

Toward a Better Understanding of the Egalitarian Agenda¹

Is there a Tension between Relational Equality and Egalitarian Rules of Distribution?

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This essay aims at reconstructing some core practical and theoretical aspects of Egalitarianism. It explores its political significance by looking at its historical dimension and studies the philosophical nuances of the egalitarian philosophical debate by focusing on the ideals of both relational and distributive equality. The work raises intuitions on whether principles other than that of distributive equality can be enforced for securing individuals to relate as equals. The main aim of the essay is to provide a deep understanding of the way one should see the egalitarian goal today, that is a goal which embraces equality both in relational and distributive terms.

Key words: Egalitarianism – Distributive equality – Relational equality – Social movements

Introduction

This paper aims at reconstructing some core practical and theoretical aspects of Egalitarianism. It is structured as follows: Section 1 locates the roots of the egalitarian ethos in the social movements of the 17th century and follows their deve-

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lopment until the postmodern era. This historical excursus is provided in the conviction that the meaning of egalitarianism can only be introduced adequately by looking at the historical context from which its principles have been raised; that is by unveiling the pervasive inequalities and oppressive relations that individuals have been facing when fighting for justice.

Section 2, then, steps beyond the historical dimension of egalitarianism and looks at its development within the philosophical debate. Firstly, it explores the ideal of equal distribution. Secondly, it turns to the relational dimension of equality as central to the egalitarian agenda. Focusing on the relational account of Elisabeth Anderson, which is egalitarian in its relational conception of justice, yet abandons the ideal of equality at the distributional level, the essay opens the possibility for egalitarians to abandon the ideal of equality in the distributive domain. This, I argue, encounters strong resistance in light of the egalitarian ethos, which has been reflecting itself in the history of the egalitarian social movements. Therefore, its philosophical soundness should be put into doubt.

1. Historical Excursus

Egalitarianism is not a new trend in moral philosophy, nor is it a philosophical thought detached from daily life. On the contrary, the aspiration to equality belongs to the history of human action and political activity. In the specific, egalitarian ideals developed during human history as a response – and as an objection – to oppressive social relations that marked societies, from monarchical institutions and feudal systems to discriminating practices and policies. Although the egalitarian responses have been discontinuous in different historical periods and social contexts, it is arguable that they all have roots in a common ethos; that is the guiding belief that a society is only just when it treats its citizens as equals.

In this introductory and brief historical excursus, I wish to mention some sparks in the history of the social egalitarian movements starting from the Levellers of the English Civil War to contemporary egalitarian movements. By doing so, I mean firstly to show the political nature of egalitarianism, to which my theoretical contribution is devoted. Secondly, this historical approach is functional for the main claim of the paper, namely that achieving equality within societies and individuals' interactions is indivisibly connected with struggling for equality within the distribution of certain goods among individuals themselves. Before continuing, however, it is right to acknowledge that the only historical approach I can undertake with respect to the history of egalitarian movements is a west-centred approach. The facts I refer to are grounded in the history of Europe and the USA and mostly do not take into account the egalitarian tradition of Asian,

Eastern and Middle-Eastern societies. However, my selection does not reflect any ranking of importance, it merely reflects my western standpoint.

It is impossible to date when human beings started developing a genuine aspiration for social equality. What is remarkable, however, is that starting from the 17th century more and more powerful groups of citizens started challenging their political institutions in the name of the ideal of equality. In particular, consider the struggle for liberties and equality of the Levellers' movement during the English Civil War and in the middle of the 17th century (Anderson, Kackson, Phillips 2014, 258–267). The English Levellers, who found their spokesmen in John Lilburn, Richard Overton, William Wallwyn, Gerard Winstanley and others, challenged the control of the English Parliament, demanding the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. Representing the aspirations of those suffering class domination, the Levellers spoke against poverty and deprivation, struggling for a political settlement that would embody principles of equality:

