

9-23-2016

Defending relational egalitarianism and the two principles of equality

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DEFENDING RELATIONAL EGALITARIANISM
AND
THE TWO PRINCIPLES OF EQUALITY

CHOY TSZ CHUN

MPHIL

LINGNAN UNIVERSITY

2016

DEFENDING RELATIONAL EGALITARIANISM
AND THE TWO PRINCIPLES OF EQUALITY

by
CHOY Tsz Chun
蔡子俊

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in Philosophy

Lingnan University

2016

ABSTRACT

Defending Relational Egalitarianism and the Two Principles of Equality

by

CHOY Tsz Chun

Master of Philosophy

This essay shall survey two streams of liberal egalitarianism, namely luck egalitarianism and relational egalitarianism, and argue that the latter is superior. The two streams have a substantive difference in terms of the essence of egalitarian justice, the role of individual responsibility, and the interpretation of the idea of treating citizens as equals. This essay shows that the idea of egalitarian justice is best understood by seeing it as an idea demanding the realization of egalitarian relationships. Principle of distribution is not methodologically self-sufficient but dependent on a broader understanding of equality.

This essay shall also advocate two principles of equality to show how we can derive principles of justice from a relational conception of equality. The negative principle of equality forbids social oppressions while the positive principle of equality demands the state to respect citizens equally and promote egalitarian values so that citizens are more willing to respect one another. A just society, regulated by the two principles, will be a society of equals in which conditions of freedom of citizens will be secured by the state. The two principles also see respect as an important idea in a theory of justice. Respect here is not only referring to the idea of making people responsible for the consequences of their free choices. Respect is conceived as multi-dimensional while the responsibility-based idea of respect is merely one face among many. Lastly, the two principles of equality will be compared with Elizabeth Anderson's relational egalitarianism, with the hope to show that the two principles move a step forward than Anderson's theory on some points.

DECLARATION

I declare that this is an original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.



(CHOY Tsz Chun)

20-10-2016


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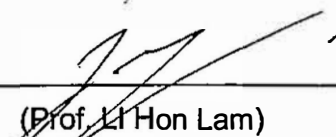
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CHOY Tsz Chun

Master of Philosophy

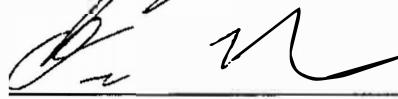
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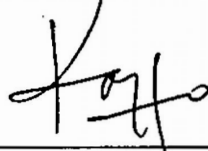


(Prof. Shyam NAIR) (Internal Member)

Supervisor :

Prof. Derek BAKER

Approved for the Senate :



(Prof. MOK Ka Ho Joshua)
Chairman, Postgraduate Studies Committee

23 SEP 2016

Date

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my supervisor Derek Baker, who not only provided many instructive comments but also made linguistic and stylistic corrections to earlier drafts of this thesis. Any remaining errors are my own.

Introduction

Equality is one of the most treasured values in modern times. Every government who claims herself to be just and legitimate must also claim the proposed and carried out policies are egalitarian in some respects. Nonetheless, equality, as well as other political values, is subjected to numerous (sometimes conflicting) interpretations. If the question of “whether it realizes the ideal of equality” is important for evaluating the justice and legitimacy of a policy or even the performance of a government, we should pause and think what does it mean by, or what is the point of, equality.

Assuming the significant space occupied by equality in normative political theorizing, this essay aims at defending a particular way to conceive of the value of equality, namely the relational view of equality, and further, ambitiously proposes two principles of equality as a desirable form of relational egalitarianism. Therefore, there are indeed two levels of justification. Readers might endorse the defense of the general account of relational equality presented nevertheless do not find the two principles of equality appealing.

Based on the two-stage requirement of justification, this paper will be mainly divided into two parts (with four chapters). The main task of the first part is to justify the general account of relational egalitarianism over luck egalitarianism. The first chapter, therefore, shall identify some of the general features of relational

egalitarianism. It will be done by drawing comparisons with another prominent form of liberal egalitarianism, namely luck egalitarianism. The first chapter of the paper will present their respective views toward the essence of justice, the idea of individual responsibility, and the interpretation of the idea of “treating citizens as equals”. The aim of the second chapter is to justify the general account relational egalitarianism. Three arguments will be presented and show that relational egalitarianism, compared with luck egalitarianism, could better explain our moral intuitions, does not fall into the dilemma of responsibility faced by luck egalitarians, and provides a better understanding of respect.

The second part of the paper is focused on explaining and justifying the proposed two principles of equality: the negative principle of equality and the positive principle of equality. According to the negative principle, justice demands the elimination of oppressive social hierarchies. According to the positive principle, justice demands the realization of relations of respect, both between the state and citizens and between citizens. The third chapter will be devoted to explaining the key ideas in the two principles, in particular, the idea of social hierarchies, social oppression, and respect. Some preliminary institutional implications will also be suggested in order to show that in the matter of evaluating social arrangements, the two principles of equality are insightful. The last chapter tries to justify the two

principles of equality. The two principles, I argue, realize the ideal of “a society of equals”, in which both the external and internal conditions of freedom and supportive social circumstances are publicly available to citizens, people are held responsible to a reasonable degree and citizens will generally be more likely to feel that they are respected and to have a stronger motivation to respect one another. Lastly, this chapter will draw some comparisons with Elizabeth Anderson’s relational egalitarianism, namely democratic equality, with the hope of showing that the two principles of equality could fill in the theoretical gaps that democratic equality seems to ignore.

1. The Luck-Relational Debate of Liberal Egalitarian Justice

This chapter shall briefly explain and compare the views of two distinct forms of liberal egalitarianism, namely luck egalitarianism and relational egalitarianism.¹ There are two reasons for doing so. First, the ideas of relational egalitarianism are expressed and developed by relational egalitarians' critique of luck egalitarianism. Second, it paves the way for the second chapter: to justify relational egalitarianism (as the most convincing liberal egalitarian account of justice). Doing so requires a basic understanding of their general features and differences.

I would like to make several points before I start. First, I do not plan to offer *definitions* of both distributive and relational egalitarianism, as definitions are unavailable (Schuppert 2014, p. 444). I hope it would suffice for the purpose of this essay to outline their general features (key ideas or principles) commonly shared by representative conceptions of luck and relational egalitarianism.² Second, both luck and relational egalitarianism are broad categories encompassing different conflicting liberal egalitarian conceptions of justice. It will be beyond my ability to study and introduce all of them. This paper will only focus on the most significant and representative, but not all, theories. For luck egalitarianism, Ronald Dworkin and G.

¹ The name "luck egalitarianism" is coined by Anderson (1999). Relational egalitarianism is often called as "democratic equality". Rawls (1971) and Anderson (1999) use this term explicitly (though it is controversial whether Rawls is a relational egalitarian). I shall not name it as democratic equality since I do not want to give the illusion that luck egalitarians are undemocratic.

² The distinction between concept and conception of justice is borrowed from Rawls (1971, p. 5) and Hart (1961, p. 155-9). Different conceptions of justice could be developed on one concept of justice. It is also theoretically possible that luck and relational egalitarianism have different concepts of justice in mind, but I shall bracket this possibility.

A. Cohen's theories will be the targets; for relational egalitarianism, Elizabeth Anderson and Samuel Scheffler's theories.³

The comparison between luck and relational egalitarianism will proceed in terms of their views toward three questions: the primary aim of egalitarian justice, the idea of individual responsibility, and the interpretations of the egalitarian plateau (treat citizens as equals).⁴ It will be shown that given their different views towards the essence of justice and the connection between the idea of individual responsibility and respect, luck and relational egalitarianism disagree with each other about both the value and the weight of the idea of responsibility and respect.

1A. The Primary Aim of Egalitarian Justice

Different forms of liberal egalitarianism conceive of the primary aim of egalitarian justice differently. Such difference will also lead to a different understanding of ideas that are deeply relevant in an egalitarian theory of justice, such as individual responsibility and respect. A relational view of egalitarian justice, for example, will focus on the relational dimension of respect (but this is not to say

³ Ronald Dworkin refused to call his theory of justice as "luck egalitarianism". But political philosophers generally regard his theory as luck egalitarian in nature. In later discussion about features of luck egalitarianism, we will see Dworkin's theory is highly luck egalitarian.

⁴ Distributive and luck egalitarianism, of course, have features other than the three points I have mentioned. For instance, (Anderson 2010a) distributive egalitarianism sees the *third-person* justification as the method while relational egalitarianism justifies *second-personally*. Also, distributive egalitarianism treats *individuals* as the basic units of justice while relational egalitarianism focuses on *group* inequality (Hinton 2001; Anderson 2010c; Young 1990).

the relational view ignores the non-relational dimension).⁵ This section will introduce both the luck and relational egalitarian views toward the primary aim of egalitarian justice.

The Luck Egalitarian View

According to the luck egalitarian view, justice is *essentially about* distribution,⁶ that is, equal distribution of certain divisible goods. Luck egalitarians (Cohen 2008, p. 300-301; Tan 2008, p. 669-71) restrict the domain of discussion to distributive justice/equality.⁷ Luck egalitarian theory is therefore classified as one form of distributive egalitarianism. The battlefield among different luck egalitarian theories is the *currency* of egalitarianism (or egalitarian justice) — that is, the question of which goods are to be distributed equally (Cohen 1989). Luck egalitarians all agree that the fundamental question of justice is “Equality of What?” (Sen 1980), though they provide different answers to this question, including resources (Dworkin 1981a, 1981b, 2000, 2003),⁸ the opportunity to welfare (Arneson 1989, 1999), and equal access to advantage (Cohen 1989, 1993, 2011). As I have mentioned in the previous

⁵ Or to mention another example, a utilitarian (or more broadly, consequentialist) understanding of justice will not take individual responsibility as serious as other theories do, for the principle of utility is an “end-result” rather than “historical” principle (Nozick 1974, p. 153-5).

⁶ When we talk about distribution, it generally refers to the idea of *re*-distribution. Rawls distinguished between distribution and allocation (Rawls 1999a, p. 56, 77), which the former is a kind of pure procedural justice and the latter allocates goods by people’s desires. I am not sure, however, whether the distributive egalitarians strictly endorse such a distinction. When this essay uses the word “distribution”, it always refer to redistribution as well, except the context suggest that the word “distribution” is used strictly. Martin O’Neill (2012, 2014) tries to raise the awareness of the significance of *pre*-distribution, but I shall leave this point aside for simplicity’s sake.

⁷ The references are quoted from (Navin 2011, p. 535-6).

⁸ Some scholars consider Rawls as a resource egalitarian. Since it is controversial, I shall bracket this issue.

remark, the discussion of luck egalitarianism will be limited to Dworkin and Cohen's theory.

The distributive view towards egalitarian justice models our understanding of the state and citizens. The basic structure of society (Rawls 1971, p. 7), i.e., the major political, economic, and social institutions in society, is conceived mainly as a distributor: the major institutions are to be designed to realize the correct distributive pattern (equality of resources, for instance).⁹ Citizens are regarded mainly as recipients of social goods.

If an equal distribution is essential in egalitarian justice, when is a distribution just? The answer of luck egalitarians could be divided into two types: opportunistic (e.g. opportunity for welfare, access to advantage) and non-opportunistic (e.g. resources).¹⁰ For opportunistic conceptions, inequality of other social goods, such as resources and welfare is justifiable, given that the equal opportunity condition is fulfilled. It invites the further question of why this is so. Non-opportunistic conceptions of distribution, in particular, Dworkin's theory, point only to the ideal *initial* distribution: it would be just if every citizen possesses an equal amount of

⁹ Luck egalitarians might disagree with Rawls, who argues that the basic structure is the primary subject of justice, for luck egalitarians might believe that redistribution beyond the basic structure is also important. Nonetheless, they affirm that the basic structure should receive great attention. For the debate about the subject or the site of egalitarian justice, see Cohen (1997), Pogge (2000), and Carter (2013).

¹⁰ If we understand the idea of "opportunistic conception" in a broader sense, even equality of resources would qualify. Dworkin states explicitly that equal opportunity (to make choice) is the "background" of his theory of equality of resources (1981b, p.297). In my discussion, however, the idea of opportunistic conception is defined in a narrower sense: only when the theory suggests that the goods that are to be distributed equally are opportunities, it qualifies as an opportunistic conception.

resources initially. But it is not to say that all forms of unequal distribution of resources are unacceptable. Luck egalitarians argue that once certain conditions are fulfilled, the subsequent inequality is consistent with initial equality of resources and therefore justifiable (Dworkin 1981b, p.292-293). The question is, then, what are those conditions?

According to luck egalitarianism, if an inequality is the result of people's deliberative *choices*, people are consequentially responsible for the inequality and therefore the inequality is justifiable. That is, a just distribution should never let brute luck (in contrast with choice) determines the distribution outcome.¹¹ If we want to characterize luck egalitarianism in the form of "equality of X", we may say it is the equality of (the impact of) fortune (and therefore it is called luck egalitarianism).¹² Luck egalitarians grant the luck-choice distinction a central role in their theories (Arneson 1989, p. 234; 2000, p. 339; 2004, p. 2; Dworkin 1985, p. 208; 2000, p. 77-83; Cohen 2008, p. 300-301).¹³ But what does luck or fortune mean? The meaning of luck is a complex issue which I am not capable of elaborating fully here and which we need not go to that deep for our purpose.¹⁴

¹¹ Readers might doubt that such a simplified account of luck egalitarianism fails to explain the complexity of the real world – the outcome of an action is both determined by one's choice and unforeseeable luck. In later chapter I explain that some luck egalitarians, notably Cohen, accept this point and concede the possibility that there is nothing could be regarded as the result of pure choice. But for the purpose of this chapter, we need not to go that deep.

¹² It is controversial that the aim of luck egalitarianism is best understood as luck-neutralizing (Mason 2006) or luck-equalizing. I shall left this issue aside and assume that "luck-neutralizing" indeed refers to eliminate the effect of luck. For more relevant discussions, see Lippert-Rasmussen (2014).

¹³ The references are quoted from (Navin 2011, p. 536).

¹⁴ Nagel (1979), for instance, specified four different kinds of moral luck. See Lippert-Rasmussen (2014).

To understand the general view of luck egalitarianism, it is essential to note that luck egalitarians distinguished between two kinds of luck: option luck and brute luck (Dworkin 1981, p.293).¹⁵ When Alex deliberately purchases an apartment for investment, it is his *choice* and whether he gains or losses depends on his *option luck*.¹⁶ If Alex is born in a royal family, the advantage (e.g. fame and social status) or disadvantage (e.g. enjoying a lower degree of privacy) of it is a matter of *brute luck* as he can never choose which family to born with.¹⁷ Luck egalitarians believe that this distinction is vital to understand the demand for justice. We intuitively believe that one's family and social backgrounds should not be the criterion for distributing benefits and burdens. If the special privilege is granted simply because the recipients belong to a particular social class, it is unjust. It is the choice-responsibility connection, according to luck egalitarians, that underlies our moral intuitions: the moral rightness (or, at least, the moral acceptability) depends on the question of whether the agent undergoes the process of deliberation and choice. We cannot deliberate and choose the place we born with, and therefore, we should not place our moral claims to the greater amount of resources basing on such unchosen

¹⁵ Dworkin somehow switched between two distinctions: the option/brute luck distinction and person/circumstances distinction (or the taste/ambition distinction) (Dworkin 1981, p. 302). I focus the discussion on the first distinction for two reasons: (1) I agree with Cohen (1989, p. 928-33) that option/brute luck is a better distinction than person/circumstance; (2) this section aims at drawing features that are shared by important luck egalitarians including Dworkin and Cohen, since Cohen rejected the person/circumstance distinction, it would only be appropriate if I focus on the option/brute luck distinction.

¹⁶ I shall present a simplified version of the distinction between two kinds of luck. It is simplified in two senses: first, I leave out cases which people make their choice but the actual outcome of the choice is beyond their imagination and calculation; second, I set aside the fact that the outcome of one choice might have long-lasting and deep effect on later events.

¹⁷ Luck egalitarians use different words to express this point. For instance, Roemer says when the consequence is "self-incurred", it is the result of choice (Roemer 1995). But they always refer to the same idea.

circumstance. Luck egalitarians conclude that a distribution is just when it nullifies the effect brought by unchosen circumstances and allows for the inequalities came from deliberative choices (Roemer 1998, p. 4-5; Arneson 1999, p. 227; Dworkin 1981b, p. 314; Cohen 2011, p. 4-5, 29-30).¹⁸ For instance, people with genetic defects should receive extra compensations and special medical care from the state as those defects are not the results of their bad brute luck. The costs of special medical care, ideally speaking, should also be collected from people who have benefited from good brute luck, such as superb talents. The basic rationale is that the state has no rights to tax people who work hard, and thus earn a lot (benefit from their good option luck). On the other hand, the state has no duties to compensate for the loss of a deliberate gambler or investor.¹⁹

The Relational Egalitarian View

Relational egalitarians see egalitarian justice from a different perspective. The primary aim of justice is to realize certain egalitarian *relationships* in society. Those relationships are both intrinsically valuable (Scheffler 2010, p. 225) and beneficial in realizing other values (Scanlon 1996). Similar to the debate within luck

¹⁸ Arneson's theory of justice could be understood as a form of prioritarianism which emphasizes on the neutralization of bad luck. See Lippert-Rasmussen (2014).

¹⁹ Readers may raise a more fundamental question: why should the state allow gambling, in particular gambles which may cost their lives. I believe the main reason is that the state should provide as much as opportunities for people to fulfill their life plans, even though those plans might be risky. But the claim that the state should not *prohibit* people from taking massive risks does not imply that the state should not *set conditions* for their choice. For instance, the state may permit people to bungee jumping *only when* participants explicitly acknowledge the possible risks.

egalitarianism, relational egalitarians offer different pictures of valuable egalitarian relationships, which discussing all of them is beyond the purpose of this chapter.

Despite their differences, relational egalitarians commonly regard social oppressions (or oppressive social structures) as the arch-enemy of egalitarian justice (Young 1990; Anderson 1999; Hinton 2001; Scheffler 2003a).

