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Sufficientarianism Revised: A Look at Past Theories of Distributive Justice and Working Prospects for Future Theories

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Introduction:

Say you are splitting a cookie with a friend, and want to divide it fairly. How do you go about solving this problem? Perhaps you split it in a way that you consider to be half, and your friend chooses the side they want. Seems fair. But what if your friend had just had three cookies, and this was your first cookie of the day. Should you still split the cookie in half? What constitutes a 'fair' way to spit the cookie then? While this exact instance may seem like a silly example, thought experiments like these may be helpful to question larger issues of distributive justice.

In philosophy, distributive justice is the economic, political, and social structure that constitute a larger debate on how resources should be divided in society. What is a 'fair' way of distributing resources? Many philosophers have created different frameworks that attempt to answer this question. Egalitarianism, prioritarianism and sufficientarianism are three such frameworks that each that a different approach with different priorities to answering the question. Egalitarianism focuses on equality and making sure everyone has an equal amount of resources. Prioritarianism prioritizes those least well-off, and making sure they can be brought up to the level of well-being of those better off. Sufficientarianism concentrates on sufficiency, and making sure everyone has enough, so that no one is in poverty. This paper will introduce ideas from egalitarianism and prioritarianism before focusing on sufficientarianism.

In Chapter One, I will present ideas from egalitarianism and prioritarianism, and then show how sufficientarianism came to be a theory of distributive justice from critiques of these theories, looking to Harry Frankfurt as the modern day father of sufficientarianism. He will respond to egalitarians as to why equality is not intrinsically valuable, and why we should focus on something more tangible, poverty. Then, I will introduce Roger Crisp who will flesh out the theory a bit more, and give us some variants on sufficientarianism. Finally, in Chapter One, Paula Casal will voice her objections to Frankfurt's and Crisps' sufficientarianism, and why it cannot stand alone as a theory of distributive justice.

In Chapter Two, I will reconsider Frankfurt's logic for creating sufficientarianism, and create a slightly altered theory of my own sufficientarianism based on these roots. This I will deem to be the best version of sufficientarianism to take on Casal's objections.

Lastly, in Chapter Three, I will contemplate the implications of the new theory I have created, and what exactly they mean for Casal's objections. Additionally, I will explore the possibilities of new problems that have arisen from the new theory, and respond to those.

Chapter 1: The First Attempt at Sufficientarianism

Egalitarianism is a theory of distributive justice that favors equality. The theory stems from the idea that everyone deserves an equal share of resources in order to be treated equally. Equality usually indicates a relationship between two people. Egalitarians typically believe that if one person has more resources than another, then the relationship cannot be equal. Like every concept, equality either is or is not intrinsically valuable; that is equality has some value for its own sake or it derives value from something else. Parfit distinguishes with this idea with two different types of egalitarian positions: telic-egalitarians and deontic-egalitarians. Telic-egalitarians agree with the idea that equality is intrinsically valuable while deontic-egalitarians praise equality for its instrumental value, and condemn inequality when inequality creates further moral consequence.

If we believe that equality is intrinsically valuable (and are telic-egalitarians), Parfit argues we must always find something positive about a state in which everything is equal. This includes cases when everyone's utility is lowered to the lowest level. Since we have made everything equal, there must be some benefit. While telic-egalitarians may be pluralists who care for things other than just equality, they may admit that such a "level-down" move would be overall bad even though it does do some good in creating equality. If we are to disagree with telic-egalitarians, we must disagree completely that leveling down does any good (hence, Parfit will coin this as the Leveling Down objection). Parfit contends that leveling down is completely bad because it does nothing to benefit those who are worse off. If we have created a situation in which everyone is worse off purely for the purpose of equality, those who are the absolute worse off are no better off because of it. Therefore, deontic-egalitarians escape this Leveling-Down objection because there is no moral reason that everyone should be brought to the same low level since equality is only instrumentally useful.

We might be tempted to become deontic-egalitarians, but Parfit advises against it. He proposes a case in which there are two worlds that have no idea of the other's existence.

(1) In world 1, people have utility level 100, and in the other world, people have utility level 200

(2) Everyone is at utility level 145 in both worlds

If we are deontic-egalitarians, we cannot make a claim against the first situation because there was no "wrong-doing, there is no injustice"[1]. Saying situation 2 is better as a deontic-egalitarians claim as an egalitarian that there must still be something valuable in equality, and we should then become telic-egalitarians. Instead, Parfit proposes a third option, seeing the need to help the people of the lowest level of utility, giving them priority when possible. This view, which he calls The Priority View, believes that benefiting those who are the worst off matters the most. The Priority View births the second theory of distributive justice which is known as prioritarianism. Prioritarianism argues that we value the increase for someone lower in resources more than those who have more resources. The same level increase for a person at a lower level is weighted more heavily than a person at a higher level. However, Parfit makes it clear that this type of comparison is not a relational view. While there is in some sense that benefiting me is good "because I am worse off than you", but it is also good just because I have a low level of utility, and need to be prioritized[2]. Prioritarians are concerned with absolute levels rather than relatives like egalitarians[3].

[1] Parfit, Derek. Equality and Priority. Blackwell Publishers, 1997. p212
[2] Parfit, Derek. Equality and Priority. p214
[3] ibid

The last theory of distributive justice, in this paper, sufficientarianism argues that people are entitled to a life above some threshold. Sufficientarians favor a system of justice where everyone can secure 'enough' and typically reject the idea that equality is intrinsically valuable. Frankfurt, who usually is thought of as the father of modern day sufficientarianism, sums up this idea by stating "what is important from the point of view of morality is not that everyone should have the same but that each should have enough"[4].

In Frankfurt's mind, poverty and greater suffering are the true problems rather than inequality. We have a duty to help those who are worse off, but distributive problems stem from the fact that some people have far too little and must live in impoverished conditions while others have far greater comforts and influence. If we are to redistribute materials, then it is likely this may "entail a reduction in inequality"[5]. However, equality should not be the goal. To figure why, Frankfurt imagines a scenario where everyone has economically the same, but far from a sufficient amount. We could easily create such a scenario by taking away resources from every individual until they are matched with the poorest person. This would not make anyone better off, but it would create equality (this is the same as the Leveling Objection from before). Thus, Frankfurt argues that equality is not a persuasive end goal – people could easily be equal and still be impoverished. Rather, we should set our sights on ensuring that everyone has enough; if people have more than enough or if the distribution is unequal, so long as everyone has enough, this isn't of much concern. This argument propels Frankfurt's Doctrine of Sufficiency, which states that ideally, all people have to meet some standard of living for them to be content. By

[4] Frankfurt, Harry. 2015. On Inequality. Princeton University Press. p7
[5] Frankfurt, Harry. On Inequality. p5

concentrating on making sure everyone meets the threshold of sufficiency, likely goods will be redistributed in the process from those with excessive wealth above the line of sufficiency.

Frankfurt argues that, at times, equality can be disastrous when it comes to distributing goods. Imagine we have a population of ten sickly people, and there are forty units of critical, life-saving medication. In order to survive, each person needs eight doses of the medicine. If distributed equally, each person will get four units of medicine, and everyone will die. In such cases of "exigent scarcity", when not everyone can meet the sufficiency threshold "the desirability of an egalitarian distribution may be quite out of the question"[6]. In this case, distributing things equally doesn't benefit anybody. No one is better off with four doses of medicine. Instead, we should promote sufficientarian principles that ensure that at least some people will meet the sufficiency threshold.