“We, the free People of England, to whom God hath given hearts, means and opportunity to effect the same, do with submission to his wisdom, in his name, and *desiring the equity thereof may be to his praise and glory*, agree to ascertain our Government to abolish all arbitrary Power, and to set bounds and limits both to our Supreme, and all Subordinate Authority, and remove all known Grievances.”²

The Levellers' principle of equality finds its roots in the religious vocabulary and tradition of Christianity, in which the ideal of equality in front of the God is powerfully expressed by the words of the Apostle Paul: *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus* (Galatians 3:28). Yet it is thanks to the Levellers and to the social movements, which followed, that the ideal of equality progressively leaves the religious domain and becomes a *political* ideal; that is, it starts reflecting the draft of a project to be realized among men and women, within political communities, and not a hope or faith in life after death (Anderson – Kackson – Phillips 2014, 258–267).

The campaign of the Levellers for equality went nearly underground in Cromwell's Commonwealth, but their ideal influenced the course of Western history anticipating by a century and a half the struggles of the American Revolution. Indeed, Thomas Jefferson would soon write in a letter to John Adams that he had derived some of his ideas about the Declaration of Independence from the writings of *those men called Levellers*³. And again the same commitment to liberties

² In the preamble to the third draft of the *Agreement of the People*, published on May 1st 1649, my emphasis.

³ So Stephen Davies in *Reclaiming the Levellers from Socialism*, a lecture from the second World Convention of the Libertarian International in 1984.

and equalities the Levellers showed came back to light during the French Revolution in 1789, which developed as an answer to the pervasive inequalities between the privileged orders of the nobles and clergy and the *Third Estate*. The egalitarian guiding belief that moved the lower classes of society against the higher echelons in revolutionary France went underground during the era of Napoleon. Still, they played a great role in favouring the abolition of the French (and later European) slave trade. Indeed, starting from the late 18th century, the free mulattos of French colonies started discussing the rights of free blacks and the most revolutionary of them urged abolition (see Olympe de Gournes' *Reflections of Black People*), aiming at the end of slavery as the end of domination.

It is interesting to see how in the British Abolitionist Campaign a vital role was played by women, and that anti-slavery literature and poetry started to be published by women who themselves suffered terrible domination and inequalities, lacking the right to vote and access to adequate education. Feminist writers and activists such as Mary Wollstonecraft linked – expressing egalitarian ideals – the oppressive relations between planters and slaves to those between men and women, and started fighting for equal rights for men and women, especially vindicating the rights of the former to education and political participation.⁴

Now, more than one egalitarian struggle has been brought on from that time. However, we should acknowledge that it is only few years ago, in 2014, that the Norwegian Nobel Committee decided to award Malala Yousafzay with the Nobel Peace Prize for her struggle for the right of women and children to education. In 2012, Malala survived after being shot in the head by a Taliban gunman for demanding that the Pakistan government allow girls to receive an education. This shows how, although some egalitarian battles ended successfully, some of them still did not end or did not end successfully everywhere, while some others are still to be fought. Among them, I want to mention the struggle of LGTBIA movement for international rights' recognition, the fight of Black folks for affirmation, the disability rights movements' activism for equal opportunities and equal rights for all people with disabilities and the activist causes for the rights of all working people. What combines all of these movements is the belief that it is worth struggling for a society of equals: “a society in which people relate to one another as equals, whether it is in their day-to-day interactions, across the major institutions of government, or in the workplace” (Anderson – Kackson – Phillips 2014, 258).

⁴ Please note that we have to wait until 1928 for the last state in the Union – Alabama – to abolish convict lease, and until after the Second World War, in 1948, for having slavery being declared contrary to human rights in UDHR. It also took a long time for women's struggle for equal rights to vote to come to fruition. Switzerland only recognized this in 1971, while women in Saudi Arabia had to wait until 2015 for being allowed to vote within municipal elections.

This is the ethos that egalitarian social movements share, this their guiding belief: that a just society is one in which individuals interact as equals. However, while there is significant agreement on such a statement, egalitarians often disagree on how to achieve social equality. In other words, while the egalitarian goal is shared, the egalitarian agenda is largely discussed and questioned. And it is here that my theoretical analysis comes into play.

