

# To sufficiency, and beyond!

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## I Introduction

In his seminal paper, “Equality as a Moral Ideal”, Harry Frankfurt attacks egalitarianism for contributing to the moral shallowness of our time and sets out a rival position, the doctrine of sufficiency, which states that “if everyone had enough it would be of no moral consequence whether some had more than others.”<sup>1</sup> In the decades that have followed, philosophers have built upon Frankfurt’s work. The positive and critical literature on sufficientarianism is now wide-ranging and the position is discussed in debates in moral and political philosophy, as well as jurisprudence, bioethics, public health, transport and urban planning, and library and information science.<sup>2</sup>

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\* I am grateful to audiences at the MANCEPT Research Seminar, the “Can Sufficiency Get Enough” conference, University Bayreuth, the “Justice, Freedom, and the Good Life”, workshop at Aarhus University, the “Never Enough?” conference, University of Pompeu Fabra, the “Just Enough Health? Sufficientarianism and the Future of Health Care Provision” conference, University of Liverpool and the Having Enough! Workshop at the University of Southern Denmark for helpful comments and suggestions, and to Pedro Silva and Viki Pederson for their critical commentaries. I am also especially grateful to Shlomi Segall, David Axelsen, Tim Kenyon, Lasse Nielsen, Christian Schemmel and Hillel Steiner for comments on an earlier draft, as well as the comments of two anonymous reviewers.

<sup>1</sup> Frankfurt, Harry. "Equality as a moral ideal." *Ethics* 98.1 (1987): 21-43: p. 21

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Wouters, Sofie, et al. "Acceptable health and priority weighting: Discussing a reference-level approach using sufficientarian reasoning." *Social Science & Medicine* 181 (2017): 158-167. Pereira, Rafael HM, Tim Schwanen, and David Banister. "Distributive justice and equity in transportation." *Transport Reviews* 37.2 (2017): 170-191. DeCamp, Matthew. "A Sufficient Limit to “Reasonable” Choices." *The American Journal of Bioethics* 12.8 (2012): 36-38. Kohn, Margaret. "What is wrong with gentrification?." *Urban Research & Practice* 6.3 (2013): 297-310. Wright, R. George. "Equal Protection and the Idea of Equality." *Law & Ineq.* 34 (2016): 1. Chiao, Vincent. "Equality, assurance and criminalization." *Canadian Journal of Law & Jurisprudence* 27.1 (2014): 5-25. Wee, Bert, and Karst Geurs. "Discussing equity and social exclusion in accessibility evaluations." *European Journal of Transport and Infrastructure Research* 11.4 (2011). Mathiesen, Kay. "Informational Justice: A Conceptual Framework for Social Justice in Library and Information Services." *Library Trends* 64.2 (2015): 198-225.

In the literature, different versions of sufficientarianism have been advocated. Some sufficientarians endorse capabilities, while others endorse welfare as the relevant metric. Sufficientarians also disagree about how high or low the threshold should be set and how benefits and burdens should be distributed when it is not possible to provide everyone with enough. Notwithstanding these differences, almost all sufficientarians follow Frankfurt in dismissing the moral importance of distributions once enough is secured.<sup>3</sup>

Much of the debate about sufficientarianism is concerned with this claim, often called the Negative Thesis.<sup>4</sup> Critics point to strongly held intuitions about the importance of addressing inequalities even among those who appear to have secured enough.<sup>5</sup> In response, sufficientarians

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<sup>3</sup> The only exceptions appear to be: Brown, Campbell. "Priority or sufficiency... or both?." *Economics & Philosophy* 21.2 (2005): 199-220 and Shields, Liam. *Just Enough: Sufficiency as a Demand of Justice*. Edinburgh University Press, 2016. On the understanding of sufficientarianism that I defend later a lot more people count as sufficientarian and on that understanding it is not true to say that "almost all" sufficientarians endorse the negative thesis, but as they do not self-identify as sufficientarians.