One remark should be made that luck egalitarians do not, of course, support or remain neutral on oppressions and tyranny. They would definitely agree that the distributive scheme A is preferable to B if oppressions are inevitable under scheme B (other things being equal). But there are two disagreements between luck and relational egalitarianism regarding the issue of oppression: (1) they condemn social oppressions on different grounds. Luck egalitarians might say “social oppressions are unjust as they threaten the realization of a just (and egalitarian) distribution” while relational egalitarians might say “social oppressions are unjust because they are in themselves inequalitarian social relationships and they threaten the realization of other valuable egalitarian relationships”; (2) relational egalitarianism offers a relational account of the evil of oppressions; oppressions are understood as the existence of an unequal (power) relationship which makes one side under the threat of being arbitrarily interfered with.²⁰

²⁰ This is not to say luck egalitarians must reject the relational account of oppression, but only that the theoretical focus of luck egalitarianism is not to offer an account of oppression.

Though the realization of valuable egalitarian relationships is the chief aim of egalitarian justice, relational egalitarians will not deny that distribution has its place in an egalitarian theory. The equal distribution of social goods and egalitarian relationships are not at odds with each other. On the contrary, an equal distribution might contribute to the realization of egalitarian relationships. If access to positions and wealth are only available to certain groups of citizens, egalitarian relationships are unlikely to be realized (worse still, hierarchal relationship will be a possible result). Therefore, distributions of social goods are of *instrumental* value in the relational account of justice. Relational egalitarians remind us that an equal distribution is neither the full picture of nor the ultimate goal of justice. Indeed, the equal distribution *might* be necessary but never sufficient for an egalitarian relationship. In order to achieve equality, it demands something beyond the redistribution of social goods. The cultivation of egalitarian values and practice, for example, is required (Wolff 1998).²¹ Egalitarian relationships involve citizens' spirits or attitudes towards one another which are obviously beyond the scope of distribution. We return to a fuller treatment on this point in later chapters.

Apart from stressing the value of egalitarian justice in different ways, relational egalitarians understand it as having broader implications than luck egalitarians do.

²¹ Cohen also talks about the egalitarian ethos, but his focus is more about the economic incentive to work hard, rather than the attitude to respect one another. See Cohen (1989, 2008).

For relational egalitarians, egalitarian justice is a moral, political, and social ideal (Scheffler 2003a). The ultimate goal of relational egalitarianism is to create *a society of equals*, citizens in which stand to one another on equal footings.²² Different types of relational egalitarianism provide different substantive contents to the ideal of a society of equals (Anderson 1999; Scheffler 2003a, 2010, 2015), but since this section is limited to the task of outlining *general features* of distributive and relational egalitarianism, I shall not go through these details (the moral, political, and social dimensions of equality; the idea of equal moral respect). In chapter four, I shall explain my understanding of the idea of “a society of equals”.

1B. Individual Responsibility²³

People generally believe that individuals are and should be responsible for their actions, but we also think that it is wrong to hold people responsible for everything. This brings us to the question of by virtue of what people are responsible. The answer to this question explains the idea of individual responsibility. A theory of justice should explain both the value of individual responsibility and its weight in the proposed account of justice. For an egalitarian account, there is an additional

²² A very general (or even vague) account of the idea of equal footing is to see each as equal members of the community or the scheme of social cooperation and members are related to one another as equals. The substantial implications vary from different theories. I shall offer my account in chapter 4.

²³ I shall restrict the discussion to individual responsibility, ignoring issues of collective responsibility.

question of in what sense doing so is egalitarian (or at least not incompatible with egalitarianism). This section will give the overview of the responses of luck and relational egalitarians.

The Luck Egalitarian View

The most central question here is about the relation between individual responsibility and justice. Brian Barry's principle of responsibility nicely summarizes the view of luck egalitarians, according to which "unequal outcomes are just if they arise from factors for which individuals can properly be held responsible, and are otherwise unjust." (Scheffler 2010, p. 211)²⁴ But why should the idea of responsibility bear such a significant role in evaluating justice? I think at least part of the answer is that luck egalitarians think that holding citizens responsible is the way to respect citizens. I shall discuss the relation between responsibility and respect in the next section so let us leave this issue aside and grant that luck egalitarians do take this view.

Barry's principle of responsibility tells us only about the role of responsibility in a theory of justice, but it does not tell us under what conditions we can reasonably hold people responsible. On this question, luck egalitarians recall the idea of choice:

²⁴ According to Scheffler, Barry mentioned this principle when he presented paper titled "Does Responsibility Undermine Equality" to the Workshop in Law, Philosophy, and Political Theory, UC Berkeley, 2003.

one is responsible for a state of affairs (e.g. gain or loss) only when it is the result of his choices.²⁵ Let us recall the option/brute luck distinction used by Dworkin and Cohen.²⁶ Citizens should only be responsible for their choices, but not for the state of affairs resulting from brute luck (e.g. natural endowments, social backgrounds). That is to say, when an inequality reflects people's choices, the inequality is justifiable since people should be responsible for it. The luck egalitarians' account of responsibility could explain many of our intuitions. For example, assuming an equal distribution (resources or access to advantage) is achieved at the initial place, a gambler bets all of his wealth and loses it – our intuition, in this case, would be that the government should not compensate his loss. Luck egalitarians could account for that intuition appealing to the luck egalitarians' account of responsibility. Compensation involves collecting revenues from other people and redistributing the collected funds to the gambler. But those taxpayers are not responsible for the gambler's loss, the state has no proper reason to tax people; and since we can safely assume that the gambler chooses to make the bet, he should be made solely responsible for it. Therefore, justice would not demand compensation.

Luck egalitarians also bridge the principle of individual responsibility with the

²⁵ The philosophical debate on responsibility is frequently discussed by many philosophers who offer different theories. Some of the examples are Frankfurt (1971, 1998), Watson (1975, 1996), and Wolf (1987) For the sake of introducing the luck egalitarians' view towards individual responsibility, we need not go that deep.

²⁶ Cohen, nonetheless, accused of Dworkin's egalitarianism which "does not put absence of responsibility in the foreground as a necessary condition of just compensation." (Cohen 2011, p. 19) I think a more charitable reading would be Dworkin presents a different characterization of responsibility than Cohen.

idea of egalitarian fairness, that is, “to ensure that people’s shares of resources (and/or welfare) are at once *ambition-sensitive* and *endowment-insensitive*.” (Hinton 2001, p. 74, italics original) For luck egalitarians, particularly for Dworkin, ambitions are voluntarily chosen while we have little (or even no) control on our endowments. While it is unfair to make people responsible for things that are beyond their control, egalitarian fairness further affirms that distribution should only be sensitive to people’s ambitions. We can see the tight connection between the luck-egalitarians’ principle of justice and their interpretation of egalitarian fairness. Since luck egalitarians make their theory sensitive only to choice and they connect the idea of individual responsibility and fairness, we may say the idea of fairness enjoys “lexical priority” over other egalitarian values (but not all values) in luck egalitarianism (Wolff 1998, p. 103, 106).

We should keep in mind that the idea of fairness is familiar in many questions of political philosophy. It is often expressed in the literature concerning political obligation and legitimacy; the principle of fair play holds that citizens who do not express their consent might also be subject to the moral obligation to obey the state if they have been benefited from a system of cooperation.²⁷ But most of the time luck egalitarians use the idea of fairness to assess the moral acceptability of distributions.

²⁷ The principle of fair play is not the focus of this paper. For more discussions on it, see Hart (1955), Rawls (1964), and Simmons (1979).

Distributive fairness is the idea that “no one should be advantaged or disadvantaged by arbitrary factors,” (Wolff 1998, p. 106) while the idea of arbitrariness is contrasted with the idea of voluntariness. Arbitrary factors are the factors that you could not take voluntarily. Or to put the notion of fairness in a more demanding form, no one except you should bear the responsibility of your own choice. The idea of fairness here is related to the idea of the desert by the claim that it is fair (and just) to give what a person deserves. If Armstrong chooses to settle in an area in which the farmland is fertile though there is a danger of flooding, and if he eventually suffers from the flooding, it is unfair for Ben to compensate for the loss of Armstrong and Armstrong deserves to bear the responsibility alone. Nonetheless, if Ben destroys Armstrong’s crops, we will think it fair for Ben to compensate (or Armstrong deserves compensations from Ben). The point might be a bit more complicated or uncertain when the consideration of intention comes in. Such a consideration does not refute but emphasizes the tight connection between fairness and responsibility: if Ben intends to destroy Armstrong’s crops, it is fair for Ben to compensate since he deserves to bear the responsibility for his decisions and actions.

The Relational Egalitarian View

There is a conflict between the relational idea of equality on the one hand and

the idea of distributive fairness on the other. Relational egalitarianism does not connect justice with the idea of individual responsibility in the way luck egalitarians do. Therefore, advocates of the relational view face a choice: either to accept that the principle of individual responsibility (and perhaps fairness) *often* conflicts with the relational account of justice, or to offer a new interpretation to the principle of individual responsibility that is compatible with the idea of relational justice.

Relational egalitarians generally pick the latter option. Though relational egalitarians reject the luck egalitarians' account of responsibility, they do not deny that the idea of individual responsibility occupies a place in an egalitarian conception of justice. Sufficient room should be left for citizens to form, revise, and pursue their own plan of life, and citizens are regarded as responsible for their choices of life plan. It is the core belief of liberalism, and there is no disagreement between luck and relational egalitarians on this matter.

The real disagreement between luck and relational egalitarians is that the latter believe the luck-egalitarian principle is not necessary for respecting people's freedom and the principle of moral responsibility. For a relational view of egalitarian justice, *prima facie speaking*, people should be responsible for the consequence of pursuing their ideal life plan. If Jane is keen on being an artist though she is fully aware of the difficulties, it is both illegitimate and unjust for the state to intervene her decision.

The state also has no particular obligation in providing Jane more social goods simply because her career path is more difficult than others (expensive tastes), for Jane is well-aware of it and takes those costs into account. Nonetheless, relational egalitarians hold that the state should not abandon Jane in the sense of letting her suffer to a degree below the basic minimum. In other words, unlike luck egalitarians, relational egalitarianism tends to set up an uncompromising basic minimum scheme to protect the level of well-being of the citizens, regardless of the quality of their choices.

Relational egalitarians have no hesitations in fulfilling the relational ideal of egalitarian respect even at the expense of distributive fairness (Wolff 1998; Anderson 1999; Hinton 2001; Scheffler 2003a). Since egalitarian justice is, they hold, a relational ideal, when it comes into conflict with the distributive conception of fairness, it shows only that luck egalitarians *overemphasize* the weight of fairness. Indeed, the value of fair distribution could be and should be constrained by a more fundamental idea – that is the ideal of mutual reciprocal respect. In some cases, a fair redistribution (rectifying the effect of brute luck) might be humiliating to recipients (Wolff 1998; Anderson 1999). These cases will be discussed at length in later chapters. Relational egalitarians suggest that justice requires the priority of respect over distributive fairness. They reject the idea of realizing a fair morally non-

arbitrary state of affairs by adopting disrespectful means.

Relational egalitarians do not totally abandon but *redefine* the content and the value of fairness. Fairness is understood as “equality of status” (Hinton 2001, p. 73, 80-5). Setting aside Hinton’s more specific and controversial account of fairness, relational egalitarians commit to the idea of basic equality – the equal moral standing of everyone. Such an equal status protects people equal rights to access to certain goods and therefore explains why racial segregation (certain races are denied to access to some social goods), for example, is unjust and unfair (Hinton 2001, p. 80).

1C. Interpretation of the Egalitarian Plateau

As Dworkin famously puts it, any contemporary theory of justice should explain in what senses the proposed principles (or theories) of justice satisfy “the egalitarian plateau”: *to treat people as equals* (Dworkin 1977, p. 179-83; Kymlicka 2002, p. 3-4).^{28,29} Generally, this idea is understood as *treating people with equal respect* (Dworkin 1977, p. 273), but it postpones rather than solves the question. The real controversy is about how best to characterize the idea of equal respect. In this section, we shall see the luck egalitarians’ and relational egalitarians’ explanation of

²⁸ See also Dworkin (1983, p. 24) and Nagel (1979, p. 111).

²⁹ Like many other philosophical claims, the idea that “treating citizens as equals” as a condition for an egalitarian conception of justice is criticized. For instance, Mason argues that the egalitarian plateau “involves but extends further than what justice requires of us.” (2015, p. 129). I do not take his conclusion since he takes justice as a much narrower idea than I do, for he thinks justice is about the advantage or disadvantage of others (“I suggest that a person’s behavior comes within the purview of justice only if it advantages or disadvantages another or, at least, is intended to do so.” (p. 131)

the egalitarian plateau respectively.

The Luck Egalitarian View

Luck egalitarians' celebration of individual responsibility should be viewed as an account of respect. Luck egalitarians affirm that each citizen is entitled to equal concern and respect and claim that their theories fit nicely with the egalitarian plateau. For luck egalitarians, people are entitled to uncompromising respect since they possess certain capacities that are to be regarded as *essential qua a moral being*. To respect people is to respect what makes them morally authoritative and agential, and to *respect* capacities to deliberate and to act freely means the state should not interfere with the results made by voluntary choices, no matter the level of inequalities they generate (Roemer 1998; Wolff 1998; Cohen 1989; Baynes 2008).³⁰ To respect people *equally* is to apply the above-mentioned luck-egalitarian principle of justice and responsibility impartially. Therefore, the egalitarian plateau requires the state, according to luck egalitarianism, to hold citizens "responsible only for those aspects of their fate that lie within their control" (Hinton 2001, p. 79).

³⁰ This account of moral agent inevitably leaves out certain group of people (e.g. disabled person), and it is natural to ask what an egalitarian theory of justice should do with those excluded groups. It is a big and complicated question that beyond the concern of this essay, and therefore I shall leave it aside. For relevant discussion, see Nussbaum (2007).

The Relational Egalitarian View

We have observed that luck egalitarians argue that egalitarian justice should be sensitive to choices and hold people responsible in the way to respect them.

Relational egalitarians have a different view towards egalitarian justice and the role of individual responsibility. It is natural, therefore, for relational egalitarianism to abandon luck egalitarians' interpretation of the egalitarian plateau. Respect is about people's psychological *attitude* towards one another, which is different from the equal distribution of possessive goods and holding people responsible for all choices.

Luck egalitarians will not deny this claim, for they suggest that respectful attitude is reflected by acting on the luck egalitarian principle of justice. For Dworkin, as Cohen says, "the state must treat its citizens with equal respect and concern ... It is not the individual's duty to treat everyone (relatives, friends, and strangers alike) with equal respect and concern." (Cohen 2000, p. 164) For the relational egalitarians, respect is more about social relations among people. For example, Scheffler accused of Dworkin's theory as "administrative", paying little attention to the relationship among equals (2003a, p. 37; 2003b, p. 203-6).

Despite the fact that different relational egalitarians characterize the notion of relational respect in different ways, there is one point worth mentioning. According to the relational view, respect is what we owe to one another and we are entitled to

respect simply because of our commitment to basic equality (equal moral standing of people). Respect always appears in the *reciprocal* form. In other words, when some people behave in a particularly poor manner (e.g. disregard one another as equals, treat others with strong contempt) we might not owe them respect in ways that we respect other ordinary people.³¹ This point illustrates how the relational account different from luck egalitarianism. Treating as equals, for relational egalitarians consist not in holding one responsible for all choices, but in maintaining a mutually respectful relationship. More importantly, holding one responsible for choices might conflict with egalitarian relationships. Relational egalitarians characterize the content and value of egalitarian relationships in different ways, so I shall bracket this aside and present my own view in later chapters, in particular, chapter 4.

Conclusion

Luck and relational egalitarianism belong to the liberal egalitarian tradition nevertheless, they have serious disagreements conceiving the fundamental aim of egalitarian justice, the idea and appropriate weight of the principle of individual responsibility and fairness in a conception of justice, and the interpretation of the egalitarian plateau. What we have observed so far is mainly a description of the two

³¹ Wolff says that “just as I expect or desire others to treat me with respect, I should treat them in a similar fashion, *at least until they prove themselves unworthy.*” (1998, p. 107, italic mine)

positions. In the next chapter, I shall argue that relational egalitarianism in general, comparatively speaking, is more desirable than luck egalitarianism.

2. Justifying Relational Egalitarianism

What I have said in the last chapter is mainly descriptive and comparative – I have outlined the general features of luck egalitarianism and relational egalitarianism. The first chapter avoids normative evaluations though also shows indirectly that (at least some of) the merits of both luck and relational egalitarianism come from their accommodation of principles or ideals (e.g. responsibility and respect) we intuitively take to be important.³²

This chapter will be more evaluative and critical, aiming to demonstrate that we have good reasons to favor relational egalitarianism over luck egalitarianism. In this chapter, I try to present three arguments that might not be strong enough to *defeat* luck egalitarianism and *establish* the supremacy of relational egalitarianism.³³ But they do express vital doubts and raise challenges to luck egalitarianism and give reasons to show that relational egalitarianism is preferable. The three arguments/reasons favoring relational egalitarianism over luck egalitarianism are: (a) relational egalitarianism's account of essence of justice fits better with considered moral judgments; (b) luck egalitarianism overburdens distributive concepts; (c) relational egalitarianism assigns a more appropriate weight to the idea of individual

³² It does not mean the claims made in the last chapter are unobjectionable. Readers might doubt or even criticize my interpretations of the egalitarian literatures.

³³ Cohen (2011, p. 225-6) distinguished between two levels of arguments: some arguments aim at defeating one position while some might just aim at showing that we have reasons to be more cautious about the desirability of that position.

responsibility in its theory of justice than luck egalitarianism.