But what is enough by Frankfurt's definition? Frankfurt argues a line of sufficiency has been reached when people are satisfied with what they have, or when any reasonable person would be content with the amount that they have been given. By Frankfurt's own admission, "it is far from self-evident precisely what the doctrine of sufficiency means"[7]. In simpler words, the threshold for sufficiency is incredibly vague. While it would seem standard is at least somewhat high as one has to have 'enough' which implies some level of contentment, there isn't a set line where one can definitely know where sufficiency is. The ambiguity of his threshold in Frankfurt's opinion "is hardly a good reason for adopting" egalitarianism[8]. Compare sufficientarianism to egalitarianism, it may be much easier to calculate if people have the same resources. However, just because it is easier to have a measure for a theory of distributive justice

[6] Frankfurt, Harry. On Inequality. p36
[7] Frankfurt, Harry. On Inequality. p15
[8] ibid

does not make it more ‘right’. We could give everyone exactly one unit of every resource for an exact measurement, but this would be a terrible theory of distributive justice because it would not do anything to ensure that anyone has enough.

Frankfurt is not the only proponent of sufficientarianism that deals with the ambiguity in setting a sufficiency threshold. Crisp, another sufficientarian, also cannot define a hard threshold for the theory, arguing that we should seek to use compassion as a key metric in understanding what distributive justice requires in setting the sufficiency line. Since everyone may have completely different levels of compassion, Crisp advocates for the use of an average impartial spectator to be the judge. Whereas, Frankfurt had reasoned sufficiency was met once distributing more stuff to the person wouldn’t (or reasonably shouldn’t) remove any discontentment, Crisp upholds a slightly lower line of sufficiency since his threshold is crossed when an average impartial spectator no longer feels compassion.

However, compassion is not alone in measuring Crisp’s sufficiency threshold as he also believes that considerations of deservingness should be taken into our understanding of compassion. An impartial spectator is used to “track the claims of justice” and in cases where someone is below the sufficiency threshold because of their own fault, likely the spectator would feel less compassion for that person[9]. The person who now suffers may not be deserving of the harm, and should be brought up to the threshold, but the person is also less deserving of help than someone suffering through no fault of their own. While Frankfurt’s main concern is that individuals are brought up to the line of sufficiency, Crisp believes that prioritarian considerations have some weight below this threshold. The reason for this consideration still

[9] Crisp, Roger. “Egalitarianism and Compassion.” Ethics 114, 2003, p120

stems from compassion as Crisp believes that "our compassion may call for special concern for the worse off"[10]. We feel the most compassion for those who are the worst off because they are suffering the most. As a result, we should help the people furthest from the threshold first.

Crisp also differs in how he distributes goods above the line of sufficiency compared to Frankfurt. While Frankfurt just cares that everyone hit his threshold, Crisp thinks that there are some additional considerations after the line of sufficiency. Above the line, Crisp believes that we should distribute goods to whoever benefits the most from the additional units. If our choices are between giving between the rich and the super-rich, it may be best to give to the super rich if they benefit more than the rich from the extra units. Since everyone has enough to meet their basic needs with some comfort, Crisp thinks that we should consider who gets the most utility from each distribution of each good. The person getting the goods will then be the person who benefits the most from those goods.

To illustrate this, Crisp uses a case (the 'Beverly Hills case') where there is a choice between giving wine to 10 Rich individuals or 10,000 Super-rich individuals. If we give the wine to the 10 rich people, they will increase their utility from a level of 80 to 82, and if we give it to the 10,000 super rich people they will have a raise of level 90 to 92. Since both groups have surpassed the line of sufficiency, it would seem absurd to get into the minute details of who gets the wine. Neither group needs compassion, so priority is not given to either group. Instead, utilitarian considerations come into play because both groups are well-off enough. The wine would be distributed to the super-rich group where it would increase the total utility the most.

[10] Crisp, Roger. Egalitarianism and Compassion. p119

After the articles of Frankfurt and Crisp which promote sufficientarianism, Paula Casal inspects their arguments, and assesses how sufficientarian “principles could play within distributive ethics in supplementing rather than replacing principles of equality and priority” [11]. In her own article, Casal picks out what she believes are the strongest arguments for sufficientarianism from Frankfurt and Crisp. This leads her to have a large overarching argument in which she has sub-arguments in which she points out problems for sufficientarianism alone as a distributive justice theory. Casal makes a cumulative case for her theory by offering a series of sub-arguments in favor of it and a series of critiques of the rival accounts. Thus, it should be noted that all of her sub-arguments are working towards a larger goal in which Casal concludes on her own distributive justice theory, and comes to this conclusion through inference to the best explanation. For brevity’s sake, I will pick out what I consider to be the most interesting of Casal’s sub-arguments.

One of the first things Casal does is breaks down the sufficientarian theory into two theses:

The Positive Thesis: it should be stressed that “people live above a certain threshold, free from deprivation”[12].

The Negative Thesis: There are no additional, prioritarian or egalitarian distributive requirements above a given threshold.

Casal accepts the positive thesis of sufficientarianism. She states that “few deny that the elimination of certain types of deprivation, such as hunger, disease, and ignorance, are very

[11] Casal, Paula. “Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough.” Ethics 117, 2007, p297
[12] ibid

weighty political requirements"[13]. Having some sort of positive thesis, in her mind, is a given. However, she rejects the negative thesis idea that once sufficiency has been reached there are no more distributive requirements. Casal sees a problem with the idea that "when everyone has enough, it does not matter how unequally additional resources are distributed"[14].

One of her main problems with sufficientarianism is arguments focused on abundance. Frankfurt, in particular, argues that once sufficiency has been reached inequalities among those above the threshold are inconsequential to matters of greater suffering. In particular, Casal uses Crisp's Beverly Hills case to illustrate some critiques of abundance while showcasing why she believes it is a poor example.

Crisp had argued that whether the rich or the super-rich were benefited in the Beverly Hills case seemed inconsequential, and Casal notes that the example used by Crisp is intentionally misleading. The two groups that were to potentially benefit were at the highest levels, and the benefit itself, wine, was trivial. If instead, Crisp had an example with "life-changing benefits", Casal argues that the results would have been very different[15]. Imagine a situation where two groups, a super-rich group and a group just barely above a threshold, could be given with this sort of benefit. One possible example is a hospital that has just received a "fantastic donation, which includes spare rooms for visitors, delicious meals, and the best in world cinema"[16]. It can either go to the super rich group or the group just above the sufficiency threshold. Since both groups have met the threshold requirements, it would seem that there is no reason to prefer one over the other. So if hospital administers were to "arbitrarily decide to

[13] Casal, Paula. Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough. p299
[14] Casal, Paula. Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough. p307
[15] Casal, Paula. Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough. p312
[16] Casal, Paula. Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough. p307

devote all those luxuries to just a few fortunate beneficiaries, their decision would be unfair"[17]. Issues of justice are still arising when a preference is given for those who are so much better than those who are barely meeting the sufficiency threshold. While both groups may be sufficiently well off, one is obviously still much better off, so there still needs to be some justice when it comes to distribution. The intuition that inequalities are important even past a threshold is counterintuitive to sufficientarian principles. Sufficientarianism would leave us indifferent to how these goods were distributed because inequalities do not matter past the line of sufficiency.

Below the line of sufficiency, Casal also sees potential problems when it comes to distribution. These types of problems are problems of scarcity; problems for when not enough resources exist to get everyone to the sufficiency threshold. While the positive thesis establishes a basis for getting everyone above the line of sufficiency, it fails to establish how we should distribute when "not everyone can have enough"[18]. If we have medicine that "does not prevent death but merely makes death less painful", "it would be unfair if all the pain-relieving medicine was distributed to the fortunate few"[19]. This medicine would not "secure sufficiency", yet it would seem that distributing it all to one person or distributing it such that some are more likely to be the "fortunate few"[20]. It would seem that we would want to maximize the number of people who are as well off as possible even if sufficiency can't be achieved. Yet, under sufficientarian principles, there is no reason to distribute things equally since no one will achieve sufficiency.