<sup>4</sup> Other objections include: Segall, S. 2016. "What is the Point of Sufficiency?." *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 33.1: 36-55., Nielsen, Lasse. "Sufficiency Grounded as Sufficiently Free: A Reply to Shlomi Segall." *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 33.2 (2016): 202-216. Nielsen provides an adequate response to this objection, which only targets telic versions of sufficientarianism. For upwards transfers objection see Richard Arneson, 'Perfectionism and Politics', *Ethics* 111 (2000), pp. 37-63, at 56-7; Arneson, 'Good Enough is not Enough', pp. 26-33; Harry Brighouse and Adam Swift, 'Educational Equality versus Educational Adequacy: a Critique of Anderson and Satz', *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 26 (2009), pp. 117-128, at 125-6; Casal, 'Sufficiency is Not Enough', pp. 315-6; Roemer, John E. "Eclectic distributional ethics." *Politics, philosophy & economics* 3.3 (2004): 267-281: p. 279; Temkin, L. "Equality, priority or what?." *Economics & Philosophy* 19.1 (2003): 61-87.; p. 65. But Crisp and most sufficientarians avoid this objection. Objections to the vagueness or ambiguity of the threshold are, at most, requests for further information and since vagueness and ambiguity remain in rival accounts of distributive justice, it is not a forceful objection. Responses to that worry can be found in Axelsen, D. and Nielsen, L. "Essentially Enough" in Fourie and Rid ed. *What is Enough? Sufficiency, Justice, and Health*, Oxford University Press (2016) and Fourie "Sufficiency: a primer" in Fourie, C., "Sufficiency: a primer" in Fourie, Carina, and Annette Rid, eds. *What is Enough?: Sufficiency, Justice, and Health*. Oxford University Press, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Those who advance the indifference objection against upper-limit sufficientarianism include: Arneson, R. 2005. "Distributive justice and Basic Capability Equality: 'Good Enough' is Not Good Enough". In A. Kaufman, ed. *Capabilities Equality: Basic Issues and Problems*. London: Routledge: 17-43, pp. 26-33; Casal "Why sufficiency is not enough." *Ethics* 117.2 (2007): 296-326. pp. 307-8, 311-2 and 315-6; Knight, Carl. "Abandoning the abandonment objection: Luck egalitarian arguments for public insurance." *Res Publica* 21.2 (2015): 119-135.; Shields, 'the prospects for sufficientarianism'; Shields, Liam. *Just Enough: Sufficiency as a Demand of Justice*. Edinburgh University Press, 2016; Larry Temkin, 'Egalitarianism Defended', *Ethics* 113 (2003), pp. 745-63, at 769-71. For a practical version of this worry that target's sufficientarianism's neglect of the need to understand the causal role inequality plays in generating harms, see Deveaux, Monique. "Re-evaluating Sufficientarianism in Light of Evidence of Inequality's Harms." *Ethics and Social Welfare* (2017): 1-20. In "What is Wrong with Sufficiency?." Lasse Nielsen claims that the burden-driven version of the indifference objection retains force, while the benefit driven version does not. Widerquist, Karl. "How the sufficiency minimum becomes a social maximum." *Utilitas* 22.4 (2010): 474-480 advances a similar objection based on a consequence of the negative thesis' indifference, but it

appeal to further intuitions about cases or have adopted multiple sufficiency thresholds, in an attempt to avoid or diminish the force of the objection.<sup>6</sup> Although the debate about sufficientarianism is now multifaceted and sophisticated, it remains a debate focussed on the intuitive plausibility of the implications of the negative thesis.

In this paper, I argue that we should reject this commitment, and therefore almost all previously defended sufficientarian positions, but not because of the counter-intuitive verdicts it yields. My argument holds true even if one finds those verdicts intuitively plausible. Instead, I argue that we should reject the negative thesis because a failure to do so renders sufficientarianism either incoherent or redundant. I will focus on sufficientarianism as a position in distributive justice as that is where the position has been most discussed, but what I say should be instructive for the application of sufficientarianism for other debates too.

To that end, this paper is structured as follows. In Section Two, I show that the debate between sufficientarians and their critics has primarily focussed on the intuitive plausibility of the verdicts entailed by the negative thesis. I argue that sufficientarians who endorse the negative thesis owe us an explanation for why no distributive principles apply above the thresholds because it is so striking and because such an explanation might help disarm the intuitive critique. In Section Three, I consider the explanation that appears to be nascent within sufficientarian views. According to this explanation, no distributive principles apply to supra-threshold distributions *because* such distributions are irrelevant to justice. I show that rather than helping to defend sufficientarianism, this explanation re-classifies sufficientarianism as a position about the scope of

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would apply to views attaching lexical priority to sub-threshold benefits, even if they did not endorse the negative thesis.

<sup>6</sup> Those who are unmoved by the indifference objection: Kanschik, Philipp. "Why Sufficientarianism is not Indifferent to Taxation." *Kriterion* 29.2 (2015): 81-102, replies it, showing that it can endorse progressive taxation. Whereas Shields *Just Enough* does not take it to be a decisive objection to sufficientarianism, just one that diminishes its prospects.

justice rather than the demands that apply to the distribution of benefits and burdens within that scope. It thus renders sufficientarianism redundant in the debate to which it was thought to have been making an important contribution. In Section Four, I discuss what follows from this conclusion: that to avoid redundancy sufficientarians must endorse the justice *relevance* of distributions above their thresholds, wherever they are placed. However, I show that this claim cannot be reconciled with the negative thesis. It is incoherent to say that distributions are relevant to distributive justice, but that distributive justice is not concerned with them. Taken together, Sections Three and Four establish the conclusion that sufficientarians who endorse the negative thesis face this fatal dilemma between redundancy and incoherence and so almost all sufficientarian views that have been advocated should be rejected. Section Five, explains the implications of this conclusion for sufficientarianism more generally by considering the possibility of sufficientarianism without the negative thesis. This section argues that there are such shift-sufficientarian views, which hold that we have reasons to be concerned with supra-threshold distributions, but they are different in nature from our reasons to be concerned with sub-threshold distributions. These shift-sufficientarian views can avoid the dilemma by accepting that supra-threshold distributions are relevant to justice without saying it doesn't matter how benefits and burdens are distributed there. Section Six, summarises and concludes.

Unlike previous work defending the “shift”, this paper offers a decisive rejection of almost all sufficientarian views based not on claims about the intuitive plausibility of verdicts which predominate the debate, but rather on an examination of the possible explanations for the negative thesis and the status of supra-threshold distributions.<sup>7</sup> The paper therefore represents a significant

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<sup>7</sup> Shields, *Just Enough*.

contribution to the debate about the demands of distributive justice and our understanding of sufficiency more broadly.