2A. Considered Judgments about the Essence of Justice and Injustice

The broader, relational understanding of equality fits better with our considered moral judgments toward the essence of justice. This paper assumes that a satisfactory *normative* theory of justice should fit with our considered judgments. To clarify this point, I shall make three remarks before proceeding. First, regarding the idea of considered judgments, they are judgments which are “rendered under conditions favorable to the exercise of the sense of justice, and therefore in circumstances where the more common excuses and explanations for making a mistake do not obtain” (Rawls 1971, p. 47-8). Therefore, the assumption does not imply the conservative idea that the status quo should maintain, for considered judgments refer to a limited range of moral judgments. But the worry might be that it turns out to support conservatism of a certain form (considered judgments). This leads us to the second remark. The idea that a satisfactory *normative* theory of justice should be able to account for considered judgments is subordinated to a broader methodology: reflective equilibrium (Rawls 1971, p. 46-53).³⁴ To oversimplify, reflective equilibrium does not imply that the considered judgments are never mistaken; rather,

³⁴ It should be noted that this methodology is a kind of coherentism which some may regard it is epistemologically conservative. I shall leave this question aside and focus on the question of whether adopting reflective equilibrium will lead to moral and political conservatism.

if a convincing account of our sense of justice is available, it is somehow necessary to “revise his judgments to conform to its principles even though the theory does not fit his existing judgments exactly” (Rawls 1971, p. 48). That is to say, reflective equilibrium admits the fact that people are fallible and that considered judgments may be wrong. But it is a mistake to reject considered judgments easily. Third, some might worry that a theory of justice that accounts for considered judgments is actually a descriptive theory. I do not agree. The descriptive theory is in nature a kind of sociological theory: it aims at explaining empirical facts we have already in hand. What normative theory of justice explains is considered judgments, which are indeed evaluative. Both descriptive and normative theory bear an explanatory role but they try to explain different things. Also, both descriptive and normative theories are not satisfied with a bare explanation: a descriptive theory looks for accurate predictions about future development, while a normative theory indicates what an ideal society would be like (or how the basic structure should be designed) and how should we evaluate different situations by using the normative standard of justice.

In order to show the relational account of the essence of justice fits better with our considered judgments, I shall focus on the American civil rights movements (1954-68) against racial segregation as an example. Let’s grant it is a considered judgment that racial segregation (or racial inequality, as the segregation policies

exemplified) in U.S. was deeply unjust (Anderson 2010c). Luck and relational egalitarianism reject racial segregation on different moral *grounds*. I argue that the relational argument is more comprehensive and fruitful in the sense that it covers more dimensions we deem as significant from the viewpoint of justice. Therefore, by virtue of understanding our sense of justice, relational egalitarianism does a better job than luck egalitarianism.

Let us start by examining the luck egalitarian account. Luck egalitarians can provide (at least) two important explanations of the injustice of racial segregation: (a) segregation presupposes that race is and should be a criterion for treating citizens differently. Since one's racial identity is utterly a matter of brute luck (in the sense that the racial group you belong to is beyond your control), this can never be the appropriate normative ground for differential treatment. Segregation takes a morally arbitrary factor to distribute benefits and burdens in society and is, therefore, unjust. (b) Justice requires equal distribution of certain social goods, but segregation prevented the disadvantaged group from an equal access to "sources of human and cultural capital" and "social networks that govern access to jobs, business connections, and political influence" (Anderson 2010c, p. 2, 23-43).^{35,36} The

³⁵ Anderson is a relational egalitarian, but she offers an excellent analysis of how does segregation lead to material inequality. It is very likely that distributive egalitarian will agree with her account.

³⁶ Different luck egalitarians will provide slightly different explanations on this point. Cohen will say: racial segregation is unjust because it denies the equal access to advantage. Arneson will say: it denies equal opportunity for welfare. Dworkin will say: it denies equal distribution of resources. But luck egalitarians deem racial segregation unjust because of its distributive implications fails the fundamental aim of distributive justice.

distribution of almost all social goods will be seriously affected by segregation which will deepen inequality in an unjust way. Comparing the two arguments, we may say argument (a) is more deontological in character, for it presupposes the state has a *duty* to eliminate the effect of morally arbitrary factors, while argument (b) is more consequentialist, for it presupposes unequal access to social good is *bad* in itself (Hinton 2001, p. 47-48).³⁷

I think both arguments say something true, but neither of them, in particular, the argument (a), capture *the real source of our indignation* toward segregation. Let us first focus on the argument (a) and see how it misidentifies the core of injustice. The racial identity of people is undoubtedly a matter of brute luck, and it seems reasonable to claim that people should not be held responsible for it. Nonetheless, this fact is not where the core injustice lies. Rather, the deep injustice is about “the way that black people were forced to live” (Hinton 2001, p. 79). In order to make this point clear, I wish to illustrate by a hypothetical gender case. Suppose there is a society where gender inequalities are severe: women lack a competitive chance to get a job or get promotion thus they are economically dependent on men; women also lack the social and political rights which all men enjoy. Also, imagine that the state

³⁷ Hinton (2001, p. 47-48) further argues that the deontological argument is less vulnerable than the consequential argument. I agree with him that the consequential argument opens to different objections but I insist argue (in the following paragraphs) that in the case of explaining the injustice of segregation, the deontological argument seems more problematic than the consequential one.

allows people to change their gender (and the state will pay all the fees for the medical operation so there are no financial worries).³⁸ The free operation here serves as a device to transform brute luck to option luck – your gender identity is within your control now. If a woman refuses to change her gender, or a man deliberately chooses to change his gender, does it entail that the state should be blind to their suffering? If the intuitive response is that (and I think most of us would share the same intuition) the injustice still exists and the state should relieve his/her suffering, then the essence of injustice does not (solely) lie in the fact that one’s gender identity is beyond one’s control and should be regarded as a matter of brute luck. It is the fact that he/she is deprived of basic rights and liberties makes it unjust. Going back to the racial segregation case, it is more likely that segregation was unjust since it treated some groups of people in a way that we find completely unacceptable, no matter whether racial identity is a matter of brute luck or not.³⁹

I imagine luck egalitarians might respond by saying the following: “we do not treat argument (a) as the sole argument to demonstrate the injustice of racial segregation. Rather, we must see the argument (a) and (b) *together* in order to see what’s wrong with racial segregation.” In order to examine whether this response

³⁸ The current attempt in Norway is part of the inspiration for this point: the government proposes to allow people “to legally change their gender without the need for any surgery, hormone treatment or sterilization”. See <http://www.thelocal.no/20160318/norway-to-allow-gender-change-without-medical-intervention>

³⁹ A real example might be religious oppressions in history. Devoting oneself to a particular religion is generally regarded as a choice, but it seems unacceptable to claim that there is no injustice to treat religious minorities as inferior since they choose their religion.

could rescue luck egalitarianism, we move to the argument (b).

The argument (b) could *partly* account for the injustice as empirical data clearly shows that segregation did result in black Americans having fewer opportunities or accesses to advantage.⁴⁰ Argument (b), however, does not seem to address the full story. Luck egalitarians talk about unequal distribution of (or accesses to) social goods like higher-ranked positions, social status, and income and wealth. This inequality itself is bad and unjust. From the viewpoint of justice, both African and non-African Americans should oppose racial segregation, even though non-African Americans benefited from it.⁴¹ I think what luck egalitarians would say so far are reasonable, and in order to see why I regard it as insufficient, we need to examine the argument made by relational egalitarians to reject racial segregation, which I believe is a more comprehensive account.

Relational egalitarians would claim that different forms of harm were caused by racial segregation and that not only African Americans suffered from it. First, segregation harmed black Americans materially, including denial of access to the enjoyment of various social goods.⁴² That is to say, relational egalitarians would

⁴⁰ I shall soon argue (in the next section) that such an explanation could not be strictly classified as distributive egalitarian.

⁴¹ This account has the merit of explaining the participation of non-African Americans in the Civil Rights Movement. For instance, in the “March on Washington” in 1963, 20-25% of the marchers were non-black Americans. For more details, see “50th Anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom Panel Discussion at the Black Archives of Mid-America” (*press release*). *The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration*. August 7, 2013. Retrieved July 27, 2014. Quoted from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/March_on_Washington_for_Jobs_and_Freedom

⁴² As later argument shows, “materially” and “distribution of social goods” are misleading terms, for some of the social goods are clearly not materials. But we should bracket this issue aside temporarily.

agree with the argument (b) made by luck egalitarians. Relational egalitarians never want to deny the fact that distributions of social goods matter to justice; what they reject is the claim that egalitarian justice is *primarily about* an ideal and fair distribution. An egalitarian society would also take *non-possessive goods* seriously.

It will be a point that luck egalitarians are unwilling to accept easily, for this presupposes that the state (or the basic structure of society) has tasks beyond the fair and equal distribution of *material* goods. And it is absurd to say a policy is unjust when it disappoints people's desires – some offensive desires (e.g. insulting others) should never be satisfied and some inoffensive desires (e.g. friendship) should not be promoted by the state. But to deny that the state is responsible for promoting all non-material interests does not imply that the state should never promote non-material interests. Therefore, the question is: is there any non-material interest that is essential in the sense that it significantly matters to people's well-being (this is similar to Rawls's notion of higher-order interests) (Rawls 1999a, p. 123), and that the achievement of that interest depends heavily on the role of the state (and therefore, the state should not harm that interest)?⁴³ Since notable luck egalitarians, such as Dworkin and Cohen, talks much about the distribution of possessive goods (resources and accesses to advantages), I assume they will deny the existence of non-

⁴³ A stronger version will be that the state is responsible not only in avoiding disappointment of achieving that essential interests but also responsible for promoting it actively. But I think the weaker version should suffice.

material goods that should be promoted by the state; otherwise, they are admitting their theories of egalitarian justice are inadequate. Dworkin and Cohen, however, would be happy to accept the claim that there are non-material goods such as friendship. What they deny is that it is in state's responsibility to promote those goods.

Relational egalitarians nonetheless believe that there are essential non-material interests that are ignored by luck egalitarians. For instance, racial segregation led to black Americans' loss of self-respect, which is obviously non-material. Self-respect is a complicated notion, but for simplicity's sake, we can understand it as a sense of self-confidence in one's own conception of the good as valuable and in one's abilities to achieve it.⁴⁴ Self-respect is an essential good since "without it nothing may seem worth doing" (Rawls 1971, p. 440). Pursuing one's rational conception of the good is important to our well-being (if not, what else it can be?), and since self-respect is necessary for carrying out our life plan, a certain degree of self-respect is our essential *need*. It is also obvious that the design of the basic structure of society has a serious effect on citizens' level of self-respect. For instance, a state may favor a particular conception of the good (e.g. a particular form of religion), thus strongly discouraging people from pursuing other conceptions. Therefore, even though it

⁴⁴ It is an oversimplified account of what Rawls mean by self-respect. For more details, see (Rawls 1971, p. 178-80, 440-2).

might be controversial that the state should actively maximize people's level of self-respect, it is important (and less controversial) for the state to secure their basic level of self-respect.

Racial segregation undermined the self-respect of black Americans in at least two ways. First, the racial segregation *expressed* disrespect to African Americans. For example, under the Jim Crow laws, the number of black voters are strictly limited by measures like “poll taxes, literacy, and comprehension tests, and residency and record-keeping requirements” while most of the whites (protected by the Grandfather clauses) were freed from those requirements.⁴⁵ Those laws and policies mirror the attitude that blacks are far less likely to be a competent voter, and therefore those tests and additional requirements are necessary. The self-respect of black Americans will normally be undermined by those demeaning laws. Second, African Americans did not have equal access to social goods, thus making them pessimistic about their likelihood of achieving their life plan. For instance, they faced severe inequality of educational resources. Public schools and libraries for African American children were operated under a very limited budget.⁴⁶ It further led to unequal opportunities in which black Americans were much less competitive in the job market. Their senses of self-worth were weakened as they found they had very

⁴⁵ This information is quoted from Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_Crow_laws

⁴⁶ Ibid.

little chance of realizing their life plan.

Apart from the material and non-material harm caused by racial segregation, relational egalitarians better explain why non-African Americans deemed it unjust as well. Again, relational egalitarians would agree with luck egalitarians that non-African Americans thought that even though they received massive benefits from it, racial segregation is indeed an unfair way of organizing society and distributing goods. They rationally desired for more distributive goods as they needed them to carry out their plans of life, but their senses of justice also told them their prestige was found on a biased and unjust system.⁴⁷ But relational egalitarians express another form of discontent. While luck egalitarians focus on the unequal distribution and the worse-off situation of African Americans, relational egalitarianism claims that racial segregation embodied unequal relations, which is problematic *in itself*. Racial segregation made relations of mutual respect between African and non-African Americans difficult if not impossible. Under racial segregation, it is more likely that non-African Americans treated African Americans with contempt while African Americans envy of the privileges enjoyed by non-African Americans.⁴⁸

In short, luck egalitarians could provide two arguments against racial

⁴⁷ Here I adopt Rawls's account of two fundamental moral powers: capacity for a conception of the good and capacity for a sense of justice. See Rawls (1985, p. 233-234; 1999b, p. 398)

⁴⁸ This is only a general trend, however. It is possible (and indeed there were cases) that they treated one another with respect. The point is that racial segregation did not seem to encourage citizens having such attitude towards each other.

segregation, one of which misidentifies the core of injustice while the other one fails to fully capture the injustice. Relational egalitarians, on the one hand, could take (part of) the luck egalitarians' idea that the unequal distribution of social goods makes segregation unjust, and on the other hand, add that racial segregation harmed citizens' non-material interests and it is an unjust form of relationship. It helps to explain the multi-dimensional nature of justice and injustice. The relational account, I conclude, is more comprehensive and fruitful than luck egalitarianism.

2B. The Limits of Distributive Ideas

The second reason for favoring relational over luck egalitarians' conception of justice is that luck egalitarians "*overextend* the concept of distribution" (Young 1990, p. 24, *italic mine*). In order to answer this objection, luck egalitarianism runs into a dilemma: either it must endorse a purely distributive theory which leaves out a number of important issues, or it must endorse a weird form of relational egalitarianism.

Let us start by observing luck egalitarians' usage of distributive concepts. As we have discussed, justice essentially refers to fair distributions of goods for luck egalitarians. Therefore, conceptually speaking, those goods have to be divisible (so that distribution is possible). Many of the social goods stressed by luck egalitarians,

upon scrutiny, would be analyzed as indivisible. Worse still (for distributive egalitarians), they are indeed *relational* concepts. Let us take the concept of rights and basic liberties as an example.^{49,50} They are neither literally possessions nor divisible.⁵¹ Rather, they refer to a series of social rules which specify “what people can do in relation to one another” (Young 1990, p. 25).⁵² There is no such thing as “distributing the freedom of press equally”, but only rules prohibiting agents (including the state and other interest groups and individuals) from interfering arbitrarily on the issues of the publication. Only money, a much narrower concept than “resources”, “welfare”, and “advantage”, is the social good that can truly be collected and redistributed.

If this is plausible, then there is a need for luck egalitarians to clarify their position. There are two options available for luck egalitarians. One is to stand as a distributive theory of justice in a strict sense. The other alternative is to admit that luck egalitarianism is not purely distributive. Both of these, however, will lead to consequences that luck egalitarians are unwilling to accept. Let me consider the two alternatives in reverse order.

⁴⁹ I barely mention that luck egalitarians emphasize on basic rights and liberties, since I take for granted that they support equal basic liberties and rights, which is one of the key features of liberal egalitarianism.

⁵⁰ Young (1990, p. 25-7) analyzed the concept of “rights and liberties”, “opportunities”, and “self-respect”. For the sake of simplicity, I shall not go through all of them.

⁵¹ Dworkin mentioned that certain resources are non-divisible (Dworkin 1981b, p. 285). But what he had in mind is that some resources (he took milking cows as example) cannot be divided to people equally, rather than the idea that those resources are indeed relational concepts (and in the case of milking cows, Dworkin is right that “cows” is not relational concept)

⁵² Rawls also claims that “[l]iberty is a certain pattern of social forms” (Rawls 1999a, p. 55-56).

Luck egalitarians may discard the name of “distributive egalitarians” and retain the substantive content of their theories unchanged. Not being distributive egalitarians allows them to discuss the equal “distribution” of resources and access to advantage. If luck egalitarians pursue this option their theory will become a weird form of relational egalitarianism: focusing on the certain social and institutional relations (e.g. basic liberties, opportunities) while ignoring other social relations that relational egalitarians deem as essential like the relation of mutual respect among citizens.⁵³

The other alternative for luck egalitarians is to maintain an essentially distributive theory of justice. The consequence is that they could only focus on distribution of money (and other social goods that are truly divisible, if any). Distributive egalitarianism could not give a primary role to equal distribution of basic rights and liberties and opportunities as luck egalitarians did. This form of luck egalitarianism, I believe, will be unreasonably narrow and assign the weight of different social goods in a counter-intuitive way.⁵⁴

But luck egalitarians might defend this option by pointing out the special feature of money as all-purpose means. Take “the fair equality of opportunity” as an example

⁵³ Another difficulty, and I believe it is a more vital difficulty, is that the consequence is not just about giving up the name. Indeed, it fundamentally changes the way luck egalitarians conceive of justice. Luck egalitarians could not view citizens as merely social-goods recipient but also an actor. I shall emphasize this point in later chapter.

⁵⁴ Rawls, for instance, offers a more intuitive way to assign the importance of social goods. He argues that the “distribution” of basic liberties and rights enjoys “lexical priority” over the opportunity, while opportunity enjoys lexical priority over income and wealth. For more details, see (Rawls 1971, p. 61)

to show the vital role played by money. The principle of fair equality of opportunity requires that accesses to social goods “are to be not only open in a formal sense, but that all should have a fair chance to attain them.” (Rawls 1971, p. 73) Therefore, people should have similar chances to develop the relevant skills and acquire the relevant knowledge. Moreover, since the natural assets and social backgrounds of people are diverse, people with bad brute luck should receive more resources, in order to be as competitive as the well-endowed. At this stage, the significance of money comes in. The government could provide extra money to the unfortunate group of people so that they are capable of hiring a private tutor, or free students from exhausting part-time jobs. It would definitely enhance their competitiveness. Even though luck egalitarianism takes the equality of fair opportunity seriously, a good that could never be distributed in the literal sense, luck egalitarianism could argue for achieving it in an *indirect* way (via the mechanism of money).