2. Theoretical Aspects

In the following of this essay, I claim that one of the processes we have to change – in order to fight inequalities – is that of the distribution of access to advantages among individuals. Indeed, the intuition I follow is that as long as distribution of advantages is not regulated by principles of fairness, social equality remains utopic rather than a concrete political goal. With this thought as a cornerstone, I argue that the ideal of distributive equality is not merely compatible – but also necessary – for the achievement of relational equality as pursued by the social movements mentioned above. Indeed, it was not fortuitous, but rather coherent with the ideal they were fighting for, that the Levellers not only called for the overthrow of social hierarchies, but also for the equalisation of wealth. Nor is it fortuitous that the *Third Estate* advocated for an equal system of taxation besides political representation during the French Revolution. And, finally, it is not a case that the half of the population which has been lacking political representation and education – be this women, blacks, LGTBQIA members, disabled, or middle class workers – also happen to be the half of population which is disadvantaged concerning the distribution of access to advantages such as income, wealth and – more broadly – opportunities.

Looking at the history of the egalitarian movements, in the end, not only shows that we have inherited a great egalitarian heritage. It also and significantly shows that the struggle for equality of status or so-called *relational equality* has been and is indivisibly connected to the struggle for distributive equality. And it is on the ground of this consideration that my philosophical approach to Egalitarianism builds upon.

2.1 The Ideal of Equal Distribution

There are many available ways for reading the philosophical debate on equality. I choose to reconstruct this debate by thinking at the accounts it presents as answering and challenging one another. In this section, I draw the lines of a string of arguments which, starting from the rejection of distributive egalitarian princi-

ples, establish the doctrine of sufficiency as the proper pattern of distribution for a society of equals.

The debate on equality starts in the framework of fair distribution. This does not surprise if one acknowledges the human community to be primarily a distributive community: one in which individuals share, divide and exchange goods with one another⁵. In this context, the ideal of distributive equality has been grounded in fairness, that is in the conviction that:

it is *fair* for two individuals A and B to be *equally* treated, or end up being *equally* well off, as long as considerations on their responsibilities were not in play.

Distributive egalitarians strongly believe that as long as individuals cannot be held responsible for their being worse off than others – as if it were if their condition was the outcome of their aware choices or reckless behaviour – then their being *not as good off as* others would not be fair. Therefore, at least a *pro tanto* reason is given for (re)distributing goods so that the considered inequality is eliminated.

If this is correct, then it seems arguable that by seeking fairness, egalitarians primarily aim at reducing the impact of bad brute luck on human life, where brute luck is to be understood as the luck resulting from non-deliberate gambles. Examples of the impact of bad brute luck on human lives could be those of a young man being hit by a falling meteorite whose course could not have been predicted (Dworkin 2000, 73), a child receiving an inferior education because of being born in a poor rather than a rich family, an engineer being paid less than other engineers in spite of being as talented as they are, but working in a developing rather than in a developed country. The egalitarian conception of equality as grounded in fairness most properly reflects itself in G. A. Cohen's concern about brute luck as an enemy of just equality:

“In my view, a large part of the fundamental egalitarian aim is to extinguish the influence of brute luck on distribution. (...) Brute luck is an enemy of just equality, and, since effects of genuine choice contrast with brute luck, genuine choice excuses otherwise unacceptable inequalities” (Cohen 1939, 931).