## II Debating the Negative Thesis

Almost all self-identifying sufficientarians endorse both the “positive thesis” and the “negative thesis”.<sup>8</sup> According to the positive thesis, we have weighty reasons to ensure people secure enough of some goods. According to the negative thesis, no distributive principles apply to the distribution of benefits and burdens once everyone has secured enough.<sup>9</sup>

The most famous attempt to motivate the negative thesis is Roger Crisp’s “Beverly Hills Case.”<sup>10</sup> Crisp imagines that we can distribute fine wine (and its attending welfare benefits) to one of two groups of well-off individuals: the *Rich* and *Super-Rich*. Here we should not be misled by the labels. We can view these groups as being well-off in whatever respect matters and not merely well off in narrow economic terms. When faced with this distributive problem, Crisp claims that “there would be nothing to choose between the two distributions.”<sup>11</sup> In a subsequent paper, this is explained further.

“One of the main points I was trying to bring out with this example was that any prioritarian, or indeed egalitarian, concern tails off entirely as the individuals one is considering reach a certain level of well-being or welfare. There is something absurd about

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<sup>8</sup> Casal, Paula. "Why sufficiency is not enough", pp. 298-303.

<sup>9</sup> Aggregative criteria might apply. See Crisp, Roger. "Equality, priority, and compassion." *Ethics* 113.4 (2003): 745-763. “One plausible view is utilitarianism above the threshold, but it is important to note that basing distribution on compassion below the threshold has no implication for what should happen above” p. 758 and Shields “Prospects for Sufficiency: 103 and *Just Enough* 2016: 22.

<sup>10</sup> Crisp Equality, priority and compassion: p. 755 and Crisp, Roger. "Egalitarianism and compassion." *Ethics* 114.1 (2003): 119-126: 120

<sup>11</sup> Crisp Equality, priority and compassion, pp. 755

claiming that equality or justice requires that the Rich be benefited instead of the Super-rich.”<sup>12</sup>

Since almost all sufficientarians endorse the negative thesis, they may reason similarly about their own favoured threshold.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, critics put forward different examples and report opposite intuitions. These intuitions have as their focus the putatively implausible attitude of indifference that sufficientarianism recommends for supra-threshold distributions. For example, Casal states that

“critics could challenge the... intuition and insist that inequalities matter, even among very wealthy individuals. They might argue, for example, that when a natural disaster such as a tsunami strikes, it is the wealthiest who should make the greatest donation. Sufficientarians cannot accommodate such plausible convictions. Moreover, since sufficientarians are indifferent not only to inequalities among millionaires and billionaires but also to inequalities among billionaires and those who barely have enough, they cannot support the preferences for progressive over regressive taxes when both are capable of securing sufficiency. This indifference toward finding the fairest way of achieving universal sufficiency is counter-intuitive.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Crisp, “Egalitarianism and compassion”, p. 120

<sup>13</sup> For example, Nielsen, Lasse. “What Is Our Real Concern with Real Inequality” cites an example, which is analogous to Crisp’s, approvingly, from Feldstein, Martin. 1999. “Reducing Poverty, not Inequality.” *The Public Interest* 137: 33–41.

<sup>14</sup> Casal, “Why Sufficiency is not Enough”, 311.

The example supposedly yields the opposite intuition: that we do have reasons to care about the unequal distribution of supra-threshold benefits and burdens contrary to the negative thesis. Notwithstanding the differences in the location of the threshold supposed by Crisp and Casal, the point can be put more generally to capture a claim central to the debate about sufficientarianism and is sometimes called the Indifference Objection. It states that sufficientarianism is intuitively implausible because it is objectionably indifferent to inequalities once everyone has secured enough.

While some sufficientarians are unmoved by the Indifference Objection, others do accept that indifference can be counter-intuitive and have developed versions of sufficientarianism that they claim are invulnerable, or less vulnerable, to this and other objections.<sup>15</sup> These new versions affirm the existence of multiple sufficiency thresholds and there are two types.

Some have argued for *Multiple Sufficiency Thresholds* for a single metric, such as welfare.<sup>16</sup> A compelling version of this view is defended by Robert Huseby.<sup>17</sup> Huseby is a welfarist who defends a low threshold of basic needs and a high threshold of welfare set at ‘contentedness’, which he claims can accommodate our intuitions about troubling inequalities among the well-off and thus avoids the force of the Indifference Objection.<sup>18</sup> The explanation of why this view could avoid the objection makes essential reference to the highly plausible claim that our own welfare assessments can depend on how well off we are *relative* to others. In other words: our subjective

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<sup>15</sup> Lasse Nielsen “What’s Wrong with Sufficiency?” discusses these two versions and Fourie distinguishes Pattern Pluralism and Distributive Pluralism in her “Sufficiency: a Primer”.

<sup>16</sup> Benbaji, Yitzhak. "Sufficiency or priority?." *European Journal of Philosophy* 14.3 (2006): 327-348; Casal, ‘Why sufficiency is not enough’; Huseby, Robert. "Sufficiency: restated and defended." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 18.2 (2010): 178-197.

<sup>17</sup> R. Huseby, ‘Sufficiency: Restated and Defended’.