Setting aside the question of whether this argument applies to other social goods like liberties and rights, the response shifts to the *instrumental value* of the distribution, a position that relational egalitarians are happy to accept. It states that the distribution of money is of no primary importance: the equal distribution of money is instrumentally beneficial to the realization of other values. If luck egalitarians believe that fair equality of opportunity is desirable (in itself), then given

the conceptual analysis of the idea of opportunity, they face the first horn of the dilemma, on which their theory becomes a weird form of relational egalitarianism (i.e. egalitarianism that on the one hand, focuses on the “distribution” of opportunities which is genuinely non-distributable, on the other hand, neglects the importance of the relationship among equal citizens).

Instead of choosing between two undesirable options, luck egalitarians might suggest another way to *escape from the dilemma*: social goods cannot be distributed in the literal sense, but this fact does not constitute a vital challenge to luck egalitarianism, for we can use the term “distribution” in a loose and *metaphorical* sense. The abovementioned argument presupposes we use the term in a literal sense and attacks a strawman.

I think this reply makes luck egalitarianism more attractive, but it does not solve the problem (perhaps the more important problem) derived from the argument about nature of distributive concepts. Philosophers are free to use concepts in a metaphorical way but there is also a risk: it might obscure something significant. In the case of using distributive concepts metaphorically, luck egalitarians ignore (or at least do not pay enough attention to) the institutional context (Young 1990, p. 21).⁵⁵

When we talk about distributive issues, even understood in a loose sense, such an

⁵⁵ Another risk mentioned by Young is that the distributive metaphor “ignores or obscures the importance of social groups for understanding issues of justice”(1990, p. 27). For the sake of simplicity, however, I shall only focus on one risk.

emphasis discourages people from deliberating on the more “background” questions. We are concerned about how many social goods citizens should be able to enjoy and consequently pay inadequate attention to the question of what kinds of institutions are required by justice. The distributive metaphor affirms the existence of injustice and encourages people to rectify the injustice by redistribution, rather than to rectify an injustice by changing the institutional settings. For instance, when luck egalitarians talk about the equal opportunity to jobs and offices, they barely discuss the “stratification of such positions” and “hierarchical division of labor” (Young 1990, p. 22).

In short, I conclude that upon analysis, most of the social goods emphasized by luck egalitarians are indeed relational concepts, and therefore luck egalitarians face a choice between maintaining the theoretical content or merely the name. Some of the possible responses made by luck egalitarians are also unable to rescue the theory.

2C. Individual Responsibility

Our concerns with issues of individual responsibility also provide a reason to favor the relational account of justice as luck egalitarians *overemphasize* the value of individual responsibility.

To start with a brief review of luck egalitarians’ view on individual

responsibility will be helpful. Luck egalitarians believe that justice requires equal respect to citizens and that the way to respect citizens equally is to hold them responsible for equality or inequality they *deserve*. An equality or inequality is deserved when it reflects people's choices rather than brute luck. By choices, luck egalitarians mean decisions that are "traceable to its victim's *control*" (Cohen 1989, p. 922, italics mine).^{56,57} We can see that luck egalitarians assign the idea of individual responsibility an essential role to the egalitarian theory of justice. Cohen, for example, said that the fundamental egalitarian aim is to "extinguish the impact of brute luck" (Cohen 1989, p. 931).

I shall introduce a further distinction in addition to luck egalitarians' account. According to Scanlon, questions of responsibility could be understood two types: "responsibility as attributability" and "substantive responsibility" (Scanlon 2000, p. 248).⁵⁸ When we say a person is attributably responsible for his action, it means that "it is appropriate to take it as a basis of moral appraisal of that person," while substantive responsibility refers not to moral appraisal but substantive claims about one's duties to act in a certain way. When we say a father is substantively responsible

⁵⁶ Cohen (1989) argued that Dworkin's equality of resources shifts between different "egalitarian cuts" in different writings. In "Why Liberals Should Care about Equality", Dworkin's view is more similar to Cohen's than in "Equality of Resources".

⁵⁷ I call it "the control account of choices". But Dworkin sometimes suggests another model: the identification account – one is responsible for their choices not because people are in control over their choices, but that people identify with their choices (Dworkin 2000, p. 287-291; 2003, p. 194). Since the identification account plays a relatively minor role in Dworkin's equality of resources, and since it is inconsistent with the control account (I can identify with my natural talent) (Scheffler 2010, p. 216), I mention this account only to set it aside.

⁵⁸ Anderson introduced three distinct kinds of responsibility (2008a, p.244): attributive (correspond to Scanlon's responsibility as attributability), prudential (one is "prudentially responsible if she exercises the virtues involved in acting responsibly"), and substantive responsibility (also correspond to Scanlon's substantive responsibility). Since the idea of prudential responsibility is less relevant for our discussion, I shall mention it here only to set it aside.

for providing a good education for his son, what we mean is that he has the duty of doing so.⁵⁹ We can hold someone attributively responsible for a choice without holding him substantively responsible. Anderson (1999, p. 295-296) invites us to imagine if there is a misbehaved driver who also deliberately declines insurance, we can blame his decision.⁶⁰ But once he suffers from his misbehavior and decision of not purchasing insurance, the state should not leave him alone. Relational egalitarians claim that even when the car accident is the result of his voluntary choice, the driver does not forfeit the right to be rescued.⁶¹

At first glance it seems that luck egalitarians focus on the *substantive* sense of responsibility: after all, the essence of justice for luck egalitarians is about distribution rather than praise or blame. Indeed, when Cohen and Dworkin talk about responsibility and hypothetical cases that illustrate the idea of responsibility, their concern is whether the inequality is justified. In defining and defend equality of resources, Dworkin believed that one of the important questions is: “is it consistent with equality of resources that people should have different *income or wealth* by virtue of differing option luck?” (Dworkin 1981, p. 293, *italic mine*). When Cohen

⁵⁹ Gary Watson (1996) made a similar distinction between attributability and accountability. The idea of attributability is the same as Scanlon’s and Anderson’s idea of attributive responsibility: open to moral evaluation including praise and blame. Nonetheless, Watson’s idea of accountability is slightly different with Anderson’s idea of substantive responsibility. Accountability emphasizes on the imposition of demands on people, e.g. someone might demand for explanation of your reasons for doing/choosing so. I do not read luck egalitarianism as advocating claims of accountability. It is true that if someone ask for compensate, he needs to provide evidence to show the result is a result of brute luck. But it is *conditional* – if you do not look for compensation, some of your genuine choices (e.g. fishing as your tastes) do not make your decision accountable to others.

⁶⁰ This case is highly simplified. For more details, see (Anderson 1999, p. 295-296).

⁶¹ Scanlon has a brilliant discussion on “the forfeiture view”, see (Scanlon 2000, p. 256-267).

writes about the different habits or tastes among people, his concern is whether the state should *subsidize* people's tastes that are voluntarily developed? We might safely conclude that luck egalitarians assign the idea of *substantive* responsibility an essential role to the egalitarian theory of justice.

Once we have confirmed that the concern of luck egalitarians is about substantive responsibility, we can ask two further questions: why should substantive responsibility play such a key role in an egalitarian theory of justice, and why people are substantively responsible for an inequality if it reflects their choices?⁶² I shall handle the questions in reverse order. Interestingly, luck egalitarians do not seem to provide a concrete argument for the connection between choices and responsibility.⁶³ I do not believe that luck egalitarians are careless here. Rather, I inclined to think that luck egalitarians see the connection is justified by its explanatory power for many moral intuitions, and therefore we do not need an additional argument to prove it. Fitting with our moral intuitions could be a theoretical merit for a normative political theory, but there are at least two potential risks for relying on moral intuitions *solely*: our moral intuitions might not be truly explained by the proposed criterion and without concrete arguments, the proposed criterion is vulnerable to counterexamples.

⁶² Indeed, this is a question of "why the fundamental aim of egalitarian justice is to extinguish the impact of brute luck (and to not intervene with the impact of option luck)?" That is to say, this is the question about the primary aim of justice, but since the criticism is constructed around the idea of responsibility, I deal with this question here.

⁶³ Scheffler (2010, p. 217-8) believes that luck egalitarians do offer an argument: people are substantively responsible for their choices since "they are morally responsible for having made them." Scheffler finds it problematic since the argument presupposes "a libertarian conception of what genuine choice would look like", while the conception itself is not that convincing.

Let me start with the first possible risk. Cohen, for instance, sees the brute-option luck distinction as justified as it enables us to account for intuitions like “people should be responsible for their imprudence.” But is it truly an intuition about substantive responsibility? We may, for instance, interpret the intuition as “people should be open to blame for their imprudence”, rather than “other people are in the right to make the imprudent person bearing the full costs of his imprudent decisions.” The latter interpretation is more controversial. The uninsured driver case also demonstrates that we are permitted (or even required) to blame driver’s reckless decision, but it is *far less clear* that the state should make the driver bear full costs of his choice.

The second risk is that the responsibility criterion is open to counterexamples. Indeed, I believe Cohen’s discussion of the Paul case (1989, p. 923-924) is a good example, though Cohen tries to use the case to illustrate the plausibility of his theory. Suppose Paul loves photography, and he could not have avoided such an expensive taste. Assume also that photography is costly to the extent that Paul cannot afford it. Cohen states that “the egalitarian thing to do is to subsidize Paul’s photography” because it is a “genuinely involuntary expensive taste,” and therefore Paul cannot “reasonably be held responsible” for it (1989, p. 923). Nonetheless, we may feel that Paul is free from moral blame since he does not choose to develop expensive taste,

but it does not imply that the state should subsidize him because of the fact that the taste for photography is beyond Paul's control.⁶⁴

But even if Paul's case does support Cohen, Anderson's uninsured driver case can also show the responsibility criterion is not always the *overwhelming* concern of justice. According to luck egalitarians, if we are sure that the driver knows the possible consequences of his choices (not buying insurances and driving negligently), he has no legitimate claim to ask for help.⁶⁵ But our intuition towards this case contradicts with this way of reasoning. The state, our intuition suggests, should not abandon people with emergency needs, and a more sensible solution is to "sort questions of fault out later." (Anderson 1999, p. 296) That is, justice requires us to bracket the concern of accountability.

Luck egalitarians might respond with the following: "we have this kind of intuition because we think that no one *would* freely and rationally choose to decline insurance and make a risk like that; the driver must be controlled by emotions or insane. Luck egalitarianism, theoretically speaking, allows the possibility that no one is truly accountable for the suffering or inequality." That is to say, luck egalitarianism

⁶⁴ The original version of Cohen's case is involves two people: Fred loves fishing and Paul loves photography. One plausible explanation of our intuition (of not compensating Paul's expensive taste) is the fact that Fred and Paul have "two versions of the same interest: having an agreeable leisure activity. As long as each person is provided with the same resources (e.g. money and time) to pursue this interest, it seems to me that the demands of equality are fulfilled." (Scanlon 2006, p. 80)

⁶⁵ Luck egalitarians, in the case of uninsured driver, might take another way to deal with their problems: they might argue that such a kind of gambling (not buying driving insurance) should be prohibited and some relevant laws should be set up (e.g. compulsory driving insurance and regulations of wearing helmet). There are two replies for this luck egalitarians' approach. First, the philosophical root for those measures seems hardly to be luck-egalitarian but paternalistic. It does not imply that no such laws should be legislated, but only that we are discussing the theoretical problems of luck egalitarianism. Second, even though such laws about safe driving should be passed, the state has no legitimate reason to ban all kinds of "gambles".

allows for the possibility that if no one freely and rationally chooses in a genuine sense, and they are not fully accountable for it. In the face of cases which we intuitively believe that it is problematic for the state not to intervene, such intuitions, assuming they are right, would not be a vital challenge for luck egalitarians. But this response does not solve our challenge. The point of the objection is that we should not use the choice-accountability way of thinking as the *final* criterion to consider government policies, rather than the objection that luck egalitarianism fails to account for our intuitive thinking about a particular policy of redistribution. The role of the intuition aforementioned in my objection is that it shows the inadequacy or over-narrowness of solely appealing to the criterion of choice-accountability; it leaves out something we deemed as important when we consider questions of justice. Up to now, I think I have shown several powerful objections to luck egalitarians' account of individual responsibility.

The main purpose of this chapter, however, is not only to challenge the luck egalitarian view but also to show that relational egalitarianism is better justified. Therefore, I shall explain further the merits possessed by the relational account. First, relational egalitarianism acknowledges that the attributive-substantive distinction in responsibility is essential. We need to ask whether the person is substantively responsible for the situation he is in or merely attributively responsible. Of course,

the relational egalitarian conception of justice will not pay special attentions to attributive responsibility. But recognizing there are two senses of responsibility leads relational egalitarians to be more cautious about judgments of substantive responsibility. They recognize that the connection between choices and substantive responsibility is not that obvious or even problematic. Instead of arguing in line with luck egalitarians, relational egalitarians suggest that there are a number of relevant aspects (including choices) that one has to consider to make a final judgment of responsibility. Or, we may see that choice is never made individually – the decision made by the agent is influenced (but not determined) by the design of social institutions and practices. Judgments about responsibility should not be made in an isolated and decontextualized manner.

I shall simplify the case provided by Anderson to illustrate relational egalitarians' view.⁶⁶ It is observed that in the US whites generally have a much better academic performance than blacks. It is reasonable to attribute this, at least in part, to the fact that blacks have developed a kind of “oppositional culture”: academic achievements are not as significant as what the mainstream (whites) claimed. Motivated by the oppositional culture, black students have generally tended not to devote their energies and time to academic achievement. A popular alternative is to

⁶⁶ For the full details of the case, see (Anderson 2010c, p. 81-4).

strive for excellence in sports. The key issue is the rise of the oppositional culture, which, as the name indicates, is a *resentful reaction* to the “mainstream culture” which instilled the idea that the only way to be esteemed is to perform well in education, combined with the fact that whites prevented blacks from doing well in schools.⁶⁷ Relational egalitarians believe that blacks who embrace this oppositional culture are open to criticisms for failing to study (attributive responsibility) and also responsible for bearing *part of the costs* (substantive responsibility). Nonetheless, relational egalitarianism reminds us not to forget the substantive responsibility of other agents (the state, or the public norms supported by the state; people who label blacks). Though it is the black students who embrace the oppositional culture, they are not the only responsible agents. The reality is very likely that not only the chooser but also other people who interact with the chooser and invisible background norms are also responsible. Therefore, it is unjust and unfair to make black students *fully* accountable for developing the oppositional culture. This oppositional culture is a very natural response to various types of discrimination black students are likely to have been subjected to. To compare with luck egalitarians which argue that people are substantively responsible for his choices, the account of relational egalitarians is more sensible. With the idea of this background, oppositional culture in mind, we can

⁶⁷ Some of the measures to prevent black students to perform well academically might be to label them as “less suitable to learn theoretical knowledge”, and to grant special resources to the education of whites (e.g. provide more sources to libraries for white students under racial segregation).

see that the choice of an action is always the result of numerous interactions (between different people and between the state and citizens). It is almost impractical, if not impossible, to calculate our degree of substantive responsibility. Once the context is introduced, the idea of substantive responsibility seems no longer be a favorable candidate to decide social arrangements – in most cases, it is not *feasible* to distributive according to the degree of people's substantive responsibility.

Readers might feel that there is a weakness of the relational account: relational egalitarians do not offer any concrete advice on matters about substantive responsibility. Even if what relational egalitarians said are all true, we are unable to calculate the degree of substantive responsibility of different agents. This worry, however, misunderstands relational egalitarianism. From the very beginning, relational egalitarians deny that we should *calculate* people's degree of responsibility. Why, then, do relational egalitarians affirm the value of choice and individual responsibility in their theories of justice? Here I shall only present a sketchy answer and offer a relational account of responsibility in greater detail in chapter 4. The basic motivation of valuing choices and responsibility, for relational egalitarians, is similar with luck egalitarians: since we affirm the moral equality of individual citizens as free, it is our obligation (both for the state and fellow citizens) to hold citizens responsible in some senses. The presupposition of individual

responsibility is an agent's freedom, denying people's responsibility would be a denial of their status as a free being. If the state refuses to hold citizens responsible (at least to a certain degree), it expresses the idea that citizens are conceived as either incapable of acting freely (e.g. animals) or agents that possess to capacity to be free but this capacity is not fully-fledged (e.g. children). Therefore, the state has a good reason to accord responsibility to citizens. Nonetheless, the state need not arrive at the conclusion that we should make citizens completely accountable. Part of the reason is mentioned before: social practices and mechanisms have a great influence on people. Another reason, perhaps more fundamental, is that there are other ways to respect people that sometimes require individual responsibility be compromised. In this sense, individual responsibility is a *prima facie* rather than overarching value. That is to say, therefore, in some cases, justice allows or even demands treatments that do not fully appreciate the value of individual responsibility.

In short, luck egalitarians grant a supreme role to individual responsibility to judgments of justice, but they do not provide arguments that are strong enough to support such an important role. It also leads to many counter-intuitive implications. Relational egalitarians see individual responsibility as one way to respect people and allows that individual responsibility could be counter-balanced by other values. It is a more plausible position to take.

Conclusion

This chapter provided three main arguments to show that relational egalitarianism is more desirable than luck egalitarianism. The case of racial segregation shows that relational egalitarians could offer a more comprehensive picture of injustice than luck egalitarians. Luck egalitarians also run into a dilemma after recognizing social goods such as basic liberties and opportunities are not essentially possessions. Lastly, relational egalitarians provide a more flexible account of individual responsibility. While both luck and relational egalitarians connect the idea of individual responsibility to the idea of respect, relational egalitarians' account does not overemphasize the idea of individual responsibility.

