

Having Enough!

The Philosophy of Sufficiency in Distributive Justice



Academic workshop, SDU, Odense – March 7-8 2019

About the workshop...

One of the hot-button issues in contemporary political philosophy is whether distributive justice demands an equal distribution of the relevant distributive currency (resources, welfare, and opportunities) or not. This issue draws a distinction between *egalitarians*, who claim that arbitrary inequality is in itself unjust; *prioritarians*, who's moral concern is benefiting the worst off; and so-called *sufficientarians*, who believe that justice holds no necessary commitment for perfect equality but only that all should have "enough". As an intuitive idea meant to serve as a constructive critique of egalitarian moral principles, sufficientarianism has roots in the writings of Harry Frankfurt (1987)¹ and Joseph Raz (1986).² Over the last years it has grown into a larger family of more comprehensive views about distributive justice.

Sufficientarianism has certainly been met with strong opposition by both egalitarians, prioritarians and utilitarians. Critics argue, among other things, that the ideal of sufficiency is arbitrary, ambiguous, over-demanding, or negligent of other important moral values. Still, most non-sufficientarians agree that the ideal of sufficiency holds a strong moral importance alongside other moral ideals. Moreover, the wide theoretical variation and creativity in the construction of defenses of the sufficiency ideal against the criticism has revealed fundamental theoretical disagreement between different strands of sufficientarianism. These disagreements latch on to questions about value-theory, value-pluralism, currency of distributive justice, design of distributional pattern, scope of justice etc. It is safe to say that among sufficientarians, as well as between them and their critics, there is much philosophy left to uncover.

The workshop, *Having Enough! The Philosophy of Sufficiency in Distributive Justice*, zooms in on the philosophical plausibility of sufficiency as distributive ideal. It hosts scholars who have made significant contributions to the literature on sufficiency. Some see themselves as proponents of sufficientarianism while others consider themselves critics.

The literature on sufficientarianism is still young. With this workshop, I hope we can help it develop in the right direction.

Lasse Nielsen
Odense 2019

The workshop is funded by the Danish Council for Independent Research

¹ Frankfurt, Harry, Equality as a Moral Ideal, *Ethics* 98 (1987): 21-43.

² Raz, Joseph, *The Morality of Freedom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Practical information

