What (if anything) is egalitarian about luck egalitarianism?

ORCID: 0000-0003-2620-096X

Jonas Franzen
University of Bayreuth
jonas.franzen@gmx.de

ABSTRACT   This paper offers a novel taxonomy of luck egalitarianism with reference to the specific kinds of distributive arbitrariness a luck egalitarian might object to, namely 'arbitrary disadvantage', 'arbitrary advantage', and 'arbitrary equality'. In doing so, it provides an instance of 'conceptual clearance', i.e., an attempt to restructure and reduce the vast number of accounts now accumulated under the label 'egalitarianism'. By scrutinizing the three sets of luck egalitarianism identified beforehand, i.e., 'simple', 'asymmetrical', and 'symmetrical', it develops a novel minimal condition for a theory to qualify as genuinely egalitarian. While 'asymmetrical luck egalitarianism' satisfies this condition, 'symmetrical luck egalitarianism' does not. Both accounts are, for that reason, affected very differently by the (in)famous levelling down objection to egalitarianism and thus face distinct argumentative challenges and justificatory burdens. Therefore, the paper identifies an important structural divide within luck egalitarian thinking. As a matter of conceptual clearance, it proposes to view symmetrical luck egalitarianism as a form of 'responsibilitarianism' instead.[1]

KEYWORDS   Luck egalitarianism; arbitrary equality; genuine egalitarianism; levelling down objection; responsibilitarianism.

RESUMO   Este artigo oferece uma nova taxonomia para o igualitarismo da sorte acerca dos tipos específicos de arbitrariedade distributiva aos quais um igualitário da sorte se pode opor, nomeadamente 'desvantagem arbitrária', 'vantagem arbitrária', e 'igualdade arbitrária'. Assim, propõe um exemplo de 'clarificação conceptual', ou seja, uma tentativa de reestruturar e reduzir o vasto número de teorias actualmente acumuladas sob o rótulo 'igualitarismo'. Ao analisar minuciosamente os três tipos de igualitarismo da sorte identificados previamente, isto é, 'simples', 'assimétrico' e 'simétrico', desenvolve uma nova condição mínima para que uma teoria se qualifique como genuinamente igualitária. Enquanto o 'igualitarismo assimétrico da sorte' satisfaz esta condição, o 'igualitarismo simétrico da sorte' não o faz. Logo, ambas as teses são afectadas de

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forma muito diferente pela objecção do nivelamento por baixo ao igualitarismo, e acabam por enfrentar desafios argumentativos e encargos justificativos distintos. Portanto, este artigo identifica uma divisão estrutural importante no pensamento do igualitarismo da sorte. Por motivos de clarificação conceptual, este artigo propõe ver o igualitarismo simétrico da sorte como uma forma de 'responsabilitarismo'.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE Igualitarismo da sorte, igualdade arbitrária; igualitarismo genuíno; objecção do nivelamento por baixo; responsabilitarismo.

Introduction

From time to time, a gardener has to cut a plant back into shape. That way, she controls and fosters the plant's growth. I reckon something similar is beneficial to philosophical concepts: from time to time, it is wise to cut back on the vast number of accounts, theories, and principles that have accumulated under a given label. This can be done by taking the figurative step back and by scrutinizing the basic meaning of the concept or label at hand. That way, some views formerly seen as examples, instances, or explications of the respective concept will no longer fall within the concept's extension (Carnap, 1950 & 1958). Such changes can help to exclude views that have become too distinct from the concept's original meaning (or function) and no longer fit the set of intuitions, considerations, or judgments associated with it. This process of reshaping a concept's extension by scrutinizing its intension might be called 'conceptual clearance'. The term is similar to the now hotly debated 'conceptual engineering'. The latter, according to a prominent proponent, references "[…] any project which aims to in some sense or another repair defects in our conceptual system" (Nado, 2021, pp. 1509–1510). The specific 'defect' which conceptual clearance addresses is an overly large extension of basic concepts like 'liberty', 'freedom', or 'equality', which potentially all cover views one has reason to keep apart (the term 'conceptual clearance' should, however, be taken with a grain of salt. I consider it a useful metaphor and helpful illustration of this paper's argumentative thrust but not a clear methodological stance).

In precisely such spirit, this paper scrutinizes the egalitarian credentials of luck egalitarianism, a prominent and well-developed family of views within distributive justice. The main question raised is this: In what sense does luck egalitarianism qualify as genuinely egalitarian, i.e., as a proper example, instance, or explication of 'equality'? This

endeavour surely is not as glamorous as the engineering of a novel concept, say, 'equality*' or the alleged discovery of a better understanding of an existing concept, such as Anderson's celebrated switch from (what she calls) 'distributive' to 'relational egalitarianism' (Anderson, 1999). Nevertheless, conceptual clearance can still be useful in countering the tendency of a philosophical discourse to fracture into large numbers of new accounts, principles, and theories whose interrelations become less clear the further such discourse progresses. Such fragmentation potentially impedes effective theorizing in political theory or political philosophy, or so one might worry. Jeremy Waldron, for example, complains that students nowadays study "[…] the 57 different varieties of luck-egalitarianism […]" and thus "[…] neglect the issues of structure, process, sovereignty, and constitution […]" as outlined in classical works of political theory (Waldron, 2013, p. 21). Conceptual clearance can help to avoid such loss of focus.

Here, I attempt conceptual clearance with regard to the highly developed and differentiated debate on luck egalitarianism. Instead of adding a 58th version, I would like to do some clean-up by first offering a novel taxonomy of luck egalitarianism, which I will use to distinguish three separate sets of luck egalitarian thinking: simple, symmetrical, and asymmetrical. Secondly, I will improve upon an existing condition for genuine egalitarianism formulated by Susan Hurley in 2001. Although helpful, the old condition needs supplementation to account for the genuinely egalitarian nature of the most recent developments in luck egalitarian thinking, namely asymmetrical luck egalitarianism. The most prominent, symmetrical version of luck egalitarianism, however, fails to qualify as genuinely egalitarian even on the new, improved understanding of 'egalitarianism'. I therefore end the paper by proposing the new label 'responsibilitarianism' to cover these views. In this way, I hope to have gone some way in cleaning up the conceptual system of egalitarian thinking.

1   A first step: mapping the luck egalitarian landscape

Let me introduce egalitarianism by example: Imagine two individuals, Sam and Mary. They may either enjoy equal or unequal levels of well-being. Egalitarians commonly think that equality between them is

better *in at least one respect than inequality*.[2] Such basic intuition long provided a simple and, for many, convincing reply to the question of how the good should be distributed, namely, equally. This simple interpretation, commonly referred to as 'outcome egalitarianism', has, however, fallen out of favour. Even from an egalitarian point of view, certain normative features of distributions justify, or even require, inequalities. Relational egalitarians, for example, want people to relate to one another as equals (e.g., Anderson, 1999; Scheffler, 2003b). This is compatible, to a certain extent at least, with an unequal distribution of the good (e.g., Anderson, 1999). Luck egalitarians want distributions to, for example, reflect the exercise of individual responsibility (e.g., Lippert-Rasmussen, 1999) – for them, the differential exercise of responsibility justifies, and possibly demands, unequal outcomes. Think about the above example again and assume that Mary is a meticulous character. As such, she takes great care in making considered, reasonable decisions. Sam, on the other hand, is sloppy. He decides based on gut feeling, without much or due consideration. Now imagine that, unsurprisingly, Meticulous Mary ends up better off than Sloppy Sam. Luck egalitarians think that such a world is better *in at least one respect* than one in which Mary and Sam are equally well off.