3. Outlining the Two Principles of Equality

I have mentioned at the beginning that the relational egalitarianism I propose includes two principles of equality. According to the negative principle of equality, oppressive social hierarchies should be abolished. According to the positive principle of equality, the state should respect citizens as equals and foster mutual respect among them. The two principles correspond to the proposal of Anderson, who says “the proper negative aim of egalitarian justice is ... to end oppression, which by definition is socially imposed. Its proper positive aim is ... to create a community in which people stand in relations of equality to others” (Anderson 1999, p. 288-9). Up to now, the content of the two principles of equality has been ambiguous, for the key ideas in the principles including “oppressive social hierarchy” and “respect” remain unclear. Part of the attractiveness of the two principles comes from the fact that the vagueness of the two principles makes them uncontroversial at first sight: who would reject a principle that aims at eliminating *oppressive* social hierarchies? But a conception of justice cannot stop at this level of ambiguity – it must further specify its key ideas to see whether people find the most specific interpretations and institutional guidance plausible.

Therefore, this chapter will be divided into three parts. First, I will explain the negative principle of equality, in particular, the idea of social hierarchies and social

oppressions. I argue that there are three forms of social oppressions. Second, I will explain the positive principle in further detail. This principle requires the state to respect citizens as equals and foster mutual respect among citizens. Last, I shall outline some general institutional implications suggested by the two principles of equality. The normative justification of the two principles of equality will be postponed until next chapter.

3A. The Negative Principle

The negative principle of equality requires the minimization of oppressive social hierarchies and social practices (including social rules and norms). It does not seem to be a controversial principle, at least at first sight, partly because the idea of “*oppressive social hierarchies*” is vague. In order to put this principle into practices, we need to identify which types of hierarchies are problematic. We cannot merely rely on intuitive judgments for they are both insufficient and insecure. What’s more, we might find it less convincing if we have better knowledge of what the interpreter thinks “*oppressive social hierarchies*” are. We can agree easily that people should be free from oppressions, but we may disagree about what oppressions are. For example, if an account of oppression does not include slavery as a kind of oppression, we have good reason to reject it.

3A (i). Social Hierarchies

Let us start with the idea of social hierarchies. “Hierarchy” refers to durable and systematic unequal social relationships (mainly among social groups). It is “social” in the sense that the systematic inequality between social groups is supported by laws or social practices (Anderson 2012, p. 42). An apparent example would be the subordination of a wife to her husband in patriarchal societies. She would have no choice but to obey the command of her husband. It is also backed up by a set of social norms and practices. When she tries to be more independent, she will be subjected to numerous social pressures and even perhaps legal sanctions.

But the negative principle does not aim at eliminating all social hierarchies. There are social relationships that fit with the features aforementioned without being unjust (or at least compatible with the relational ideal of egalitarian justice). The negative principle only targets *problematic* social hierarchies. Teachers in high school possess unequal power with regard to students. They can assign tasks to students and punish them when students refuse or submit unsatisfactory work, but students cannot do the same thing to their teachers. Nonetheless, the negative principle has no implications that such a hierarchy should be destroyed (though it may require modifications *in some cases*, such as banning any form of physical

punishment). Political officers also possess more power than ordinary citizens even under a democratic regime, but the negative principle will not claim that the power relation unjust simply by virtue of the unequal durable social relations.

3A (ii). Three forms of Oppressions

What makes a social hierarchy problematic, then? As the negative principle suggests, when social practices and hierarchies are oppressive, they are problematic.⁶⁸ It does not solve our problem but brings us a further question. We must now ask in virtue of what is a social hierarchy oppressive. Drawing on discussions from Pettit (1997), Anderson (2012)⁶⁹, and Young (1990, p. 48-63) I will describe three important forms of social oppressions: domination, denial of meaningful participations, and self-alienation. They cover most, if not all, cases of social oppressions.

Domination

It is natural to associate the idea of domination with social oppression.

Republicans, in particular, stress the injustice of domination. According to Pettit, domination is a social relation in which the dominant group is capable of exercising

⁶⁸ I leave the question of whether there are non-oppressive forms of problematic social hierarchies aside.

⁶⁹ Anderson expressed similar views in an interview with The New York Times:
http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/04/23/inequalities-we-can-live-with/?_r=0

arbitrary interference upon the interests of the dominated group (Pettit 1997, p. 52).

The notion of arbitrariness, to simplify, refers to the fact that the interference could not be traced back to the interests of the dominated group.⁷⁰ If the interference is made because the master believes that the slave is mistaken about what is truly good to him, it is paternalistic rather than arbitrary interference (Holroyd 2009, p. 326).^{71,72} Slavery is the standard example of the republican account of domination.⁷³ Slavery is unjust since it permits the master to possess the capacity to interfere with his slaves arbitrarily (e.g. to work 16 hours a day *for the master*). It does not have to be the case that the master, in fact, exercises such capacity, but the fact that the system of slavery allows the master to do so makes slavery unjust. Another feature of domination is common knowledge: both the dominating and the dominated agent realize such relations exist and they know that each other knows about it (1997, p. 58-9). Given this common knowledge, it is sometimes rational for the slave to please his master or conduct self-censorship in order to prevent punishments. For republicans, this is a loss of freedom and, therefore, unjust (Pettit 1997, p. 85-8).

⁷⁰ Another interpretation is that an interference is arbitrary when the dominated group interferes simply because some thoughts come into his mind. Pettit sometimes refers to this interpretation but I think the interpretation mentioned in the main text fits better with Pettit's theory as a whole.

⁷¹ This is not to imply that paternalistic policies are not oppressive. The point here is that paternalistic measures are not "arbitrary" in the sense that domination is. Nevertheless, it is possible that paternalistic policies could be counted as oppressions in forms other than domination.

⁷² The idea that an action is paternalistic if it limits A's options for the sake of A's interests is not a definition of paternalism. It merely states the sufficient condition. On this point, see Carter (2014, p. 82)

⁷³ Slavery was permissible in ancient Greece. Some ancient Greek philosophers (notably Aristotle) supported slavery for two reasons: (1) some people were born natural slaves; (2) the freedom of citizens is mainly exercised when they take part in political affairs; but it is both time and energy consuming. They need slaves to do those exhausting housework for them. (1) is rejected by contemporary egalitarians and (2) is highly controversial; we regard ourselves as free even when we are sometimes occupied by household affairs (or we might hire a housemaid rather than enslave people).

While Pettit identified domination as the only intrinsic political evil, there are cases of social oppressions which could not be accommodated by Pettit's notion of domination. For instance, Pettit's idea of domination is a relation between agents, while the negative principle, as a principle of relational egalitarianism, regards structural (non-agential) oppressions as unjust (Thompson 2013, p. 282-3). Also, for Pettit, domination has to be a matter of common knowledge, that is, both sides in the relation know that conditions of domination exist and they know that others know it as well. For the negative principle of equality, however, it is possible that social oppressions might proceed without the notice of every affected person (Schuppert 2014, p. 449-50).

Readers might question whether some forms of hierarchies or exploitations are necessary for maintaining society? A laissez-faire market, for instance, might be assessed by relational egalitarians as unjust, but it might also be argued that such a market is socially necessary.⁷⁴ In this case, my reply is that a laissez-faire market is not necessary to motivate our economic development. A generally accepted belief is that laissez-faire capitalism, though allowing for extreme inequality of wealth, has

⁷⁴ I imagine readers who are familiar with Habermas's and Marcuse's idea of surplus repression might raise such a question. Basically, surplus repression means society "frustrates their (citizens) preferences to a greater extent than is necessary for it to maintain and reproduce itself." (Geuss 1981, p.17) I regard surplus repression as problematic, and I believe this is consistent with my thesis. The more challenging question is, however, what if some oppressive structures are necessary. There are three possible answers: (1) philosophical anarchism; (2) make the compromise and try to limit the evil of those oppressions; (3) deny that there are social necessary oppressions. I do not have a clear and well-argued answer for this general question though I favor (3). In the case of the capitalist market, however, I wish to show that it is not socially necessary. And I take the capitalist market as an example since I believe many people who worry about the possibility of a socially necessary oppression has the idea of a capitalistic market in mind.

the merit of motivating people and increasing productivity. Competition motivates people but we should not exaggerate its advantages as well. Anderson remarks that “there is virtually no correlation between pay and performance for top executives. Studies show that excessive incentive for work requiring innovative thinking can actually depress productivity by focusing people’s mind on money rather than the task at hand.”⁷⁵

Denial of Meaningful Participations

Social relations and practices that prevent citizens from participating in meaningful public events, in particular, social and political cooperations, are also oppressive. Meaningful participations include but are not limited to taking part in public social and political decision-making and joining other associations (e.g. religious group). There are three different levels of denial. I shall illuminate their differences via the case of a meeting, assuming participating in that meeting is meaningful. *Marginalization* refers to the idea that people are denied of participations from the very beginning – they are even not allowed to enter the meeting room and read the agenda. *Powerlessness* refers to the idea that people are in principle allowed to join the meeting, but they do not have the power to influence the

⁷⁵ Elizabeth Anderson raises this point in an interview with the New York Times: http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/04/23/inequalities-we-can-live-with/?_r=0

outcome. The powerless people are similar to observers who can attend the meeting but prohibited to voice out their opinion. *Hierarchy of standing* refers to the idea that even though participants have their influences, they do not enjoy the same standing as other participants and therefore result in unequal considerations of interests.

People who suffer from the hierarchy of standing have the right to present their ideas and interests in public, but their voices are always be ignored or not taken seriously.

Therefore, the final decision will always be partial to people who enjoy hierarchy of standing. The negative principle of equality sees the unequal consideration of interests as unjust and oppressive since it contradicts to the commitment of equal authority and cooperative nature of society (Rawls 1971; Anderson 1999, p. 322).

The injustice of both dominations and the denial of meaningful participations could be explained by the value of autonomy and equal consideration, but one should be aware that they are different kinds of social oppressions. It is apparent that domination as social oppression does not have a specific focus while the denial of participation has a much narrower scope, namely the meaningful participations.

Besides, dominations and the denial of meaningful participations are different forms of social relation. On the one hand, it is possible that someone is dominated while he could take part in meaningful participation. For example, a super benevolent master might treat his slaves as equals by inviting his slaves to express their opinions and

taking their opinions equally seriously. On the other hand, it is possible that someone is denied of meaningful participations while he remains non-dominated in Pettit's sense. For example, some social norms (perhaps relate to traditional family values and religious ideas) might exert extra pressure and prevent homosexuals from running an office, though all citizens in society are legally entitled to political rights. It is not domination in Pettit's sense since it is not the relation among agents. It is the social norms that are oppressive.

The injustice of denial of meaningful participation is explained by the reasonable liberal claim that the well-being of individuals largely depends on their participation to activities they regarded as meaningful. We want our life to be successful, not only in the sense that certain ideal states of affairs are realized but also that we *actively engage* in the process of the realization of those states of affairs. Consider Nozick's famous example of the experience machine.⁷⁶ Nozick invites us to imagine there were a high-technical machine which could give you all kinds of experience you preferred. If you plug into the machine, you need not really spend so much time and effort on athletic training but experience the feeling of winning the Olympic medal. One of the reasons for not plugging into the experience machine, argued forcefully by Nozick, is that "we want to *do* certain things, and not just have

⁷⁶ Nozick (1974, p. 42-45)

the experience of doing them.” (Nozick 1974, p. 43, italic original) Of course the discussion of Nozick’s case here is highly simplified – not all activities are “meaningful” and some minimal qualifications might be needed. But the point is quite clear: for those cases that are less controversial (e.g. certain forms of religious practice, engaging in labor and social movements) it would be unjust for the state to deny citizens’ participations. Under some exceptional circumstances, such as under the threat of terrorists attack, it might be legitimate to restrict citizens’ freedom to participating in meaningful activities. But the burden of proof, the duty to explain why the state’s limitations on citizens’ participations, is on the side of the state.

Self-alienation

Both domination and denial of meaningful participations are external social obstacles to freedom. They refer to the injustice of external agents or social practices capable of exerting an unacceptable degree of power over others thus hindering their autonomy and denying equal consideration derived from the idea of moral equality.⁷⁷

The third form of oppression is self-alienation, which is closer to an internal constraint to one’s autonomy. Under certain social systems and practices, people might accept stereotypes regarding particular groups of people.⁷⁸ It is possible that

⁷⁷ Literally speaking social practice cannot exert power since it is not an agent, but it is common that social practices are protected and enforced by power. So “exerting power” here is used metaphorically.

⁷⁸ Christman (2013, p. 377) mentioned that (McLeod and Sherwin 2000, p. 79) expressed the same point.

social oppressions in this form might not be conscious. Rather, we often unconsciously and unreflectively internalize many social norms and expectations. From the point of view of the negative principle, “social relationships and structures (which)... lead to a person’s loss of self-respect or alienation from herself through the explicit or systematic disrespect of the affected persons (or group’s) status as a social free and equal” as a kind of social oppression (Schuppert 2014, p. 453).

There are at least two reasons for seeing self-alienation as unjust. First, self-alienation prevents people from being authentic. Imagine the stereotype that “pink is the color of ladies” is prevailing in the society. A man will hesitate to wear pink clothes (or even unconsciously and automatically exclude the option of purchasing pink clothes), even though he finds pink attractive. As time passes, he may also develop a kind of adaptive preference, agreeing with other men that pink will never be his favorite color.

What if someone tries to be authentic? After all, it is possible for the oppressed agents or groups to express their authentic tastes; the man is legally allowed to choose pink if he insists. But the problem is that the social environment makes it (unreasonably) costly to be authentic: the authentic person will suffer from great peer and social pressures which might undermine their level of self-esteem. In a patriarchal society, women are regulated by norms of femininity (Krause 2013, p.

193): they should stay at home, sit and talk politely and be sensitive to men's needs.⁷⁹

When a woman violates those social norms, she will be regarded and even teased as rude and “masculine” (not doing the proper job of a woman), which is a kind of censure. When she are constantly under those criticisms, she will lose her self-esteem. This effect or process is called stigmatization (Anderson 2012, p. 43; Young 1990). In a society where stigmatizations prevail, individuals are vulnerable to a problematic degree: people are exposed to the risk of having a low level self-respect. For relational egalitarians, as I discussed in chapter 2, a minimal level of self-respect is essential to individuals. Without it people lack motivations to act autonomously, for they always feel their life project is valueless and they are incapable of realizing their plans. But it is not the ultimate reason for rejecting stigmatizations, since the two principles of equality only provide equal opportunity to citizens to be free. It is up to citizens to decide what life they want to live (within a reasonable limit such as they are legally not allowed to live a life of robbery or kidnapping). The real problem of stigmatization is that it makes people to decline the opportunity to live autonomously for the wrong reason. How ridiculous it would be, for a woman to give up her ambitions on career, simply because the society exerts huge pressure on women's life choices! A liberal state has no interests in citizens' choices (again,

⁷⁹ This is quoted from Schuppert (2014, p. 450).

except some cases), but an egalitarian society should also pay attention to social circumstances which would put unreasonable pressure on citizens' shoulder.

In sum, domination, the denial of meaningful participations, and self-alienation exhaust the forms of oppressive social hierarchies. We could go back to examples mentioned before. Slavery is social oppression since it (a) allows the master to dominate his slaves; (b) rejects slaves' chance to co-determine future plans with the master (unless the master is unusually beneficent); (c) encourages (consciously or not) the self-alienation of the slave, such as to please his master by adapting to his preferences.

3B. The Positive Principle

We have said that the negative principle only removes undesirable forms of social relations, but a society regulated only by the negative principle might not be a desirable society: some forms of living such as mutual indifference and isolation might prevail. A more desirable society than it might be one that citizens are related to one another in some ways other than mutual indifference. The more specific answer is provided by the positive principle, according to which the state respects citizens as equals and citizens are related to one another by mutual respect.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ This should not be understood as a principle of maximization, but rather a requirement that a society should meet some threshold of respect.

Before going into the details, let me make one short clarification about the idea of respect. We said that respect is a kind of attitude rather than a series of actions. Respectful actions (e.g. salute) are only actions that we can reasonably presume the actor performs based on his respect for another. But one can salute to his officers without truly respecting them. Since respect is attitude, it can never be achieved by state's coercions. If an egalitarian conception of justice affirms the value of respect, what it can do is merely to *promote* (rather than coerce) mutual respect. There is no guarantee that all citizens will treat others with respect. In other words, we should not evaluate the state's performance in promoting respect in terms of the actual state of affairs: so long as the state has done its best to promote egalitarian values (within the limits of political legitimacy), it should be viewed as just.

3B (i). State's Responsibility to Respect Citizens as Equals

The idea of egalitarian plateau introduced in the first chapter – to treat citizens as equals, is interpreted by relational egalitarians as a matter of treating citizens with equal respect.⁸¹ This section will further explain this interpretation.

The egalitarian plateau stems from the idea of moral equality: people enjoy equal moral status despite their diversities. Everyone possesses moral dignity and an

⁸¹ Or "respect citizens as equals", both of them I mean the same thing.

“inviolability found on justice” (Rawls 1971, p. 3). This conviction (perhaps the deepest moral conviction of contemporary times) derives the requirement that we should not be treated in undignified ways, such as being tortured arbitrarily and treated as a mere means. To make the content more substantive, we need an account of moral agency (i.e., by virtue of what we are a moral agent).⁸² Such an account would also help us to see the complexity of the idea of respect.

The state is responsible for protecting citizens’ entitlement to autonomy, and doing so requires the state to replace autonomy-hindering social relations with autonomy-supportive relations. Moral equality, according to perhaps the most popular interpretation, means people equally have the potential to be autonomous. Their agential power includes but is not limited to what Rawls call the capacity for a conception of the good, namely “the capacity to form, to revise, and rationally to pursue a conception of one’s rational advantage” (1996, p. 19). For example, domination will not be tolerated since it denies the dominated opportunities to exercise his capacity for self-governance. In Anderson’s terms, domination enables “others [to] wield unaccountable power over them” (Anderson 2012, p. 45). Also, the positive principle contends that a state should not abandon the life of citizens, even though their situations are self-incurred.⁸³ Apart from that, a just government will

⁸² Moral agency, again, is an extremely hard and complicated philosophical question that is beyond the scope of this essay. Therefore, I shall aim at offering a less controversial account.