<sup>18</sup> In responding to an objection like the Indifference Objection Huseby, “Sufficiency: restated and defended”: 183 states, “The version of sufficiency that I have presented here is not vulnerable to this objection. It is not blind to all kinds of differences in welfare levels. The relative deprivation of the person left behind in Holtug’s scenario, makes it very hard to for her to be content in an environment in which she is considerably worse off than others.”

welfare is sensitive to inequality, even if we are well off in absolute terms. So, if Sarah is above the threshold and some windfall were to benefit everyone but Sarah, Sarah's subjective welfare may fall below the threshold, even though she is not absolutely worse off than she was prior to the windfall in terms of the metric of the windfall, say, income, as a consequence. If the threshold is set at 'contentedness', then the sufficiency principle will often identify as objectionable those inequalities that generally cause people to be less than sufficiently contented, which in Sarah's case was the fact that others benefitted from the windfall and not her. Insofar as indifference to Sarah's disadvantage is counter-intuitive, Huseby's innovation appears to show that critics overstate the implausibility of sufficientarianism. More generally, if cases like Sarah's are the only or most counterintuitive implications associated with the Indifference Objection, it would be much less forceful against this version of Multiple Sufficiency Thresholds.

Others have argued for *Sufficiency in Multiple Metrics*. According to this view, justice demands that individuals secure enough in more than one metric and so we should not be indifferent about distributions once everyone has secured enough in *one* metric.<sup>19</sup> Instead, we should care about securing enough in the other metrics as well. Proponents of Sufficiency in Multiple Metrics allege that, since supra-threshold inequalities in one metric can create insufficiency in another metric, the view can condemn the supra-threshold inequality as unjust, albeit instrumentally, and therefore avoid what was thought to be counter-intuitive about sufficientarianism.<sup>20</sup>

An excellent example of Sufficiency in Multiple Metrics is given by David Axelsen and Lasse Nielsen in their paper "Sufficiency as Freedom from Duress."<sup>21</sup> Axelsen and Nielsen argue

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<sup>19</sup> Axelsen and Nielsen call this "Aspect Pluralism" in their "Essentially Enough"

<sup>20</sup> Axelsen, David V., and Lasse Nielsen. "Sufficiency as freedom from duress." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 23.4 (2015): 406-42

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

that justice requires that individuals are free from duress. An individual is free from duress when they are not subject to *significant* pressure and do not face *significant* obstacles in achieving success in *central aspects of human life*.<sup>22</sup> Axelsen and Nielsen argue that insofar as inequalities should concern us, it is for reasons to do with insufficiency. One reason for this, they argue, is because of the positional or relational logics of some capabilities.<sup>23</sup> Having less than someone else in some respect usually means you do not have enough in another respect. To illustrate, they give the example of political freedoms.<sup>24</sup> Unequal political freedoms, such as an inequality in the number of votes co-citizens may cast, may lead to insufficiency of self-respect among those with fewer votes. Since self-respect is, on their view, a central aspect of human life the injustice of inequality in political freedoms, even where everyone has enough political freedom, can be explained, instrumentally, by insufficiency in self-respect. Likewise, the view is able to explain the injustice of inequalities in material wealth when they translate into insufficiencies in central aspects of human life, for example, because they lead to a deficiency in control over one's life. In this way, an intuitively troubling inequality in some metric can be judged as problematic by their view *because* and *when* it is an insufficiency in some other metric. So, the view would not be indifferent to many cases of intuitively troubling inequalities. To that extent it is less counter-intuitive than single threshold versions of sufficientarianism.

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<sup>22</sup> See Ibid: 407, for "Freedom from duress, then, entails freeing people from significant pressure in certain central areas of human life, while others are to be considered beyond the scope of justice."

<sup>23</sup> Ibid: 420. "One's absolute position may, thus, be determined by one's relative position, in which case a person may become insufficiently free because of relative deprivation—but it is the insufficiency that creates a problem, not the inequality in itself. Indeed, most often when distributive egalitarians point to unjust inequalities, these are actually positionally determined insufficiencies, we claim."

<sup>24</sup> Ibid: 420. "Thus, when the aristocracy is given two votes while the plebs retain only one, this inequality affects the social basis of self-respect of the plebs and their capability for engaging in respectful relations with their societal peers in an absolute sense. Akin to relational egalitarians and in tune with the notion of positional goods, then, we affirm that an unequal distribution may generate insufficiency and place people under duress but not due to the distributive inequality itself."

By limiting the range of cases in which they recommend indifference, Axelsen and Nielsen may appear to have diminished the force of the indifference objection and, like Huseby, fought back against the intuitive case against sufficientarianism. However, both Sufficiency in Multiple Metrics and Multiple Sufficiency Thresholds retain the negative thesis and hold that once enough is secured, no distributive principles apply to the distribution of benefits and burdens. Therefore, these more sophisticated views remain indifferent to some distributions of benefits and burdens. For Huseby, we should be indifferent to distributions of benefits and burdens that do not threaten our contentedness. This might include economic windfalls in cases where those who do not benefit never find out about this windfall or feel themselves to be unworthy of the benefit. For Axelsen and Nielsen, there are two types of supra-threshold inequality that we ought to be indifferent towards. The first type are inequalities of obstacles or pressures in achieving success in central aspects of human life. Such inequalities are consistent with distributive justice so long as the obstacles or pressures are not *significant*. The second type of inequality is inequality in significant obstacles or pressures in achieving success. Such inequalities are also consistent with distributive justice so long as they are not in relation to *central aspects of human life*. In short, inequalities can be significant, so long as they are not central, and they can be central so long as they are not significant. Justice-preserving inequalities may include inequalities in some quality of life enhancing medical care, public health initiative or educational programs. It might also include improved gardening and recreational spaces or even diminishing criminal or anti-social behaviour. Since the indifference remains, it seems possible to construct a counter-example along similar lines to Casal's tsunami example and to raise the intuition that indifference there is also implausible. The debate about how intuitively plausible indifference mandated by the negative thesis is not decisively settled.