It is this statement that most powerfully grounds the egalitarian intuition that nothing but individual responsibility can make inequality fair. More than showing the core egalitarian concern for the effects on brute luck on human life, however, there is something deeper Cohen points at when claiming against the latter. I see this related to what egalitarians *should* believe when it comes to the proper metric of distributive justice; that is when answering the question of *what* should be

⁵ See (Walzer 1983).

fairly distributed. Indeed, the egalitarian choice of endorsing *one* metric of distributive justice brings with it some significant difficulties: either some implications of a fair distribution of the metric are non-desirable or some desirable egalitarian aims are not achieved through a fair distribution of the metric. More specifically: equality of resources is subject, among others, to the objection that individuals who – through no fault of their own – possess lots of personal endowments and talents are constantly forced to work and pay for compensating their fellows’ lack of talents and abilities. Equality of welfare, however, counter-intuitively demands that individuals with modest preferences work and pay for ensuring that individuals with more expensive preferences have them satisfied. And, finally, equality of opportunity for achieving welfare ends up by not being in a condition to justify desirable egalitarian distributive policies, which compensate individuals in light of requirements that are not exclusively welfare opportunity requirements. In my eyes and in light of the difficulties in the spelling of one single metric of just distribution, Cohen’s accent on brute luck as the enemy of just inequalities is more than a claim on the proper aim of egalitarian justice. It reminds egalitarians about the *character* of their ideas, whose strength lies in the fight against underserved inequality, rather than in the construction of principles of distribution. And, similarly, it also serves the focus on equal access to *advantage* as the proper currency of justice; a broad and generous concept understood to include, but be wider than any single metric (Cohen 1939, 934). Embracing Cohen’s view in the deep conviction that a broad criterion such as *equal access to advantage* is a valid principle for fighting inequality, I claim that the proper positive aim of distributive justice is to establish and defend a society where the only inequalities existing are those that reflect differences of taste and choice: a society in which fairness has won over all inequalities that are the result of luck and not of choice.

2.2 From Distributive Equality to Relational Equality

Starting from the last 20 years, new nourishment has been brought to the egalitarian debate by so-called relational approaches to egalitarian justice. Based on the conviction that the proper positive aim of the latter is the achievement of a society where individuals relate to one another as equals, and that its proper negative aim lies in the end of oppression, relational egalitarians started to reject the understanding of egalitarianism as centred on issues of distribution and they questioned the ideal of distributive equality as necessary for the egalitarian goal. In this section, I wish to highlight the impact and attractiveness of the relational view for the philosophical debate on equality. At the same time, however, I also aim at questioning the distributive egalitarian ideal presented in the previous section as a proper pattern of distributive justice. More precisely, I wish to explo-

re the intuition Elisabeth Anderson powerfully expresses in her 1999 published article *What is the point of Equality?*, that since equality is to be reached at the relational level, its achievement in the distributive sphere is not necessarily a desideratum of egalitarian justice.

Starting from the early decades of the last century, the philosophical debate on equality has been characterized by more than one contribution to the project of critical examination of egalitarianism approached in its distributive dimension. These contributions⁶ outline how egalitarianism has failed to play sufficient attention to significant egalitarian issues besides distribution. In the following, I wish mainly to focus on the two most prominent criticisms to what Elisabeth Anderson defines in her 1999 paper as *luck egalitarianism*⁷, namely:

3. that the realization of the distributive principles it offers might undermine further desirable egalitarian values such as respect and self-respect (Wolff 2010, 336); and
4. that the horizon it considers is too narrow for acknowledging how injustice within societies does not primarily derive from economic inequality, but rather from institutional structures, which allow some social classes to dominate others.

To explore the first criticism to luck egalitarianism, consider how a practical realization of distributive egalitarian principles in society such as equality of resources, welfare, and opportunity might end up by forcing individuals to build up an invasive system of data collection entailing detailed information about everyone's income, talents, choices, and gambles. Individuals would need to be constantly observed in order for their behaviour to be judged prudent or reckless, their fortune deserved or fortuitous, their sufferings foreseeable or unpredictable. In this scenario, people would be encouraged to mistrust one another. The communitarian value of reciprocal trust would be massively harmed (Wolff 1998).

If, however, its achievement conflicts with individuals' trust and respect, why should we struggle for equality of distribution? Are trust and respect not also values that we should care about when we ask ourselves to what extent and in which terms should human beings be equally treated? The first critical reply to egalitarianism as a theory of fairness states, answering these questions, that "distributive justice should be limited in its application by other egalitarian concerns" (Wolff 1998, 122).