⁸³ It only refers to normal situations like the uninsured driver case. This paper has no intention to discuss problems like assisted

play a positive role in promoting conditions of autonomy. The questions of what those conditions are, and what measures the government can take, will be discussed in later section and chapter.

Another important way to express equal respect is to satisfy what Scheffler calls the “egalitarian deliberative constraint”: “other persons’ equally important interests – understood broadly to include the person’s needs, values, and preferences – should play an equally significant role in influencing decisions” (2015, p. 25). This constraint expresses the idea of equal participation and equal consideration of interests. While the negative principle identifies denial of meaningful participations as one form of social oppressions, the positive principle advocates not only that citizens should enjoy the fair opportunity to participation, but also the equal consideration of interests. Equal consideration of interests is valuable since it affirms citizens’ equal moral authority – it does not regard a particular group of citizens as superior and pays extra attention and consideration on them.

The positive principle requires that the state should treat citizens also with “opacity respect,” that is, “paying attention only to their outward features as agents” (Carter 2011, p. 539). We might consider it a form of respect for people’s privacy.⁸⁴

suicide and euthanasia.

⁸⁴ Conceptually speaking I believe opacity respect is different from guaranteeing privacy. We can have different grounds in favor of guaranteeing people’s privacy: for our personal safety, for economical or financial reasons. But the idea of opacity respect and avoiding shameful revelation provides a moral reason to support protection of privacy: without it our sense of self-esteem will be unjustly undermined.

This provides a significant constraint on distributive practice. The positive principle, motivated by the concern for opacity respect, argues against examining people's development of agential capacities, which is the essential information for luck egalitarians to judge whether the inequality can be traced back to agent's choices. The reasons for not investigating the internal varying of capacities among citizens are two-fold: first, to assert the idea that once the state is confident that citizens possess a very minimal amount of agential capacities, remaining variation does not matter (in the sense that citizens with a higher level of development do not enjoy higher moral status); second, to avoid a humiliating effect which undermines citizens' self-respect. Anderson points out that luck egalitarians, by advocating the state should investigate the degree of defects in citizens' internal assets, disparage "*the internally disadvantaged and raises private disdain to the status of officially recognized truth*" (Anderson 1999, p. 306; italic original). Imagine a citizen is unemployed for a long time because his talents (e.g. hunting) are not needed by the society. After investigating his talents, the government regulated by luck egalitarianism will offer him compensations with the explanation that you are entitled to compensation since you do not have valuable talents from our point of view.⁸⁵ This could be humiliating and significantly weaken his sense of self-worth

⁸⁵ Of course, when putting the luck-egalitarian principle into practice, the government needs not to offer explanation when providing compensation. However, from a normative point of view, it is undesirable if the moral motivation of a particular policy, when open to public, will be humiliating.

(Anderson 1999, p. 305). To avoid passing those judgments, the two principles of equality argue that the state should also be constrained by the test of opacity respect.

Another way of respecting citizens as equals is to hold them equally responsible. As far as the positive principle is concerned, substantive responsibility is only a *prima facie* value. This way of respecting citizens could be counter-balanced by other aforementioned aspects of respect. The positive principle also holds that it is a mistake to think that a state's policy should be solely directed by the calculation of individual responsibility, for the reason that doing so often humiliates people (imprudent people or people with bad brute luck).

For egalitarians, individual responsibility matters because by holding people responsible we treat them as free beings. The test of treating citizens as equals will be met without calculating the degree of responsibility since "all moral persons will be treated as equally responsible in identical external circumstances." (Carter 2011, p. 568) That is, a judgment of responsibility will be made independent of information about citizens' particularity, and in this sense, it is impartial and equal.

The positive principle, on the other hand, requires the state to promote diversity. Diversity is important based on two factors: the value of self-esteem and what Rawls call the fact of reasonable pluralism (Rawls 1996, p. 3-4).⁸⁶ For Rawls, in an open

⁸⁶ An alternative to explain the fact (not the value) of diversity is value pluralism (Berlin 2002; Galston 2002), who holds that values in the world are conflict and incommensurable. The difference between value pluralism and reasonable pluralism is that the former is "a claim about the nature of value" while the latter is "a claim about the nature of human judgment" (Lynch 2009,

society, citizens will naturally develop “reasonable comprehensive religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines” that are perhaps opposing and irreconcilable with one another (1996, p. 36).⁸⁷ Religious ideas (e.g. salvation) might have no place in atheists’ comprehensive conception of good. And some may assign different weight to religious values than others, even though both of them are Christians. All those conceptions of the good could be reasonable. Given the fact of reasonable pluralism, I argue that promoting diversity is the appropriate response from justice. Imagine a monistic society in which only one esteem-evaluative standard is available (or it dominates while other standards are greatly marginalized). Only citizens who fit with that dominating standard enjoy esteem: they have a good sense of self-worth partly because they know that their goals and achievements would be accepted by society. But citizens who depart from the dominating standard will suffer greatly: society provides few opportunities and resources to them, and even if they overcome that hardship and realize their goals, the majority will not recognize their achievements properly. Low level of self-esteem would be the natural consequence. As we have argued that self-esteem is essential, celebrating diversity is the appropriate response from the state.

p. 73). I appeal to reasonable pluralism as I think it is less controversial (while at the same time compatible with value pluralism).

⁸⁷ Rawls often calls comprehensive religious, philosophical and moral doctrines as comprehensive conceptions of the good (1996).

For instance, in Hong Kong, there is one dominant evaluative standard: wealth. It is not to say pursuing other forms of achievement (e.g. artistic achievement) is impossible. Indeed, different ways of life are legally approved. But they have greatly marginalized: society provides little support (including both the necessary resources and opportunities and encouragement) for those possible ways of life. Some marginalized ways of life may require little resources, but the monistic society, in general, will not esteem your conception of the good, and worse still, it will treat you and your life plan with contempt. If you want to be a philosopher, which obviously will not make as much money as certain other professions (e.g. banker or lawyer or doctor), you will be doubted and criticized for not doing the proper thing (pursuing a profession that generates wealth). Our confidence in the value of a particular life plan partly depends on the attitude of others. Your sense of self-worth will be shaken by the disapproval of others. In a pluralistic society, citizens will have a greater chance in realizing their plans, no matter their plans are (since the state will not bias to a particular conception and marginalized others), but also that citizens will affirm one another's' conception of the good as reasonable.⁸⁸

In short, the positive principle conceives of the idea of respecting citizens as

⁸⁸ In a diversified society what citizens are required is to acknowledge that others' conception of the good as also "reasonable" and therefore entitled to a fair chance in realizing them and we should not treat them with contempt. It does not follow that citizens must regard others' conception as "equally reasonable". Indeed, it is plausible to regard some conceptions of the good as "not the most reasonable", such as mindless entertainment or consumerism.

equals as a complex idea with different requirements. Most importantly, it requires the state to guarantee equal citizenship, in which all enjoy equal basic liberties and rights, equal consideration of interests, treat citizens with opacity respect, and to promote diversity. Additionally, the state should regard holding citizens substantively responsible for their choices as a *prima facie* way to respect citizens' equal moral status, but it is possible that it should be counter-balanced by other considerations of respect. The positive principle might be accused of still not providing a concrete and substantive enough account of accommodating different faces of respect, but I believe that pointing out the multiple dimensions of respect is the best we can do.

3B (ii). Mutual Respect between Citizens

The positive principle promotes mutual respect between citizens. But why should we respect each other? The duty to respect one another stems from the presupposition that we are morally free and equal and therefore possess a certain degree of dignity.⁸⁹ The dignity of people makes each an authority, entitled to make claims or demands on one another to respect their dignity (Darwall 2006, p. 13-4).

When someone is treated as mere means rather than an end in itself, you may legitimately, as a moral agent who deserves to be treated not merely as a means,

⁸⁹ Here I shall not deal with the question of whether people are morally free and equal. I regard it is a more fundamental question but I simply *assume* it. Otherwise the discussion of egalitarian justice could not continue. For some relevant discussions see Williams (1973, p.230-249), Pojman (1991), Arneson (1998), Carter (2011), and Steinhoff (2014).

require others to treat you in the appropriate way. The reason provided here is second-personal: “it is grounded in (*de jure*) authority relations that an addresser takes to hold between him and his addressee.” (Darwall 2006, p. 4) That is to say, the reason one appeals to is not that treating *people* as merely means is bad (or wrong); you are treating someone as merely means; your action violates a moral principle, but “you should not treat *me* like that!” *Mutual* respect is the idea that each is willing to understand the second-personal reasons from his or her point of view and constrain oneself based on these second-personal reasons.⁹⁰ Readers might find that the idea of second-personal reason (and authority) new or even unappealing. But many actions and reactions we find pretty justifiable in fact presuppose such a second-personal standing. Both speech acts (e.g. commanding) and moral reactive attitudes (e.g. resentment and guilt) presuppose the second-personal relation (Darwall 2006, p. 3, 17; Austin 1975; Strawson 1968).

To recall the luck egalitarians’ view on respect might help to illustrate. Luck egalitarians believe that respect is a value that the state has a primary duty to respect citizens, nonetheless, mutual respect between citizens is not the concern of justice. The positive principle denies this: if citizens are entitled to be respected by the state, why are they not entitled to be respected by other citizens? If respect is essential to

⁹⁰ Rawls said that mutual respect is expressed “in our willingness to see the situation of others from their point of view” (1999a, p. 297), though I am unsure if he is referring to second-personal reasons.

one's well-being, how can we not care about relations between citizens?⁹¹

Once we take relations of mutual respect between equals seriously, social structures and norms that lead to biases and stigmatizations which unreasonably threaten mutual respect should be regulated. Some forms of stereotypes stigmatize a certain group of people, not only alienating them but also discouraging other citizens to treat the stigmatized group as equals. There are prejudices and biases against blacks (to recall the discussion of racial segregation), and based on those biases, citizens might develop the conviction that we need not to respect them. Some of those stigmatizations, I believe, could be removed by stating the facts clear, for those stereotypes are clearly false once clarified. More than that, the state should foster attitudes of respect and promote relevant egalitarian ideas among citizens.

Mutual respect is citizens' attitude towards one another, but respect, generally speaking, will be manifested in the following ways. First, when making decisions that do not only affect himself, a citizen is more willing to treat the equally important interests of others who will also be affected by the decisions with equal weight.

Second, citizens are inclined to not to interfere with one another's enjoyment of basic rights and liberties and the pursuit of their conception of the good. It does not follow

⁹¹ At least for some notable luck egalitarians such as Dworkin and Cohen, they do not explicitly reject the idea that justice considers issues about our relations to one another. Charitably speaking, I will say they may accept it but grant it a less significant place than the idea of eliminating the impact of brute luck in their theories of justice. Relational egalitarians will still find their positions (under this interpretation) insufficient or even fail to capture the core of justice.

that citizens are completely indifferent to other citizens. Rather, since citizens *trust* other citizens are equally capable of forming a reasonable conception of the good, even though the rational life plans between citizens are different, citizens still view those life plans as reasonable (unless there is an obvious reason to think some citizens are pursuing unreasonable goals) and therefore no interference is warranted.⁹²

In short, the positive principle suggests that the state should play an active role in promoting mutual respect. If citizens respect one another, they will constrain their actions according to second-personal reasons, try to meet the egalitarian deliberative constraint, and affirm each other's conception of the good as reasonable.

3C. Institutional Prescription

Before discussing the possible institutional implications suggested by the two principles, I shall make a remark about my purpose in doing so. The chief role here is *evaluative* rather than directive and regulative. This is to say, this section does not aim at teaching people how to fulfill the negative principle. Real politics is not the focus of this paper. This section aims, in contrast, to show that how we can make normative evaluations and criticisms to current social and political arrangements in

⁹² Wolff expresses the idea that one way of undermining respect is to distrust citizens (1998, p. 108). I am inspired by this point and further argue that to respect citizens one has to trust others as possessing and capable of exercising agential capacities.

light of the two principles of equality. Though some institutional settings (e.g. equal basic liberties) could possibly be derived from the two principles of equality, the chief aim here is to demonstrate that the two principles can play a *prescriptive* role – point out the dimensions we should consider when we talk about justice.⁹³ Even in the discussion of institutional instructions, the focus should be how we can use the relational account to evaluate basic institutional designs.

The main prescription of the two principles will be to replace existing oppressive social relations with desirable egalitarian relations such as the relation of mutual respect. Based on this general prescription, the two principles suggest that the constitutional, political, economic, welfare-related, and educational settings can contribute to realizing the relational ideal of justice. But the state should be cautious in the applications of direct coercive enforcements, such as penalties or jail. The two principles would be better served by more moderate measures if such options are available. Part of the reason is moral and part of the reason is pragmatic. The exercise of coercive power, no matter what political goals the state tries to achieve, is to be regulated by “the liberal principle of legitimacy”, according to which “exercise of political power is proper and hence justifiable only when it is exercised in

⁹³ In his “Equality of Resources”, Dworkin explains that there are three merits of developing his general account of equal auctions into a fuller account of the ideal of equality of resource. With the thicker theory in hand, we can, first, test its “coherence and completeness”; second, to use it as “a standard for judging institutions and distributions”; and third, to bring insight to the question of “the design of actual political institutions” (1981b, p.290-292). I see the purpose of this section is to demonstrate the two principles of equality have the second merit but not the third one (though not denying that they are incapable of inspiring the design of actual institutions).

accordance with a constitution the essentials of which all citizens may reasonably be expected to endorse in the light of principles and ideals acceptable to them as reasonable and rational.” (Rawls 1996, p. 217). Constrained by this principle, only a few serious injustices should be addressed by coercive force, for we can safely assume that citizens will have no reasonable grounds to reject such exercise of political powers. The exercise of coercive forces would also fail for pragmatic reasons in many cases, since we have observed that to truly realize an egalitarian relationship, in particular, mutual respect, requires the corresponding attitude that cannot be achieved by coercion.

3C (i). Constitutional and Political Measures

The state regulated by the two principles of equality would follow what Rawls calls the principle of equal basic liberties, according to which “each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all” (Rawls 1999a, p. 266). *Basic* liberties are liberties that “provide the political and social conditions essential for the adequate development and the full exercise of the two moral powers of free and equal persons” (Rawls 2003, p. 45).⁹⁴ Some examples of basic liberties are political

⁹⁴ Rawls suggests that there is another way of coming up with a list of basic liberties, by surveying history to see what are the liberties being taken seriously (Rawls 2003, p. 45). But I shall not comment on this approach.

liberty, freedom of speech and thought, and freedom from arbitrary arrest.⁹⁵

The principle of equal basic liberties also forbids forms of domination, in particular, slavery. Indeed, Pettit supports a similar way of dealing with domination. In discussing non-domination as a political ideal Pettit suggests two ways to achieve it, namely “the strategy of reciprocal power” (sometimes Pettit calls it a “decentralized strategy”) and “the strategy of constitutional provision” (Pettit 1997, p. 67). The strategy of reciprocal power is the idea that by making citizens possessing nearly equal power, domination will cease to be a possible outcome. Equal power implies that it is unwise for an agent to try to dominate others, for he might be punished by others for his attempts. This strategy is rejected by Pettit for it may cause another form of domination: “such punishment and threat of punishment are themselves forms of interference, as we know, and forms of interference that do not track the interests and ideas of those who are affected” (Pettit 1997, p. 67). Based on this potential threat, Pettit prefers the strategy of constitutional provision: to set up a constitutional authority which “deprive[s] other parties of the power of arbitrary interference and of the power of punishing that sort of interference” (Pettit 1997, p. 68). This strategy does not lead to new domination as the authority acts according to the common good.⁹⁶ And this strategy leads naturally to the principle of equal basic

⁹⁵ For the full list of basic liberties, see Rawls (1999c, p. 53)

⁹⁶ For more comparisons between the two strategies, see (Pettit 1997, p. 93-5).

liberties, for doing so could effectively deprive any party of an unacceptable degree of control over others.

The design of political procedure could help to achieve the requirement of equal consideration of interests. To achieve equal consideration of interests, political decisions should meet the “egalitarian deliberative constrain”:

The parties should display comparable tenacity and imagination in seeking to address the comparably important interests of each of them. In these ways, they make manifest their view of one another as equals and the equal seriousness with which they treat one another’s interests (Scheffler 2015, p. 28).

Setting up a procedure to guarantee that the outcome (of a political decision) would be properly constrained seems to be a more effective way than checking particular decision one by one.⁹⁷ A deliberative democracy, for example, will tend to meet the egalitarian deliberative constraint. Admittedly what I have said so far omits a lot of complicated issues such as how the state can collect information about citizens’ interests (both their content and their relative importance for citizens) in a respectful way (or at least not disrespectful). The aim of this section, to repeat, is not to provide concrete institutional design but to demonstrate the two principles can play a

⁹⁷ If we adopt Rawls’s distinction between three forms of procedure, namely perfect, imperfect, and pure procedure, I believe that aiming at a pure procedure, that does not know the criterion of equal consideration of justice but able to guarantee that outcome meet this requirement, is more realistic. For Rawls’s distinction, see (Rawls 1999a, p. 74-6)

prescriptive role.

The state should also guarantee people a fair equality of opportunity (Rawls 1999a, p. 63); that is, not only formal equality of opportunity (e.g. legal rights to apply for a job or join an association) but enabling citizens to “have a fair chance to attain” those desirable positions.⁹⁸ Doing so not only expresses respect for citizens as equals but also enables citizens with fair chances to obtain resources or other goods needed for carrying out their life plans. Citizens who live in a society with fair equality of opportunity are assumed to maintain *a basic level of self-respect* in the sense that they can reasonably expect that they have a fair chance of obtaining resources (understood in the broad sense) they need to pursue their life plan. Equality of fair opportunity preserves citizens’ sense of self-worth in another way as well. Some social goods, such as social status and positions, are positional goods, which mean it is impossible for all citizens to enjoy them equally. When those social goods are open to all under the condition of equality of fair opportunity, citizens are well-aware that those who enjoy positional goods are better than those who do not, but only in the sense of performance or achievement, not in the sense of natural superiority. Fair equality expresses clearly the idea that no one is naturally entitled to this positional good. Consider the society in which social status is determined by

⁹⁸ For more details of Rawls on equality of fair opportunity, see (Rawls 1999a, p. 73-8, 263-7).

blood (e.g. ancient Japan): your family background determines and fixes your social status and this fact expresses the idea that you are naturally inferior (if you born in a peasant family) to another and it will last forever. Fair equality of opportunity is a much more desirable system in preventing citizens' loss of sense of self-worth.