When sufficiency can be achieved for some below the threshold, but only if things are divided unequally, Casal argues that equality is still a valuable concept. In Frankfurt's example

[17] ibid
[18] ibid
[19] ibid
[20] ibid

where there is only "enough medicine to save only five of ten patients", Frankfurt assumes that an egalitarian would favor an equal distribution of resources even when it leads to the death of all the patients[21]. However, the egalitarian position is not committed to distributing resources equally means everyone is just as bad off. Rather, egalitarians must find some way to distribute benefits in a way that "satisfies each individual's equal claim to be benefited, that is, by giving everybody an equal chance" at sufficiency[22]. If instead of medicine, the resource in question was the Mona Lisa, egalitarians wouldn't shred the painting into ten different pieces, but find some way to fairly distribute rather than destroy the resource. The egalitarian view allows for sufficiency, but also distributes the resources in a fair way. Under Frankfurt's view, we can prefer certain individuals because all that matters is securing sufficiency.

The drive to secure sufficiency can be problematic as it may prioritize certain individuals over others. If one accepts both the positive and the negative thesis, then it is possible to imagine a situation where there are a limited amount of resources and only some people who already have more can get to sufficiency. Casal illustrates this kind of example using three individuals, Ana, Bea and Celia, all in need of surgery. Ana has lived a horrible life and despite the prospect of surgery, it is determined she will never reach sufficiency. While Bea and Celia have both lived sufficiently good lives, Celia has had a much more comfortable life. Thus arises the question of how sufficientarianism measures success. Ana will never reach sufficiency even with the surgery, so giving her more resources may seem pointless especially to someone like Frankfurt who seems to emphasize the importance of people being able to reach the sufficiency threshold. Giving the resources to Bea over Celia may signal a preference for valuing those at lower levels

[21] ibid
[22] ibid

of resources which sufficientarians reject above a threshold. Casal leaves us with these question from sufficientarianism: what do we ultimately care about? If we just care about the sufficiency threshold, sufficientarians may be quick to write off people who cannot reach the sufficiency threshold, disregarding them. As a result, sufficientarianism becomes about how many people can reach sufficiency even if some people have to suffer with incredibly low levels of goods as a result of such policies. If we care about poverty, it would seem we have to incorporate some prioritarian considerations even if people can't reach a threshold at all.

Casal does ultimately agree with the positive thesis, and that there should be some "guaranteed social minimum"[23]. Yet, she believes that the negative thesis fails, and that sufficientarianism on its own is not enough. As a result, sufficiency should be used to "supplement rather than replace equality and priority"[24]. From her objections of sufficientarianism, she comes to the conclusion that we should favor "sufficiency-constrained luck egalitarianism" because it will allow "some inequalities in outcome may arise justly but deny that individuals' [can have] less than enough" even when it is voluntary[25]. Luck egalitarianism "insists that it is unjust for some individuals to be worse off than others through no choice of their own but denies that inequalities are unjust when produced by variations in voluntary choice against a background of equal opportunity"[26]. As a result, Casal does find something intrinsically valuable about equality, but it is only right to pursue in situations where there has been an injustice done. Yet she does not fall victim to the Leveling Down Objection that Parfit poses because she will not correct inequalities unless there was a voluntary choice

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[23] Casal, Paula. Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough. p323
[24] Casal, Paula. Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough. p318
[25] Casal, Paula. Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough. p322
[26] ibid

made. Even then, she believes there is an absolute social minimum that we can allow people to fall to even with poor choices.

Casal comes to the conclusion that sufficientarianism cannot stand up on its own. By itself, Casal argues that Sufficientarianism does not do enough for equality above and below the threshold, and the theory can only supplement other disruptive justice theories like luck egalitarianism.

Chapter Two: Revising Sufficientarianism

Picking up from Chapter One, we have just reviewed potential problems of sufficientarianism. Specifically, we looked at two main types of problems with the theory– problems with scarcity and problems with abundance. Scarcity problems deal with distribution below the line of sufficiency and abundance problems deal with above the line of sufficiency. Our goal for chapter two is create our own working theory as to what sufficientarianism is, so we can get the best form of sufficientarianism to answer these problems.

What do Sufficientarians Care About?

Before stepping into the problems and potential solutions of sufficientarianism, we return to the roots of the theory. We should understand why sufficientarianism came up as a theory of distributive justice, what the theory intended to respond to, and whether current theories proposed versions of sufficientarianism do what they intended.

To explore this particular issue, we will look at Casal's objection that she terms "The Choice between Possible Units of Concern"[27]. I prefer to think about this issue as the "What do Sufficientarians Care About" topic because it addresses what sufficientarianism is supposed to be measuring as success, and thus valuing at the end of the day. Casal's objection in her three people, Ana, Bea and Celia case. Casal argues that Ana (who can't reach sufficiency even with

[27] Casal, Paula. Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough. p314

surgery) is written off via “a principle requiring the minimization of insufficiency does not provide any reason to operate”[28].

On Ana’s issue, Casal believes that sufficientarianism cannot do anything to better her condition because she will never reach sufficiency. Her view is that sufficientarianism measures success through a “minimization of insufficiency”, and so helping someone like Ana doesn’t do anything[29]. Giving Ana more resources won’t create another person over the sufficiency threshold. Casal’s view of sufficientarianism has a measure of success where we are best off when the most people are over the sufficiency threshold.

Frankfurt’s view of sufficientarianism is rather non-descriptive. At its core, Frankfurt hopes to use sufficientarianism to “repair a society in which many have far too little”[30]. Thus, he believes “our basic focus should be on reducing both poverty”[31]. It seems doubtful that the correct way to interrupt this is to say that if someone cannot achieve sufficiency or be pulled out of poverty in his view, we will not distribute any more resources to them. What Frankfurt does imply, is that he does not believe that egalitarian considerations matter below the line of sufficiency. This is why in his medicine case, he is willing to distribute more medicine to certain people over others. He has not forgotten about the other people that have not reached sufficiency, but rather is focusing on the ones that he can guarantee sufficiency at that moment. Does Frankfurt’s view still care about giving resources to people even without the guarantee of sufficiency? On this matter, Frankfurt claims that “that it is never or only rarely beneficial to move closer to an important utility threshold without actually crossing it. It may certainly be

[28] ibid
[29] ibid
[30] Frankfurt, Harry. On Inequality. p5
[31] ibid

beneficial, either because it increases the likelihood that the threshold will ultimately be crossed, or because—quite apart from the significance of crossing the threshold— additional resources may provide desirable increments of utility"[32]. So, yes, even when a person will not immediately reach sufficiency, we should still distribute resources to them in the hopes that eventually they will reach sufficiency. Additionally, even apart from that reaching sufficiency altogether, a person with more resources closer to the line of sufficiency has a higher level of utility, and thus is better off. Greater suffering is the enemy in Frankfurt's view, and any resources that can be distributed to get someone close to sufficiency to alleviate suffering is still something that his form of sufficientarianism cares about.

Crisp uses compassion as a metric for distributing resources. He uses his compassion principle which states "absolute priority is to be given to benefits to those below the threshold at which compassion enters. Below the threshold, benefiting people matters more the worse off those people are, the more of those people there are, and the greater the size of the benefit in question"[33]. As a result, prioritarian and utilitarian considerations play into how he decides things are distributed below the line of sufficiency. We give things to people who are lower from the threshold because we feel more compassion for those people who are suffering more or for great groups of suffering. Casal commends Crisp's incorporation of prioritarian consideration stating that "Ana's case shows why sufficientarians should, as Crisp recognizes, incorporate prioritarian considerations within their overall view"[34]. Similar to Frankfurt, Crisp doesn't outright state what he views success under his form of sufficientarianism would be, but he does

[32] Frankfurt, Harry. On Inequality. p40
[33] Crisp, Roger. 2003 "Equality, Priority, and Compassion," Ethics 113, p758.
[34] Casal, Paula. Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough. p314-315

use the compassion principle to further prioritarian considerations. This position for Crisp would mean that he would also want people to be as well off as possible, close to the line of sufficiency.