The term 'Luck Egalitarianism' was first used in 1999 by Elizabeth Anderson (Anderson, 1999). Various philosophers have contributed to the development of luck egalitarianism (whether they consider themselves egalitarians or not), among them prominent figures such as Ronald Dworkin, G. A. Cohen, Eric Rakowski, John Roemer, and Richard Arneson. As one anonymous reviewer has rightly pointed out, some of these philosophers explicitly rejected the label 'luck egalitarian', notably Ronald Dworkin (e.g., Dworkin, 2003; Scheffler, 2003a). This raises interesting concerns about the proper placement of a particular philosopher's ideas within a certain school of thought or family of theories. However, I do not want to address such issues here, i.e., which label to attach to specific philosophers. Instead, I question whether the label 'egalitarian' can be attached to the theories now called 'luck egalitarianism'.

Luck egalitarianism (from now on 'LE') is considered a particularly attractive account for egalitarians, and thus, it has been carefully

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2   I would like to express my gratitude to an anonymous reviewer who prompted me to provide examples to illustrate my thoughts. Additionally, this reviewer referred to Philippe Van Parijs's 'Crazy' and 'Lazy', which inspired the here-presented 'Meticulous Mary' and 'Sloppy Sam' (Van Parijs, 2013).

developed over the course of recent decades. In a very recent paper, Carl Knight claims that LE "over the last three decades […] has come to be arguably the most influential theory of equality in Anglophone political philosophy" (Knight, 2021, p. 350). Making their theory responsibility-sensitive has helped luck egalitarians avoid the counterintuitive implications of the original, and much simpler, egalitarian thinking: if an agent is responsible for having less than others, the resulting inequality seems well justified. The particular appeal of LE, as the generic interpretation of responsibility-sensitive egalitarianism, is to accommodate a rather conservative concern for individual responsibility within the very liberal framework of egalitarianism. G. A. Cohen, one of LE's most prominent and diligent advocates, praised LE as having "[…] in effect, performed for egalitarianism the considerable service of incorporating within it the most powerful idea in the arsenal of the antiegalitarian right: the idea of choice and responsibility" (Cohen, 1989, p. 933). Now, one might wonder in what sense such a composite theory still qualifies as egalitarian. In fact, Sven Ove Hansson, a prominent critic of LE, very recently challenged LE by explicitly calling it 'anti-egalitarian'. He explains: "It is usually preferable to use the terms introduced by the initiators of an idea or standpoint, but there is also a limit to how misleading terms one should use for a concept. An anti-egalitarian policy should not be called egalitarian. 'Luck anti-egalitarianism' is a more suitable term for the standpoint that has been promoted under the name 'luck egalitarianism.'" (Hansson, 2023, p. 122). Note that Hansson doubts the egalitarian credentials of LE because of its allegedly inegalitarian *consequences* when applied in practice. I would like to analyse here whether LE is genuinely egalitarian on a deeper level, namely one of basic *commitments* and theoretical *structure*. To get a better idea of what luck egalitarianism holds, I want to first state LE's core commitment as precisely as possible. Luckily, despite LE not being a monolithic theory but a family of related views, all of these build on a single and simple intuition. It is this idea that I call 'LE's core commitment'. In a recent monograph about LE, Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen states this core claim in the following way: "It is unjust if some people are worse off than others through their bad luck" (Lippert-Rasmussen 2016, p. 1). A very similar formulation can be found in a paper by Larry Temkin, published in 1986: "[…] what is objectionable [about a distribution] is some being worse off than others through no fault of their own" (Temkin, 1986, p. 101). This is not just egalitarians' take on equality – Derek Parfit

(himself an anti-egalitarian) characterised 'equality' as follows: "This principle claims that it is bad if, through no fault of theirs, some people are worse off than others" (Parfit, 1986, p. 26). Thus, the family of theories subsumed under the label 'luck egalitarianism' shares a common core: the commitment that it is bad for some to be worse off than others, when this inequality is due to bad luck. This commitment can be illustrated by referring to Meticulous Mary and Sloppy Sam: an inequality between them is not considered bad (or unfair) if it did result from, say, Sam's sloppiness. Or so luck egalitarians think. If Sam, however, loses what little he has through an unforeseeable stroke of bad luck (e.g., a total crash of his otherwise reputable bank), the resulting inequality between him and Mary is bad (or unfair) *for that reason.*

To supplement the above commitment, modern luck egalitarians usually state an additional requirement, i.e., that "[...] it is not bad – unjust or unfair – for some to be worse off than others through some fault [or choice] of their own" (Huseby, 2016, p. 260). This addition demarcates LE from simple, outcome-oriented egalitarianism: the latter claims that being worse off is bad *simpliciter* – which logically entails that is it bad to be worse off through sheer luck, but also that it is bad to be worse off through one's own fault. Huseby's addition rejects this latter claim and thus carves out LE's core commitment more clearly. To summarize, a simple formulation of LE's core commitment, which includes this qualification, is:

> *LE's core commitment:* It is bad for some people to be worse off than others through bad luck, and it is not bad for some people to be worse off than others through no (good or bad) luck.

In the following, I will refer to distributions that involve good or bad luck as 'arbitrary'. I do this primarily for simplicity's sake, i.e., to avoid the clumsier phrase 'involving good and/or bad luck'. However, it also helps to make my characterization of LE more inclusive: not all luck egalitarians are, strictly speaking, concerned with (non-)luck. Some invoke (individual) responsibility (e.g., Lippert-Rasmussen, 1999), others (personal) desert (e.g., Anderson, 2007) as the specific, inequality-legitimizing feature. It remains an open question to what degree the terms 'non-luck' and 'responsibility' or 'non-luck' and 'desert' overlap (Miller, 2014) – even though the overlap is, in all likelihood, significant (i.e., luck usually negates responsibility and desert), the overlap need not be

complete (i.e., luck could sometimes be compatible with responsibility and desert). Therefore, I use the more neutral term 'arbitrariness', which is meant to capture the inverse of whatever inequality-legitimizing feature specific luck egalitarians endorse.