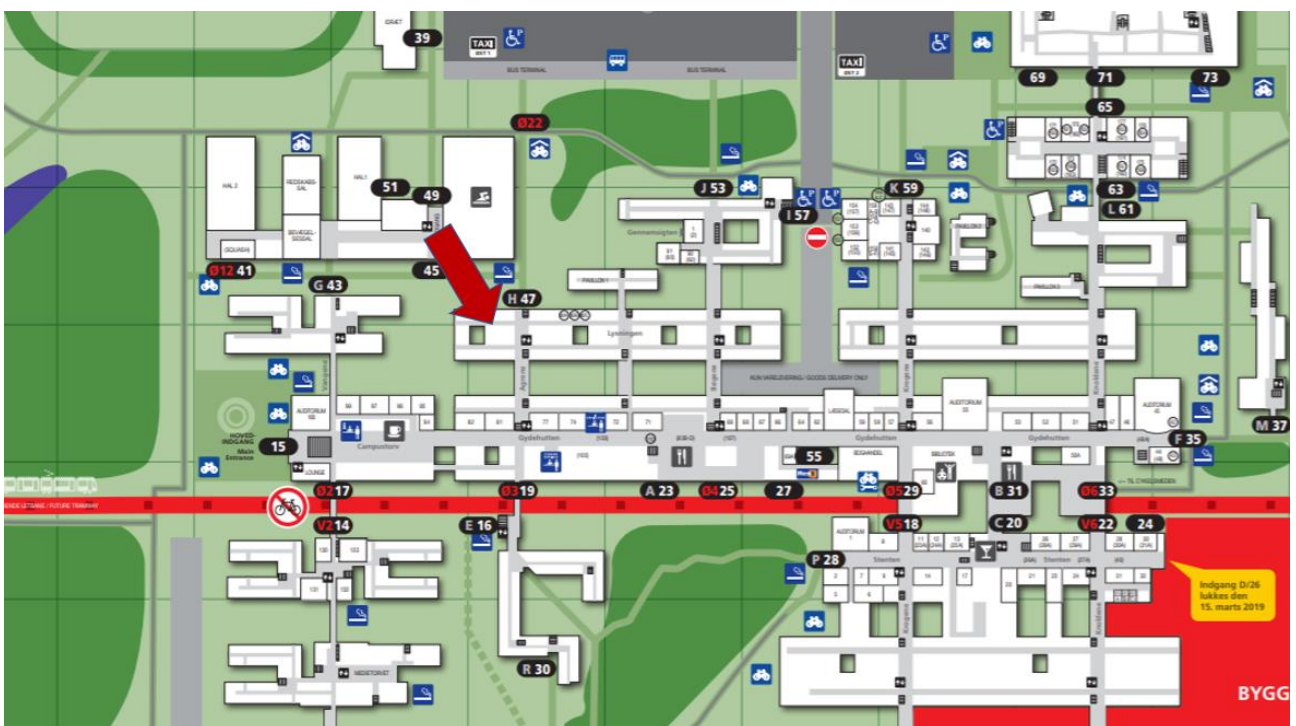
Time

Workshop runs from Thursday March 7 at 12.00 to Friday March 8 at 15.45.

See full program at page 7.

Location

Workshop location is **Comenius** (near entrance H).



Getting to Campus

There are frequent busses (41 and 42) between Campus (entrance H) and the Central Train Station.

Presentation of speakers

Andreas Albertsen is Assistant Professor at Department of Political Science, Aarhus University. His research interests are in political theory and medical ethics. His research addresses topics such as personal responsibility in health, the shortage of transplantable organs and inequality of political participation. He has published in *Political Research Quarterly*; *Politics, Philosophy and Economics*; *Journal of Medical Ethics* and *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*.

Axel Gosseries is a political philosopher. He is the Head of the Hoover Chair in Economic and Social Ethics (UCLouvain, Belgium), Maitre de recherches at the FNRS (Belgium) and Professeur extraordinaire at UCLouvain. He is also the Principal Investigator of the « Taking Age Discrimination Seriously » Project (2017-2019, Czech Academy of Science) and has affiliations with the Institute for Future Studies (Stockholm, Sweden) and the University of Wollo (Dessié, Ethiopia). He is the author and editor of several books (including *Intergenerational Justice*, ed. with Lukas Meyer, OUP 2009 and *Institutions for Future Generations*, ed. with Inigo Gonzalez Ricoy, OUP, 2016). His work focuses on theories of justice, including its generational and environmental dimensions.

Carl Knight is Lecturer in Political Theory at the University of Glasgow, where he works primarily on theories of distributive justice. He has published numerous articles in this area, and is currently completing his second monograph on luck egalitarianism, provisionally entitled *Leaving Nothing to Chance*.

David Axelsen David V. Axelsen teaches and pursues research in political theory at LSE in London. He works in the nexus between politics, economics, and philosophy and has published in prominent journals on issues such as inequality, national identity, and having enough. Netflix has offered to purchase the rights for turning this article into a seven season series, but David has not committed to their proposal yet and is still open to offers from other streaming services. He is a founding member of The London Cooperative.

Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen is Professor of Political Theory, Aarhus University, and Professor II in Philosophy, University of Tromsø. He is currently working mainly on distributive justice, discrimination, and the methodology of political philosophy. His books include *Born Free and Equal?* (Oxford University Press, 2013), *Luck Egalitarianism* (Bloomsbury, 2015), and *Relational Egalitarianism* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Lasse Nielsen is Associate Professor in Philosophy at the University of Southern Denmark. His research interests cover distributive justice, health care ethics, political inequality, responsibility, virtue ethics and the capability approach. Nielsen is a defender of sufficientarianism about distributive justice but is struggling with figuring out why. His work on sufficiency includes publications in *Journal of Political Philosophy* (with David Axelsen), *Policy Studies Journal*, *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, and *Res Publica*. He is presently completing a research project on the foundation of sufficientarianism within the capability approach.