The question therefore remains: how might we adjudicate between these particular ways of setting the negative thesis threshold and the alleged counter-examples to which they are vulnerable? The debate about sufficientarianism has and continues to be focussed on the negative thesis and rightly so. It is the negative thesis that makes these sufficientarian views distinctive and so the relative merits or demerits of the views depend on the defensibility of the negative thesis. But the focus on the intuitive plausibility of the verdicts of sufficientarianism in hypothetical cases has obscured a deeper issue that I will argue holds the key to evaluating the literature on sufficientarianism more decisively.

Although any assessment of these versions of sufficientarianism should focus on the negative thesis, the sufficiency threshold itself is the distinctive idea within the broader family of views of sufficientarianism and so, what is distinctive about those views, is the difference that having enough should make to the assessment of distributions. Whether an individual has enough must make some difference to how we treat a person if sufficientarianism is to have anything to contribute to our understanding of the distributive justice. While many sufficientarians believe we should give priority to the least advantaged below the threshold, the negative thesis holds that above the threshold we should be indifferent to their position. This is a profound difference indeed, and it has given rise to different and conflicting intuitive responses. It therefore requires some explanation. Furthermore, the explanation could also provide us with a way of settling the current dispute. This is because the explanation of the negative thesis could explain why some of the apparently counter-intuitive verdicts do not tell against the negative thesis after all.

An explanation of this indifference would have to tell us something about supra-threshold distributions. It is odd that no such explanation has not yet been provided. What is the rationale for such indifference? What is it about those distributions that makes indifference appropriate

when it would otherwise be inappropriate? These are questions that all proponents of the negative thesis sufficientarianism must have an answer to, and the answer to it will determine the acceptability of that thesis.

### **III Explaining the Negative Thesis**

One possible explanation of why we should be indifferent to supra-threshold distributions, as the negative thesis mandates, is that supra-threshold distributions of benefits and burdens are not relevant to justice. There is textual support for this explanation from proponents of that view. In “Equality as a Moral Ideal”, Frankfurt states that “if everyone had enough it would be of no moral consequence whether some had more than others.”<sup>25</sup> Saying something is of no “moral consequence” is a denial of the moral-salience of that thing. The justice-analogue of that claim is that supra-threshold distributions are of no “consequence for justice”. Paula Casal, in “Why sufficiency is not enough” states that the negative thesis “denies the relevance of certain additional distributive requirements”, presumably the denial refers to the relevance of distributive requirements to justice.<sup>26</sup> In Lasse Nielsen’s “What is wrong with sufficiency?” he states, more directly, that “inequalities above that level are irrelevant to justice.”<sup>27</sup>

If supra-threshold distributions are not relevant to justice, then that could explain away the apparently counter-intuitive implications that critics have pointed to in the following way. If questions of justice do not arise for those distributions, then any intuitions from cases about those distributions could not tell for or against any account of those demands and therefore could not tell against these versions of sufficientarianism. What may explain this irrelevance at a deeper level

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<sup>25</sup> Frankfurt p. 21

<sup>26</sup> Casal p. 298

<sup>27</sup> Nielsen, L. “What’s wrong with sufficiency?”, *Res Publica*, online first. P. 3.

might be the claim that justice itself, or all of the reasons or goods that justice is concerned with are satiable and sated at the negative thesis threshold.<sup>28</sup> For example, if justice is concerned exclusively with some good(s) that it is not possible in principle for a person to secure more than a certain amount of, then objections of indifference to supra-threshold distributions will be misplaced. This might be the case, for example, if we hold that justice is concerned fundamentally, and exclusively, with happiness and we understand happiness to be satiable.<sup>29</sup> On that view, it is a conceptual confusion to talk about inequalities above the threshold that it is counter-intuitive to be indifferent to. If everyone were fully happy, they could not be unequally happy. To give another example, if justice is only concerned up to a point with certain, perhaps non-satiable, good(s), then, again, objections of indifference to supra-threshold distributions will be misplaced, though in this case not due to a conceptual confusion but a confusion about what justice is concerned with. Although there may be inequalities in some dimension, that dimension isn't, fundamentally at least, relevant to justice. This might be the case, for example, if we hold, similarly to Crisp, that distributive justice is a virtue exclusively based on compassion.<sup>30</sup>

To see this point more clearly consider a different sort of example from political philosophy. It may be counter-intuitive to think that individuals have a permission to extract inequality exacerbating incentives from their employers, but if justice is restricted to the basic structure and not concerned with individuals' legally uncoerced actions, and an argument can be given for that restriction, then this case is not relevant to justice and the intuitions solicited from it cannot tell for or against a principle of justice.<sup>31</sup> This is one way that an explanation of what justice

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<sup>28</sup> See Nielsen, Lasse. "Sufficiency and Satiable Values." *Journal of Applied Philosophy* (2019). Early View. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1111/japp.12364>

<sup>29</sup> Raz, Joseph. The morality of freedom. (Clarendon Press, 1986): 241-243.