Before proceeding with my argument, LE's core commitment needs further sharpening. After all, it is incomplete: it implies that arbitrary disadvantages are bad, and that non-arbitrary disadvantages are not bad. But what about two other states of affairs, which I propose to label 'arbitrary advantage' and 'arbitrary equality'? The first label applies when an agent, due to arbitrary factors (e.g., good luck), is better off than at least one other agent. LE's core commitment is silent on whether such a state of affairs is bad. The second label applies when an agent, due to arbitrary factors, is just as well off as other agents. Think of a stroke of good luck that makes Sloppy Sam as well off as Meticulous Mary. Imagine him, for example, inheriting his father's amassed wealth. Because this newly created equality does not reflect Mary's and Sam's differential level of desert, choice, or responsibility, it is arbitrary.

Is there anything bad about this situation from a luck egalitarian point of view? The core commitment, as stated above, does not imply any particular judgement. However, I would assume that most luck egalitarians find arbitrary advantage as well as arbitrary equality bad. At first sight, the concept 'arbitrary equality' might be difficult to grasp, so let me offer yet another illustration (proposed by an anonymous reviewer): imagine two persons, A and B. The former does difficult and unenjoyable work to build a house, while B enjoys leisure. Then, however, a government error knocks down A's house, giving A and B the same standard of living. This equality between A and B is arbitrary because it is due to the government's error only that A is as well (or badly) off as B. Note that 'well off' and 'badly off' here refer to objective standards of living and do not include considerations of desert or merit (relative to how deserving she is, A is in fact worse off than B). Most egalitarians would certainly object to such (distributive) equality, either because A *deserves* to be better off than B (having diligently and prudently constructed her house) or because A's house was destroyed by no *choice or responsibility* of hers (but because of a government error). This is why the resulting (distributive) equality between A and B is (morally) arbitrary. Thus, even if it results in (distributive) inequality, A is probably owed compensation from the government *for egalitarian reasons.*

In short, arbitrariness in distributions can figure not only in distributive disadvantage, but also in distributive advantage and equality. Therefore, I propose to distinguish three separate commitments open to luck egalitarians:

(A) *Badness of arbitrary disadvantage:*
   It is bad for A to be arbitrarily worse off than B.

(B) *Badness of arbitrary advantage:*
   It is bad for A to be arbitrarily better off than B.

(C) *Badness of arbitrary equality:*
   It is bad for A to be arbitrarily as well off as B.

These claims have a special charm: different versions of what is commonly labelled 'luck egalitarianism' can be understood as distinct combinations of the above claims. Thus, distinguishing arbitrary disadvantage, arbitrary advantage, and arbitrary equality helps to bring out structural differences in various luck egalitarian theories. Note that one could merge (A) and (B) into a more comprehensive commitment, namely the 'badness of arbitrary inequality'. It is this commitment and (C), the 'badness of arbitrary equality', which will matter for the argument presented here. As one anonymous reviewer has pointed out, the more fine-grained distinction between arbitrary advantage and arbitrary disadvantage might simply be grammatical. After all, how can one exist without the other? Are they not two sides of one coin (Segall, 2016, p. 74)? Recently, however, Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen has argued for the conceptual independence of these two commitments (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2016). To illustrate such conceptual independence, one needs to show that one person's (or group's) arbitrary disadvantage is not (necessarily) another person's (or group's) arbitrary advantage. Furthermore, and conversely, one also needs to show that one person's (or group's) arbitrary advantage is not (necessarily) another person's (or group's) arbitrary disadvantage. It thus takes two convincing illustrations to make an argument for aforementioned conceptual independence. Lippert-Rasmussen offers one such case (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2016, pp. 4–5). He invites us to imagine two persons, one of whom is offered an attractive gamble and the other a fixed sum of money. The former accepts the offer and wins, the second declines the offer and is left with what money she had before. One person is now better off than the other. Lippert-Rasmussen argues that in such case, the

first person's advantage is due to good luck (of having won the lottery), but that the second person's disadvantage is not a matter of bad luck (because she could have been just as well off by simply accepting the money offered to her). In short, it seems as if this is indeed a case where one person's arbitrary advantage does not translate into another person's arbitrary disadvantage. I leave it up to the reader to judge how plausible such an example is (or whether it has a meaningful equivalent in real life). Note, however, that in arguing for the conceptual independence of arbitrary advantage and arbitrary disadvantage, Lippert-Rasmussen still owes us an example of how arbitrary disadvantage does not (necessarily) entail arbitrary advantage. Such a case is much harder to come up with, or so I think. Whatever the case, the taxonomy offered here is fine-grained enough to reflect the possible difference between arbitrary advantage and arbitrary disadvantage. The arguments presented later, which build on this taxonomy, do not rely on such conceptual scrutiny; instead, they rely merely on the difference between arbitrary inequality and arbitrary equality.

Using this taxonomy, LE falls apart into three distinct sets, corresponding to three plausible combinations of (A), (B), and (C), each of which is compatible with LE's core commitment. Firstly, luck egalitarians could only embrace (A). In that case, they would condemn *arbitrary disadvantage* but remain silent on the badness of arbitrary advantage and arbitrary equality. This is the most minimal version of LE. Therefore, I call this account 'simple luck egalitarianism'. Secondly, they could embrace (A) and (B) but not (C). In other words, luck egalitarians would condemn arbitrary inequality in the distribution of the good, but wouldn't condemn arbitrary equality. I refer to this version as 'asymmetrical luck egalitarianism' because arbitrary inequality is treated differently than arbitrary equality (e.g., Albertsen and Midtgaard, 2014, p. 337).

Lastly, luck egalitarians could embrace (A), (B), and (C) – thus subscribing to the badness of all *arbitrary distributions*. This is the most demanding combination of the above claims. I call it 'symmetrical luck egalitarianism' because it evaluates arbitrary inequality and arbitrary equality similarly. What is commonly labelled 'outcome egalitarianism' does not subscribe to any of the three claims. After all, it is not a responsibility-sensitive theory and, as such, sees no badness in any sort of distributive arbitrariness. I will draw on this taxonomy when scrutinizing the egalitarian credentials of LE. Before doing so, I will present a novel, necessary condition for a theory to qualify as genuinely egalitarian.

Note that much (taxonomic) work has already been done in structuring our thinking about distributive justice. Think, for example, of the common distinction between a distributive theory's site (the level of its implementation), its scope (the entities to whom it applies), its currency (the benefits and burdens distributed), and, lastly, its distributive pattern (the rules governing distributions) (e.g., Hickey et al., 2021). Most systematic analyses of distributive justice offer some such taxonomies. Take, for example, Kok-Chor Tan's analysis of egalitarian (distributive) justice, which neatly separates the site, ground, and scope of equality (Tan, 2011, 2012).[3] Such taxonomies are, however, coarser than the one offered here, which specifically structures the different types of egalitarian commitments (or, in Tan's words, the 'grounds' of equality). In fleshing out more precisely what sort of (joint) commitment an egalitarian can hold, no implications about other dimensions of egalitarianism (say, its scope or currency) are made. For example, the taxonomy offered here is compatible with (what one might call) *individual* (luck) egalitarianism as well as *institutional* (luck) egalitarianism. The latter holds that the proper site of egalitarianism is society's background institutions (or, as Rawls famously calls them, the basic structure of society). The former, in contrast, implies that egalitarianism also applies to individual conduct (and personal interaction) *within* such an institutional framework (Rawls, 1971; Tan, 2012). In formulation, my arguments lean towards the individualistic perspective (if only for simplicity's sake), but they could be framed as applying to the institutional level, too. Take the 'badness of arbitrary disadvantage', namely that it is bad for A to be arbitrarily worse off than B. From an institutional point of view, one can formulate a corresponding commitment, namely that it is bad *for an institution* to make A worse off than B for arbitrary reasons. The two other forms of badness can be reformulated accordingly.[4]