Liam Shields is a senior lecturer in political theory at the University of Manchester, home to MANCEPT. His research interests include educational equality, parents' rights and, of course, sufficientarianism and distributive justice. Shields is an advocate of the deeply unpopular "shift-sufficientarianism", according to which sufficiency thresholds mark a point beyond which our reasons to care about distributions are fundamentally different. This contrasts with the standard sufficientarian position that sufficiency thresholds mark some end-point to our reasons of distributive justice. Shift sufficientarianism is elaborated in his 2016 book *Just Enough: sufficiency as a demand of justice*.

Nils Holtug is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Copenhagen. He currently works mainly on distributive justice (egalitarianism and prioritarianism in particular) and various issues relating to migration. His books include *Persons, Interests, and Justice* (Oxford University Press 2010), *Nationalism and Multiculturalism in a World of Immigration* (Palgrave Macmillan 2009, co-edited with Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen and Sune Lægaard) and *Egalitarianism. New Essays on the Nature and Value of Equality* (Clarendon Press 2006, co-edited with Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen). He is currently writing a book titled *The Politics of Social Cohesion. Immigration, Community and Justice* (under contract with Oxford University Press).

Rutger Claassen is Associate Professor of Ethics & Political Philosophy at the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies of Utrecht University. His research is in the field of socio-economic justice, where he defends a version of the capability approach. In his monograph, *Capabilities in a Just Society. A Theory of Navigational Agency* (Cambridge University Press, 2018) he argues for a capability approach centered on a notion of autonomous agency. At Utrecht University, Rutger Claassen is the Program Director of the new BA-program in Philosophy, Politics & Economics (PPE), starting in September 2018.

Shlomi Segall is a Professor of Political Philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and the head of the PPE (Politics, Philosophy, & Economics) Program. He is the author of *Why Inequality Matters* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), *Equality and Opportunity* (Oxford University Press, 2013), and *Health, Luck, and Justice* (Princeton University Press, 2010).

Viki Møller Lyngby Pedersen is a PhD student in the Political Theory section at Department of Political Science, Aarhus University. Her project focuses on paternalism, especially its relation to the two concerns of ensuring sufficiency and internalizing the costs of people's choices. Her research output so far includes publications in *Utilitas* and *Political Studies*.

Program

March 7	Presenter	Title
12.00	Get in and welcome Lasse Nielsen	<i>Having Enough! On the Philosophy of Sufficiency in Distributive Justice</i>
12.30	Paper 1 Lasse Nielsen	<i>Sufficiency of Satiabile Values</i>
13.15	Paper 2 Axel Gosseries	<i>Age, the lifetime view and sufficientarianism</i>
14.00	Coffee break	
14.30	Paper 3 David V. Axelsen	<i>Intrusive, Harsh, and Pernicious</i>
15.15	Paper 4 Viki Møller Pedersen	<i>Sufficiency, Non-paternalism and Cost-sensitivity</i>
16.00	Coffee break	
16.30	Paper 5 Nils Holtug	<i>Prioritarianism, Risk, and the Gap Between Prudence and Morality</i>
17.15	Paper 6 Shlomi Segall	<i>Factualist Prioritarianism: A Reply to Holtug</i>
18.00	End of academic program	

March 8	Presenter	Title
10.30	Paper 7 Rutger Claassen	<i>Capability Sufficientarianism</i>
11.15	Paper 8 Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen	<i>Relational Sufficientarianism</i>
12.00	Lunch break	
13.00	Paper 9 Liam Shields	<i>To Sufficiency and Beyond!</i>
13.45	Paper 10 Carl Knight	<i>Why sufficiency cannot be a fundamental rule of distribution</i>
14.30	Coffee break	
15.00	Paper 11 Andreas B. Albertsen	<i>Insufficient Offers: Distributive justice and the badness of organ markets</i>
15.45	End of conference	

Abstracts

Paper 1

Lasse Nielsen: Sufficiency and Satiabile Values.