<sup>30</sup> Crisp, Equality, Priority and Compassion. *Ethics* 113 (July 2003): 748-749

<sup>31</sup> For the basic structure see Rawls, J., *Justice as Fairness: a restatement* (Harvard University Press, 2001). 24. For critique see G. A. Cohen, *Rescuing Justice and Equality* (Harvard University Press, 2008), 116-150; M. Ronzoni, 'Two Concepts of Basic Structure, and their Relevance to Global Justice', *Global Justice: Theory, Practice and*

is concerned with might vindicate a particular principle of justice. The principle only has counter-intuitive implications if taken outside of its area of supposed application. It is therefore, unfair, to bring up those implications in an assessment of that principle.

Given the textual support for the “justice-irrelevant” explanation of the negative thesis, we ought to carefully consider its plausibility. If there is a convincing story about why these cases are irrelevant then the intuitive reactions elicited from them would lack any force they might otherwise have. This is why an examination of the explanation of the negative thesis is not simply an additional way of evaluating the negative thesis, it is one that is relevant to determining the outcome of the battle of intuitions as well. Furthermore, it goes beyond the unsatisfactory responses currently available to sufficientarians, who might argue that the counter-intuitive implications can be explained by relational, rather than distributive, justice based reasons.<sup>32</sup> Adopting that response one could claim that reasons of non-distributive justice that apply to supra-threshold distributions or norms of impartiality or non-arbitrariness can explain why we find Casal’s tsunami example troubling, consistent with remaining sufficientarian about distributive justice. Utilising this response, those sufficientarians can condemn arbitrary distributions above the threshold, but what remains unsatisfying about it is that they cannot condemn the inequality *qua* sufficientarian nor from the point of view of distributive justice.<sup>33</sup> The obvious response to this pluralist strategy, is to say that the claims of those above the threshold are of justice and not simply of some other moral value. The justice-irrelevant explanation of the negative thesis confronts this obvious response that there is residual injustice head-on, by calling it irrelevant.

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*Rhetoric*, 1 (2007), 68-85; M. Ronzoni, ‘What Makes the Basic Structure Just?’, *Res Publica*, 14 (2008), 203-218; A. Williams, ‘Incentives, Inequality and Publicity’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 27 (1998), 225-247.

<sup>32</sup> Some Luck Egalitarians use this strategy to try to avoid the so-called Abandonment Objection. See for example, an appeal to compassion rather than justice to explain why the imprudent are entitled, morally, to basic health care Shlomi Segall *Health, Luck, and Justice*, (Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 68.

<sup>33</sup> Removed for blind review

But far from rescuing sufficientarianism, the “justice-irrelevant” explanation renders the threshold redundant. To see why, consider that, if, as the negative thesis claims, no principles of distributive justice apply to supra-threshold distributions of benefits and burdens *because* those distributions are not relevant to justice, then there can be nothing for distributive justice, never mind sufficientarian theories of distributive justice, to say about supra-threshold distributions. Taking a specific example, if all of the goods distributive justice is concerned with are satiable, then there’s a point above which we cannot get any more of that thing. But that is not so much a claim about the demands of distributive justice, with respect to which we may wish to prioritize the least advantaged or equalize the distribution. It is a claim about the nature of the goods distributive justice is concerned with. More generally speaking, if the explanation is true, then sufficientarianism doesn’t make a claim about how benefits and burdens that are justice-salient should be distributed. It makes a claim about what benefits and burdens are justice-salient. It makes a claim about when questions of justice arise at all and not merely how they should be answered.

If sufficientarians hold that supra-threshold distributions are irrelevant to justice they no longer have a distinctive claim to make about how benefits and burdens should be distributed and are therefore redundant in that debate. Consider that a prioritarian can hold, as Raz does, that well-being is satiable and that we should prioritize the least advantaged with respect to it or as Crisp does, that distributive justice is concerned only with welfare up to the limits of compassion, below which we should prioritize the least advantaged.<sup>34</sup> There is no dispute here because, so characterized, the negative thesis makes sufficientarianism a claim about the nature of distributive justice itself and not a demand of distributive justice. Providing this explanation of the negative thesis moves the goal posts, it changes the kind of thing sufficientarianism is from a principle of

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<sup>34</sup> Raz, Joseph. *The morality of freedom*. (Clarendon Press, 1986): 241-243 and Crisp, Equality, Priority and Compassion. *Ethics* 113 (July 2003): 748-749

distributive justice to a position on the scope of distributive justice. One might think that it is, therefore, below the threshold where sufficientarianism is distinctive and therefore not redundant. But almost all sufficientarians appear to endorse prioritarianism below the threshold and for good reason. Those who endorse maximizing the incidence of sufficiency may offer distinctive guidance, but that guidance is very implausible, and this intuitive debate is taken to be settled.<sup>35</sup> This point is itself further illustrative of the problem these positions face. We can easily switch prioritarianism with egalitarianism without losing what is apparently distinctive about sufficientarianism. The egalitarian version of Crisp's and Raz's view is that when people have less than enough we should ensure equality among them. Both views retain the negative thesis in the sense of denying the justice relevance of supra-threshold benefits and burdens.

This is not to say that the claim that supra- threshold distributions are irrelevant to justice is not a distinctive claim, per se. It is quite distinctive. One could reject it and hold that justice's concern is either insatiable or with at least one good that it insatiable, but this is a radically different debate, and orthogonal to the debate about the demands of distributive justice.