2 A second step: establishing genuine egalitarianism

What I hope to have established by now is that the term 'egalitarianism' covers a wide range of theories that differ substantially in

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their core commitments – even within the already narrow set of LE. What this indicates is the far advancement of the philosophical literature on egalitarianism: over the last decades, numerous new egalitarian theories have emerged, a development potentially driven by the need to keep up with the highly elaborate debate and the alleged counterarguments presented there. Calling all of these theories 'egalitarian' does, however, suggest some basic commonality. Just what this commonality consists in is rarely, if ever, spelt out. This lacuna is problematic insofar as a label is more than, say, a book's call or a painting's accession number. Instead, a label invokes a broad range of associations and intuitions and thus situates a proposed argument or theory within a specific philosophical discourse. Jeremy Waldron succinctly captures this very point with regard to the here-discussed label 'egalitarianism':

> 'Equality,' like 'liberty' and 'fraternity,' is a shorthand slogan but not an abbreviation. It evokes a particular range of moral considerations and a particular set of complex arguments, and it does that, not by virtue of its meaning, but because every political theorist is familiar with a tradition of argumentation in and around certain texts and doctrines and knows that colleagues can be alerted to the possible relevance of that tradition by using that simple word (Waldron, 1991, p. 1352).

Now, if a philosophical tradition has evolved far enough and into a complex branch of accounts, doctrines, and theories, the array of intuitions, moral considerations, and presumed counterarguments the governing label evokes might no longer be adequate or fitting for at least some of these accounts – or so I think is the case with 'egalitarianism'. For example, one of the most classic counterarguments to egalitarianism, the (in)famous levelling down objection, is very intimately connected to the label 'egalitarianism' – when a theory is labelled 'egalitarian', worries about potential levelling down arise. Yet, the accounts subsumed under the label 'egalitarianism' are affected very differently (if at all) by the levelling down objection, as I will argue in more detail below: simple outcome egalitarianism has a hard time coping, whereas some forms of LE have an easy way out. If such mismatches become too extreme, it might be time for conceptual clearance. That way, views which have evolved very differently over the course of intense debate can be singled out and, if necessary, relabelled appropriately.

A different argument for conceptual clearance in the context of LE is provided by Susan Hurley, who is renowned for scrutinising the very nature of LE. She explains: "[…] there is some minimal independent constraint on what could count as egalitarianism. Otherwise, anything that the luck-neutralizing aim leads to could be stipulated to be egalitarianism, and the issue degenerates" (Hurley, 2001, p. 52). I disagree with Hurley in that there necessarily is a minimal constraint on what should count as egalitarian, but she provides a good argument for why there *should* be such a constraint – namely to avoid a debate degenerating. By that, I take her to mean the following: if the specific accounts, theories, or doctrines subsumed under a label become too different, the label itself becomes more and more meaningless. Conceptual clearance aims at reducing the extension of overly general terms, thus helping to regain a more fine-grained and nuanced understanding of the similarities and differences among various clusters of philosophical theories.

In line with this paper's ambition to do 'conceptual clearance', I will offer a simple, necessary condition that aims to capture or establish common ground among genuinely egalitarian theories. In deriving this condition, I proceed from a simple starting point, namely the idea that a genuine egalitarian has to attribute at least some justificatory force to numerical or arithmetic equality in normatively evaluating (and comparing) various distributive states. Put in simpler terms: if a distributive state is (descriptively) more equal than another, this simple fact has to count for something in judging the normative quality of these states – for an egalitarian at least. Thus, if Mary and Sam are equally well off, there is *something* good about this state of affairs, even if one of them is sloppy and the other meticulous. Or so genuine egalitarians should think.

Now, it remains unclear what this 'something' means: must true egalitarians favour the more over the less equal state? Is it enough if they remain indifferent? Or even something else? It has traditionally been argued that egalitarians have to favour equality of some sort. Apart from its intuitive appeal, this idea is in fact shared by most egalitarians themselves. Richard Arneson, for example, explains: "An egalitarian favors equality of some sort: People should get the same, or be treated the same, or be treated as equals, in some respect" (Arneson, 2013, p. 1). In the distributive realm, with which I am concerned here, this suggests that true egalitarians favour an equal distribution of the good. Now, it would be too strong an assumption to demand egalitarians to favour

equality *simpliciter*. After all, egalitarians are often pluralists who do recognise the importance of other values. Thus, the goodness of a more equal distribution might be overridden by conflicting considerations or values. Yet, or so the thought goes, equality should at least be *one* reason to prefer a more equal over a less equal distribution of the good. In short, egalitarians have a *pro tanto* reason to prefer a more equal over a less equal distribution. According to this reasoning, it is not enough for true egalitarians to remain indifferent between two otherwise identical distributions, one of which is more equal than the other. Differently put: if the fact that one distribution is more equal than another cannot tip the balance when all other relevant features are kept constant, what justificatory value does equality have? Thus, if Sam (however sloppy he is) can be made as well off as Mary (however meticulous she is), this should provide egalitarians with (at least) one good reason to prefer such a distribution. This line of thought naturally flows into a simple, necessary criterion for genuine egalitarianism, which has already been formulated in 2001 by Susan Hurley. She calls it the 'minimal patterning constraint':

> *Minimal patterning constraint (MPC):* 'To count as egalitarian, a doctrine must, for some X, favour relatively more equal patterns of distribution of X over relatively less equal patterns of X, other things equal' (Hurley, 2001, p. 52).

MPC can easily explain why outcome egalitarianism is genuinely egalitarian: by definition, outcome egalitarians favour more over less equal distributions. MPC does, however, also explain the genuinely egalitarian nature of more complex accounts. Consider, for example, 'Paretian egalitarianism' (e.g., Tungodden & Vallentyne, 2005): Paretian egalitarians first select all Pareto-optimal distributions from the set of possible outcomes. They then choose the most equal distribution within this restricted set. Paretian egalitarians sometimes favour unequal distributions over equal ones, i.e., if and only if only the former are Pareto-optimal. However, among otherwise similar (here: Pareto-optimal) distributions, equal distributions are favoured. Thus, MPC is complied with. Hence, Paretian egalitarianism qualifies as a genuinely egalitarian theory.

