

Sufficiency of Resources and Political Morality

Shepley W. Orr

Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering

Centre for Transport Studies

University College London

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I. *Introduction: The Currency, Type, Mode and Justification of Distributional Policy*

What is wrong with inequality? Why is it wrong that some people in our society have so much while others have so little? This question is obviously not new. Indeed, the question has over the past two decades been fleshed out into two different types of debate. One is the question of “equality of what”, or what we may call the *currency* of distribution: answers proposed include simple income, primary goods, resources, capabilities, opportunity, welfare, opportunity for welfare, and access to advantage, and there are no doubt other permutations of these goods that could be the currency of justice. Then there is the question of the pattern in which the currency is to be distributed, which tends to be either equality, priority or sufficiency, which I will call the *type* of distribution. Within each of these types of distribution, there can be different degrees of sensitivity to different types of responsibility: responsibility for ambitions, expensive tastes, choices, talents, achievements, efforts, circumstances, and probably other factors. These combinations of what and why can then be divided according to whether they are one-off, as in starting gate theories, or over the course of the lifetime.

There are two questions that I would add to this, already quite complicated, picture, but I believe these two questions may work to simplify the picture. I at least hope that these two questions being asked, if not simplifying the picture, will make a more coherent response to the problem of distribution. The first question is: *how* is the currency to be distributed? That is, how the good is to be provided to the disadvantaged, be it through social services, a public-private partnership, a charitable foundation, through private action, or what have you, may in fact help us to clarify the problem of distribution. I will call this the *mode* of distribution. The second question is, what types of values are we bringing to bear on the problem of equality? Do we think the problem is one of general morality, or one solely of political morality? Given that our political morality is a subset of our general morality, we may limit our concern for what we do for the disadvantaged in different ways for different reasons. We may want the disadvantaged to be helped in some ways by the state as a matter of justice, and others through “general” (moral) means, such as private action or

charitable actions for reasons of altruism. However, we can think that it is just or fair that the disadvantage receive help through private non-state means, just as we may think that it is a matter of altruistic compassion that we act through state agencies.¹ I will call this question the question of the *justification* of distribution. What moral values, general or political, are in play will help us to justify particular types of distribution. An important distinction here further follows between the distribution of goods and the allocation of goods. What people get is not always distributed to them, most often it falls to them through the allocative mechanisms of the market. This is an important distinction for our questions about mode and type of distribution.²

To foreshadow, I myself believe that the currency of distribution should be resources, and that the type of distribution should be sufficiency. I will show in this essay that by focussing on the questions of mode and justification for distribution, we are better placed to see why sufficiency of resources is the right response to the type and currency of distribution question. That is, I will show that when we think about overall patterns of distribution that are desirable, we realize that the mode of distribution forces our political morality to be sufficientarian, although from the perspective of our more general morality we may have concerns that other goods are allocated in, say, prioritarian ways, or in maximizing average possession of some goods. What I wish to show is that the justifications of our specifically political morality, constrained by the mode of justification, favours a sufficiency of resources.³

I proceed as follows. In the following section, I outline the most recent defence of sufficientarianism, by providing a summary of a recent article by Crisp in favour of sufficiency. I will show that Crisp is right in rejecting Temkin's, and others', defence

¹ Placing emphasis on matching the type of remedy to particular types of disadvantage follows from Wolff (2003).

² The discerning reader will already have noticed that I am referring both to the "problem of distribution" and the "problem of disadvantage". This is because I do not want to assume that inequality is a problem, but we are clear that what is distributed is the object of our concern. I also do not assume that the currency is, for example, the "currency of justice" (cf. Cohen, 1989), because how we distribute the currency may or may not be a matter of justice, as I wish to leave as an open question what justifies a particular distribution. Further, I am including allocative mechanisms of the market in defining an overall distribution, even though the goods they so receive were not, in the technical, Musgrave sense, distributed the goods by a centralized state agency.

³ I am not assuming that there is some radical break, or discontinuity, between our general morality and our political morality. Indeed, I hope that what I propose here is consistent with Dworkin's views on the "continuity" that our political convictions should have with our ethical convictions. I discuss this issue below in section III.

of prioritarianism over sufficiency, but for the wrong reasons. First, I will argue, contra Crisp, our intuitions about why sufficiency is important are not based, at least not solely, on compassion. That is, I will argue that Crisp gets the question of justification incorrect. Second, I will argue that the currency should not be welfare, as it is for Crisp, and I will show counter-examples to his point about compassion and welfare which show that compassion does not justify, at least not solely, sufficiency of welfare, although compassion is one justification for sufficiency of resources.

In section III, I digress from the topic of sufficiency to provide a further defence of resources as the currency of distribution, using Andrew Williams' critique of Dworkin's critique of Sen. While Dworkin argues that Sen's approach to capability collapses either into equality of welfare or equality of resources, Williams attempts to show that there is still a unique role for the idea of capabilities. Further, Williams argues that Dworkin's theory cannot allow for inequalities that arise from others' ambitions, and that his idea that our political convictions must follow from our ethical convictions is flawed. I argue that Williams' arguments fail.

After defending resources over capabilities, in section IV I address Arneson's critique of sufficiency wherein he focuses on sufficiency of capabilities. I show that his arguments in favour of sufficiency are wrong, partly because the prioritarian must make many assumptions that Arneson says are fatal assumptions for a sufficiency doctrine. I also fault Arneson for failing to distinguish between goods that are distributed through the state, and those that are allocated through the market. By focussing on overall distributions, without paying attention to what I call the mode of distribution, Arneson confuses what our political morality demands in terms of state distribution (which I argue should be sufficientarian), and what we might otherwise seek in terms of our general morality (which may or may not be prioritarian).

In section V, I turn to another critique of the sufficiency view. In an unpublished book manuscript, Wolff and de Shalit address a similar target to Arneson's, namely, a multidimensional theory of disadvantage such as that proposed by Sen and Nussbaum capability approach. Here they reject the idea that sufficiency is a coherent theory, and argue that sufficiency is misplaced because we should be focussed on the least advantaged. I argue that, while this is certainly true of our general morality, and

perhaps partly true of our political morality, it ignores the fact that service providers are constrained by information, and changing social conditions, which will always require a role for sufficiency. Thus, a political morality takes constraints presented by the mode of distribution as normatively significant, and again, this is why I argue that sufficiency is what is suggested by our “ordinary” political morality.⁴

In the last section I conclude by trying to offer a normative defence of the sufficiency approach, that is, the justification for sufficiency. I do so by drawing on David Miller’s approach to the role of empirical studies on distributive justice. Namely, I cite the fact that in many studies of attitudes to distributive justice, there is a surprisingly overwhelming consensus that, subject to some considerations about desert, subjects are concerned that average income be maximized allowing great inequalities subject to a safety net or floor. I note further that this position is also compatible with other forms of luck egalitarianism, and thus that sufficiency and luck egalitarianism need not be opposing positions. This role for sufficiency allows a plurality of motives for redistribution as well.