This paper identifies value-satiability sufficientarianism as a distinctive version of the sufficiency view, which has been ignored in the literature on distributive justice. This is unfortunate because value-satiability sufficientarianism is much better equipped than alternative sufficiency views to cope with the standard objections against sufficiency. Most often, sufficientarianism refers to satiability as a feature of moral principles and reasons. But value-satiability sufficientarianism also invokes satiability in the space of value-theory, as it determines the sufficiency threshold at the point where justice-relevant values have been completely fulfilled. The paper gives examples of how this view is widely apparent in the literature, and it provides some reasons in its favour. It then presents the two standard objections against sufficientarianism—the threshold objection and the indifference objection—and argues that these critiques do not apply to value-satiability sufficientarianism. The general argument of the paper therefore proves sufficientarianism more difficult to refute than it is commonly being credited for.

Paper 2

Axel Gosseries: Age, the lifetime view and sufficientarianism

I will begin with an account of the lifetime (or complete-life) view in distributive justice. I will then look at how sufficientarian should look at it. This will include providing an account of what lifetime sufficientarianism could mean and discussing whether sufficientarianism should support or reject a lifetime approach.

Paper 3

David Axelsen: Intrusive, Harsh, and Pernicious

Several policies rely heavily on determining whether someone's situation is due to luck or choice. In political philosophy, this distinction is mirrored by luck egalitarian theorists who hold that a just society is one that emphasizes this distinction in the distribution of society's benefits and burdens. But overemphasizing the distinction between luck and choice will lead to clashes with the value of moral agency, on which the distinction rests. Here, we argue that a number of contemporary critiques of luck egalitarianism holding it to be intrusive, harsh, and pernicious can be understood as illustrating such clashes. We call this The Unity Thesis and argue that it should lead us to constrain the emphasis placed on the luck/choice distinction in theories of justice.

Paper 4

Viki Møller Lyngby Pedersen: Sufficiency, Non-paternalism and Cost-sensitivity

Disagreements arise when people make decisions that in profound and negative ways affect their own interests. Specifically, it has been argued that if we think compromising sufficiency, accepting paternalism, and extending liability are all unappealing options, we run into a trilemma. Often, when people act imprudently, we must choose at least one of the three options. According to Andrew Williams, there are two overall strategies to ensure sufficiency, the ‘internalizing’ and the ‘externalizing’ strategy. Both strategies offer care to people who are in need because of a harmful activity. Internalizers, however, prefer an ex ante restriction of people’s choices, for example, by introducing excise taxes, compulsory insurance, or even banning certain activities. Externalizers, on the other hand, suggest ex post corrections, for example, in the form of general tax schemes that ensure funds for medical treatment. In short, to ensure sufficiency internalizers will accept liberty-limiting measures whereas externalizers will extend liability. In light of the above strategies, I discuss how sufficiency for the imprudent should be ensured. I defend accepting paternalism as one answer to this question.

Paper 5

Nils Holtug: Prioritarianism, Risk, and the Gap Between Prudence and Morality

According to a common objection to prioritarianism, this theory implies a gap between prudence and morality. A gap between prudence and morality obtains insofar as prudence unequivocally favours A over B, where A and B are both either outcomes or acts, whereas morality favours B over A. In this paper, I first explain the moral basis in prioritarianism for the gap between prudence and morality. Then I provide a more precise account of axiological prioritarianism and what it implies for the relation between prudence and morality. Furthermore, I provide an account of four prioritarian theories that (unlike axiological prioritarianism) have implications for risky choices, namely ex ante prioritarianism, ex post prioritarianism, pluralist prioritarianism and my favoured version, factualist prioritarianism. I then present the objection that prioritarianism implies a gap between prudence and morality in single-person cases in greater detail, which includes explaining the extent to which this objection applies to different versions of prioritarianism. Finally, I explain why I believe the prioritarian gap between prudence and morality is unproblematic, even in single-person cases. (On some versions of sufficientarianism, the prioritarian function applies below the sufficiency threshold, and therefore both the objection and my response to it apply to (such versions of) sufficientarianism as well.)