In short, for the sake of abolishing domination, providing necessary conditions of autonomy, and preserving citizens' self-respect, the two principles prescribe (in terms of constitutional and political institutions) that equal basic liberties should be available to all citizens, the government should try its best in meeting the egalitarian deliberative constraint, and guarantee fair equality of opportunity.

3C (ii). Economic and Welfare Policy

The two principles of equality allow for social and economic inequality, but only within a certain range. There are several reasons to constraint the socio-economic inequality. First, the two principles prescribe that the state should provide a social minimum including shelter, food, and emergency medical care to all citizens on an *unconditional* basis. Those are not only necessary for the exercise of agential capacities but also necessary for survival. It should be provided on an unconditional basis for two related reasons concerning respect. First, a just society will never abandon citizens, even when the suffering of citizens is due to their bad option luck.

Second, if the social minimum is open on a conditional basis, it might force citizens to reveal information that they feel shameful to reveal. To treat citizens with opacity respect, the two principles recommend an unconditional basic minimum.

But socio-economic inequality could still be severe even when the unconditional social minimum is provided, and it is problematic as it threatens political equality. This is a standard republican concern: the billionaires might control media or some political parties and make themselves politically more influential than ordinary citizens. The consequence might be that both media and political parties are biased to the interests of the wealthy, leading to an unequal consideration of interests.⁹⁹ Also, the mere social minimum is only sufficient for citizens to live with basic dignity but insufficient for pursuing their plan of life.¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, it may seem unfair to tax the wealthy in order to enable the poor with necessary conditions of autonomy. In response to this possible objection, the two principles suggest that the redistribution is fair in another sense: the equality of persons entails that “all individuals share a common pre-political title to the resources of the external world” (Hinton 2001, p. 85).¹⁰¹ Another possible response is more Rawlsian: in a hypothetical situation, we will all agree that socio-economic inequality should be

⁹⁹ Limiting the socio-economic inequality is just one possible way to tackle the problem. Another possible solution might be laws to regulate party-donation.

¹⁰⁰ The idea of basic dignity is vague, and sometimes it means people should be treated as ends in itself and the exercise of coercive political power should be constrained by the principle of legitimacy. I endorse those meanings but here I employ the idea of dignity to mean people can have those necessary goods (e.g. shelter, food, clothing, and safety) without begging one another.

¹⁰¹ The idea of joint-ownership is also discussed by Cohen. See (Cohen, 1995), in particular p. 96-105.

tolerated only when it improves the conditions of the least well-off, assuming to be enjoying fewer conditions of freedom. We might now regard the redistribution is unfair since we are now biased. From an impartial and a moral point of view, however, such a redistribution is perfectly justifiable.

Redistribution involves offering social *welfare* to the least well-off group, but some social welfare policies, in contrary to a social *minimum*, should be made available to citizens on conditional terms.¹⁰² The concern here is mainly pragmatic: the economy of the society will be unsustainable if all social welfare is provided unconditionally. But it also stems from moral concern. Take a housing allowance as an example (while the shelter is an example of the social minimum). If every citizen is entitled to the housing allowance unconditionally, it is likely that even the wealthy group will take advantage from it, resulting in an unacceptable accumulation of assets. This betrays the aim of providing social welfare, namely to address the problem brought by socio-economic inequality.

It might be challenged that once the social welfare is made conditionally, the idea of treating citizens with opacity respect is no longer possible. Respecting the two principles of equality requires that we balance opacity respect against other

¹⁰² Some social welfare policies, however, are unconditional, such as laws regulating the working conditions. In this essay I speak very little on this matter, not because it is an unimportant problem. Quite the contrary, it is a big issue and I regard myself as incompetent to make a full account of this matter. Marx argues that there is no substantive difference between an alienated worker and a slave. I am not sure whether his point is accurate, but we can argue for further regulations on the working conditions independent of Marx's claim. I believe, in general, sweatshops and child labor should be banned. Workers should enjoy greater bargaining power than we have now. The co-determination system in Germany and the idea of workplace democracy might sound radical, but they should be seriously studied.

values connected with respect. To clarify, the two principles do not suggest that economic efficiency is an overriding concern, but a society in which all social welfare is offered unconditionally would simply be disastrous. Fortunately, there are ways to maintain economic efficiency without sacrificing opacity respect. For instance, the state can decide on qualified welfare recipient without appealing to the internal characteristics (e.g. intelligence, dispositions) of citizens. The housing allowance should be open to the family that does not own any property yet. The piece of information the government need is only whether you (and your family members) own any property; the knowledge of whether the fact that your family does not own property is due to your low IQ is beyond the concern of the government. Hopefully, by appealing to more external and objective information citizens' level of self-esteem and economic efficiency can be preserved.

3C (ii). Education

Education is essential since it provides chances for future citizens to both acquire skills necessary for autonomy and cultivate egalitarian attitudes.

Straightforwardly, basic skills (e.g. calculation, writing and communication) are necessary for earning a living. Citizens need to develop cognitive and deliberative abilities in order to make good use of their liberties and other resources in pursuing

their conceptions of the good. A more detailed account of the conditions of autonomy and how education can contribute to it will be offered in the next chapter.

In order to cultivate the attitude of mutual recognition, education as a soft (or moderate) paternalistic means should be considered. At school, students should be given chances to communicate with one another on equal footing. For instance, when students are going to decide the site of school picnic, they should be free to present their ideas and reasons to one another. An idea such as “we should go site A because I want to” will slowly be excluded and they learn to provide reason like “we should go site A because the scenery of site A is nice and we could all enjoy it”. This is both seeing one another as a second-personal authority and try to take others’ equally important interests with equal seriousness. Another non-coercive way of promoting egalitarian spirits is to set up special official holidays. For example, to celebrate the birthday of Martin Luther King with the aim of promoting egalitarian ideas.¹⁰³

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter explains some of the key ideas in the two principles of equality. For example, domination, denial of meaningful participations, and self-alienation are three forms of social oppressions. Respect is realized not only by the

¹⁰³ On this point, see Nussbaum (2013), p. 6

state to treat citizens as equals, but also the mutual respect relation between citizens.

To make the two principles more explicit, I also survey the prescriptive role that the two principles of equality can play.

4. Defending the Two Principles of Equality

After laying out the content of the two principles of equality, I shall now justify them as the appropriate conception of relational egalitarianism. I would like to make one relevant point briefly only to set it aside. The two principles of equality are obviously a type of relational egalitarianism (e.g. the two principles present justice as an essentially relational ideal achieved by minimizing social oppressions and encouraging respect in society) so that the two principles inherit the advantages of relational egalitarianism mentioned in chapter 2. The two principles properly acknowledge the limits of distributive concepts and are free from the objections raised by cases that are counter-intuitive to luck egalitarianism. The merit of the two principles in terms of the idea of individual responsibility is unclear right now, but I shall make it explicit in this chapter.

This chapter will present two main arguments. First, if two principles of equality are satisfied we will arrive at a society of equals, which is morally desirable. I consider it a huge advantage to my proposal, as many forms of relational egalitarianism fail to specify in details what a society of equals would be like. According to the two principles, a society of equals requires that (a) conditions (including supportive social circumstances) of relational autonomy are available to citizens; (b) the egalitarian plateau (treating with equal respect) is fulfilled and

mutual respect is promoted; (c) the value of choice and people's moral responsibility are both acknowledged by the society. Those three points are not completely distinct from each other (in particular, the first two points, as we will see) but they emphasize different aspects of the idea of justice, and therefore appropriate to treat them separately. The discussion of the conditions of autonomy will be the major part of this chapter, for the ideas of respect and individual responsibility have already been developed in previous chapters.

The second argument for the two principles of equality is that they contribute to the development of relational egalitarianism. I will show this by comparing the two principles of equality with Anderson's account of democratic equality. This paper draws heavily from Anderson's works, which offers an attractive picture of relational egalitarianism. Nonetheless, the two principles differ from Andersons' conception of justice in some ways, and I will argue that the conception presented here is superior.

4A. The idea of a Society of Equals

Apart from the merits shared by most, if not all, forms of relational egalitarianism, the society honoring the two principles of equality would be a society of equals. Relational egalitarians are better at spelling out injustice rather than

articulating a more positive account of justice.¹⁰⁴ If the two principles of equality could provide a more substantive account of a society of equals, it should be considered as a huge advantage. According to the two principles of equality, there are at least three core elements for a society of equals: (a) conditions of relational autonomy would be open to all citizens; (b) the egalitarian plateau is fulfilled and mutual respect is promoted; (c) the value of choice and the role of responsibility.

4A (i). Conditions of Relational Autonomy

The two principles of equality commit to the liberal idea that the fundamental duty of the state is to secure freedom of citizens.¹⁰⁵ This idea presupposes that egalitarian justice should respect citizens as morally *free* agents. While libertarians interpret this duty as setting up legal frameworks to remove external obstacles to citizens' freedom, proponents of the two principles of equality suggest a more robust and expansive account of freedom, which holds that while external freedom and opportunities and internal competencies are the two conditions for leading an autonomous life, the fulfillment of the internal and external conditions largely depends on social circumstances. Advocates of the two principles of equality are

¹⁰⁴ I do not regard it as a special failure of relational egalitarians. Indeed, I think all theorists of justice will find it more difficult to articulate a positive account of justice.

¹⁰⁵ I do not regard this idea as distinctive to contractarians. For example, I believe Pettit will also agree that the primary aim of a state is to secure citizens' freedom, and therefore he advocates the maximization of non-domination while domination is defined as the obstacle to freedom.

more sensitive to the possible impacts brought by social circumstances than libertarians. But there is no guarantee that all citizens will be autonomous when the two conditions and supportive social environments are available. Whether a citizen can lead an autonomous life ultimately depends on whether he decides to make good use of those conditions. This section aims at providing a sketch of what those conditions of autonomy are, but we first need a relational account of autonomy in order to build up the details.

Relational Autonomy

The idea of autonomy can be understood at different levels. It is sometimes referred to a particular action or desire. When you have the capacity to choose and your choice reflects your self-identity or commitments, you are autonomous. Let us call this *local* autonomy. But there is another sense of autonomy. Autonomy in this sense does not focus on a particular choice or desire but refers to the idea that an agent can *in general* manage her life. This is called *global* autonomy (Oshana 2006, p. 2).¹⁰⁶ The two principles concern the issue of autonomy in the global sense: whether citizens, in general, can manage their life, rather than the question of whether decisions, interests and desires made (or formed) by citizens are

¹⁰⁶ This distinction between local and global autonomy need not be exhaustive. For instance, Machenzie introduces the idea that an agent is programmatically autonomous when she has control over “domains of a person’s life.” (Machenzie 2014, p. 19) The key issue here is that the main focus of relational autonomy is not local autonomy.

autonomous.¹⁰⁷

If we fix the idea of autonomy to the global level, what does it mean when we say an agent is autonomous? I propose that there are three dimensions of autonomy (Mackenzie 2014).¹⁰⁸ First, autonomy requires *self-determination*, to make good use of available options to shape your life through your own choices. Second, autonomy requires *self-governance*, to make good use of your abilities so that your way of life coheres with your authentic self. Third, autonomy requires *self-authorization*, to regard oneself as “having the normative authority to be self-determining and self-governing.” The first two dimensions at first glance are similar, but they are distinct in the sense that the dimension of self-determination emphasizes the availability of external freedom and opportunities while the dimension of self-governance emphasizes the availability of relevant skills and capacities that are more internal to the person (Mackenzie 2014, p. 31). Such a difference in focus leads to different relevant conditions of autonomy, as we will see soon.

This account of autonomy is relational since unhealthy social relations or practices can frustrate these conditions. A relational account of autonomy, we may say, commits to the idea that our road to autonomy (including the formation of one’s

¹⁰⁷ Part of the reason for (relatively) neglecting local autonomy is that otherwise it might be intrusive for citizens and violate the requirement of respect. But the more important reason is that it seems uncontroversial that what we truly care about is global rather than local autonomy, once we have made this distinction clear.

¹⁰⁸ For Oshana, an agent is autonomous when he has “*de facto* power and authority over choices and actions significant to the direction of her life.” (2006, p. 2) Mackenzie regard it as mere one dimension of autonomy, namely self-governance, but I am skeptical on this point as I think Oshana’s definition allows for more flexible interpretation.

identity) is complex, dynamic, and inescapably depends on social environments.¹⁰⁹

For instance, when social structures dominate a certain group of people, the dominated might be deprived of the necessary freedom and opportunities for self-determination. Some social norms (e.g. norms of femininity) might deform desires or interests, making them incoherent with the authentic self. In other words, a just society should be sensitive to the impact of social circumstances to autonomy.

There is one more remark I need to note here. The two principles of equality conceive of autonomy not as a binary property but a property which comes in degrees; that is, the two principles do not tell us that we are either fully autonomous or not. It would be ridiculous to say that when a person does not have complete control over her choices or the actions that matter to her life, she is not autonomous. If we see autonomy as a binary property, the conclusion would be that no one is autonomous. A more reasonable presentation will be she enjoys a high degree of, though not a full degree of, autonomy. Therefore, the idea of conditions of autonomy should be understood as *conditions that enable citizens to obtain a sufficient degree of autonomy*.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Admittedly I did not provide any psychological report or experiment to support this claim (doing so could apparently make my claim stronger), but at the same time I regard this claim as relatively uncontroversial and we could find evidence everywhere, even in our daily world.

¹¹⁰ The question of how to draw the line or threshold between sufficient and insufficient degree of autonomy is a deep question that I am unable to deal with here.

Conditions of Autonomy

Based on the account of relational autonomy, we could now turn to the question of what are the relevant conditions of autonomy. The conditions of autonomy, according to the two principles of equality, are numerous and the account I provide here might not be exhaustive. I broadly divided between *external and internal conditions* of autonomy. More importantly, I argue that *social circumstances* will make a huge impact on whether the internal and external conditions are achieved.

To begin with, a wide range of *freedom and opportunities* will be open to citizens in a society of equals as they are necessary for self-determination, determination free from *external* interference (or possible interference).¹¹¹ Here I refer not only to basic liberties and rights, which are undoubtedly essential to autonomy, but also a wide range of options about different ways of life, for example, your career plan and religious identity, and also different sets of commitments to what are valuable to you.¹¹² That is to say, citizens with a reasonable but relatively unpopular conception of what is truly valuable and worth pursuing will also have the fair chances and accesses to adequate amount resources to pursue their plan in a just society.¹¹³ To guarantee such a wide range of freedom and opportunities available to

¹¹¹ Anderson and Honneth (2005, p. 133) prefers the name “institutional conditions” instead of “freedom and opportunity condition”. I think the substantive content are highly similar but the former suggests the role a basic structure can play while the latter suggests what a citizen need for autonomy. I opt for the latter one based on the aim of this section.

¹¹² As Mackenzie (2014, p. 27) notes, Joseph Raz (1994, p. 170-91) provided a detailed account of opportunity (or he calls “options”).

¹¹³ But there is no guarantee that a society must provide sufficient amount of resources needed for an expensive taste, such as travelling around the world.

citizens, the state should promote diversity in a number of ways. For instance, the state should promote the idea that citizens should respect one another's conception of the good, given that they are reasonable.¹¹⁴ Also, the state should open up modes of economic production, in order to provide economic opportunities for those who are less interested in financing and industrial production.¹¹⁵ Citizens are allowed or even encouraged to pursue their particular ways of living, given that they are reasonable. It matches the idea of promoting diversity mentioned in the last chapter. Admittedly, a perfectly diverse society seems unrealistic, and therefore we ought not to demand the state to realize a diverse society to an unrealistic degree, but the state should try to open up different options and possibilities to citizens.¹¹⁶

Social circumstances make a huge impact on whether the freedom and opportunities condition is achieved at two different levels. First, the basic social institutions determine which types of freedom and opportunities are open to citizens. For example, we need laws to ensure that our properties will not be forfeited arbitrarily. We also need social institutions to prohibit discrimination and to secure equal opportunities for citizens. Second, social circumstances can affect the exercise

¹¹⁴ The idea of reasonable here I mean not conflicting with the basic commitments of liberal egalitarianism, such as respecting one another's basic rights.

¹¹⁵ When I talk about this point, I have Hong Kong in mind as an example. The economy of Hong Kong is largely (though not totally) dominated by several economic sectors; other modes of production such as agriculture are greatly marginalized. Only top professional sportsmen can earn a decent living. It makes pursuing different ways of life very difficult, though not impossible.

¹¹⁶ A related question is that if a perfectly diverse society is unattainable, is it unfair or unjust to those minorities whom their conceptions of the good have relatively little chance to prosper? I believe the answer is no. It will be unfair or unjust only when the state is capable of doing but refuses to do so.

of the freedom open to citizens. Here “social circumstances” refer not only to laws and concrete social institutions but also to social norms and practices. For example, assuming that a constitution guarantees equal basic liberties to all citizens, but certain groups of citizens (e.g. women) live under strong social and peer pressures to exercise those liberties (e.g. political liberties) because of the prevailing social norms, the freedom and opportunities condition is not met, for it requires every citizen to have a *fair chance of exercising* (rather than merely possessing the formal and legal rights of) those basic liberties. This is not to deny that some women (perhaps they are brave or unaware of the pressure) could still exercise political liberties as they please. But the point here is that citizens should not bear the unnecessary cost of enjoying and making use of those opportunities.