While both Frankfurt and Crisp want people to get close to the line of sufficiency, and then achieve sufficiency, the key distinction between Frankfurt and Crisp is that Frankfurt does not believe in extra considerations below the line of sufficiency. Crisp advocates in bringing people up with the Compassion Principle which takes these prioritarian and utilitarian considerations into play. Crisp would advocate that we help give resources below the line of sufficiency to the people we feel most compassion for. For Frankfurt, he is most concerned with issues of extreme scarcity – issues where not everyone will achieve sufficiency or even an increase in sufficiency in the long run, and what will ensure some people get sufficiency is an uneven distribution of resources. What Frankfurt's version of sufficientarianism seems to care about is long-term increases in utility. Frankfurt agrees it is reasonable to assign a higher priority to give additional resources to people below the threshold, but argues that simply giving people resources below the threshold "may not actually improve the condition of those people at all"[35]. The assumption Frankfurt has made in this statement is that some people cannot be helped by additional amounts of resources. As such, we would be better to distribute resources elsewhere, not because we do not care about these people, but because giving them any more resources would not move them closer to sufficiency.

In light of considering what sufficientarians care about, it's important to remember the motivation for creating the theory in the first place. As Frankfurt is considered the 'father' of modern-day sufficientarianism, he is perhaps the most influential philosopher in setting the

[35] Frankfurt, Harry. On Inequality. p39

origins for the theory. Sufficientarianism is a response to egalitarianism, fighting the narrative that "our most fundamental challenge is not the fact that the incomes of Americans are widely unequal", but that the most pressing challenge is that "too many of our people are poor"[36]. In addition, Frankfurt finds it "indisputably" that the extremely wealthy have "a great deal more than they need in order to live active, productive, and comfortable lives"[37]. Gluttony has its own harmful effects, including "harmful psychological and moral effects upon the lives of the gluttons themselves"[38]. Poverty and gluttony are two sides of a coin where a person either has too much or too little resources. Both are a bad because they cause suffering for the person who is affected as well as society at large. Thus, the motivation of sufficientarianism is two-fold: relieve greater suffering through reducing gluttony and poverty.

How did this line of reasoning, that is – greater suffering excess wealth and excess wealth are the enemy, lead us to sufficientarianism? What sufficientarianism seems to suggest is that at some point, sufficiency can be reached so that a person is no longer considered impoverished. Below this line, we, as a society of resource distributors, have a special obligation to help people who have not met this sufficiency level. When people are no longer impoverished, their choices (in combination with luck) determine how well-off they are. Under sufficientarian theory, as long as a person is not suffering from poverty or excess gluttony, people can control to a large degree how well-off they are. This is a major distinction between egalitarian and prioritarian theories where the goal is focused on closing gaps between groups of people. Sufficientarianism recognizes that people will make their own choices, and the resulting consequences should be

[36] Frankfurt, Harry. On Inequality. p3
[37] Frankfurt, Harry. On Inequality. p4
[38] ibid

theirs to bear. People have a personal responsibility to manage their own resources, but they also have the freedom to be as well-off as they would like as long as they are hoarding unnecessarily.

To see the appeal of sufficientarianism in this regard, we can imagine two siblings, Dan and Ellie, who have taken very different life paths. Dan has always worked hard, and as a result, he does well for himself. Dan's luck hasn't been perfect, for example, his house was hit quite harshly after a bad storm. However, Dan chose to buy insurance, and insurance, when available, allows Dan to have a safety net that otherwise would be left to brute risks. Ellie, on the other hand, has enjoyed her leisure time, and so she has many fewer resources since she does not devote as much time to work. This is her choice, and she has willingly made this trade-off. As sufficientarianism, we are just concerned that neither one suffers as a result from poverty or excess gluttony. Unless a person is really in great poverty or hoarding resources gluttonously, we have no responsibility to insert ourselves into how other people use their resources.

Unfortunately, I think this is where both Frankfurt, and Crisp fail in their versions of sufficientarianism. A person who hoards resources situation should be taken as seriously as a person who lacks resources. There is a line of sufficiency in both Frankfurt's and Crisp's versions of sufficientarianism where the people below the line are considered to have not enough. These are the people to who we have a special obligation to give resources. But, if we want to combat gluttony, we also must think about who we are taking resources from. Is everyone above this line of sufficiency, on a level of gluttony, where we should take resources from them? Most likely, not. There must exist a space between having too few resources and having too many resources. But under both accounts of their sufficientarianism, a person will always fall on one side of the sufficiency threshold, making them a giver or a taker of resources.

The sufficiency line suggests this, that there is a shift as soon as that line is crossed, and that a person no longer becomes 'in need' and now becomes someone who helps bring people up to the line of sufficiency. Casal notes this as odd when talking about sufficientarianism theories that only support one threshold for the reason that "it is strange to think that individuals can suddenly plummet from having *absolute priority* to *no priority whatsoever*"[39]. I would add that it may even be stranger than Casal believes because our theory of distributive justice is not just about giving resources, but about taking them to redistribute them as well. Any theory of distributive justice must consider where resources that can distributed be are coming from, and the most obvious answer is in the form of taxation. So a person who has crossed the line jumps from absolute priority in receiving to absolute priority in giving.

This leaves us with a theory where neither proposed version of sufficientarianism really leaves room for people that are in cases where having just enough is a plausible position. While the goal of sufficientarianism is to reach sufficiency, the goal is not to reach sufficiency and then more. If a person gets to a point where they have enough resources, and then continues to collect resources to the point of hoarding, this goes against sufficientarians trying to reduce gluttony. There should be an area in which people who have more resources so they are not impoverished or demand our compassion, but they do not have too many resources so that they have exhibited greediness. Sufficientarianism is about aiming for this area of sufficiency. Having a single line of sufficiency signifies not only are the people that cross it sufficient, but now these people have too much.

[39] Casal, Paula. Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough. p317

One of the problems with sufficientarianism that Casal identifies is that there are problems with both a high threshold and a low threshold sufficiency. Casal argues that on one hand, thresholds that are too low may serve little purpose and lead to big gaps above the line of sufficiency, but on the other hand, thresholds that are too high may, ironically, lead to move people being left behind. To demonstrate why too low thresholds may be a bad idea, imagine a threshold set at some low level. Because it is lower, people can meet sufficiency with ease. However, once they do, it is no longer a problem if any relevant disparities exist. After all, we only care that sufficiency has been met, and poverty eliminated, not that some people are ultra-rich and some are just barely out of poverty. As for high thresholds, we return to Frankfurt's example of 10 patients needing medicine. If we have a particularly high threshold, so that we have to "maximize the number of people who have enough", we might be forced to invest "all the resources available in just one individual so that she reaches a threshold", and "thereby allowing nine deaths"[40]. A high threshold means it is harder to reach sufficiency, and if we measure success by minimizing insufficiency, then we may leave people behind so that a few can reach the very high threshold.

With our reasoning for becoming sufficientarians, neither low nor high thresholds seem appropriate. Low thresholds may set a goal so that no one faces resource poverty, but they treat people with just enough resources and people with excessive resources the same. High thresholds may make it so the people that are giving the resources are those above the threshold, and therefore those who truly have enough; but, even if we ignore Casal's idea of minimizing

[40] Casal, Paula. Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough. p316

insufficiency and focus on Crisp's idea of compassion (and by extension prioritarian considerations), we still treat people who likely have enough as a taker of a resource.

At its core, having a single line of sufficiency does not properly do what sufficientarianism intended to do. If we care about preventing two things (poverty and gluttony), then we put limits, so that people stay in a certain range of resources where their own choices will determine where they fall. These limits are the thresholds of sufficientarianism where either above or below, we have a motive to intervene (see Figure 1)[41]. This sufficientarianism focuses on two thresholds where each threshold has its own goal. The bottom threshold's goal is to be a marker of where poverty is. This bottom-limit works to ensure a person can have enough resources, and is our 'minimum standard of living'. At the bottom-limit, people should be able to afford the basic necessities for a modest daily life. The upper threshold's goal is to ensure that people don't hoard resources unnecessarily or live lives of excess glamor while others live in poverty.