Paper 6

Shlomi Segall: Factualist Prioritarianism: A Reply to Holtug

Nils Holtug proposes in a recent paper that we ought to understand prioritarianism as a factualist criterion of goodness rather than as a probabilist decision-making mechanism. Understanding prioritarianism in this way has the attractive by-product of averting a persistent objection, namely that prioritarianism violates the separateness of persons (SOP). I argue that even as a factualist principle prioritarianism cannot be open-ended about uncertainty. As a consequence, factualism cannot help prioritarians deflect the SOP objection. My argument to that effect builds on a surprising parallel with another axiological view, namely an ideal of desert in criminal justice. Deserterians are not neutral in the face of uncertainty. Rather, their ‘criterion of rightness’ (in Holtug’s words) decrees that the outcome in which an innocent person is punished is worse than the outcome in which a guilty person walks free. It is this criterion of rightness that makes desert risk-averse. Similarly with regard to prioritarianism, an outcome in which a person drops from 70 to 50, say, is worse than an outcome in which a person drops from 90 to 70. Crucially, on its very criterion of rightness the former is worse than the latter, no matter if pertaining to two different individuals, or two alternative prospects for the same person. The very criterion of rightness of factualist prioritarianism already has risk-aversion built into it. Even under factualist prioritarianism, weighing between uncertain prospects is not ‘largely an empirical matter’. For deserterians the choice between ‘the preponderance of the evidence’ (the threshold for tort law) and ‘beyond reasonable doubt’ (the threshold for criminal law) is not some added-on decision making mechanism. It is a matter of principle following from their criterion of rightness. The exact same thing is true of prioritarianism’s risk aversion.

Paper 7

Rutger Claassen: Capability Sufficientarianism

Capability Sufficientarianism build upon Nussbaum’s (and others’) suggestion that the capability approach is sufficientarian: for each capability what is owed to citizens is a threshold level which specifies what is sufficient or enough. An ‘equal entitlement to a set of basic capabilities’, then, does not mean a strictly equal amount, but an equal right to a threshold amount which is the same for everyone. The sufficiency threshold, in my theory, is what is sufficient to develop one’s navigational agency. However, this sufficientarianism must be qualified in several ways. I argue in some detail for the incorporation of elements of the competing theories of prioritarianism (namely below the threshold), egalitarianism (namely for positional goods) and luck egalitarianism (namely where choice is needed to develop agency). This complex yet consistent frameworks is justified by relating each of these elements to the development of what I call “navigational agency”, as the central political task in a just society.

Paper 8

Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen: Relational Sufficiency

In this paper I introduce a novel relational view of justice: relational sufficiency, to wit, the view that justice requires that we relate as sufficient, i.e., people with sufficient, but not necessarily equal, moral and social standing. I then argue that if some of the most prominent objections by distributive sufficientarians, most notably Harry Frankfurt's, work against the ideal of distributive justice, then they also work against relational equality, in which case we should be relational sufficientarians rather than relational egalitarians. However, there is a range of cases involving comparative justice, e.g., punishment, which shows that we should be relational egalitarians, not relational sufficientarians. Hence, we must reject sufficientarian objections to the ideal of distributive equality. In the last part of the paper, I show in detail, why the six most prominent sufficientarian arguments against distributive equality are flawed. The wider upshot of the paper, thus, is a vindication of the ideal of distributive equality.

Paper 9

Liam Shields: To Sufficiency and Beyond!

Almost all sufficientarians accept the negative thesis, which states that once individuals have secured enough inequalities are not important, either from the point of view of distributive justice or some other moral point of view. While the negative thesis has attracted powerful criticisms, proponents have responded, somewhat persuasively, and the thesis remains widely endorsed. In this paper I examine the negative thesis. I note that the thesis is somewhat ambiguous, and attempt to resolve that ambiguity in a way that is charitable to sufficientarianism. I show that this exercise leads us to a particular ambiguity about the status of supra-threshold benefits and their moral or justice-relevance. This generates the following dilemma: either supra-threshold benefits are relevant and so the indifference mandated by the negative thesis inappropriate, or supra-threshold benefits are irrelevant and so distributive justice (or some other moral point of view) itself is unconcerned about these benefits. Thus the indifference mandated by the negative thesis is true, but it is not distinctive to sufficientarianism.