II. Sufficiency or Priority of Welfare?

In a recent article, Roger Crisp offers a defence of the sufficiency against both strict equality, and its descendants, priority and weighted priority. He begins by defending the levelling down objection to inequality. This objection is as follows: Imagine two different distributions, LD equality and Inequality 1:

Figure 1. Levelling Down and Equality

	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>
<i>LD Equality</i>	9	9
<i>Inequality 2</i>	99	100

⁴ I may be taken to task for assuming that there is coherence to a pluralistic society’s political morality, so I have no business in speaking of “our” political morality. I have two replies to this concern. First, there is survey evidence (discussed in section V below) which suggests that there is a large consensus on largely sufficientarian types of distributions. Second, also discussed in section V below, it may be that political morality is *shaped by* the existence of some political disagreement or a plurality of justifications for distributions, which may explain the nature of political morality.

It is intuitive to most that LD Equality should be rejected. This leads to what Temkin (1993) calls The Slogan, which is stated as follows: one situation cannot be worse (or better) than another in any respect if there is no one for whom it is worse (or better) in any respect. This has the same force, of course, as the Pareto principle. However, it is subject to the problem that Parfit calls “the non-identity problem”. Namely, that people who will exist in future generations can be affected badly by our current actions, so no existing person will be harmed. Therefore we should reject the slogan.

Crisp gets around this objection by proposing the welfarist restriction. This is a version of the Slogan which reflects the fact that an action should be taken just in case it provides a benefit to individuals. Crisp then postulates that our sense of the unfairness in undeserved inequalities arises from a kind of non-rational envy of people who get unfair advantage over others. The resulting sense of relative fairness states: “not that equality is a good in itself, or inequality a bad, but merely that relative positions of potential recipients of goods and bads may be relevant in distribution” (Crisp, 2003: 750). This principle allows Crisp to note that we can have a sense of relative unfairness that explains our concern for equality and priority.

Thus, Crisp argues that, in general, the plight of the worse off matters only because they are worse off, but not strictly because their situations are unequal. Crisp argues that because compassion is the sole force motivating our distributive justice, sometimes equality matters because we are concerned with relative fairness, but compassion is directed far more towards those who have very little, and very slightly towards those who are relatively worse off to their peers. Thus, the compassion-based approach can explain our (marginally unimportant) concern with inequality, but also explains our far more urgent concern for those who are very badly off.

But then we might find that compassion also causes us to have concern not just for the worse off, but also for the majority who are relatively well off. That is, we run into cases where strict priority gives us counter-intuitive results: suppose that with policy 1, we can benefit the worst off individual a small amount, or with policy 2, we can benefit everyone but the worst off individual a large amount. Strict priority suggests that we should give the small benefit to the worst off individual instead of giving the large benefit to all the rest. The intuition here is that, although priority to the worse

off is a good idea most of the time, there are nevertheless cases where the benefits to a majority are so great it would be churlish to deny them the benefit. Thus, strict priority is, as Crisp puts it, “almost as absurd as levelling down” (Crisp, 2003: 752).

Parfit has argued for a modified view of the priority view called weighted priority, which Crisp summarizes as follows: “benefiting people matters more the worse off those people are, the more of those people there are, and the greater the benefits in question” (Crisp, 2003: 752). Now this view runs into the following problem: because we are back into the realm of straightforward aggregation across persons, we must sometimes provide tiny, trivial benefits to millions and millions of people at the expense of, say, relieving the extreme pain of a few. So now we are roughly back where we started, pre-Rawls: weighted priority looks a lot like a form of utilitarianism which allows benefits for the many at the expense of (or indifference to the plight of) the few.

Now, to foreshadow slightly, and deflect any immediate concerns about my position, let me state the following: I don’t want to suggest that we must accept a discontinuity view, where no benefits of whatever size to whatever population size, such as preventing hangnails for all of mankind, can outweigh benefiting certain types of extreme harms, such as suffering from cancer. I have no problem, as a matter of general morality, with accepting that there is a continuum of goods and bads. However, where this view goes wrong is in thinking that the policies and institutions we set up through the state are *always* meant to provide aggregate benefits subject to priority. Often, we set up institutions like benefits services, housing policies and health policies precisely because we don’t want people to fall below a certain level. As I will discuss below, very often these institutions are established because of market failure in the provision of insurance, wherein the worse off are more likely to suffer. Part of the contention of this paper is to highlight just what it is that we wish to achieve through the offices of the state, which should be a separate concern from the welfare of most or all.

Of course, sometimes the state is concerned with benefits to all, but take the following example. I think most of us respond badly to scenarios seen in the local papers when we hear that a council has spent hundreds of thousands of pounds on landscaping for a

public park when there are also people in that jurisdiction who cannot get adequate healthcare, food or housing. However, we respond differently when a private citizen who believes strongly that nature is important to everyone donates those same hundreds of thousands of pounds for landscaping. We may question whether that person should donate that same amount of money for healthcare and housing, or we may simply think it a wonderful gesture. What we cannot have is a sense of outrage that the many were allowed to benefit at the expense of the few. I believe that these intuitions show why our political morality is distinct from our general morality, although it follows from our general morality, and thus why our political morality is much closer to sufficiency than to priority.⁵

Now, I am not saying yet that compassion or justice is what motivates intuitions such as those I have just suggested. But Crisp does offer an intriguing example of why compassion may be, or not, what is in play in such cases. Consider what Crisp calls the Beverly Hills Case. Suppose that we can offer two different types of wine Lafite 1982 and Latour 1982 to two different groups, the rich and the super-rich. Imagine then that the super-rich prefer Latour and the rich Lafite. Now imagine the following distributions:

Figure 2: The Beverly Hills Case

	<i>10 Rich</i>	<i>10,000 Super-rich</i>
<i>Status Quo</i>	80	90
<i>Lafite 1982</i>	82	90
<i>Latour 1982</i>	80	92

Now, Crisp contends, and I concur, that at this point, to not provide the super-rich with their benefit would be a waste. But why does weighted priority not have any effect here? Is this what similarly offends our intuitions about an aggregative

⁵ To put this point in another philosophical lexicon, we may say that the private individual can be morally motivated by agent-relative reasons in their donation; while when it comes to allocations of state funds we prefer agent-neutral reasons. However, I make no claim that people's general morality is necessarily prioritarianism, or any other -ism, for that matter: indeed, I question whether there are general moral intuitions about how goods are to be distributed in large groups, absent particular knowledge of the workings of markets, governments, charities, family structures, etc. I am currently developing this latter thought in another essay.

approach to the distribution of benefits? Crisp says yes: it is because, past a certain threshold, compassion gives out. I think that this is a partial, and helpful, explanation of our intuitions about why sufficiency is important. But has Crisp got the relationship between compassion and our distributional judgements right?