⁶ Among others, see Iris Young's *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, published in 1990, Samuel Scheffler's *What is Egalitarianism?* published in 2003 and Jonathan Wolff's *Fairness, Respect and the Egalitarian Ethos*, first published in 1998 and last revised in 2010.

⁷ Anderson refers to egalitarianism as luck egalitarianism in virtue of the centrality this reserves to considerations on luck in human life.

The second critical examination of luck egalitarianism focuses on what egalitarians end up not acknowledging when they focus their thinking about social justice on the distribution of some certain goods such as resources, income or wealth: the structural dimension of injustices. This criticism finds its roots in the critique Karl Marx presented in his *Kritik des Gothaer Programms* (1875) to all the bourgeois economists who consider and treat distribution as independent of the mode of production and do not see how the latter causes and promotes the unequal outcomes with which economists are so concerned. It is not fortuitous that when Iris Young moves her critique to luck egalitarians she starts quoting Marx's work⁸ as it is not fortuitous that Jonathan Wolff also goes back to Marx's critique and Mill when criticizing egalitarian theories for not making any reference to modern economies, nor patterns of ownership, although distribution necessarily reflects them (Wolff 2010, 339). However, both Young and Wolff give a new and broader understanding of what Marx points at as "mode of production": which entails any structure, norm, law and practice that guide it as well as the language and symbols that mediate it within interactions and society (Young 1990, 22). Therefore, the general criticism of the mainstream egalitarian focus on distributive justice is that:

"such a focus ignores and tends to obscure the institutional context within which those distributions take place, and which is often at least partly the cause of patterns of distribution of jobs or wealth" (Young 1990, 22).

What results from this critical analysis of the luck egalitarian commitment is that egalitarians *should* – because of being egalitarian in the first place – integrate within their horizon considerations that go beyond distribution. They should look at the necessary institutional conditions for assuring that individuals are treated equally and avoid, by challenging injustice, the situation in which they end up experiencing inequality in dimensions that are not limited to the distributive sphere. In other words, egalitarians should primarily care, by struggling for equality, about fighting the oppressive character of individuals' relations, whose consequences include distributive patterns and further significant issues that do not relate to distribution. Among others, see culture, division of labour and decision-making procedures (Young 1990, 39).

Both Iris Young's and Jonathan Wolff's critical reactions to luck egalitarianism have a constructive spirit: despite largely offering criticisms against the luck egalitarian focus on distribution, neither of them rejects the principle of justice according to which one has at least a *pro tanto* reason for favouring equality of distribution. This assumption does not meet Elisabeth Anderson's critique of luck

⁸ See first chapter of (Young 1990).

egalitarianism; Anderson non-solely dismisses equality of distribution as morally irrelevant, but also offers a new positive egalitarian theory to replace luck egalitarianism: a theory of democratic equality. In her 1999 publication *What is the point of Equality?*, one of the papers that most excited the egalitarian debate, Anderson accuses luck egalitarians of displacing the proper egalitarian commitment in their formulation of principles of compensation, which show disrespect both to the victims of bad option luck and to the victims of bad brute luck. Indeed – so Anderson – by affirming that individuals cannot make claims on compensation to one another when it comes to the outcomes of their own choices and voluntarily run risks, luck egalitarians abandon them to their own fate. At the same time, luck egalitarians also are disrespectful toward the victims of bad brute luck. Indeed, in order for them to get compensation, luck egalitarian principles demand that they display evidence of personal inferiority and make themselves subject to invasive state judgements based on pity.

What follows from Anderson's rejection of luck egalitarianism is a new approach to equality, the central core of which is: a) that we should aim at achieving a society in which individuals participate as equals, that is in a democratic form of society rather than one marked by social hierarchies; and b) that a democratic society is that which guarantees to individuals a *sufficient* level of some certain capabilities (Anderson 1999, 313).