What I want to show in the next section is that MPC struggles to account for the egalitarian nature of LE. I will argue that MPC needs supplementation to capture the genuinely egalitarian nature of at least one subset of LE. As it stands, MPC fails to keep up with the develop-

ment of LE since 2001. To see this, I will now use the novel taxonomy of LE developed above to scrutinise the egalitarian credentials of LE's three central subsets (simple, asymmetrical, and symmetrical LE) using MPC. I will argue that MPC cannot account for the genuinely egalitarian nature of asymmetrical LE. This deficiency can, however, be fixed, or so I will argue, by adding an additional condition labelled MPC*: the combination of MPC and MPC* provides a better explication of the idea that genuine egalitarianism assigns numerical equality a certain justificatory power in normatively evaluating (and comparing) various distributive states.

3   A third step: scrutinising the egalitarian nature of LE

Depending on the specific interpretation of its core commitment, LE falls apart into three subsets: simple, symmetrical, and asymmetrical LE. Simple LE objects to the badness of arbitrary disadvantage only, thus remaining agnostic on the badness of arbitrary equality and arbitrary advantage. Asymmetrical luck egalitarians object to arbitrary inequality, but not to arbitrary equality. Symmetrical LE, finally, objects to all three sorts of arbitrariness.

3.1. Simple luck egalitarianism

Simple LE embraces claim (A) only – the badness of arbitrary disadvantage. This aligns well with how LE is canonically understood. Recall Temkin's influential statement: "[...] egalitarians have the deep and (for them) compelling view that it is bad – unjust and unfair – for some to be worse off than others through no fault of their own" (Temkin, 1996, p. 13). What is bad for people is to be worse off than others due to, say, bad luck. Thus, it is bad for Sam to be worse off than Mary through bad luck. However, it is not bad for Sam to be worse off than Mary because of his sloppy character. This commitment does not entail any normative evaluation of states of affairs that make people equally well off (or even better off) due to (un)fortunate circumstances. Does such a stance qualify as genuinely egalitarian according to MPC? It does not. To see this, imagine two distributions, both of which are the results of people's voluntary choices and, for that reason, non-arbitrary. One

of these distributions is significantly more equal than the other. In all other respects, the two distributions are identical. Simple LE sees no fault in either of them, as neither features arbitrary disadvantage. Thus, simple LE is indifferent between the two. According to MPC, simple LE should, however, favour the more equal distribution to qualify as genuinely egalitarian. Simple LE thus fails to be a genuinely egalitarian theory according to MPC. Furthermore, imagine being presented with two possible worlds and asked which was better *from an egalitarian point of view*: One world features Sloppy Sam and Meticulous Mary, unequally well off. The other features Meticulous Mary and her friend, Meritorious Mark, equally well off. Now, would not a genuine egalitarian prefer the latter one? However, a luck egalitarian is typically indifferent between these two worlds, because in each, there is no arbitrary disadvantage.

At that point, one can either accept this conclusion and drop the label 'egalitarian' when speaking about simple LE. Or, alternatively, one can challenge MPC: maybe it is too strong a condition for genuine egalitarianism? I want to pursue the latter route. When scrutinising MPC, it is crucial to see how it evaluates symmetrical and asymmetrical LE. After all, simple LE is more of a taxonomic artefact than an account actually embraced by egalitarians. In reality, luck egalitarians do *not* remain agnostic about the badness of arbitrary advantage and, most importantly, not about the badness of arbitrary equality. It is the latter that marks the fundamental divide between symmetrical and asymmetrical LE. Consider the following claim from Carl Knight: "[…] luck egalitarianism is standardly construed as counteracting brute luck's influence on distributions, a stance that clearly places it at odds with brute luck equality" (Knight, 2015, p. 127). Knight here claims that arbitrary equality (what he calls 'brute luck equality') is bad. He therefore expands simple LE by additionally subscribing to the badness of arbitrary equality. If, as Knight claims, LE aims at counteracting all influence of luck on distributions, Knight's account would also condemn arbitrary advantages, because these are the result of luck as well. Thus, Knight's actual understanding of LE significantly transcends simple LE – and, I reckon, the same holds for most actual luck egalitarians.

3.2. Asymmetrical luck egalitarianism

The most recent contribution to the set of luck egalitarian accounts, and arguably one of the most interesting ones for the purpose at hand,

was developed by Shlomi Segall. According to Segall, arbitrary equality should not be considered bad by egalitarians. Segall's interpretation of LE boils down to the following core commitment: "It is bad for one to be worse off than another through no fault or choice of one's own. It is never bad, with respect to equality, for one to be equal to another through no merit or effort of her own" (Segall, 2015, p. 359). Segall's view is asymmetrical because it treats arbitrary equality differently from arbitrary inequality (whether arbitrary advantage or arbitrary disadvantage). Note that Segall does not state a *version* of asymmetrical LE, but the asymmetrical view *simpliciter* – in the quoted passage, he does not commit himself to a specific account of arbitrariness; he broadly mentions 'choice' and 'fault' as the inequality-legitimising features, without specifying a conception of the good. Instead, he merely claims that arbitrary equality cannot be bad from an egalitarian point of view. Thus, by design, asymmetrical LE remains indifferent between an equal and an unequal distribution, even if all other things are not equal. Consider Sloppy Sam and Meticulous Mary again. If Sam and Mary are equally well off, an asymmetrical luck egalitarian considers this just as good as Mary being better off than Sam (irrespective of Sam's sloppiness and Mary's meticulousness).

According to MPC, asymmetrical LE is not a genuinely egalitarian theory. After all, mere indifference between an equal and an unequal distribution is not enough for an account to be truly egalitarian. I find this result implausible: asymmetrical luck egalitarians accord numerical equality substantial justificatory power in judging various distributive states. In fact, equality is so powerful that it allegedly makes an equal distribution as good as any other distribution, even if the latter reflects, say, people's choices, responsibility, or individual desert much better. For that reason, I think that MPC delivers the wrong result when applied to asymmetrical LE. MPC fails to be a perfect expression of the underlying, vague idea that genuine egalitarianism grants equality at least some justificatory power in judging various distributive states.

However, I do not think one should completely abandon MPC. Instead, an additional condition can fix the issue. Remember, the specific value attached to equality within asymmetrical LE is in making an equal distribution just as good as any other, even if the latter differs significantly in other respects. Differently put: the specific justificatory power of equality makes it possible for asymmetrical luck egalitarians to remain indifferent between an equal distribution and one that is not,

even when all other things are *not* equal. This justificatory power is captured by the following condition, which I chose to label MPC*:

> *MPC*:* To count as egalitarian, a doctrine must, for some X, not *disfavour* relatively more equal patterns of distribution of X over relatively less equal patterns of X, other things *not* equal.