[41] This theory with an upper and a lower limit will referred to thought the rest of the paper as two threshold sufficientarianism

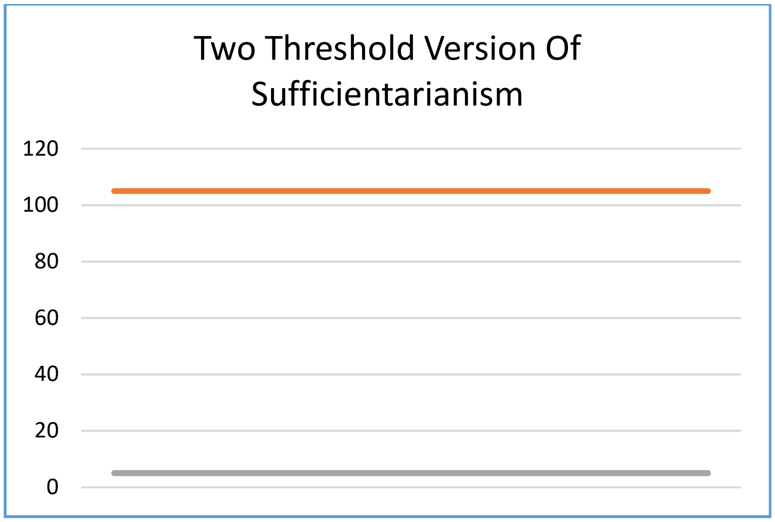

Figure 1: Two Threshold Version of Sufficientarianism

To return to Casal's three person case, I do not question why she worries about Ana as she is below the line of sufficiency. However, neither the best version of sufficientarianism would not advocate for ignoring someone just because they would have a hard time reaching sufficiency. Making sure poverty is alleviated, even if it is not eliminated is a part of sufficientarianism. However, I do wonder why Casal also worries about Bea. While Casal pities Bea because Bea has lived a "barely good enough" life, I think Casal is phrasing Bea's life in a way that we would have sympathy for Bea[42]. Casal has, by her own account, put Bea over a sufficiency threshold, albeit by a slim margin, but to the point where her life has been reasonably good. Casal compares Bea to Celia, and concerns that any extra luxury treatment that we give to Celia will only further the divide between the two. However, this is where Casal has misunderstood sufficientarianism. Sufficientarianism is not about Bea, a perfectly content person, versus Celia, a person who has an excessive amount of stuff. Sufficientarianism is about Ana, a person with far too little, versus Celia. Bea is the overlooked person with 'just enough'

[42] Casal, Paula. Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough. p315

that she should not be a taker nor a receiver of resources. Under the new proposed two-threshold version of sufficientarianism, Bea would likely be above the bottom threshold by Casal's remarks. As a result, she would not get special treatment or resources. Nor would Celia, who may be above the upper threshold, and could be expected to contribute resources.

If what sufficientarians care about is making sure people have some range of enough that is a resource amount so that people can cohabitate without living in poverty or in excess, then the current working theories have not created an area for these people to exist. Where current sufficientarianism fails is that it only provides two spaces for people to exist: above the threshold and below the threshold. Each space suggests a different thing that the theory is against. Being above the threshold suggests that one must give resources to reduce excess. Being below the threshold suggests one must receive resources to reduce poverty. Yet if poverty and excess are always being reduced, then there is no neutral zone where people can simply have enough. By creating a two-threshold version to combat poverty and gluttony, we allow for people to make their own choices with their resources.

Chapter 3: Group Responsibilities and Problems

Now that we have outlined our new version of sufficientarianism, it seems appropriate to take a look at what responsibilities each group will take on as a form of restorative justice.

Our new theory of sufficientarianism gives us three 'areas', each area representing something different. The area below both thresholds, the lowest tier, is the area where people are suffering from poverty, and do not have enough resources to be considered 'sufficient'. The area between the lower-threshold and upper-threshold, which we may refer to as the middle tier, is where people have gathered 'enough' resources, and personal choice will determine where they fall. The area above both these thresholds, or the highest tier of resources, is the area of gluttony, where people hold so many resources that it in some way prohibits people beneath the upper-threshold from gathering more resources. In this chapter, we will explore what responsibilities each group faces, specifically with regards to resources redistribution and taxation, and potential critiques how each area is dealt with.

Problems with Sufficiency

We turn first towards people in the middle tier, who are sufficiently well off. This area is not one discussed by Casal as both Frankfurt and Crisp fashioned versions of sufficientarianism that only had two areas (above or below a single threshold). Nonetheless, we should explore this area for potential problems after stating the responsibilities of the group.

In our new theory, the individuals in the middle tier are responsible for taxation for public goods, but not for resources redistribution. In this area, people have been determined to have 'enough' resources, so taking away resources or giving resources for the purposes of redistribution is counterintuitive. We would still tax this group, but for reasons of public goods. . Public goods are a type of good that are non-excludable and non-rivalrous, meaning that the use of the good by one person does not exclude the use of the good by another and providing the good does not reduce the amount of the good. As a result, public goods are under produced without the assistance of a supervising body. Additionally, public goods tend to benefit most people, so while there are taxes on this group to create such types of goods, the ultimate benefit is for the group. The second group has sufficiently acquired enough resources so that personal choice is should be the determinate of where a person lands in the second area. However, giving back resources for redistribution amongst the population is slightly different from the matter of taxation for creating public goods. While all groups will benefit from the creation of public goods, not all groups *can* contribute to the creation. Therefore, we as a society only ask that groups with 'enough' resources, contribute to something that would be a beneficial collective project.

Of course, the issue of taxation brings up Casal's negative thesis, the idea that sufficientarianism must treat everyone above a threshold the same. However, in this case, we do not have to treat people with the same regards to taxation responsibilities. As Casal, herself admits, the positive and the negative thesis do not have to invoke the same threshold[43]. Our lower threshold raises the idea that everyone should have enough to live a life free from poverty, but it is our upper threshold that places the cut off where egalitarian and prioritarian

[43] Casal, Paula. Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough. p298

considerations no longer have any considerations. The reason for doing this sort of taxation policy is that although personal choice should be the determinate of where a person falls in this area, we still place a slightly higher priority on making sure people towards the lower-threshold do not fall below the lower threshold entirely. While they carry some responsibility for contributing to public goods, taking away too many resources diminishes their well-being potentially at an increased rate due to laws of diminishing marginal utility. A progressive tax system best implements a fair system that puts the burden equally on all people. This is in counter to a system when people would be taxes either a resource amount or resource percent. Here, while things might be 'equal' the burden of the tax is not equal on every single person. To imagine this further, think of a 10% tax on someone with a lower resource level versus a higher resource level. While the 10% is proportional to their wealth, it does not affect the two people the same. The wealthier individual can bear the burden much easier than the lower income individual relative to their utility level. Therefore the system that we would want to implement would be one that most progressive counties (including the United States) have in place.. The resource level that a person in the middle tier has is taxed in a bracket system, and each tax rate applies only to the level of resources in that tax bracket. So a person at the top of the middle tier pays the corresponding tax rates for their resource level until they reach a new bracket. At the highest bracket, they pay the highest tax, but only on the level of resources that has put them at that bracket. Essentially, people on the lower end of the area are more sensitive to changes in their resource level because taking away an additional resource from them impacts them greater than taking away an additional resource from someone higher up. Therefore, we tax these individuals at a progressive rate for the purposes of supporting public goods.