Paper 10

Carl Knight: Why sufficiency cannot be a fundamental rule of distribution

Sufficientarianism is typically conceived as providing a fundamental (non-instrumental) rule of distribution, competing in this space with utilitarianism, egalitarianism and prioritarianism. This paper argues that sufficiency cannot even in principle serve this role. The starting point is to observe that sufficiency of some good x , unlike maximization of x , equality of x or prioritarian weighted maximization of x , is not by itself a rule with substantive content. To get to a substantive rule we need not just sufficiency of x , but sufficiency of x for some objective y . The fundamental normative commitment of a putatively sufficientarian theory is to objective y , and the fact that this commitment is presented as requiring a distributive rule of sufficiency has no bearing on its normative content. Sufficiency of x for y is just an instrumental corollary of the sufficientarian's fundamental rule, which is to maximize y . To say that a sufficient amount of x for y should be provided is to say that x is intrinsically unimportant and should be used instrumentally to further the achievement of y . This can be further demonstrated by noting that sufficientarianism's supposed competitors all imply sufficientarian principles that have the same basic structure as allegedly fundamental sufficientarian principles: for instance, welfare egalitarianism implies a distribution with a sufficient amount of resources for equality of welfare to be achieved. The paper considers resourcist, capability, and welfarist versions of sufficientarianism, as well as weighted sufficientarian theories, demonstrating that they all have this structure of a fundamental objective, and instrumental sufficientarian rule aiming to further that objective.

Paper 11

Andreas B. Albertsen, Insufficient Offers: Distributive justice and the badness of organ markets

In light of the shortage of organs for transplants and the associated suffering, a prominent proposal is that we deal with this shortage in the same way as we address other shortages – by increasing the price on offer. The most controversial market-based proposal includes that the near-universal ban on organ selling is lifted, allowing people to sell one of their kidneys. Such current markets, with varying degrees of regulation, has received increased attention in recent years by philosophers and ethicists (Radcliffe-Richards et al. 1998; Richards 2012; Taylor 2002; T. M. Wilkinson 2011). Such markets have been met with various criticisms. Some suggest that the desperate circumstances of the sellers should affect our assessment. Perhaps it exacerbate their propensity to experience physical or psychological harm (Koplin 2014), makes them more likely to succumb to social or legal pressure to sell (Rippon 2014; Koplin 2017), affects their agency (Satz 2010) or makes them less likely to understand the consequences related to consenting to sell (Cohen 2015). This paper develops an alternative argument. It argues that even if all the arguments just mentioned failed, we can criticize the organ markets from the perspective of distributive justice. It can be wrong to offer this option and not a better one. The state implementing the organ market conducts a wrong if it does so as a response to a background injustice it has itself created or failed to alleviate. It's driving case is one of a man, A, who is responsible for the miserable situation of another man, B. When A meets B desperate in the forest, there is a wide range of possible ways to help B. Choosing to implement an organ market is one such choice, which can and should be evaluated in light of A's responsibilities and alternative options.

List of participants

	Name	E-mail
1	Andreas Albertsen	aba@ps.au.dk
2	Anne-Sofie Greisen Højlund	agh@ps.au.dk
3	Axel Gosseries	axel.gosseries@uclouvain.be
4	Bertram Bruun Rasmussen	brasm18@student.sdu.dk
5	Carl Knight	carl.knight@glasgow.ac.uk
6	Donart Simnica	dosim15@student.sdu.dk
7	David V. Axelsen	d.axelsen@lse.ac.uk
8	Jens Jørund Tyssedal	jjt@ps.au.dk
9	Jurgen De Wispelaere	jurgen.dewispelaere@gmail.com
10	Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen	lipper@ps.au.dk
11	Lasse Nielsen	lasseni@sdu.dk
12	Liam Shields	liam.shields@manchester.ac.uk
13	Matthew Parry	matthew.perry@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk
14	Nicholas Vrousalis	vrousalis@aias.au.dk
15	Nils Holtug	nhol@hum.ku.dk
16	Rutger Claassen	r.j.g.claassen@uu.nl
17	Shlomi Segall	shlomi.segall@mail.huji.ac.il
18	Thomas Hegelund	thhegi8@student.sdu.dk
19	Viki Møller Pedersen	vikip@ps.au.dk