But even having external freedom and fair equality of exercising opportunities are insufficient for leading an autonomous life, we need internal competence as well. The *competence* condition refers mainly to the “basic skills and competencies related to choice, deliberation, action, and interaction” (Christman 2014, p. 205).¹¹⁷ When a wide range of options is available, choice-related competencies are of special importance. I shall mention some examples here. A citizen, in the process of forming (and choosing among different options) and pursuing her plan of life (including a set

¹¹⁷ Christman offers a full list of choice-related competencies which I shall not list out all of them in the main text. For details, see Christman (2014, p. 205-6).

of interests and values), needs to acquire relevant information and deliberate in order to form realistic judgments (Oshana 2006, p. 7). “Information” includes both what is required in order to realize a particular valuable life plan and whether I have the necessary talents and abilities. A citizen may rule out the option of being a great artist if he does not have the aesthetic potential talents. Also, even if access to resources necessary for a wide range of reasonable life plans is open to all citizens, citizens need to be equipped certain skills. In a society of equals, jobs (which can provide a steady amount of income and perhaps satisfaction) are open but citizens still need to possess relevant knowledge and skills such as literacy, basic calculation abilities, communication, and perhaps computer skills in order to gain a job. A society of equals will provide adequate chances to make sure that every citizen could be equipped with those capacities if they want to. Again, knowledge, skills, and capacities are concepts measured in degrees. A society of equals is not a society in which every citizen is fully deliberative and possesses the highest level of cognitive abilities. They might make mistakes, but those mistakes should not be the result of distorted social relationships or social structure. To enable the competence condition, education plays a key role, and school (and perhaps also family) is the best place to provide knowledge and training on skills that are necessary for autonomy.

The competence condition is closely connected to the *authenticity* condition. In

order for a person to be autonomous,¹¹⁸ he needs to exercise agential capacities in a way that reflects (or at least coheres with) his will. If an agent manages his life according to his alien desires, it is hard to say he is truly autonomous. Take the drug addict as an example. If someone unintentionally develops a drug habit and therefore regard taking drugs for pleasures as a valuable way of living, it is doubtful that he is truly autonomous in terms of his direction of life.

How can social circumstances make a difference in the achievement of the authenticity condition? A just government, to recall, will never inquire whether the “motivational structure”, a system composed of choices, values, and commitments, expresses one’s will, for it is both undesirable (the potential danger of violating the test of opacity respect) and impractical to investigate.¹¹⁹ The responsibility of the government is only to rectify social relations and practices that are likely to have the effect of self-alienation of citizens.¹²⁰ Two principles of equality require that we care about the authenticity condition, partly because of the worry that self-alienation and stigmatization of the society might force citizens to form adaptive preferences and, therefore, violate the authenticity condition. To avoid adaptive preference, we need the negative principle which minimizes social oppressions in society.

¹¹⁸ I am uncertain that whether lacking a convincing account of authenticity would be a weakness of the two principles of equality, and if it does, would it be a decisive weakness.

¹¹⁹ Oshana used the term “practical identity” (2006, p. 31) frequently to explain the authenticity condition. I guess this idea is borrowed from Korsgaard (1996) and since I am unfamiliar with her works, I deliberative give up using this term.

¹²⁰ The idea of self-alienation could be understood in at least two senses: (1) forming inauthentic desires and set of values; (2) not seeing oneself as a normative authority. The discussion about authenticity condition limits the idea of self-alienation in the first sense. Its second sense will be discussed soon, but I avoid calling it “self-alienation” to avoid confusion.

Apart from the impact made to the achievement of the two conditions of autonomy mentioned above, positive social circumstances will also motivate citizens seeing themselves as authority for self-determination and self-governance as well which make citizens more *willing* to make good use of their opportunities and competencies available to direct their life. We have said being an autonomous agent implies that he has the *authority* of self-determination and self-governance. Based on this authority, he can make claims on one another if they do not treat him in the ways they ought to. He is also entitled to pursue his authentic plan of life (given that it is reasonable). But if an agent fails to see himself in this way, he will be less willing to do what he is entitled to. Advocates of the two principles of equality believe that social circumstances influence, if not determine, citizens' way of seeing themselves.¹²¹ Citizens living under social relations and practices that promote mutual accountability (and social recognition) will make them more willing to regard themselves as authority. Accountability here does not mean bearing substantive responsibility but requires every participant be ready to respond (and act according) to each other's legitimate claims and demands. Participants in those supportive relations will *recognize* each other as an authority and deserving respect, and they are prepared to restrict their freedom in order on this basis. When someone denies others'

¹²¹ Or in Mackenzie's terms, social circumstances influence citizens' "self-evaluative attitudes" (Mackenzie 2014, p. 35).

authority, even it is done unintentionally, the disadvantaged participants, according to the supportive social relationships, have the right to complain and demand justice *as an authority to be self-determining and self-governing*.

In contrast, some social circumstances have a negative impact on self-evaluation, thus making citizens losing willingness to make good use of their internal capacities in an environment that necessary freedom and opportunities are guaranteed. For example, imagine a husband who is both competent and truly loves to do domestic work. He enjoys cleaning, tidying up stuff and cooking for his family members. But he lives in a society where norms like “the husband should work and sustain the family financially while the wife should stay at home to take care of other family members” are prevailing.¹²² Such norms of the family are not coercive – the husband will not be punished legally if he chooses to stay at home. But this norm at the same time exerts pressure on a stay-at-home husband, people (his neighbors) who embrace this norm might treat the desire to be a stay-at-home-husband *as if* it is an alien desire. Also, the husband will live under strong pressure for his stay-at-home decision and start doubting whether being a stay-at-home-husband is truly valuable.

This kind of self-doubt is the result of the prevailing social norms of the family rather

¹²² There are not only norms about family, but others like “a university graduate should not work as a waiter or a bellboy.” I think the issue here is a bit tricky: people might not realize those norms might stigmatize people. Indeed, they might (consciously or unconsciously) take this norm for granted at the same time believe that “a university graduate should be free to do what he wants to.”

than his own psychological causes.¹²³ That norm imposes, perhaps unnoticed, unnecessary burdens for the husband.

In short, advocates of the two principles of equality commit to the idea that the state should secure freedom of citizens. There are three domains of autonomy namely self-determination, self-governance, and self-authority. Making all citizens equal in terms of these three domains is an unrealistic ideal, but government officers should pay special attention to social circumstances as they will affect citizens' *external freedom and opportunities, internal competencies and authenticity, and the willingness* to exercise their competencies to direct their life.

4A (ii). The Egalitarian Plateau

The discussion about the egalitarian plateau in Chapter 1 is minimal. Part of the reason is that different forms of relational egalitarianism articulate the idea of treating as equals (or treating with equal respect) in slightly different manners. The two principles of equality provide a distinctive understanding of the egalitarian plateau as well, one on which the idea of equal respect is multi-dimensional. Citizens are entitled to respect by virtue of a number of things. Therefore, respecting one another as equals involve flexible treatments in different aspects, some of them might

¹²³ Scanlon (2000, p. 213) argues that if someone suffers a sense of worthlessness "simply from psychological causes that have nothing to do with the actual facts of one's society," it is just a matter of "misfortune" but not the concern of social institutions.

conflict with one another in a particular scenario. I shall illustrate several dimensions of respecting people as equals.

First, equal respect involves equal considerations of interests. Equality of citizens demands that the state, when deciding on policies that influence different citizens, should consider the interests of citizens equally (Scheffler 2015). Equal considerations of interests acknowledge citizens' equal moral authority, or to say, acknowledge every citizen as a "self-originating source of valid claims" (Rawls 1980, p. 543). It is not to say that a policy that respect citizens as equals is necessarily the policy that provides equal outcomes.

Second, respecting citizens as equals require treating them as morally free beings. Citizens could be equal in many different senses but what advocates of the two principles of equality concern are the moral commitment of equal freedom. To respect citizens is to respect citizens as moral free agents – that is, to guarantee citizens conditions of autonomy and to ensure that social circumstances are not to be designed in the way to demotivate citizens to direct their life autonomously.

Third, respecting citizens as a moral agent with dignity requires the state not to abandon citizens and to treat them with opacity respect. The state should consider both the distributive result and psychological consequences to citizens. Egalitarian distributive fairness is sometimes needed to be compromised.

In brief, respect is a multi-faced notion that requires equal consideration of interests, enabling conditions of autonomy, not to abandon citizens, and maintaining opacity respect (avoiding shameful revelation). Holding citizens responsible is also one of the ways to respect which will be discussed in the next section.

4A (iii). Individual Responsibility and the Value of Choice

In chapter 2, I argue that responsibility should not be the overriding demand of justice. Instead, it should be subjected to other egalitarian values such as respect. I worry that the previous discussion might lead to an illusion that responsibility bears no role (or an extremely minimal role) in relational egalitarianism. I shall now state my position on this point in greater details.

Luck egalitarians stress the theoretical connection between individual responsibility and respect. One of the main drawbacks, as we have observed, is that it will lead to many counter-intuitive implications. The two principles of equality do not nullify the role of individual responsibility but treat it as only one way among many to achieve respect. Distributive fairness is not always overriding. Indeed, it should be counter-balanced by ideas like opacity respect and not abandoning people. The two principles of equality do not offer a concrete account of how to balancing different ways of respect. This is what relational egalitarians should work on. But the

current suggestion, namely that respect citizens as equals involves different dimensions, provides flexibility to account for our moral intuitions.

While relational egalitarians do not believe that if you are not held substantively responsible for every choice you have made, the state fails to treat you with respect, it does not nullify all values of choice. Indeed, a society of equals acknowledges several values of our choices. Scanlon distinguished between different kinds of choices which are helpful in illustrating this point (Scanlon 2000, p. 251-6).¹²⁴ On the one hand, choices are of *instrumental* value, that is, we have a better understanding of my interests, plans, and abilities than anyone else, therefore it would be more beneficial if I can choose for myself. There are cases in which making choices will lead to a loss of global autonomy, for example, to subordinate oneself to others, but generally and empirically speaking, choices lead the agent closer to his ideal plan of life. Second, choices are of *representative* value. Normally speaking a choice reflects your desires, interests and what you value. Finally, choices are of *symbolic* value: the absence of opportunity to choose and being held responsible is demeaning since it suggests that we are incompetent to live our own life. The symbolic value is often stressed by relational egalitarians.

Also, individual responsibility plays a passive role in redistribution policies.

¹²⁴ I bracket another value of choice mentioned by Scanlon, namely the representative value.

According to Scheffler, responsibility has two potential roles to play (2010, p. 211-4). It can play a *defensive* role – we can support redistribution policies by claiming that citizens are not completely responsible for their suffering (and also the wealthy class are not totally responsible for their wealth). This is defensive since conservatives and libertarians tend to use the language of responsibility to reject redistribution: redistribution will only benefit or even encourage the lazy. Egalitarians can respond properly to conservatives by raising a point about responsibility, so in this sense it is defensive. Another potential role for responsibility to play is *affirmative*, which is what luck egalitarians advocate, to determine what a just distribution is merely by appealing to the notion of (substantive) responsibility. We have explained why relational egalitarians reject the affirmative role in chapter 2 so I do not repeat here. Introducing the two distinctive roles aims at showing that though the two principles of equality reject the luck egalitarians' account of responsibility, responsibility will be acknowledged in a society of equals.

In normal circumstances, citizens in a society of equals will treat one another as responsible agents; that is, ready to be responsive to one another's legitimate claims or demands.¹²⁵ Presupposing this depends on the idea that citizens could be

¹²⁵ Here shows that the distinction between attributive/substantive (or accountability) responsibility is not exhaustive. Responsibility here neither means substantive responsibility (it does not follow the responsible agent should bear the full cost) nor attributive responsibility (moral praise and blame always stem from an impartial moral judgment while the idea of responsibility here is more second-personal).

regulated by their own sense of justice (and acknowledgment of one another's authority).

As we have said so far, an egalitarian conception of justice should be concerned about global rather than local autonomy, for an increase in the number of autonomous choices does not necessarily lead to an increase in a person's autonomy. Since local autonomy is no longer the central focus, even if substantive responsibility for a choice is compromised by other reasons, it does not undermine (global) autonomy. It is also possible that in some cases not to hold someone substantively responsible will improve her global autonomy.

In short, though the two principles of equality reject the luck egalitarians' claim that holding one responsible is an essential requirement of respect, the two principles do not give up the value of choices and responsibility. Choice has its instrumental, representative and symbolic value, and the symbolic value of choice explains why both the state and citizens should hold the agent responsible under normal circumstances. Also, in a society of equals, responsibility plays a defensive role in social redistribution – to answer the conservatives' and libertarians' objections.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ We may also say that the social conditions of autonomy guaranteed by the two principles of equality are indeed "prerequisites to exercising responsible agency." (Anderson 1999, p. 328) Without those social conditions, it is not obvious that we should hold an agent who make a non-coerce choice responsible. For example, if the agent has a very limited range of choice available (e.g. either work with very low wage or starving), it will not be fair and just to hold him fully responsible.

4B. Comparing with Anderson's Relational Egalitarianism

Now I shall draw some comparisons with Elizabeth Anderson's conception of egalitarian justice, namely "democratic equality". There are some other forms of relational egalitarianism, but it is impossible for me to compare with all of them. Therefore, I take Anderson's theory as exemplary. Also, since my theory heavily relies on Anderson's ideas, the comparison helps to explain in what ways we are different.

Though my theory draws heavily on Anderson's ideas, having a systematic though the highly simplified account of democratic equality is still necessary. In terms of the fundamental aim of egalitarian justice, she writes:

The proper negative aim of egalitarian justice is not to eliminate the impact of brute luck from human affairs, but to end oppression, which by definition is socially imposed. Its proper positive aim is not to ensure that everyone gets what they morally deserve, but to create a community in which people stand in relations of equality to others (Anderson 1999, p. 288-9).

Democratic equality "guarantees all law-abiding citizens effective access to the social conditions of their freedom at all times." (1999, p. 289) Anderson also

thinks that Amartya Sen's capability approach¹²⁷ is "a better way to understand freedom," and therefore "egalitarians should seek equality for all in the space of capabilities." (1999, p. 316) Valuable states of being and doing are called functioning; Anderson does not ask for equal functionings but *equal capabilities*, resources and freedom "to achieve valued functionings." (1999, p. 316) Examples of capabilities include civil and political rights and "means of sustaining one's biological existence" (e.g. shelter and food) (Anderson 1999, p. 316-7).¹²⁸ The capability approach as a distributive scheme, according to Anderson, "is superior to its main rival", such as equality of welfare and equality of resources (2010b, p. 81).

Both Anderson and I believe that the equal consideration of interests is one of the requirements of justice. The two principles imply that unequal consideration is unjust since it does not respect people as equals. Since each person is a second-person authority, we are entitled to make claims and obligated to be responsive to one another's valid claims. By doing so we are not only expressing our status as a second-person authority, we also implicitly affirm the audience as a second-person authority as well. If you regard your audience as incapable of making their own claims and reacting on your valid claims, you have no reason to maintain the attitude

¹²⁷ For more details of the capability approach, see Sen (1992).

¹²⁸ For the full list of Anderson's examples of capabilities, see Anderson (1999, p. 316-20; 2010b).

of being responsive to and making claims on them. So far my view and Anderson's agree. However, the merit of the two principles of equality is that a more detailed procedure, thanks to Scheffler's idea of egalitarian deliberative constraint, is offered thus the ideal of equal consideration of interests becomes more viable. Political (in broad sense) issues concerning citizens' well-being should be decided under a procedure that satisfies the deliberative egalitarian constraints.

The idea of moral respect and individual responsibility is also vital in any egalitarian conception of justice. We have seen that luck egalitarians grant individual responsibility a weighty role. Anderson objects that such an account would suffer from many counter-intuition implications and that it is hard to measure the responsibility of an agent. I agree on these two points, and add that individual responsibility is at best a *prima facie* value because it derives its value from the value of moral respect. Moral respect is a fundamental moral ideal. Individual responsibility is only one among many ways to respect people, and therefore, it is subjected to counterbalance.

On the question of redistribution, Anderson favors the capability approach. So long as equality of capabilities is fulfilled, the state of affairs is just. The two principles of equality, on the other hand, do not specify any distributive pattern or principle. Any distributive principle that does not generate social oppressions and

help to cultivate citizens' sense of respect will be welcomed. But the capability approach, I suspect, is incompatible with the relational ideal of justice. The question of whether the citizen's possessed sufficient capability is the decisive factor in judging the justice of a redistribution. To compare with the luck egalitarianism, Anderson's proposal handles better in the uninsured driver case, since the consideration of equal capabilities (including "the means of sustaining one's biological existence" (1999, p. 317)) leads to the conclusion of rescuing the driver to make sure that "even the imprudent are never forced to fall." (1999, p. 325) But still, the two principles feel unease with Anderson's proposal, since it is possible though not necessary that the opacity respect will be violated (Wolff 2010, p. 248; Carter 2011, p. 565-7). Anderson acknowledges that "people are not equally able to convert resources into capabilities into for functioning. They are therefore entitled to different amounts of resources so they can enjoy freedom as equals." (1999, p. 320) I conjecture that Anderson is suggesting that the state, in order to make sure people can enjoy freedom as equals, needs to investigate people's internal capabilities (for the efficiency of translating capabilities to functioning largely depends on your level of capabilities). The extra amount of resources (or other forms of compensated) should be made to those who are inefficient in converting resources into capabilities for functioning. Doing so invites people to reveal shameful information (e.g. their

inefficiency) about themselves.

To conclude, though Anderson's democratic equality provides numerous insights into the development of relational egalitarianism, there are areas that Anderson fails to fill up and that the two principles try to fill up, such as a specific procedure in meeting the egalitarian deliberative constraint. At the same time, the two principles doubt that adopting the capability approach, as Anderson suggested, might lead to undesirable consequence, namely shameful revelation.

Conclusion

A society regulated by the two principles of equality will be a society of equals, in which the external and internal conditions of freedom (supported by healthy social circumstances) are open to citizens, the multi-dimension of respect will be acknowledged, and citizens are held morally responsible for their choice to a reasonable degree. Apart from that, the two principles of equality provide a more substantive account of equal consideration of interests by introducing the egalitarian deliberative constraint. Anderson's theory of democratic equality, though promising in many ways, may fail the test of opacity respect when the capability approach, the distributive pattern Anderson prefers, is put into practice.

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