However, besides the taxation for the creation of public goods, we treat everyone in this group the same. No one has a duty to contribute resources for the purpose of redistribution. By doing this, we acknowledge that citizens assume responsibility for the management of their own resources, and can use those resources in whatever ways see fit to fulfill their preferences. Inequalities will naturally rise out of how people differ in spending or saving resources, and the job of a supervising body is not to correct for trivial differences when everyone is living above a poverty standard. The choices of how one person spends their resources should reflect on them, and not on other people. As a result, if a person falls in resource level we should not expect other people to compensate them for the choices that lead them to this position. More importantly though, we should not dedicate resources to helping people who are already above the lower level poverty line when we can help people below the lower level poverty line. Our concern is guaranteeing everyone a resource minimum. Of course, this will apply if any person falls below the lower threshold, and we will guarantee that they are returned to the minimum threshold. But our concern is guaranteeing that everyone can be at the lower threshold.

Naturally, this guaranteed social minimum may some criticism. While Casal actually finds the idea of a social minimum positive, and thinks that "few deny that the elimination of certain types of deprivation, such as hunger or disease, [and many] … accept Rawls's view that a just society will guarantee a social minimum", our view goes further than simply just eliminating deprivation[44]. The lower-level threshold is meant to eliminate poverty altogether which means that it would ensure that people have access to things needed to function in daily lives (comfortable shelter, transportation, etc). If we guarantee this, we guarantee it to people regardless of their situation, and some critics may argue people could choose to not work at all

[44] Casal, Paula. Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough. p299

and live off of this guaranteed minimum. While this is a possibility and some people may take it, personally, I believe it is sad way to look at humanity. Furthermore, while no empirical studies have been done to prove such the hypothesis that most people would continue to work, case studies have looked at how people react when a universal basic income is enacted. The closest case study comes "from 1974 to 1979 when the Canadian government partnered with the province of Manitoba" and "guaranteed annual income offered to every eligible family in Dauphin… and smaller numbers of residents in Winnipeg"[45]. The area continued to thrive, and for "primary earners — those with full-time jobs — there was virtually no decline in work"[46]. While we do not have a social minimum guaranteed in the United States, we have lots of social programs that could theoretically allow people to do little work, and live off of government assistance. Thus it would seem, most people choose not to take this route of full leisure, probably because they want more resources than would be guaranteed at the lowest point. If their utility can increase with extra resources and leisure has diminishing marginal returns for most people, then working would be the best way to increase utility.

While the middle tier has taxation responsibilities, we also have responsibilities to this tier as well. It is important not only to guarantee sufficiency, but to continue to this guarantee. Although this may be a small concern for this tier, ensuring that the positive thesis is held, so that everyone does has enough at all times, and no one falls below the bottom threshold is part of the responsibility of sufficientarianism.

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[45] Flowers, Andrew. "What Would Happen If We Just Gave People Money?" FiveThirtyEight. 2016.
[46] ibid

Problems with Abundance

The first group that we will look at is the individuals that fall into upper-tier. As we saw in Chapter One, after the line of sufficiency has been passed, sufficientarians argue that no prioritarian or egalitarian distributive requirements should apply. In our new two-threshold version of sufficientarianism, we will only consider those who have passed the top tier to have an overabundance of resources. Thus, these individuals will be treated slightly differently in terms of resource burdens than people in the middle tier who only have 'enough' resources. Groups over the upper threshold have a burden to redistribute their resources because they have collected too many resources that it affects their well-being as well as the well-being of others who now are heavily restricted in the amount of resources they can collect. The idea that we would be indifferent to treatment to groups above the upper threshold was seen as a weak point by Casal as inequalities above this line, in her mind, still have the possibility to constitute an injustice.

Casal argues that it is not just that sufficientarians are indifferent "to inequalities among millionaires and billionaires", but that they are indifferent to inequalities of people who have barely enough and billionaires[47]. In our two-threshold verison of sufficientarianism, this is no longer the case. People who have just enough will fall above a different threshold from people who have exorbitant amounts of money. As a result, they will be quite treated differently in terms of their taxation responsibilities. However, it does still hold under our new two-threshold theory sufficientarianism that within the upper tier, individuals will be treated the same as other group members.

[47] Casal, Paula. Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough. p10

One critique Casal provides for individuals on the highest tier is that these individuals will be treated the same in regards to taxation because sufficientarianism "cannot support the preference for progressive over regressive taxes"[48]. Casal never says why in particular she prefers progressive taxes though it can be inferred that she worries that people just above the sufficiency line and people well above the sufficiency line have the same responsibilities under sufficientarianism. She believes that progressive taxes cannot be applied above the threshold because they suggest once you have enough, egalitarian and prioritaian considerations still matter. It is worth considering if progressive taxes may not be the right thing for people above the upper sufficiency threshold.

Consider how a sufficientarian would tax above the line of sufficiency. Since sufficientarians are theoretically indifferent to the inequalities above the threshold, the same tax policy should be implemented on everyone. One way they might choose to implement the same tax system is with a flat dollar amount tax. Sufficientarians might choose to tax everyone above the line of sufficiency a $50,000 tax. This would likely be regressive as people with smaller income, closer to the line of sufficiency would pay a higher percentage of their income in taxes versus people who were way above sufficiency. Another way sufficientarians could tax people is by charging everyone a flat percent tax of 30% of their income per month. If a person has reached sufficiency, they are expected to contribute a portion back to helping others reaching sufficiency, and everyone is burdened by the same percent on their income. The last way sufficientarians could tax people is taxing people's level of well-being. Since the loss of money does not have the same effect on everyone's utility, we could find a way to calculate how losing a certain amount of money on a very wealthy person versus a person just above the threshold

[48] Casal, Paula. Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough. p311

impacts their well-being. The tax would go after make sure each person had an equal amount of utility lost. Though this last idea is much more abstract, it still treats everyone the same. People above the upper sufficiency threshold would lose resources at an equal rate relative to their utility.

Before I get into what I think is the correct way to deal with resources redistribution policy above the upper line of sufficiency, I want to more directly respond to Casal's argument. My belief is that sufficientarianism should incorporate a high upper threshold into the theory, so it is the wealthiest individuals, those with an overabundance of resources, who have to deal with this resource redistribution. A sufficientarianism theory with a higher upper threshold avoid problems between people who have barely enough and people with lots of resources because the higher a threshold becomes, the less we care about differences in responsibilities between trillionaires and billionaires.

This returns us to resources redistribution responsibilities. If we have set a high upper threshold such that only those who really have more than 'enough' – people who have money and are not concerned about it then a flat tax is best. To understand why, we return to our sufficientarian theory, and Frankfurt who states that the most "basic focus [of sufficientarianism] should be on reducing both poverty and excessive affluence"[49]. We should tax people above the sufficiency threshold, those who hold a gluttonous amount, a high flat tax in order to redistribute it, and move people closer to the line of sufficiency. Regardless of how people above the upper-threshold acquired their resources, they now have an over-abundance of resources which is inherently a bad thing. This group has accumulated so much wealth that they are at a resource

[49] Frankfurt, Harry. On Inequality. p7

surplus level, and owe it to the larger society to redistribute resources back because their congregation of wealth is somehow preventing others from accessing more wealth. These individuals hold a responsibility as members of a productive society to be a part of a redistributive policy. It does not make sense that every single person would contribute to a redistribution policy in the same way because people have varying levels of resources. Our upper-threshold is set so high in part because people who have met this level, while they may have varying levels of resources, have such high levels of varying resources that a very high flat resource tax impacts them all in very similar ways. In terms of pure resources distribution, it is only the top-tier group that will have to give back resources for the purposes of redistribution.

Perhaps this logic seems counterintuitive given that I have just explained that a progressive tax system should be placed on the middle tier. To clarify why I think this is not a logical inconsistency, I should add that even people in the upper-tier are treated like people in the middle tier in the progressive tax system until they reach the highest threshold. This means all of the wealth that they have accumulated will be taxed in the same system as anyone in the middle tier until the wealth reaches the upper-bracket. At this point, we treat all individual wealth the same. The progressive tax system is still in place, but it has the last bracket defined by a flat tax on wealth over the upper threshold. The reason for instituting this sort of tax bracket is that at some point we must have the final tax bracket. We cannot have tax brackets going on for infinity. At some point, we create a line where over this wealth limit, you are expected to pay a high tax and no more brackets occur.