I do not believe so. To see why, let us consider the question of currency. Crisp is concerned to clarify, from a previous example, that “I am, of course, assuming my *Rich* to be welfare rich, and my *Poor* to be welfare-poor.” (Crisp, 2003: 754, fn. 22). However, if rich is just to be welfare-rich, why place the example in Beverly Hills? Crisp is sneaking in the assumption, I believe, that people who have enough material resources are no longer deserving of our compassion, and is straining his example to square this with his largely consequentialist view that welfare should be the currency of distribution. But I think it is simply the fact that people who have enough resources are not deserving of any state remedy because they are at a sufficient level of resources, not because of their supposed “welfare richness”.

Let me offer an example that I think justifies our intuitions in favour of resources as the currency with which sufficiency should be concerned. While we do not believe welfare to just be happiness, we do think welfare, in as much as welfare is important at all, is some substantive kind of good that has to do with say, an objective list or an informed desire conception of the good. Now, take a result that is one that is a staple of research on well-being and happiness surveys: namely, that close personal relationships are the primary determinant of well-being, at least statistically.⁶

Now, let us take two individuals. One is a woman, call her Alice, who has very little money, but has a very strong set of social relationships that make her very happy. However, suppose that Alice also has a handicap, say a severe limp, that seriously impedes her mobility, and with it her ability to find work and partake of many other activities. Now take Brenda, who also has very little money, but who has very few social relationships that provide her with welfare.

⁶ This is not to say that good personal relationships are a necessary or sufficient condition for happiness, satisfaction or well-being, only that, in aggregate, it does the most work in explaining happiness. (cite studies here? Or unnecessary)

Let us suppose that there is in fact, which I don't really believe possible, an overall index of welfare that suggests that Alice, despite her impairment, is more welfare-rich than Brenda. Further let us suppose that we can devote resources to counselling for Brenda, which will help her develop skills to realize fulfilling friendships and relationships. This programme of counselling happens to cost the same as an operation that will cure Alice's impairment. Let us suppose further, that on the welfare scale we have constructed, that Brenda will in fact surpass by a great margin the level of welfare that would be attained by Alice if her impairment was cured.

According to Crisp, because Brenda's welfare prior to counselling is so low, we should feel compassion for her, and because the counselling would provide so much more benefit to Brenda than the operation would do for Alice's overall welfare, we should devote the resources to Brenda developing relationship skills. My intuition, and I hope everyone else's, is that whatever resources we have should go to Alice's operation. What does this intuition tell us in terms of principle? I believe it tells us that (1) Crisp is wrong in believing that welfare is the currency of distribution, and (2) that compassion is not all that motivates our concern with sufficiency.

Address (1) first. We see from the Alice-Brenda comparison that it may well be that someone's welfare level is lower than another's, and yet, we wish to provide a resource to another person *because of the type of disadvantage* that that individual (i.e., Alice) faces. (Note I'm avoiding "weighing up" in a Broome sense, to my detriment: I do not consider occurrent states versus overall comparisons over a lifetime. I'm only assuming what Crisp does, namely that something called welfare can be represented cardinally for purposes of comparison between individuals). That is, in as much as the state is concerned, my intuition is that the welfare that is provided from relationships is simply not on a par with the lack of welfare caused by a disability. And, following from the fact of Brenda's welfare being lower than Alice's does not get priority, nor does the prospect of her welfare gain from relationship skills training give her priority, this just goes to show that our political morality isn't concerned with welfare. So our choice of currency is partly determined by our view of the role of the state.

Second, why does compassion not seem to enter into consideration here? That is, why does our political morality seem to favour devoting resources to cancer-curing than relationship-counselling, even though ostensibly our compassion for Brenda is higher? Now consider a case wherein a person, Claire, can choose to charitably give their resources to either Alice or Brenda. My intuition is that Claire can have more compassion for Brenda. And indeed, as a private individual she may give her own resources to helping Brenda develop relationship skills. Nevertheless, I don't want Brenda to have precedence in NHS funding.

Does this mean compassion is never at play in state action? While not at all ruling out compassion as a motivation for the state, I fear that my example shows that we can have great compassion for people, while still not believing them worthy of the state's attention. If compassion does not favour benefiting the worse off in terms of welfare, the state may well not be concerned.

It may seem to some that I have merely repeated the case of the contented slave. Shouldn't Alice really have much lower levels of welfare? Isn't she just focussing on the happiness given to her by her relationships so that she doesn't have to face the misery caused by her impairment? Well, why should we think that? There seems no problem in thinking that a person can, without self-deception, take great happiness in their relationships, despite having an impairment. And further, Alice herself may recognize that she is, in many ways, better off than Brenda, but still believe that resources should go to her treatment. Similarly for Brenda, am I suggesting that we feel no compassion for her, living without a friend or partner? Of course not. But from the point of view of political morality, her relationship status is neither here nor there.

This discussion should lead us to see that resources have a greater intuitive status as the currency of distribution than welfare. It also helps us to see that compassion is not what motivates our concern with sufficiency.

III. Why Resources instead of Capabilities?: Williams on Dworkin on Capability⁷

It may seem that my insistence on the importance of resources is drawn from a particular idiosyncratic view of political morality. However, if this is my problem, it is Dworkin's too. I believe that the idea of welfare as the currency of distribution has little force. But perhaps resources aren't the right currency either, and we should instead favour something more expansive to encompass complex capabilities such as achieving happiness, having healthy relationships, etc. In this section, I examine a recent attempt to show that resources aren't the right currency of distribution, and that our political morality does not identify what are the disadvantages which should be remedied by the state.

Dworkin argues that resources are superior to capabilities as a currency of equality, but Andrew Williams has argued that Dworkin has failed. Williams has recently taken Dworkin to task on what he calls "Dworkin's dilemma"; namely, the dilemma that Dworkin poses for Sen that capability equality collapses into either equality of welfare or equality of resources. Hence, Dworkin contends, by not specifying further the relevant ranking of capabilities and the importance of "complex capabilities" such as achieving happiness, enjoying communal life, and the like, Sen's position is redundant, because it is a confusing hybrid of the existing views of equality of welfare and resources.

Williams seeks to defend Sen against Dworkin by presenting two ingenious arguments, both of which are designed to show that the justification of resourcism fail to take into account morally relevant information in what is deserving of rectification from the state. However, I believe I can reject both of these arguments, and defend resourcism, and my own view of political morality, from having to take seriously a state obligation to promote the achievement of complex functionings (i.e., such as Brenda's achieving happiness through relationships).

⁷ I am grateful to Andrew Williams for discussion of the contents of this section, although I fear I have not adequately addressed his concerns.

Williams' first case concerns two twins, Ann and Bob. Both have the same ambition, to have both a meaningful career and to find a partner of the opposite sex and have children. However, because of *other people's ambitions*, wherein more women favour having children, and more men favour having a career, this creates an institutional setting in which women are at a disadvantage when it comes to work/career balance. Thus, Ann is at a disadvantage to Bob, although they have the same personal and impersonal resources. And yet, according to Dworkin, if two individuals have the same personal and impersonal resources, then neither is deserving of any state rectification of their disadvantages. Thus, Dworkin appears to not allow for a morally relevant difference between two people's unchosen circumstances to be deserving of compensation, and his theory is meant to address just such cases.