The claim that there is a sufficiency threshold above which distributions are not relevant to justice, is not a claim that prioritarians and egalitarians generally endorse, and we might call this *sufficientarianism about the scope of justice*, but it would not be sufficientarianism about the demands of distributive justice. The truth of the justice irrelevant explanation of indifference, then, would not be a victory for sufficientarianism as we know it. It would, instead, be to reclassify sufficientarianism as a completely different kind of position. Of course, the debate about the scope and limits of justice is an important one and perhaps the position sketched here is a plausible position within that debate, but it would certainly be surprising to discover that in spite of all of

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<sup>35</sup> For the Excessive Upwards Transfers Objection see Shields, *Just Enough*, 2016: pp. 21-22.

the literature on sufficientarianism proceeding as if it were a position in a debate about distributive justice to rival equality, and priority, it was actually a very different sort of position, more akin to a position on the scope of justice, rivalling the traditional understanding of the circumstances of justice as falling between extreme scarcity and super abundance. Most importantly, however, understanding sufficientarianism in this way would mean that sufficientarian principles could not be included within the most plausible account of the demands of distributive justice and the familiar and common sense notion of sufficiency, and the importance of securing enough, would be redundant.

Of course, it is open to the sufficientarian to care about values other than distributive justice. They might also care about relational justice, or impartiality and non-arbitrariness, they may care about non-justice values too. All of these considerations may enable a sufficientarian to capture our intuitions that there's something morally amiss in particular cases involving supra-threshold distributions by having a broader normative view, either condemning inequality or partial or arbitrary treatment, as well as wastefulness and inefficiency. However, non-sufficientarians can help themselves to these values too. We cannot expect these other values to save sufficientarianism because nothing about their sufficientarianism is distinctive and nothing about these additional moral requirements will be distinctive either. Thus, sufficientarianism is redundant if supra-threshold distributions are irrelevant to justice or even only distributive justice.

#### **IV The Relevance of Supra-Threshold Distributions**

To be included within the most plausible account of distributive justice, sufficientarianism cannot have as its core distinctive claim the justice irrelevant explanation of the negative thesis. But, since supra-threshold benefits must, as a matter of logic, be either relevant or irrelevant to justice,

sufficientarians can only avoid redundancy by endorsing the relevance of supra-threshold distributions to justice and any explanation of why we should be indifferent to supra-threshold distributions must be consistent with that.

When this explanation is combined with the negative thesis, we are forced to describe the position in a very puzzling way, as follows: “we should be indifferent to supra-threshold distributions because they are relevant to distributive justice.” A better way of phrasing this is to say that “we should be indifferent to supra-threshold benefits *even though* they are relevant to distributive justice” and this statement captures the problematic nature of this remaining explanation of the negative thesis.

On one interpretation of justice relevance it simply means that the question of justice is raised by these distributions. The negative thesis would then seem to imply that although those distributions are relevant to justice they just so happen to be neither just nor unjust. This would be analogous to an Egalitarian being indifferent between different but equal distributions. But this interpretation of justice relevance is not capable of *explaining* that indifference, not least because distributions above and below the threshold are equally relevant to justice. The initial question, and curiosity, was around how sufficientarianism could explain the negative thesis: why is it that no distributive principles apply to supra-threshold distributions? This interpretation denies the negative thesis and states that principles do apply, they just don't give us any ability to discriminate between distributions. But what we need is an explanation of why the principles that apply don't discriminate. This interpretation looks straightforwardly incoherent.

On another interpretation, justice relevance for sufficientarians means that some of the distributions above the threshold are more or less just. However, one cannot hold both that some distributions are justice-relevant in this sense and that it doesn't matter what those distributions

look like from the point of view of justice. To say that it doesn't matter how justice-relevant benefits are distributed from the point of view of justice is a contradiction. Wherever there are distributive justice-relevant benefits, they can be distributed in ways that promote or diminish justice, and so it matters for justice how they are distributed, even if we should be indifferent between some of those distributions, we cannot be indifferent across all possible distributions. This shows the incoherence of sufficientarianism on the only interpretation where it is a view about the demands of distributive justice. It is just as incoherent as combining the reverse claims that there are justice irrelevant distributions that matter to evaluations of justice. Unlike the justice-irrelevant stance, the justice-relevant stance wears its unacceptability on its face.

In this section I have examined the ways in which sufficientarians might explain why indifference is appropriate above the threshold through an assessment of the status of supra-threshold distributions. I have shown that if we explain the negative thesis, which states that no distributive principles apply to supra-threshold distributions, by saying that supra-threshold distributions are irrelevant to justice, as has been suggested, then sufficientarianism becomes a very different kind of view than we had thought, and is made redundant in debates about what the demands of distributive justice are. But if redundancy is to be avoided, sufficientarians must accept the negation of that explanation: that supra-threshold distributions are relevant to justice and distributive principles either do apply, which contradicts the negative thesis or they do not apply. But if that is true, then sufficientarianism becomes incoherent because the negative thesis and the claim that supra-threshold distributions are relevant to justice are incompatible. Since the justice relevant and justice irrelevant explanations of the negative thesis are both unacceptable and exhaust the logical possibilities for how we can regard supra-threshold distributions, the negative thesis, and therefore sufficientarianism, cannot be adequately explained and must be rejected. No

acceptable explanation of the negative thesis can be found. Since no other view endorses the negative thesis, this critique cannot apply to those other views. It is a unique problem for the sufficientarian who endorses the negative thesis.