Some critics may take issue with this line of arguing. While we have successfully dealt with Casal who had problems with people who have barely enough and billionaires, we now would have a system in place where multi-millionaires and billionaires are treated the same.

Some people may want an even more progressive system that further divides wealth among these individuals. It may be compelling to further divide wealthy people, so that the more endowed are paying even higher rates of taxes. However, if we believe in sufficientarianism, then we are inclined to believe that the problem is poverty, not wealth, and discussions that would compare ultra-wealthy people become distracting. For the people that would disagree, I would urge they read the reasons we turned to sufficientarianism in the first place. If we reasoned our version of sufficientarianism to be the right theory, then it should follow that the implications of the theory are also right. One implication, in this case, is that above a certain threshold, we treat people the same because we have decided that discussions regarding excess wealth lead to people comparing their wealth status with others and jealousy rather than real progress[50].

This sort of giving back is not a punishment, but rather the responsibility of the group that has congregated the most resources. It should be considered that some sort of exorbitantly high flat wealth tax might help everyone, including the people above the upper-threshold. As previously stated, when resources congregate in the hands of the wealthiest individuals, they tend to not be productive resources. Without 'freeing up' resources, there is "lower investment in education and health, [which ultimately] impairs long-term growth"[51]. Enabling term economic growth in the long-run by freeing up resources is something that benefits everyone. Simultaneously, allowing the wealthiest individuals to keep most (but not gluttonous amounts of resources), "endows the rich with the means to start businesses, and creates incentives to increase productivity and investment, promoting economic activity"[52]. The allowed levels of differing

[50] Frankfurt, Harry. On Inequality. p14

[51] Grigoli, Francesco. "A New Twist in the Link Between Inequality and Economic Development." International Monetary Fund. 2017.

[52] ibid

levels of resources is a benefit of sufficientarianism because some level inequality promotes economic growth, but our two-threshold version puts a loose restraint in the form of taxation on the extreme resource amass, ensuring that inequality does not get too out of hand.

At this point, a flat tax is instituted for all people above the upper-threshold. People who have passed this threshold have accumulated so much wealth that the best thing to do is tax them all at a very high rate. When this threshold has been passed, egalitarian and prioritarian considerations do not come into play because our concern is that these people have gotten too wealthy in comparison with everyone else. There is no need to treat people above the upper-threshold as people who have committed different offensives. They have all hoarded too many resources, and the construction of a high flat tax for people of a very high wealth category signals that it does not matter how much surplus of resources a person has. The mere fact that anyone has a surplus is what is the bad thing and what the high flat tax attempts to get rid of.

Critics might argue that a flat tax for the wealthiest group is still controversial. After all, if gluttony is bad shouldn't have more resources, and therefore are more gluttonous by hoarding more resources have to face a higher tax? While this logic might be appealing at first, it would also suggest that less gluttony is somehow better. If I hoard resources at a high level, but I do it at just a smaller scale than someone else who hoards way more resources than me, shouldn't I face a smaller tax because I have committed a smaller crime? The answer is, no. Here, taxation is used as a form of restorative justice for people who have collected too many resources. Gluttony or the hoarding of resources is not something that is 'less bad' or 'more good' when people decide to hoard less. The wrongdoing is still the same, albeit on a smaller scale, but simply because it was done less does not make it less wrong.

When we return to our theory, we see also that sufficientarianism would not promote progressive policies between the very wealthy and the very very wealthy. Both groups deserve to face a high redistribution tax. If things start becoming about “who owes more”, then things stop becoming about “how can we help reduce poverty”. Discussions about excess wealth are misleading because they move the debate away from more helpful poverty policies. If we institute progressive taxes, then we signal that we care about the difference in resource level with people who have too much. But this is not what we care about. What we care about is just that people have too many resources to begin with compared to people who have far too little. No matter where a person who has reached the upper threshold falls, they have an excess of resources.

As this group is the best-off in terms of resources, we hold them accountable for contributing to the redistribution of resources and the taxation for public goods. The wealth that they contribute back goes, in part, to help people below the lowest-threshold, and also, in part, to the creation of public goods. Intuitively, it makes sense that the group most endowed with resources has the most responsibilities in terms of taxation and resource redistribution. The group has these responsibilities because they are not just better off, but because they are substantially better off. Taking away resources from them is done to benefit everyone, this top tier included who will profit from economic growth that occurs when unused resources are freed up.

Problems with Scarcity

Finally, we will look at the group below both thresholds. This group has no responsibility to give back resources for taxation or redistribution purposes. While they do benefit from public goods created from taxation, the group is at a level of resources that has been deemed not sufficient for living a comfortable life where basic needs are met. As a result of their impoverished state, taking resources would be an unnecessary burden and would send them further into a state of poverty. Since our responsibility is to get people closer and then reach sufficiency, we would be counteracting this idea if we put a tax on people that haven't yet met sufficiency. Rather, we will distribute resources to this group with the means that more resources will increase levels of well-being, and move people closer to the lower threshold. It seems doubtful that people would argue that people in poverty should – or even somehow can – redistribute resources as a group so that they no longer in poverty. Being beneath both thresholds, the first group suffers from having not enough resources so taxing them would be taking away resources from a group that has not yet gotten enough to comfortably meet their basic needs.

While this group has straightforward responsibilities, it does not leave us without potential problems for the group, specifically our responsibilities to this group. We have determined that this group does not have a role in giving resources, but they still have to receive resources which means we have to determine how to best distribute resources, especially in cases of scarcity when not enough resources exist for everyone below the threshold.

In order to consider this issue, we will reexamine Frankfurt's medicine example where not enough medicine existed to get everyone to the point of sufficiency. Frankfurt argued that sufficientarianism would be the best theory for distribution because it would ensure that that five patients would achieve sufficiency whereas egalitarianism would just split the medicine equally. Casal, on the other hand, disagreed saying that egalitarianism was only committed to finding a fair way to distribute the resource without destroying the benefit. One important issue that sufficientarians face, Casal argues, is that sufficientarians have no way "to employ a fair way of selecting the lucky five [patients]"[53]. In order to secure sufficiency, Casal argues that sufficientarianism leaves behind factors like fairness, and overlooks otherwise important factors like the patient's age.

Sufficientarianism requires that individuals reach sufficiency. Casal's objection to this, specifically in Frankfurt's medicine case is that it doesn't matter who reaches sufficiency. People can be unfairly favored because sufficientarianism doesn't have any mechanism for fairly distributing resources below the sufficiency threshold. Once again, the question arises of what does reaching the sufficiency threshold mean arises. In our two-threshold version of sufficientarianism, it is not the elimination of equality that we care about to get to the lower level. However, returning to the theory that got us to the two- threshold version sufficientarianism, we might consider what reaching the lower threshold represents.

In a direct sense, reaching the lower threshold denotes having enough resources to have avoided poverty. But in an indirect sense, it also represents reaching an area where an individual has 'enough' and is not missing any basic needs. While basic needs may include tangible things like water, food and shelter, they also include intangible things like freedom, access to knowledge, or fair treatment. Consider a person who has plentiful resources, but restricted personal freedom. Have they really met sufficiency? Although they are well-off in one sense, they have been restricted in another which also affects their well-being. Lower level-sufficiency requires these intangible basic needs, just as much as it requires tangible basic needs. We have

[53] Casal, Paula. Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough. p307

not snuck in any extra principles to sufficientarianism, rather we have considered what it takes to be sufficient.