There are, I believe, two different responses Dworkin can employ to respond to Williams' first objection.⁸ First, from within Dworkin's theory, we know that person's set their ambitions against a set of what he calls parameters: that is, factors which act as constraints on one forming their conception of the good life, against which one can form defensible goals and ambitions. Now, one such set of parameters is the institution of the market, both its conditions for employment and the way it sets prices. For example, one cannot claim compensation for having expensive tastes, given that the person knew that champagne will always be expensive. Similarly, one cannot claim compensation for not making a great income as a professional tennis player, given that they formed that ambition against a background of knowing that making a living as a professional tennis player is very slim. Now, it would appear that I'm saying {(that the fact)} that women aren't deserving of a fair chance to raise kids and have a career. I'm not: I think that it would be a good thing for employers to do more for parents to be able to balance their work and their home lives. I might also be saying that anything the market throws up must be a fair set of parameters from which one forms their ambitions. I am not suggesting this either, because much of Dworkin's scheme is meant to correct externalities of the market that many economists do not consider (such as failing to insure: see below). I am suggesting

⁸ I do not discuss Dworkin's (2002) reply to Williams here, as it is concerned more with the value of equality, and not with why resources should be the currency, where the latter question is my concern.

that the market for partners who want to have families is not a concern of political morality.

However, there are two points at which Ann is responsible for her predicament, or so I argue. First, Ann knew that it was difficult to have a rich family life and a meaningful career when she formed the ambition to do both. The constraints of employment were well known, and should have influenced her choice. Indeed, the existence, for better or worse, of requiring maternity leave already concedes much to the basic physiological demands that women face that men do not in starting a family. But beyond maternity leave, why should equality of resources require more help for Ann than Bob?

Second, Ann also faces a choice of employer. Many firms do offer better forms of child care, office nurseries, and flexi-time, in order to allow for child rearing. Ann therefore may be in some ways responsible for the condition of having relative difficulty in raising a family by her choice of employer.

Nevertheless, what is problematic here is not that Ann is unable to raise a family and have a good career. What is problematic is that Ann, who has the same ambitions and personal and impersonal resources as Bob, is unable to have a career and a family, while Bob is. However, I believe that Williams' mis-describes the case to make the point. He says that because more women are willing to put family first, Bob will find it easier to have a partner who will look after the children than Ann, who suffers from the fact that most men are more likely to be concerned with their careers.

I will make two points against this view. First, Ann, again, had a choice in her partner, and, although they may be in short supply, there are men out there who are willing to share the work of childrearing. Second, and here is the mis-description, I believe Williams betrays an odd conception of having a family, at least regarding differences between men's and women's perspectives. According to Williams, Ann's having a family involves her spending a lot of time with her children, such that it may present a conflict with work. In contrast, Bob's having a family involves him siring the children, and letting his wife get on with it, and not present a conflict with work. If this is the case, then in fact their ambitions are different: Ann wants to *raise* a

family, while Bob merely wants to *have* a family. Thus, their requirements for resources are different, and the way they respond to parameters of work-life balance are different because of their differential ambitions. Thus, they do not fall foul of any of Dworkin's requirements for a just claim on resources.

Thus, the Ann and Bob case, I argue, does not show that the capability approach, with its emphasis on objective measures of more complex, welfare-like, functionings, better captures what should be distributed. Now let me turn to Williams' second argument.

Williams' second argument is that cases can be constructed in which Dworkin's continuity test is violated, and hence the supposed objective political morality that grounds everyone's concern with certain resources, is fallacious. The continuity test is Williams' labelling of Dworkin's claim that "Equality of resources...proposes a politics which we can embrace as flowing from the rest of our convictions, a politics which citizens can make and respond to claims of justice without switching to special, made-for-politics morality. It allows us to cite, as disadvantages and handicaps, only what we treat in the same way in our own ethical life." Hence, the continuity is between our general ethical convictions and our political moral convictions. That they are *our* general ethical convictions is not subjectivism, however, as Williams points out on Dworkin's behalf: "The basic idea underlying the continuity test appears to be that a political community should regard certain conditions as disadvantaging some of its members only in those members' own ethical convictions also imply that those conditions disadvantage them" (Williams, 2003: 34).

In criticizing the continuity test, Williams imagines a case in which there are two deaf individuals, Dan and Ella, who are both deaf. However, Dan views being deaf as not being a disadvantage, and that others underestimate the benefits of membership in the deaf community. Dan would reject any resource that would remove him from the community through ameliorating his deafness. Ella, on the other hand, while fully aware of the same benefits that Dan appreciates, nevertheless regrets being deaf, and would gladly forgo those benefits if it were possible to remove her deafness.

Williams argues that because, on Dworkin's view, one's viewing a feature of their circumstances as a disadvantage from within their own ethical convictions is what makes that circumstance a disadvantage, that the disagreement between Dan and Ella shows a flaw in Dworkin's framework. That is, the lack of unanimity concerning the ethical convictions that define what count as a legitimate disadvantage impugns the objective framework that is meant to underpin the resourcist framework. As Williams puts it:

“...the capability approach does not give the same role to the individual's own evaluation of her capabilities, which Dworkin emphasizes is a central feature of equality of resources, and exploits in order to oppose equality of welfare. For that reason it is possible for proponents of the capability approach to argue that the inequality in communicative capabilities between Dan and the nondeaf majority is unfair in a way that is unconditional on Dan's attitudes”. (Williams, 2003: 37).

Now, what I must do here is to avoid the idea that thinking being deaf is not a legitimate disadvantage that should be addressed by resourcism, while making Dan's assessment of his deafness compatible with Dworkin's own views about personal ethics, that is, the ideal of the good life proposed by Dworkin's challenge model. If I can succeed, we can suggest that Dan's assessment of his situation as not requiring a resource for remedy is perfectly acceptable on Dworkin's own view of how to live a good life, is nevertheless compatible with a general view that being deaf is a resource which requires remedy.

Now, the easy move here is to, as would the capability theorist who finds justification for anti-welfarism in the problem of the happy slave, suggest that Dan's attitude to his deafness is an adaptive preference, which he has developed so as not to have to face the horrible difficulties that arise from being deaf. This would not suffice for Dworkin. Instead, let us view Dan's assessment of his situation as a perfect candidate for a challenge that makes one's life projects have meaning. The challenge of being deaf is one that Dan has taken on with gusto, and has made it part of what counts as success in his life. And he has so succeeded. Is this false consciousness, an adaptive preference? I do not see why we should reach this conclusion. But it would appear that we must now charge Ella with irrationality: she should have accepted the challenge of deafness and made it part of her projects, and so incorporated the

challenge into her life. But we need not make this step. It is perfectly in keeping with the challenge model that one can choose different challenges that form the projects of their lives, and that there is a reasonable, i.e., rationally acceptable, amount of disagreement about what projects are valuable that needn't impugn the rationality of one agent choosing one project and another agent choosing some other project.