Despite being egalitarian in *a*, Anderson's democratic equality is sufficientarian in *b* – where *a* concerns the relational sphere of individuals' interactions and *b* concerns the distributive dimension of how individuals share goods in their societies. To explore, *a* phrases the aim of achieving a democratic society, that is a society in which each member accepts the obligation to justify his or her action by principles acceptable to all other members and they all enjoy mutual consultation, reciprocation and recognition (Anderson 1999, 313). *B* instead states that democratic equality is sufficientarian in its conception of distributive justice. Indeed, the ideal is not that everyone has equal opportunities, resources or capabilities, but rather that everyone has enough to secure the conditions of any citizen's freedom and civic status as an equal to other citizens (Anderson 2004, 106).

Further exploration shows that some inches need to be given to the concept of capabilities as a metric of justice, some more into Sufficiency as the proper pattern of distribution. The issue of capabilities as a proper metric of distributive justice goes back to the approaches of Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, according to which the advantages that should be distributed among individuals do not correspond to the actual fulfilment of a certain action's exercise (eating, studying, voting etc.), but rather to the real opportunity to do something (being capable of eating, studying, voting etc.). Now, while the capabilities approach as such is only a partial theory of social justice (Nussbaum 2011, 40), which does not make any

commitment about how inequalities in general – and inequalities above an hypothetical Sufficiency level in particular – ought to be handled (Nussbaum 2011, 40), Anderson’s approach goes further by stating that equal respect for all is non-antithetic to the existence of inequalities among individuals in terms of wealth, resources or opportunities. Indeed, if justice consists in the absence of oppressive hierarchies, Distributive Equality is not what (at least primarily) matters. What matters is rather that everyone is capable of functioning as an equal citizen. This involves the capability of functioning as a human being, as a participant in a system of cooperative production, and as a citizen of a democratic state (Anderson 1999, 317). These capabilities, then, also require various conditions to be met: among others, individuals should have effective access to food, shelter, clothing, medical care, access to the means of production, freedom of occupational choices, access to education, freedom of association, and access to public spaces etc. However, none of these capabilities needs to be maximized, nor is it a moral problem that someone has access to better-quality education, jobs, food and shelter as long as everyone has access to some of them – and this needs to be good enough to secure equal participation in society.

In these terms, democratic Equality is egalitarian in regard to the dimension of individuals’ relations, yet it is sufficientarian when it comes to the distribution of resources and opportunities. It states that it is not a moral concern that merely some citizens (and not all of them) have access to – among others – private schools and hospitals, expensive restaurants and clothing, luxury lodging and holidays, as long as everyone has access to a lower – but sufficient – level of education, healthcare, recreation and housing. Yet how much is enough? And is *enough* really enough?

3. What Are We Struggling for When Struggling for Equality?

The previous section has opened the possibility for egalitarians to abandon the ideal of equality at the distributive level. Indeed, if the proper aim of egalitarian justice is the achievement of a society where individuals relate as equals, it seems questionable whether individuals need to enjoy distributive equality in the first place. In this last section of the essay, I raise some doubts on the possibility for egalitarians to abandon the ideal of distributive equality. Indeed, it seems to me that embracing the egalitarian ethos is – as reflected in the struggle for equality embraced by the egalitarian social movements – acknowledging that individuals should have access to enjoying the flourishing lives to which they are equally entitled. And this necessarily is struggling for eliminating the impact of luck on human life.

This claim bases on one deep intuition: that if we struggle for equality within society we struggle for a society where individuals have the same chances to achieve goals and personal projects. Now, Anderson assumes that inequalities in capabilities are of no moral significance as long as each individual has enough capabilities to function as an equal within her community. Yet how can individuals relate as equals when – because of no fault of their own – they have access to different levels of advantages? How can they recognize each other as equals if they contribute and perpetrate unequal treatment to different social groups defined in terms of possession?