In this case, we are taking a special look at the intangible basic need of fairness. It seems intuitive to conclude that without fair treatment a person cannot be treated sufficiently, and thus reach the threshold. Fairness invokes a set of objectivity that we treat everyone with respect to their personal features. In this regard, fairness opposes equality because we treat people differently because of qualities that make them unique. When Casal suggests that we the age of the patient in Frankfurt's medicine case, we are considering people in an unequal way. However, if we weigh them by their age so the young are more likely to get the medicine, then we are treating them in a fair way such that everyone has the fair chance to get have lived a long life. Sufficiency requires this kind of fair treatment because without it, a fundamental intangible basic need is missing. Someone who is continuously wronged, and treated unfairly, regardless of their resource amount, cannot be considered at a level of sufficiency.

So how exactly do we distribute resources under the line of sufficiency? Casal argues that sufficientarians are in favor of a forum of the theory that minimizes insufficiency. This means, in her mind, sufficientarians want the least number of people to be insufficient. As a result, some people make get left behind at incredibly low resource levels so that others can meet our lower threshold, and it would seem, that she gets this idea from Frankfurt's medicine case. Obviously, Frankfurt has chosen to leave some individuals at a low resource level so that others can meet sufficiency in this example. However, as Casal herself admits egalitarianism would do something similar, at least in this example. As we saw in Chapter Two, when egalitarians are forced into a similar life or death situation, they also distribute benefits, so resources are not wasted, but just give everyone a fair chance to receive that benefit. As I have stated just now, I believe in order to be sufficient, being treated fairly is one of the intangible principles that is required. Ultimately, in this specific medicine example, things are a bit different from a regular threshold example. Because the stakes are life or death rather than poverty or sufficiency, we may see a different set of rules play out such that in situations of life or death things do become about minimizing insufficiency because in these cases insufficiency is equitable with death. And maybe that's okay, such that the rules are a bit different.

As always, we return to the roots of the theory to see why such a discrepancy may exist. One of Frankfurt's key arguments in making sufficientarianism was that while "it is never or only rarely beneficial to move [an individual] closer to an important utility threshold without actually crossing it", it may be unbeneficial to "additional resources to people who… are in serious need"[54]. And at first, this seems really odd. How could it ever be unbeneficial to give resources to people who are really in need? But again, remember what we saw Frankfurt say in Chapter Two which is that giving more resources "may not actually improve the condition of those people at all"[55]. So if an individual cannot be helped with more resources, we do not give them more resources. Why? Because, with the same resources we *can* help other people. In some sense, this is about minimizing insufficiency because we, of course, do want the maximum number of people to be sufficient, and for the people that are helped by additional resources, we give them that. However, if a person is unable to be bettered by resources, there is nothing that a theory of distributive resources can do to help them. And at that point, again, we are best off to put our resources elsewhere.

[54] Frankfurt, Harry. On Inequality. p39
[55] ibid

To some critics, this conclusion will be unsatisfying. After all, we are leaving people below the line of sufficiency. To those people, I remind you, at some point, we cannot do anything to help everybody. No theory of distributive justice will leave people when there aren't enough resources satisfied. This is what we saw in Frankfurt's medicine case. The resource level was too low to satisfy everyone, so what we needed was a fair way of distributing resources (as fairness is an intangible basic need). Thus, we have no choice but to leave some people behind, not out of cruelty, but out of necessity for the other people whose lives we can save.

However, Frankfurt's medicine case may be an easy example in some ways for problems with scarcity. While the example ultimately does leave some people unsatisfied, it does so in a way that few would likely argue against it. After all, giving everyone an equal amount of medicine would be a waste of resources because no one would be better off in this case. But, what about it cases where there is a chance for improvement for everyone with some level of resource, and not everyone can achieve it? To exemplify this, imagine a situation where we have, instead of ten sick people, ten people underneath a wealth threshold. Each of them needs $80,000 to above a poverty line. We have $400,000 to distribute amongst this population. Once again, ideally, we would have enough money to distribute to everyone so that this problem would not arise. But for whatever reason it has arose. Therefore, we are left with two extremes – we can distribute everything equally and everyone will be $40,000 better off, but no one will be above the poverty threshold or we can give a select few $80,000, ensuring that some people do reach sufficiency.

One of the basic principles of sufficientarianism is to ensure that all people ensure sufficiency. As such, we would be very tempted to choose the second options where people do reach sufficiency. However, it is actually the first option that makes the average of the group closer to sufficiency which is closer to our goal. At first, this may seem impossible, after all, no matter what we have $400,000 and ten people. So the average amount we can might think we can better someone is $40,000 regardless of how we split up the money. In order to see why this is not true, we actually will turn to prioritarianism, Parfit, and an early idea from Chapter One. Recall the idea that the Priority View was built on, that is, "benefiting people matters more the worse off these people are"[56]. By helping people who are worse off, we increase the overall well-being more.

Another way to see this is to think of a person who has no wealth whatsoever versus a person who has $20,000. Both people are under the poverty line. However, if we have the option to give one of them $10,000, the person who would benefit more would be the person with no resources. Their well-being would increase more than a person who already has some resources. At first, this may seem in some ways like we have incorporated prioritarianism considerations into our version of sufficientarianism. But, remember as sufficientarians what we want the most if to ensure that *everyone* can reach sufficiency, so a solution where more well-being is the outcome, is one we would support. We have not incorporated prioritarianism considerations, but have incorporated some of the logic of prioritarianism into our theory. The logic we are basing this position off of is that resources have a decreasing marginal value. The difference between a person's first dollar and a person's ten-thousandth dollar is not the same.

By taking this route, we have chosen to do two things. First, we have chosen to maximize everyone's chance at sufficiency rather than maximize sufficiency. Once we have distributed the

[56] Parfit, Derek. Equality and Priority. p213

money, every individual now has more money, and every individual is more likely to reach sufficiency. Being in poverty bears a lot of hidden costs, one of which is that being poor tends correlate with having bad credit (or at least worse credit than those better off), meaning that interest rates are higher on loans or credit cards. If we raise everyone up rather than elevate a few, than we are maximizing the chances that everyone will reach sufficiency because everyone now has more resources individually. However, possibly more important, is the second thing we have done - making sure that the average level of well-being is as high as possible. While everyone may have the same resource level, people are better off than if the resources had been distributed unfairly. As we have discussed in this section, it is crucial when dealing with problems of scarcity to ensure increase utility long-term.

While ideally, there would be enough resources to distribute, scarcity resources may arise. As a result, we have a responsibility to the bottom tier to distribute resource fairly. Without both tangible and intangible basic needs being met, people cannot meet the bottom level of sufficiency.

Conclusion

When we return to theories of distributive justice more generally, hopefully it can be seen sufficientarianism is worth defending. The theory is entrenched in a want to divide resources so poverty is nonexistent still with a freedom in how people choose to spend their resources.

In this paper, we specifically looked at Casal's objections to Frankfurt's and Crisp's versions of sufficientarianism. She pointed out distributive problems of abundance and scarcity, and we looked at those accordingly. Rather than defend Frankfurt's or Crisp's sufficientarianism, we went back to the roots of the theory. Frankfurt and Crisp failed in allowing for large wealth inequalities, allowing people to hoard resources at high levels. Additionally, we clarified the sufficientarian theory that would require fair (though not equal) treatment as fairness would be one of the intangible basic needs required to reach sufficiency. As a result, we returned with a stronger two-threshold version with three tiers.

Focusing on redistributing policies, we looked at responsibilities by tier. Naturally, those endowed with more resources would be expected to contribute at a level that affected them at the same marginal level as those with less resources. This would mean they would contribute a higher amount of resources with a cap at the high threshold level. Outside of this, we guaranteed a resource minimum at the bottom threshold level where everyone would ideally have above this amount, and we would work to provide that. We looked at the economic consequences of taxing the super wealthy at a high level and providing people with enough resources to escape poverty, and saw these actions were, at worst, neutral, and, at best, incredibly positive.

We reconsidered the objections to specific sufficientarianism, and sought to reason why given these objections the theory must be revised. Amendments were expressed and considered to be a persuasive response to previous oppositions with the theory.

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