But I have said that we really should see deafness as a disadvantage that a resourcist should seek to redress. Must I now tell Dan that his attitude to his deafness is, although rational according to the challenge model of a good life, nevertheless wrong because it fails to recognize a real disadvantage when it sees it? If so, then I am able to rescue Dan's idiosyncratic attitude, but treat it as a rational outlier, while still accepting that Ella's attitude is the more representative and should inform the basis for what counts as a disadvantage that requires redress through resource provision. But if I tell Dan his attitude is rationally acceptable according to resourcism, but not acceptable as a basis for resourcism, then aren't I really just telling him, in so many words, that his attitude is a case of adaptive preference? I think not.

The key lies in the fact that the hypothetical insurance mechanism is *ex ante*, whereas Dan's perfectly rational (according to the challenge model) attitude to his deafness is *ex post*. Here is a simple way of making the point: suppose Dan could choose the hearing status of his child. If he thought that being deaf was itself a kind of resource or necessary parameter for leading a good life, he would choose that his child be deaf. I'm not sure that he would. The more complex way of making the point is to highlight the veil of ignorance feature of the auction mechanism: if Dan truly believes that being deaf is a necessary feature of a good life, he would take no insurance against any kind of hearing loss. Indeed, if Dan's attitude to his *ex post* deafness were the same as his *ex ante* attitude to deafness, he would insure against any form of treatment for hearing loss being "imposed" on him. Would he do this? Again, I think not. But his *ex post* attitude to his deafness is no less reasonable, and no less in keeping with the challenge model of the good life, for this fact.⁹

⁹ To use the same philosophical lexicon mentioned previously, we may say that attitudes towards resource provision are agent neutral, and attitudes to a lack of resources can be agent relative.

IV. Problems of Sufficiency: Arneson

I turn now to two different critiques of sufficiency doctrines. Both focus in fact on the sufficiency, or threshold model, of capabilities or functionings. One is Richard Arneson's, who has also provided the arguments against sufficiency in general. The other is the unpublished manuscript of Jo Wolff and Avner de Shalit called *Disadvantage*. Wolff and de Shalit, unlike Arneson, do endorse the capability approach as opposed to Arneson's currency of welfare. Both endorse a weighted priority view.

Let me introduce the basic criticism, which both Arneson and Wolff and de Shalit have argued for. Sufficiency promotes the idea, it is supposed, that the only political value is that people should reach the threshold. In fact, very few people have actually formulated and defended sufficiency views, so we must put forward a couple of formulations. Let us make the statement more precise: Sufficiency holds that as many people as possible should reach the threshold, and that this has "strict lexical priority over any other justice values there might be" (Arneson, 2005: xx). Now, a similar problem besets the sufficiency position that also afflicts prioritarianism: it is insensitive to aggregate benefits. Thus, in the strictest version, sufficiency allows itself the same types of dilemma: suppose that, for the same cost, that many people who are already well-off could be benefited greatly, while one person can be put just over the threshold. Arneson also poses an inverse of this case, where many people who will never reach the threshold can receive a great benefit, or we can devote those same resources to getting one person who is better off, and just near the threshold line, . Arneson writes:

"Suppose we can choose either (1) a policy that brings one person from just barely below to just across the sufficiency threshold or (2) a policy that brings about great improvements in the well-being of many people who are unavoidably below threshold (billions are moved from hell to tolerable limbo existence) or (3) a policy that brings about great improvements in the lives of a great many people who are already above threshold (billions and billions are moved from a modest existence to perfectionist bliss)." (Arneson, 2005: 20-1).

Arneson notes that although (2) and (3) are highly desirable, that a strict sufficiency approach will always require putting that one person just beyond the threshold. This is both seemingly arbitrary and wasteful. In short, we may characterize Arneson's critique of sufficiency as being that sufficiency suffers from a kind of "threshold fetishism".

Arneson characterizes this as a "strict sufficiency doctrine", which holds the following: "As many as possible of those who shall ever live should be brought to the good enough threshold level of lifetime well-being. This principle (has) strict lexical priority over other justice values, including gains to those above and below the good enough threshold that do not alter the numbers of people who are sustained at sufficiency" (Arneson, 2005: 19)

Arneson then offers sufficientarians a way out by proposing moderate sufficiency, which consists in the following three claims:

(a) there is a good enough level of well-being, such that moral priority should be given to achieving well-being gains for those who are below the threshold, (b) the further an individual is below the threshold, the greater the moral value of securing a well-being gain of a given size for that individual, and (c) above the threshold, well-being gains and losses count for something in determining what to do, but achieving any gain or avoidance of loss for any person below (the) threshold has strict lexical priority over achieving instead any gain or avoidance of loss of any size for any number of individuals who are and will always be above the threshold." (Arneson, 2005: 22)

So, Arneson has here allowed moderate sufficiency to define a level of sufficient well-being, allowed for priority to be given to those who are further from the threshold, but retained the lexical priority of reaching sufficiency against benefits that may be attained above the threshold.

However, moderate sufficiency does not fare so well, in Arneson's eyes. First, when everyone is above the sufficiency threshold, then the view collapses into weighted priority. Further, Arneson is still particularly unimpressed by lexical priority, which requires us to put one person over the threshold instead of a great gain to many. As he puts it: "...why discount gains to the well-being of the better off so ruthlessly? To

make this radical discounting credible, we would need to be told a story that explains and justifies the claim that the sufficiency threshold is of paramount moral importance. But how can inching one's way up a bit along a measure of overall lifetime well-being have that sort of significance?" (Arneson, 2005: 22).

So, the real problem is that the threshold, again, appears to be morally arbitrary when faced with aggregative gains to many. That is, why should we discount the level of benefits above the threshold at a rate of 0%? As Arneson states: "we still need some plausible justification of why the sufficiency line is drawn in one place rather than somewhere else and why this particular line is morally significant" (ibid, 23). This suggests that, as I will argue below, Arneson is as concerned with where and why the sufficiency line is drawn as with the problem of threshold fetishism.

I believe there are three replies to Arneson: a philosophical reply, a "you're just as bad" reply, and a practical question. Let me begin with the philosophical reply.

Philosophically, we can point out that the problem of a sufficiency threshold is one of vagueness: that is, a threshold seems to suffer from the fact that as a predicate of a person's situation, the line could have been just below, or just above, the threshold and make no moral difference. Now, on the one hand, we may be able to say that this is a flaw of sufficiency views, but we may also say that it is slightly unfair of Arneson to hint at a critique based on the idea of vagueness, while not then allowing sufficiency the arsenal of philosophical theories of vagueness to come to its defence.

