound judgment? When can we say that it is legitimate to interfere with the distribution above the minimum threshold?

I stated in the modified shift thesis that: Legitimate non-sufficientarian reasons can be justified by reference to morals or by being instrumental to positive public goods. As I see it then, at least for the time being, these are two plausible categories we might consider giving priority in a pluralist framework of sufficiency objecting to the negative thesis.

Imagine a society in which everybody in society are sufficiently well off. However, as in Temkin's miracle berry example under equality, comparative unfairness can occur. Some people can have more than others, which in turn can constitute disadvantages. These disadvantages may not be relevant for sufficientarian reasons, but they might be relevant from a moral point of view. I will not discuss the idea of the miracle berries here, as I will not analyze the comparative unfairness of somebody living longer than others. Rather, I will discuss grave disadvantages in resources, as an example of what can constitute a legitimate non-sufficientarian reason for benefiting the sufficiently well off.

There is also another scenario for giving benefit to the sufficiently well off. I discussed this when rejecting that sufficiency is a principle that will only allow the social minimum to become the social maximum. I think that, projects such as those Huseby (forthcoming) talks about, of value to society must be given priority above the minimum threshold. It seems legitimate that because these are more or less crucial for a well ordered society benefiting such projects instead of those below the minimum threshold can be justified.

This is because, if our society is to evolve and develop, whereby also increasing our chances of helping more people achieve sufficiency over time. Such projects must be allowed. For example, hospitals must be built so that we can ensure that people have sufficient opportunity for life, schools must be built to ensure education and so on.

I think these are legitimate reasons for prioritizing the sufficiently well off, to some extent.

4.2.2 Sufficiency as fairness: a relative threshold

Building on the idea that we can have legitimate non-sufficientarian reasons for priority above the minimum threshold, I see it fit to include another threshold. This threshold is based on something that I will call, sufficiency as fairness. It is based on a notion of fairness, in the sense that fairness means that nobody should have an unfair advantage over others. This is not so much grounded on sufficiency as it is grounded on fairness, but it acknowledges some priority to those above the sufficiency line, which is not based on socially useful projects. Throughout this thesis I have claimed that the negative thesis is objectionable. This is my attempt to give some considerations about what can plausibly happen above the sufficiency threshold. It must also not be mistaken for equality, I do not propose that all must be equal above the sufficiency line. Rather, sufficiency as fairness deals with grave inequalities of advantage.

What can influence this threshold then? I imagine the currency of this threshold to be something like subjective welfare (Huseby 2010) or democratic equality.

For example, even though we have a sufficient distribution, ought we, from a moral point of view allow grave inequalities or disadvantages with regards to resources or welfare? Even though I rejected resources as a currency of sufficientarian justice, I think that under a pluralist sufficientarian framework, resources can give somebody an edge over others, giving them an unfair advantage. For example, some individuals might have a lot more resources than others, allowing them to convert these into welfare. Even though everybody are sufficiently well off, such resource or welfare inequalities might lead to relative deprivation. Relative deprivation does not, constitute an insufficiency of capabilities, freedoms or opportunities (at least not relevant opportunities), but even so it might be thought that extreme cases of relative deprivation can give us legitimate reasons to interfere with the distribution from a moral point of view.

Therefore, in order to improve the moral quality of the sufficient distribution, I propose that we include a relative threshold. The aim of this threshold is to ensure that nobody has an unfair advantage over others. Therefore it will allow inequalities above the sufficiency threshold, but only to some extent. It will object to a sufficient distribution whenever somebody has so many resources, so that they may use these to exploit others, in this way, we also escape the implication that somebody can exploit others and render them insufficiently well off. Without this threshold, and if we accept that an extremely skewed distribution of resources, can enable somebody to use these resources so that they violate the three categories of the minimum threshold, sufficiency as fairness also has a preventive function – it stabilizes the distribution, and ensures that nobody breaks out of it, rendering the rest insufficiently well off.

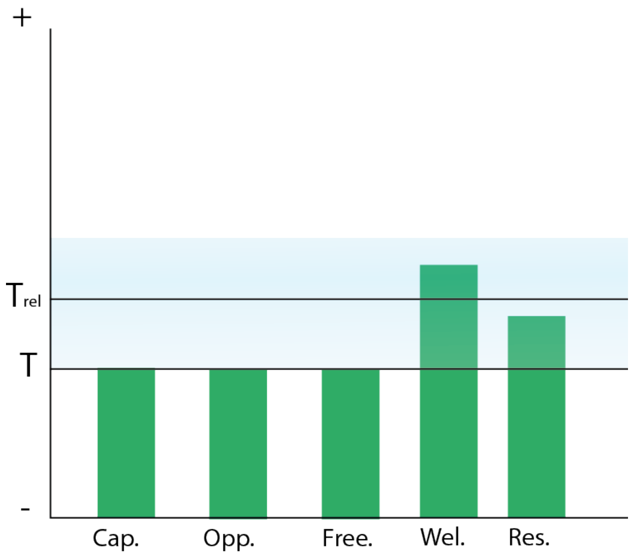

Figure 7: In this figure an individual sufficiently well off under sufficiency as fairness is depicted. T-rel depicts the relative threshold, any value of resources or welfare (or something else) is accepted. However, if somebody breaks out above the blue area, their assets are best redistributed, because, such a relative difference in an asset could lead to unfair advantages in the distribution. The size of the blue area varies, based on the median value of resources and welfare in the distribution.

4.3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have tried to show how we must establish the minimum threshold by relying upon capabilities, freedoms and opportunities. My intuition is that this is what we must take into account when establishing the minimum threshold. Also, if we define the minimum threshold in such a way, we will not need to set it excessively high in order to have enough.

I have also tried to show that we can have reasons to prioritize the sufficiently well off in some instances. Socially useful projects and other projects of great interest to society should be allowed as long as they do not deteriorate the situation of the insufficiently well off. I also proposed a relative threshold, which is based on a currency of resources or welfare, this is primarily to ensure that nobody achieves an unfair advantage over others in the sufficientarian distribution, but also to ensure that people also, above the threshold ought to be at relatively equal levels, in order for society to be functioning, so that we can achieve the best possible distribution.

With that said, a framework of sufficiency such as the one I have proposed in this thesis, needs a lot more work in order to become a fully working theory. I regard my approach as merely the first layer in a discussion of pluralism. It will probably not be solved for a long time to come.

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