This new condition needs clarification, as it contains a double negation ('not disfavour') as well as a complex qualification ('other things not equal').[5] Firstly, why not substitute the complicated formulation 'not disfavour' with the much simpler term 'favour'? As straightforward as this seems, not disfavouring equality and favouring equality are not the same thing. The former ('not disfavour') is weaker than the latter ('favour'): To demand that genuine egalitarians must *not disfavour* equality is compatible with them being indifferent between an equal, but arbitrary, distribution and an unequal, but non-arbitrary, distribution. Hence, the more complex formulation cannot be replaced by the simpler one. Think about Sloppy Sam and Meticulous Mary again: in one world, Mary does better than Sam. In another world, Mary and Sam are equally well off. Now, most luck egalitarians think that the former, unequal world is (at least) as good as the second, equal world *from an egalitarian point of view*. Now, MPC* is designed to be as charitable towards LE as possible (in order to make my argument that symmetrical LE nevertheless does not qualify as genuinely egalitarian as convincing as possible). Thus, it should take such (luck) egalitarian intuitions seriously, without, however, giving up the idea that egalitarianism has something to do with valuing numerical equality. This can be achieved by allowing genuine egalitarians to remain indifferent between an equal, but arbitrary, and an unequal, but non-arbitrary, distribution. After all, each distribution has something appealing for (luck) egalitarians to offer: (numerical) equality in one case and non-arbitrariness in the other. These two considerations can be merged by requiring genuine egalitarians to simply *not disfavour* equality. Refraining from *favouring* one distribution over another allows for recognition of both distributions' merits *from an egalitarian perspective*. Conversely, if egalitarians were required to favour equality outright, they would have to, for instance, prefer Sam (despite his sloppiness) being as well off as Mary (regardless of her

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5   I am thankful to an anonymous reviewer for having pressed me to provide such clarification.

meticulousness). Presented in this light, genuine egalitarianism lacks the conceptual resources to justify the egalitarian appeal of an unequal distribution. However, the argument against the egalitarian nature of symmetrical LE is stronger if genuine egalitarianism does indeed possess such conceptual resources: if one can show that symmetrical LE does not qualify as egalitarian *even under the weaker and more encompassing formulation of MPC**, this makes for a stronger case against the genuinely egalitarian nature of symmetrical LE. In short, MPC* contains a double negation because this makes my case against symmetrical LE stronger (though at the cost of a complex formulation of MPC* itself).

The qualification 'other things not equal' is introduced for a different reason: without it, MPC* would be too weak a condition for genuine egalitarianism. The very reason that luck egalitarians can, for example, convincingly remain indifferent between Sloppy Sam and Meticulous Mary being equally and them being unequally well off is precisely *because things are not equal in these cases*. Let me explain: if Sam and Mary are equally well off, this distribution is arbitrary (or so luck egalitarians think). After all, Sam is sloppy and thus, there is a *pro tanto* case for him being worse off than Mary, who behaves meticulously. If the two, are, however, unequally well off (to the extent that this reflects their differential behaviour), the resulting distribution is no longer arbitrary. Thus, both distributions, equal and unequal, are relevantly different in an important sense: One is arbitrary, and the other is not. It is in that sense that things are not equal. Now, imagine that things were relevantly equal. Think of, for example, one world in which Meticulous Mary is better off than Sloppy Sam, and another in which Sloppy Sam is as badly off as Sinning Sarah. Now, it seems that in such a scenario, genuine egalitarians can no longer remain indifferent between these distributions. After all, the latter, being non-arbitrary and *equal*, is preferable to the former, which is non-arbitrary and *unequal*. If distributions differ in no other respect than their (numerical) equality, genuine egalitarians should *prefer* the (numerically) equal distribution. Indifference is no longer a convincing option. If it were, genuine egalitarianism would be implausibly detached from the value of numerical equality. In short, by restricting the indifference introduced through the double negation in MPC* to cases where things are not relevantly equal, MPC* delivers a *prima facie* plausible condition for genuine egalitarianism, tailored to the argument presented here. This condition remains true to the basic egalitarian idea that egalitarians favour (or, at least, do not disfavour)

numerical equality, but it also accounts for the more specific, (luck) egalitarian intuition that non-arbitrary distributions have a distinct (egalitarian) value. In summary, its complex formulation allows MPC* to capture two distinct (luck) egalitarians concerns in a balanced and thus *prima facie* plausible way.

MPC* should not, however, replace MPC. As a free-standing condition, MPC* fails to account for the egalitarian nature of some accounts that one has good reason to regard as genuinely egalitarian. Consider Paretian egalitarianism. It assigns equality a genuine role, or power, in judging various distributive states – if only a lexicographically subordinate one compared to Pareto optimality. I thus consider it a genuinely egalitarian theory. Paretian egalitarianism, however, fails to satisfy MPC*: confronted with an equal, but Pareto-inferior, and an unequal, but Pareto-superior, distribution, it will disfavour the equal distribution. Numerical equality matters for Paretian egalitarians only when all else is equal, i.e., precisely in the cases addressed by MPC but not by MPC*. For that reason, one should still consider MPC an important condition for genuine egalitarianism – if only one in need of supplementation by MPC* to address theories that assign equality normative weight in cases where everything else is *not* equal. Together, or so I think, MPC and MPC* form a neat explication of genuine egalitarianism:

> *Genuine egalitarianism:* For a theory to qualify as genuinely egalitarian, it has to satisfy either MPC or MPC*.

This new explication captures the genuinely egalitarian nature of a wide range of egalitarian theories, from simple outcome egalitarianism and conditional forms like Paretian egalitarianism to modern, asymmetrical versions of LE. Note that it neither speaks in favour of nor against a theory to qualify as genuinely egalitarian. What is at stake here is not the quality of an account as a convincing theory of distributive justice, but merely the appropriateness of carrying the label 'egalitarian' – and with it the associated assumptions, intuitions, and considerations. Asymmetrical LE has, for example, been heavily criticised for never disvaluing arbitrary equality (e.g., Lippert-Rasmussen, 1999, and especially Albertsen and Midtgaard, 2014): the main charge asymmetrical LE faces is to explain just why a numerically equal distribution is valuable, if the latter does not reflect, for example, individuals' choices, responsibility, or desert. This challenge is similar to objections raised against other

genuinely egalitarian accounts, e.g., against outcome egalitarianism. All of them, by attributing an equal distribution justificatory power, need an argument for where this power comes from. In short: what is it about arithmetic equality that makes it *pro tanto* desirable and valuable? The (in)famous levelling down objection (from now on 'LDO') to egalitarianism questions the existence of such reasons (e.g., Parfit, 1997). According to the LDO, if distributive equality is achieved by merely diminishing ('levelling down') people's distributive shares, this cannot make a distribution better *in any possible way*. Egalitarianism, or so the objection continues, does value distributive equality per se and thus considers such equality good *in at least one way*. Proponents of the LDO, however, deny that levelling down can be an improvement in even one such way. I reckon all forms of genuine egalitarianism face one or another version of the LDO. Thus, the label clusters theories with similar features facing similar challenges and burdens.

I am now switching my attention to symmetrical LE. I want to show that symmetrical LE fails to qualify as a genuinely egalitarian theory, but that it does better in handling paradigmatic challenges commonly raised against egalitarianism.