One such approach to the problem of vagueness I think fits the bill here, namely, the contextual solution to problems of vagueness. This solution is quite simple, but I think right. In the real world, when we face problems of Sorites-like problems, we aren't left dumbfounded, like Buridan's ass, unable to choose between two equally plausible or desirable options. Instead, we know why we are having to draw a particular line in the sand: because of the context of our choice. This version of the contextualist solution draws on Graff's "interest-relative" account, wherein, for instance, we can use a vague predicate like "tall" because we have an interest in knowing what buildings are tall and which are not, say, for purposes of complying with building regulations. A line has been drawn, somewhat, but not entirely,

arbitrarily: its non-arbitrariness arises from the fact that we needed to draw the line of tall somewhere in order to get on with the task we face.

I suggest that something similar applies to the logic of sufficiency thresholds. Suppose there are two kinds of bads: very bad things, and pretty bad things. It may be that having an illness is a “very bad thing”, and also be the case that being a little more or a little less ill make it no more or no less a bad thing. Nevertheless, as a community, we have decided that there must be *some* definition of a very bad thing, so that we know when something needs to be done. It may be a horrible thing that sometimes someone who suffers a “pretty bad thing” in terms of illness does not get the same attention as a “very bad” illness, but this is how we have decided to prioritise our concern.

And here our political morality also enters. What we are saying is *not* that suffering a pretty bad thing is not pretty bad. Instead we are saying that the state should ensure that no one should suffer a very bad thing, and this is the state’s first priority. The state may also help, a la lexical priority, those who suffer from pretty bad things, but only after it has helped those who suffer very bad things. Further, we may question whether suffering pretty bad things is the state’s concern. We may draw on the public choice tradition approach to government, in which the main (and for some, the only) justification for the state is to correct for market failure. And in this case, we know from the problem of moral hazard and adverse selection that those who are most likely to suffer from very bad things are much less likely to be able to be insured on the private market just because of their vulnerability. Thus, on this logic, our interest in defining what counts as a very bad thing is partly determined by the fact that those who are likely to suffer pretty bad things can find, and afford, private insurance against those pretty bad things.

Let me turn now to another criticism of Arneson, which is a philosophical reply, but also employs the logical fallacy of, “well, it may be a problem for me, but it’s a problem for you too!”. Namely, I will suggest that weighted priority suffers from the need to define a threshold, and thus suffers the same problem of vagueness that Arneson levels at the sufficiency doctrine. Consider what is involved in weighted priority. It is saying that we should give priority to those who are badly off, but not

when we can also provide huge benefits to others. However, this requires of weighted priority that *it* define a point that counts as sufficiently bad off such that resources go to the worse off versus the many. The fact that in theory there is a sliding scale of benefits to a small minority and a large minority does not change the fact that, when making a particular decision about when to give priority to the worse off, it looks a lot like an arbitrary lexical priority given to the worse off at the expense of the many.

To see my point, take the following. Say that a weighted prioritarian has on their scale a point b , which counts as being very badly off. Suppose they also have a level of benefits to n individuals at level w (for well off). The benefits or goods are of a size we may call g . Now suppose that the weighted prioritarian decides, in some case, that point b is deserving of g , instead of a particular distribution of many g 's to n at level w . This is just what weighted priority, qua a form of priority, must do. Otherwise it's just average utilitarianism, which it clearly does not want to be.

Now, to illustrate my point that weighted prioritarians face the same threshold problem as a sufficientarian. I will take the quote above of Arneson's criticizing the model of threshold sufficiency; however, I will substitute the weighted prioritarian's "point b " where Arneson uses the phrase "sufficiency threshold". Imagine that this statement is made by those n individuals at w , who want to know why they aren't getting the gains that are instead going to the person at point b :

"...why discount gains to the well-being of the better off so ruthlessly? To make this radical discounting credible, we...need to be told a story that explains and justifies the claim that *point b* is of paramount moral importance."

Using another of Arneson's quotes I used above, I again substitute "point b ", this time for Arneson's "sufficiency line":

"we still need some plausible justification of why *point b* is drawn in one place rather than somewhere else and why this particular *point b* is morally significant"

So if I am correct, it appears that in fact, weighted priority is itself just a form of sufficiency; weighted prioritarians just happen to pay attention to what happens above

the threshold. I believe that, as far as Arneson's critique of sufficiency goes, he must, as a weighted prioritarian, face up to the same problems he has noted for sufficientarians.

However, sufficientarianism must still face the challenge of using weights as well. Take case (2) of Arneson's below. To reiterate, this involves "a policy that brings about great improvements in the well-being of many people who are unavoidably below threshold". Arneson is surely right that it would be the worst kind of threshold fetishism to ignore the interests of the worse off in order to merely meet a threshold for, say, one person. Ironically, this suggests that underneath the threshold, sufficientarians must be weighted prioritarians! The difference is that above the threshold, a sufficientarian does not care for further benefits. Further, below the threshold line where the sufficientarian must employ weighted priority, which is subject to a problem of vagueness, I have at least defended an approach to vagueness which allows a policy maker to draw a line at some point.

Lastly, let me point out the practical problem for Arneson's view. Arneson proposes many scenarios where for a given cost C , we can provide small benefits for some badly off person, or provide great benefits for many at the same cost of C . Well, what kinds of cases are these? What are the cases where we can provide a small benefit to one badly off person or a large benefit to many? I suppose that such cases are those where an extremely expensive life-saving equipment can prolong a person's life who is barely living, versus curing a great many people's colds. But here we should ask, even if we accept a continuity approach to disadvantage, as I have stated above that I do, why do we immediately think that, as the recent literature puts it, the numbers *must* count? If you are a consequentialist who thinks we must act so as to maximize moral value, then it is rather obvious that the numbers should count. But since when did political philosophers accept maximizing consequentialism so readily? And further, can we assume that politicians', or ordinary citizens' political morality, endorses a maximizing consequentialism?

I think they aren't, and if we respect the separateness of persons/self-ownership, we should take citizens' tacit or actual consent very seriously indeed. That is, I think we can in any case find a more procedurally just way to answer the question using

Dworkin's approach to the rule of rescue: we should just use that level of resources for dire medical emergencies versus everyday benefits that an average individual would insure against in a hypothetical insurance market. Now, it may well be, and I suspect often is, the case that ordinary citizens favour helping the needy few over benefits to the many. Arneson has little time for what ordinary people think and want, and instead prefers to jump up to the impartial spectators' view of what's good in the universe. I suggest this move is unwarranted, at least in as much as we take seriously the separateness of persons.

There is one last, related, thought here. Following up the market failure idea regarding insurance, I wish to introduce a thought to the logic of sufficiency. Arneson proudly bites a maximizing consequentialist bullet in his paper over the threshold fetishism of the sufficiency approach, suggesting a case wherein:

“Either we can get a tiny tiny benefit, such as a single bite of chocolate, to many many people who are already leading lives that are wonderful, far above the sufficiency level, or we can instead get a huge (lifesaving, say) benefit to a tiny number of extremely badly off persons. We must choose one or the other...Which to choose? The prioritarian will say, it depends on the numbers. But it is guaranteed by her position that if the number of beneficiaries is large enough on the side of the chocolate bite eaters and small enough on the side of those severely disadvantaged persons who stand to gain an incredible windfall benefit, the prioritarian must say that the right answer is to stuff the extremely well off with extra chocolate.”