Think about a society in which all cancer patients get free treatment, but only some of them (that is mostly the privately insured patients) can choose their own doctor, only few of them get treated in a hospital with single bedrooms and extra beds for family members. Think about a society which secures education for all, yet does not care about children with equal potentials having access to different schools and universities due to different parental resources. If treating individuals with respect is treating individuals with *equal* respect – as egalitarians should believe – then why not to recognize that it is unjust for some to have access to fewer advantages than others through no choice or fault of their own? As Pablo Gilabert powerfully writes:

“To relate to others in a way that really shows equal respect and concern, (...) [w]e should also relate to others in such a way that we grant them the same expansive opportunities to live a flourishing life that we seek and think we are entitled to have” (Gilabert 2012, 113).

Grounding on Gilabert’s intuition, I claim that non-enforcing principles of equal distribution of access to advantage as egalitarians would be misunderstanding the egalitarian goal itself are too unambitious for truly creating a society free from domination and oppression. Indeed, it is not sufficient for oppressed and dominated to be emancipated, as long as access to valuable capabilities and material means is them denied. Only when individuals enjoy equal access to advantages no one can – by virtue of undeserved privileges or fortune – raise herself as oppressor, nor can anyone – due to unchosen misfortune – bow down to the new ruler.

Following these assumptions, I claim that in order to secure a non-oppressive character of individuals’ relations, we need equality to be secured *also* at the distributive level. In my view, then, the expansion of the egalitarian scope beyond relational issues is fundamentally compatible a) with the struggle for equality brought on by the different social movements presented in Section 1 and 2 with the ideal of distributive equality analysed in Section 2. Indeed, as seen in Section 1, if on the one side the Egalitarian political movements have been struggling for relational equality and equal participation within their community, on the other side they have also been powerfully struggling for equal systems of ownership,

taxation, education, health care and other valuable advantages. As considered in section 2, furthermore, the ideal of distributive equality, if properly considered, does not – differently from what Anderson states – present itself as an alternative to relational egalitarian accounts in the first place. Indeed, more than one egalitarian makes such compatibility explicit. Among others, Richard Arneson outlines that the focus of egalitarianism on distribution does not imply a reduction of the egalitarian agenda to issues of distribution (Arneson 1989, 77). On the contrary, the question of distribution is a question that arises *within* the egalitarian debate itself and that – as such – does not exclude the moral importance of issues beyond distribution. A compatible statement also can be found in Cohen’s Introduction to his *Rescuing Justice and Equality* when declaring his conviction in political philosophy with respect to justice: that the focus on distributive justice is *one* relevant aspect among further aspects that egalitarians might want to consider (Cohen 2008, 7). Moreover, the distributive principles that follow from an egalitarian distribution of goods might, despite being *pro tanto*, just not be, *all things considered*, desirable in light of further egalitarian values or nondistributive considerations. Hence, they are open for revision.

In sum, Arneson’s and Cohen’s considerations corroborate my intuition on the compatibility of luck egalitarianism with a hypothetical expansion of the egalitarian debate from distribution to issues that go beyond it. Indeed, on the one side Arneson does acknowledge the broader egalitarian horizon Young criticizes egalitarians for ignoring, yet decides not to focus on it. Cohen, on the other side, non-solely validates Arneson’s acknowledgement, but also takes into account – as Wolff does – that further egalitarian values might, in *all things considered* scenarios, outweigh principles of egalitarian distribution.

Conclusions

This essay mainly aimed at providing a better understanding of some practical and theoretical aspects of Egalitarianism. After exploring its political significance by looking at the social movements who have been struggling for realizing the egalitarian ideal, I have acknowledged the struggle for social equality to be inevitably struggle for some form of equality of distribution. This does not reject nor underestimate the egalitarian statement according to which the proper aim of egalitarians should be the achievement of a society free from oppression and domination. On the contrary, it corroborates and goes beyond this last, grounding in the deep intuition that individuals only will be in the condition to relate to one another as equals when they all will have the same opportunity to achieve the flourishing lives they are equally entitled to. This implies the abolishment of

luck's outcomes on human life and the improvement of equality of access to advantage.

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