3.3. Symmetrical luck egalitarianism

Symmetrical LE is the most extensive version of LE within the taxonomy of claims presented above, because it subscribes to the badness of arbitrary disadvantage, arbitrary advantage, and arbitrary equality at the same time. The account is symmetrical because it condemns arbitrary inequality (i.e., arbitrary advantage and disadvantage) as well as arbitrary equality (in contrast, asymmetrical LE condemns arbitrary inequality only). This aligns well with the general spirit of LE – after all, luck egalitarians usually condemn the impact of arbitrary influences on people's distributive shares *per se*, regardless of whether such influences make people worse off, better off, or equally well off compared to others. Symmetrical LE is a prominent position among luck egalitarians and embraced by some of LE's most eloquent advocates. Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen, for example, claims: "It is in itself bad […] if […] people's comparative positions reflect something other than their comparative exercises of responsibility" (Lippert-Rasmussen, 1999, p. 479). According to this commitment, it is not just comparative disadvantages that can be bad – comparative advantage or comparative equality can

be morally problematic as well when not reflecting people's exercise of personal responsibility. Similarly, Larry Temkin thinks that egalitarians "[...] can accept luck that makes equally deserving people equally well off, or unequally deserving people unequally well off proportional to their deserts" (Temkin, 2017, p. 46). To give a last example, consider again Carl Knight's above-cited commitment that "luck egalitarianism is standardly construed as counteracting brute luck's influence on distributions, a stance that clearly places it at odds with brute luck equality" (Knight, 2015, p. 127). All three accounts reject arbitrary equality and thus qualify as generic instances of symmetrical LE. Thus, symmetrical luck egalitarians (for example) think that it is bad for Sloppy Sam to be as well off as Meticulous Mary. After all, he is sloppy, and Mary is not. However, they do not find any fault with Sloppy Sam being as well off as Sinning Sarah (assuming sloppiness and sinning are equally imprudent or irresponsible).

Such accounts do not qualify as genuinely egalitarian because they fail to comply with MPC as well as MPC*. Let's consider MPC first: to comply with MPC, an account has to favour an equal distribution all else equal. Symmetrical LE, however, does not favour an equal distribution all else equal. Imagine two distributions, one more equal than the other, which are both non-arbitrary – say, because they perfectly track individual choices or individual desert. As none of the distributions are arbitrary, there is no badness from the point of view of a symmetrical luck egalitarian. Consequently, she remains indifferent between the two and thus fails MPC.

As pointed out above, however, a failure to comply with MPC does not suffice to disqualify symmetrical LE as genuinely egalitarian, for the latter could still meet MPC*. According to MPC*, an account qualifies as genuinely egalitarian if it is indifferent between an equal and an unequal distribution in cases where everything else is not equal. Now, imagine two distributions: one equal and arbitrary, the other unequal and non-arbitrary. Consider Sloppy Sam, who is lucky and therefore as well off as Meticulous Mary. Alternatively, imagine Sam not being as fortunate and remaining worse off than Mary. Since both distributions differ in their level of arbitrariness (one resulting from brute luck while the other does not), everything else is not equal. Symmetrical luck egalitarians prefer the non-arbitrary distribution; they prefer Mary to be better off than Sam. After all, they find arbitrary equality bad and thus have no reason to remain indifferent between the two. This violates MPC*,

which demands indifference in such cases for an account to qualify as genuinely egalitarian. Since it fails both MPC and MPC*, symmetrical LE does not qualify as genuinely egalitarian.

This result should not come as a surprise, as the above quotes make it clear that symmetrical luck egalitarians attribute numerical equality no justificatory power in ranking distributions. According to Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen, all that matters for evaluating the justness of a distribution is the degree to which it reflects people's 'comparative exercises of responsibility' (Lippert-Rasmussen, 1999, p. 479). On this account, equal outcomes are a mere byproduct of similar (or equal) exercises of responsibility – equality has no value on its own. Similarly, according to Temkin, a distribution is bad if and only if it does not reflect individual desert. Thus, equality will only come about as a byproduct of equal desert – again, it has no value on its own. The fact that equally deserving people are to receive an equal share does not constitute a genuinely egalitarian commitment, but embodies the principle of formal equality only: equal cases should be treated alike (Carter, 2011, p. 541). Notice the difference to Paretian egalitarianism: among Pareto-optimal distributions, Paretian egalitarians favour the most equal one – for the sole fact of being numerically more equal. Symmetrical LE, as conceived by Temkin, Lippert-Rasmussen, and Knight, however, never favours equality for its own sake – if equality is realised at all, it is the accidental byproduct of distributions that, for example, perfectly reflect individuals' equal desert or personal responsibility.

Now, the failure of Temkin's, Lippert-Rasmussen's, and Knight's accounts to qualify as genuinely egalitarian reflects a structural feature of symmetrical LE, rather than a peculiarity of their specific theories. By rejecting all arbitrary influences on distributions, and by thus being fully sensitive to the exercise of individual responsibility (or personal desert), symmetrical LE can neither comply with MPC nor with MPC*. The only egalitarian theories that can comply with one of the two are either partially or fully responsibility-insensitive (the latter accounts are commonly called 'outcome egalitarianism'). Partially responsibility-insensitive egalitarianism can qualify as egalitarian if it is insensitive to the arbitrariness of equal distributions (an instance of such a view being asymmetrical LE).

Symmetrical LE does, however, handle the LDO better than its genuinely egalitarian counterparts. This is because symmetrical luck egalitarians are committed to the badness of arbitrary equality. Thus, sym-

metrical luck egalitarians would never level down individuals simply to create a more equal distribution. For example, they would never make Meticulous Mary worse off just to establish equality between her and Sloppy Sam. Instead, they might want to level someone down if that makes a distribution less arbitrary. In that case, however, they have an easy answer as to why this particular instance of levelling down is good in at least one respect: because it makes a distribution less arbitrary, e.g., by better aligning it with people's individual choices or personal desert. For example, levelling down Sinning Sarah such that she is as badly off as Sloppy Sam is intuitively not (very) troubling. Now, such an improvement in the dimension of non-arbitrariness could still be overridden by conflicting considerations, e.g., the incurred loss in welfare, but it *is* a proper answer to the LDO. No such answer is readily available to genuine egalitarians.

Symmetrical LE does, however, face some challenges that genuine egalitarianism can handle better. Think of David Miller's incoherence worry. In short, Miller argues that LE's twofold goal of eliminating inequalities based on luck while preserving those based on choices, cannot be realised in certain contexts, e.g., when the choice-based inequality between two parties creates a luck-based inequality regarding a third (Miller, 2014). I am not going to take a stance on the plausibility of this challenge. Note, however, that it targets symmetrical LE's ambition to deliver a fully non-arbitrary distribution and that asymmetrical luck egalitarians would have an easy way out by simply realising a numerically equal distribution – as would other, genuine egalitarians like outcome egalitarians. Thus, Miller's worry is probably not the kind of challenge one should have in mind when thinking about typical 'egalitarian' accounts. This strengthens, or so I think, the case for conceptual clearance regarding symmetrical LE: if it differs substantially in structure to genuinely egalitarian accounts and is confronted with its own, distinct challenges, why not simply calling it 'responsibilitarianism' instead?