I personally find that my intuition about this case is that I would much prefer to be a threshold fetishist than to be the one going around giving chocolates. And we have here a pleasingly implausible case to contrast with our “death or curing colds” case above, that emphasizes why political morality favours resources as the currency. If people want chocolate in small amounts, they can get this from their own private resources. Governments are not concerned with providing welfare, which is why they don't distribute chocolate: the market does a perfectly good job of chocolate distribution. Governments are concerned with the more serious business of providing resources. And again here, why sufficiency? And again, it has to do with the fact that life saving, in general, we see as the state's job. I think political morality dictates that we should ensure that all have a sufficiently good chance of being disease and pain free. As for colds, yes, the NHS deals with colds: but so do Robitussin and Lemsip.

Sufficiency pays attention to the benefits that the state is best poised to deliver, and lets the market do the rest. Arneson wants us to oversee and control the distribution of resources completely, regardless of whether it is distributed by the state, the market, or otherwise.¹⁰

V. *Problems of Sufficiency: Wolff and de Shalit*

Wolff and de Shalit suggest a further problem for thresholds. Unlike Arneson, who has a monistic theory of value, wherein well-being is the only value, Wolff and de Shalit employ a multi-dimensional approach to advantage and disadvantage, employing Sen's theory of capabilities to function. They avoid the problem of having to select weights for priority in using their scheme because of the existence of what they call clusters of disadvantage. That is, because we can see statistically that certain individuals suffer multiple deprivation, that is, are at low levels across the same sets of functionings, it is obvious who is worst off and deserving of priority. Hence, there is no need for reaching multiple thresholds.

Similarly, and I believe independently, they have proposed a strong and weak threshold view which corresponds to Arneson's strict and moderate priority. For both, the strict version is lexical, and the moderate version allows weighting when great advantages can be gained by allocating resources elsewhere. However, like Arneson, they note that their weak threshold view reintroduces the need for weighting, much like Arneson notes that moderate sufficiency collapses into weighted prioritarianism. Thus, as they put it, a weak threshold view "reintroduces the need to weigh and balance different factors, yet avoiding this was the prime motivating force behind the multiple threshold view" (MS, 88).

This is a powerful critique of sufficiency, and one I believe we must take seriously. However, there are a few problems. Let me note first: a multiple threshold view is not primarily motivated to avoid indexing problems. A multiple threshold view is motivated by the idea that we have collectively a (I believe, governmental)

¹⁰ And a further point follows here: if Arneson wants the distribution of all welfare-enhancing goods to be overseen by the state and the market, he will face the same difficulties of a socialist planner, who cannot reach his allocative and distributive goals because of constraints on information.

responsibility to ensure that people do not suffer needlessly, and after that, our obligations to others are of a different sort. Nevertheless, part of the advantage of a multiple threshold view, as would be meeting sufficient, but not equal, levels of resources (as I am here proposing), is that we needn't worry about how everyone fares across every possible level of resources. Nevertheless, since we are concerned with avoiding extreme deprivation, and those who suffer multiple disadvantage with respect to resources are more deprived than others, are hence more deserving of our attention. This much should be conceded to the Wolff and de Shalit views.

However, there are further problems. Wolff and de Shalit argue that “(t)he attempt to avoid weighting of factors leads to an implicit assumption that all categories – or at least all threshold points on all categories- are of equal importance”. They use as an example Nussbaum's category of functioning of “other species”, of being able to live with and show concern in relation to plants and animals. Surely this is not as important as bodily health, they argue. And it is hard to disagree with the point, as thusly phrased. However, there is a first step that goes some way to allaying their fears. Namely, relatively unimportant functions should have relatively low thresholds for satisfaction. The threshold for communing with animals would be set so low that it could never compete with any serious proposal for the provision of health or housing resources.¹¹

Further, in the area of resources, functionings such as communing with other species are simply not included in the list. When our political morality narrows the scope of what each citizen can expect as a matter of duty from other members of the political community, categories like communing with animals simply aren't on the list of resources.

Lastly, if we were to include as a resource or primary good something such as communing with other species, meeting a sufficiency threshold, when other levels of resource or functioning are low, may in fact do some good. This is not to say that when we can knowingly provide a good of health or a good of hanging out with animals, we would not choose the former. It is simply that, were agencies unable to

¹¹ There is a problem with always prioritising other functionings over, say, communing with other species. It can be argued that this is simply to not treat that functioning as valuable at all.

coordinate on priorities, it may be no bad thing that at least some other functioning or resource is provided to help cope with the person's lack of health.

It is here that we find that the role of actual political processes in implementing policy may act as a constraint on our normative political theories: the usual economist's emphasis on feasibility rears its head. I want to argue here that sufficiency is actually important partly because it creates a feasible approach to implementing political theories that are consistent with the constraints of the workings of actual government agencies. The argument relies on certain empirical arguments derived from public choice theory. In an ideal world, first, information about multiple deprivation would be transferred between agencies without cost or impediment. However, in the real world where transaction costs play a role, identifying the multiply disadvantaged may not be so easy for government agencies.

Second, we face the problem of the division of labour. A health expert is not an expert in setting priorities for housing. Although it would be desirable that such information provides a clear index of where resources should be devoted to address the problem of multiple disadvantage, it may not be the case that an agency charged with providing a sufficient level of housing in order to promote overall lack of disadvantage will be understanding of a particular trade-off of a lack of housing for another gain in health. This is a simple problem, not philosophical, of complexity of information about who is disadvantaged and by how much. It is, indeed, highly implausible that we expect different individuals in different government agencies to be overall experts in disadvantage: the division of labour may well reflect the fact that we prefer our government agencies to be expert in their chosen area, not jacks of all trades, masters of none. If this argument is correct, then sufficiency has in its favour the fact that it does not make infeasible informational and skill requirements of civil servants.

This argument suggests, as Wolff and de Shalit note, the need for "joined-up" government. As an example, the worry is that it is no good building a school for the poor, if there is no affordable transport for them to get there. Government agencies therefore require some coordination in order to address multiple disadvantage. But is "joining-up" government that easy? I have highlighted the informational problems

and the fact that agencies might do better doing what they know best, as opposed to trying to be masters of disadvantage. Suppose, however, that we attempt to make government more joined up. For instance, government departments are constantly reshuffling in order to better address particular clusters of disadvantage. So on the Wolff and de Shalit view, governments will change in order to identify particular priorities in the form of clusters of disadvantage. But I think sufficiency should still play a role. Let me explain.