4 Why not responsibilitarianism?

As indicated above, paradigmatic instances of symmetrical LE attribute no justificatory power to numerically equal distributions. Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen's formulation of symmetrical LE tracks the 'comparative exercises of responsibility' (Lippert-Rasmussen, 1999, p. 479)

while Temkin's classic account focuses on comparative desert or fairness (Temkin, 2017). I tried to show that such commitments come with their own problems while, at the same time, handling traditional challenges to egalitarianism well. Relabelling such accounts 'responsibilitarianism' does more justice to them than sticking to the original label 'egalitarianism'. A shift in labels, as part of the broader project of conceptual clearance, might contribute to forming a new set of intuitions, moral considerations, challenges, counterexamples, and alleged benefits associated with the kind of theory here identified as responsibilitarian.

In fact, precisely this terminology has already been adopted by some luck egalitarians (e.g., by Knight, 2009) – without, however, yet abandoning the ambition to also be egalitarian. Despite acknowledging that "[...] prudential value is not to be distributed in strictly egalitarian fashion, but rather proportionally [...]" and that "this commitment [...] may appear to cut into equality" (Knight, 2009, p. 112), Knight thinks that "one can truthfully say that luck egalitarianism is just as much a form of 'responsibilitarianism' as it is a form of egalitarianism" (Knight, 2009, p. 169). Other luck egalitarians have drawn more revisionary conclusions. Larry Temkin, for example, has recently conceded that his theory of distributive justice, long considered one of LE's most generic accounts, is probably not about equality at all:

> [...] one might argue that on my view there is nothing good or bad about equality, *per se* [...]. If this is so, then although I now call my view *comparative fairness egalitarianism*, or *equality as comparative fairness*, wouldn't it be more accurate to drop the reference to egalitarianism and equality altogether? [...] the simplest, most honest response to it is probably to just accept the position it expresses. [...] I may not have realised it at the time, a more accurate title of my first book would have been *Comparative Fairness*, rather than *Inequality* (Temkin, 2017, p. 55, emphasis in original).

Before concluding, I would like to discuss two worries pertaining to the set of arguments developed throughout this paper. Firstly (and returning to the conceptual dimension), one might ask: Am I not, in spelling out my version of 'genuine egalitarianism' as a disjunction of MPC and MPC*, placing the bar too high for egalitarians? After all, why should one not classify a theory as 'egalitarian' that, for example, leads to a more equal distribution of the good in practice? Or alternatively,

why not characterise those accounts as 'egalitarian' that are compatible with (or expressive of) treating people as equals (e.g., Dworkin, 1981)? Under these alternative conditions, symmetrical LE might well qualify as egalitarian. Such strategies, however, risk corroding egalitarianism's conceptual core: the above-mentioned alternative conditions are so broad that even paradigmatically anti-egalitarian theories, such as utilitarianism, would potentially qualify as 'egalitarian' – utilitarianism treats people equally in that "everybody [is] to count for one, nobody for more than one" (Bentham's famous dictum). Moreover, utilitarianism would certainly be highly redistributive in practice – and thus lead to a more equal distribution of the good. Counting utilitarianism as genuinely egalitarian would, however, stretch the meaning of the term beyond reasonable limits.

A second worry is this: I tie genuine egalitarianism to some features of a distribution, but what about versions of egalitarianism that are non-distributive in nature, say, relational egalitarianism? A first response is to point out that LE can potentially include the allegedly non-distributive concerns of relational egalitarianism.[6] Thus, egalitarians need not choose between luck egalitarianism and relational egalitarianism. Instead, egalitarians, or so the argument goes, can have their cake and eat it too. The central idea is that once '(social or political) relations' are framed as goods, they can be part of a luck egalitarian currency of justice. Arguments of this sort have recently been developed by different political philosophers. Anca Gheaus, for example, writes: "[...] egalitarian political relationships can be conceptualised as one of the distribuenda of justice (on any plausible metric), thereby showing that some of the central demands of relational egalitarianism can also be generated by the internal logic of luck egalitarianism" (Gheaus, 2018, p. 55). In similar spirit, Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen thinks that "[...] any objectionable inegalitarian social relation can be analyzed as an unequal distribution of a relevantly related social good" (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2018, p. 81). A book-length argument that "[...] distributive equality is required by the logic of relational egalitarianism [...]" has recently been offered by Eva-Maria Parisi (Parisi, 2020, p. 15). A possible counterargument to such aforementioned attempts is that '(social or political) relations' cannot in any *substantive* sense be considered (distributive) goods, because that would stretch the meaning of 'good' beyond

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6   I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for highlighting this possibility.

reasonable limits. Thus, if one nevertheless speaks of a 'distribution of (social or political) relations', her choice of words would be *metaphorical* (at best) if not *nonsensical* (at worst). This line of criticism is inspired by John Kleinig's classic argument against using too wide a notion of 'desert': Kleinig thinks that some desert-claims (e.g., the Niagara Falls being deservedly famous or the Western Australian coastline deserving to be as well-known as that of the East) are sensible as metaphors only (Kleinig, 1973, p. 53). Besides raising a similar worry with regard to a wide notion of '(distributive) good', i.e., one that accommodates even (social and political) relations, I do not take any stance here on whether relational egalitarianism can ultimately be framed as a distributive view – not least because my argument does not require any stance on this matter.

If relational egalitarianism could not be framed as a distributive view, one might instead say that what this paper has hopefully established is a novel account of genuine *distributive* egalitarianism, but not of genuine egalitarianism *simpliciter*. That, however, would still be an interesting, if only narrower, result. Alternatively, the findings presented here might well apply to non-distributive forms of egalitarianism, too. Applied to relational egalitarianism, this would mean something like the following: Genuine relational egalitarianism either values equal relations higher than unequal ones, *all else equal*, or is indifferent between equal and unequal relations, *all else not equal*. This, of course, assumes that there are valuable features of (social or political) relations other than their equality, e.g., their voluntariness. Thus, the condition for genuine egalitarianism presented here can plausibly explain the egalitarian credentials (or lack thereof) of a wide array of egalitarian theories, whether distributive or relational, conditional or unconditional, focused on outcomes or on opportunities, and importantly, independent of whether a theory pays attention to a distribution's arbitrariness or not. It can help to explain why some accounts, such as asymmetrical LE, remain genuinely egalitarian although being sensitive to individual responsibility – and why others, like symmetrical LE, should be seen as purely responsibilitarian. In light of this, symmetrical luck egalitarians should ask themselves: Why not speak of 'responsibilitarianism' right from the start? Or, if the claim that symmetrical LE constitutes a genuinely egalitarian theory is maintained, luck egalitarians should then answer: What (if anything) is egalitarian about (their) luck egalitarianism?

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