Indulge me yet another market metaphor. Assume that disadvantage is a kind of demand for social services, and government agencies the suppliers. Now, there are certainly good arguments for merging government agencies in order to satisfy a high demand market niche: namely, those with multiple disadvantages. But just like in real markets, demand shifts, and suppliers must be prepared to meet that demand. Now, can we rely on the entrepreneurial initiative of government agencies in anticipating new clusters of disadvantage? Firms are often slow to meet demand, and government bureaucracies, perhaps, even more so. So I think from a pure policy, service delivery perspective, standards of sufficiency should play a role. That is, in spite of the fact that, as suggested by Wolff and de Shalit, government agencies should seek to coordinate, where coordination failures arise, agencies should still seek to aim at a “safe” standard of service provision. Furthermore, it is my view that *in our current society*, following Wolff and de Shalit, we should seek for government agencies to join up to meet the demands of the worst off. But, I want us to do so with the aim of just ensuring that they have enough. In a society that met sufficiency tests, where the rich were the so-called disadvantaged, I would want to abandon the Wolff and de Shalit multiple-disadvantage prioritarianism. Therefore, if we were ever fortunate enough to have a society in which sufficiency was achieved, our normative standard should not be prioritarianism. Instead, we would need sufficiency to let us know when there is a real problem for governments to address.

The argument here is that the mode of delivery will influence what political theory is justifiable. A political theory must recognize the constraints of what forms of rectification of disadvantage are politically feasible, and this should not be a mere afterthought for the theory.

VI. *Why Sufficiency? What the People Think, and the Many Reasons for Redistribution*

I have now addressed three of my concerns of distribution: the currency, type and mode of distribution. However, I have not addressed the question of justification. I believe this is a slightly tricky area. I myself hold an extreme form of contractarianism, wherein the state acts justly just in case it acts in the way the people wish the state to act. Thus, we should act on what the people think.

Now, here I think we can turn to David Miller's (1999) work on popular opinion about distributive justice. I will cite two facts that I think are relevant here. First, Miller cites the work of Frohlich and Oppenheimer's (1992) study of beliefs of distributive justice. This work, along with other studies, finds a highly robust result across education, income, gender and culture, that subjects strongly prefer a distributive scheme in which the average income is maximized, allowing relatively large inequalities, subject to a basic minimum income or safety net. So, it appears that if the state should do what the people think, one thing it should definitely provide is a sufficient floor.

Now, as a contractarian, this is as far as I need to go as far concerning justification. But what are the people's justifications, or reasons, for preferring a floor? There are a multitude of subjects' qualitative interviews in Frohlich and Oppenheimer's book which suggest what subjects' reasons are, but I think we can find a possible explanation by citing another piece of evidence on popular opinion about distribution. Miller notes that study after study finds that individuals apply different distributive principles in different social contexts. Specifically, in contexts of personal relationships, we prefer meeting needs; in contexts of communal or political associations, we favour equality; in economic contexts, we favour rewards subject to inputs. Now, it seems that the political community should be interested in equality, so how does this square with the Frohlich and Oppenheimer finding that subjects overwhelmingly prefer a floor? What it may suggest is that we want equality *in the form of meeting needs*: that is, we partly see the state as a form of relationship, in which we want needs met, but we don't want needs met unequally, and so we insure that there be a sufficient level of resources for all citizens. Similarly, in as much as

the state partly intervenes or not in the economy, the state is itself partly an economic context. Thus, rewards being proportional to inputs, or merely allowing differential rewards, is consistent with the view of the state as partly an economic instrument.

Of course, one problem with sufficiency is that it is not able to address the role of responsibility and choice sensitivity that has become a predominant theme in contemporary political theory. Now, an emerging theme in political theory, in contrast to the aforementioned “luck egalitarianism”, is that of relational (Wolff, 1998), democratic (Anderson, 1999), or social (Miller, 1999) equality. This approach suggests that what matters is not the distribution of goods, but instead social conditions in which people are able to treat others as equals. On this view, the fact that luck egalitarianism requires intrusive questioning and “shameful revelations” (Wolff, 1998), such as admitting that one has been unable to find work because they are untalented, which are not in keeping with the “egalitarian ethos”. Thus, although responsibility is an important value, it should be traded off against the importance of social equality.

Now, I have suggested that sufficientarianism is by its nature not able to allow for responsibility, because individuals should always have a sufficient level of resources, even if they do not make the most of the opportunities provided by those resources. This appears to make individuals able to squander their resources and still be “bailed out” by the state, at the expense of those individuals who do take advantage of the opportunities they have been given. This fact, in as much as responsibility is seen as an important political value, appears to be a knock-down blow to sufficientarianism. There are two replies, however. First, in agreement with the “relational egalitarianism” discussed above, we do not need to assume that responsibility is a trumping value: specifically, it does not outweigh all other concerns for respect and dignity. However, more importantly, sufficiency is not at odds with responsibility, or not entirely. In principle, one could set a level of resources which would be chosen in a hypothetical insurance auction, and allow individuals who squander those resources to fall below the level set by the auction. Nevertheless, the level of sufficiency would be lower than that as set by the auction, and individuals would not fall below that sufficient level. This is consistent with both contractarianism and with Dworkin’s equality of resources.

First, as a contractarian, it is perfectly plausible that individuals would want, say, an initial endowment of resources at a fairly high level, but simultaneously also allow individuals to not fall below a certain level of resources even if they squander their endowment from the initial endowment of resources. Further, Dworkin himself is at pains in a recent reply to point out that his scheme of equality of resources “would provide everyone with at least a decent minimum standard of living, then no one would lead a ‘horribly grim’ life just because he had made poor economic decisions about education, training, investment, or consumption earlier in his life.” (Dworkin, 2002: 114). Further, because any individual’s failure to insure himself imposes an externality on others, each individual should, in the name of fairness, therefore be required to pay at least mandatory minimum insurance. This mandatory insurance can also be justified on paternalistic grounds, because a community of equals will not allow any individual to let himself fall on extremely hard times (ibid: 114-6).

Lastly, let me end with a plea for a plurality of justifications for sufficiency. As public choice scholars note (Mueller, 2003: ch. 2), there are a variety of motives for redistribution. One is fairness, we want people to have a fair share of society’s resources (perhaps they believe in world ownership?). Another is altruism: we cannot bear the thought of seeing others suffer, even if their situation is not unfair. Another motive is social insurance: it may be that I will someday face destitution, and therefore I may want there to be a sufficient social safety net. Lastly, there are concerns of allocative efficiency. Economic growth and productivity will be higher if the very badly off are provided with education and resources. They may then both produce goods for others to consumer, and/or then purchase goods with their resources, leading markets to clear that otherwise would not.

My plea for pluralism is very much a real world, not a philosophical concern. Philosophically, it might be that individuals ought to be motivated by altruism and fairness; but in a society in which many are not at levels of sufficiency, we should not look askance at redistribution for the more selfish reasons of social insurance and improving allocative efficiency. Whether this multiplicity of motives is normatively unacceptable or is merely politically expedient is a question I must leave to another occasion.

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