## **V What Now for Sufficientarianism?**

The discussion so far may seem to suggest that sufficientarianism should be rejected out-right. But I do not believe that to be the case. If, as may seem to be the case, the negative thesis really is definitive of sufficientarianism, then we should consider that position seriously flawed in general. But conceiving of sufficientarianism so narrowly is a mistake that would deprive us of many interesting, plausible and distinctive positions in distributive justice, and other fields, that appeal to the special importance of securing enough. The availability of such positions not only saves the intuitive and familiar notion of sufficiency from redundancy and incoherence in distributive justice, but also shows that there is no reason to cling to the negative thesis, for most of what sufficientarians find attractive about that view can be found in alternative versions that reject the negative thesis.

The essence of sufficientarianism is a commitment to the special importance of securing enough of some goods, just as egalitarians give special importance to equality and prioritarrians give special importance to prioritizing the worse off. This special importance can be captured by attributing both positive weight to securing enough, as the positive thesis already does, and by positing that once enough is secured our reasons to benefit people further are different in their nature.<sup>36</sup> So, we can say, that the sufficiency threshold represents a shift in, and not an upper-limit to, our reasons of distributive justice and therefore the application of distributive principles.

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<sup>36</sup> In Shields *Just Enough* this is presented as the shift-thesis, and is defined by the fundamental change in the rate of change of the marginal weight of our reasons to benefit people one they have secured enough.

Sufficientarians, then, care about supra-threshold distributions of benefits and burdens, they are relevant to distributive justice and so sufficientarians can avoid redundancy. The negative thesis, which claims that it doesn't matter, from the point of view of distributive justice at least, how those supra-thresholds benefits are distributed, should be rejected to avoid incoherence.<sup>37</sup> That way the threshold does make a difference to how justice-relevant distributions are judged. It thus avoids redundancy and incoherence.

Shift-sufficientarianism endorses the positive thesis, rejects the negative thesis and holds that supra-threshold distributions are governed by fundamentally different reasons than sub-threshold distributions, but both types of distribution are relevant to distributive justice. Moreover, the shift-sufficientarian has a coherent explanation of why a change in our reasons takes place, and one that doesn't make it redundant in debates about the demands of distributive justice. This explanation appeals to the existence of satiable reasons. If some of our reasons are satiable, then those who have enough for that reason to be sated cannot call on the same set of reasons to support their claims for more as those who lack enough, but are otherwise equally situated. Such reasons might flow from satiable values, such as autonomy or happiness or basic welfare, understood as meeting basic needs. If justice is concerned with at least one satiable value, in addition to another, then thresholds like this will exist. Above the threshold of basic needs, we might still be concerned with promoting further welfare, further autonomy or further happiness, however understood. Therefore, distributions involving those with enough, can still be evaluated as distributive just and

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<sup>37</sup> This understanding builds upon the most developed account of sufficientarianism offered by Liam Shields in his, *Just Enough*. There, Shields is critical of upper-limit sufficientarianism and notes the well-known objections to it, but takes this as a reason to develop shift-sufficientarianism without noting that upper-limit sufficientarianism is incoherent. He notes that the negative thesis is a type of shift, but given that the negative thesis renders sufficientarianism as incoherent these views are not best understood as valid versions of sufficientarianism at all.

unjust based on further reasons, but not the same set of reasons as distributions that only involve those who lack enough.

To further support the idea that those sufficientarians who endorsed the negative thesis, which is almost all of those who self-identify as sufficientarian, should endorse shift-sufficientarianism, note how easily that view could be modified to avoid endorsing the negative thesis. Those sufficientarians need only make a subtle change to become shift-sufficientarians and this comes with the highly significant benefit that their position avoids the dilemma I have pointed out. This would involve asserting that there are some, quite different, and possibly light-weight reasons to be non-instrumentally concerned with equality or the worse off once sufficiency is achieved. In this way, they would not be indifferent about inequality or disadvantage among the well-off and can avoid becoming either redundant or incoherent. But accepting these reasons would not necessarily commit them to making any trade-offs between benefitting those who have secured enough with those who have not by endorsing lexical priority of benefitting the least advantaged. They could, then, maintain their strong opposition to advancing the position of those with enough, when those without enough could instead be helped. For this reason, an attitude of *almost indifference* could be retained consistent with avoiding the irresistible dilemma they would otherwise face by endorsing the negative thesis. This shift-sufficientarian view fits very well with the dismissive attitude many among the well off, who claim that we should not give those distributions any thought, and instead focus on the plight of the badly off and put the rest out of our minds. But to put the affluent out of our minds altogether, as the negative thesis would hold, would be a mistake. Instead, we should put them to the very back of our minds, but nevertheless there, to extend the metaphor, does not invite the decisive objection from redundancy or incoherence.

A possible concern that may remain for sufficientarians is that this idea of a shift in our reasons to benefit people is a mysterious thing, which invites further powerful objections of vagueness and arbitrariness.<sup>38</sup> Further, we should note that recent developments in sufficientarianism, such as those discussed above by Axelsen and Nielsen and Huseby, have adopted multiple thresholds and attach the negative thesis to only one such threshold, or to several when collectively met. In doing so, they already endorse at least one shift-sufficientarian threshold, moving from one set of reasons of distributive justice to another. For this reason, these sufficientarians cannot have a good principled reason to object to the shift as an acceptable way of construing a sufficiency threshold, since it is already contained within their views. This provides an additional reason for upper-limit sufficientarians to reject the negative thesis and welcome shift-sufficientarianism.

More radical shifts than those I mentioned above are also possible, all of which would attach some significance to addressing inequalities and disadvantages above the threshold, but this subtle change would retain what is distinctive about sufficiency: the difference in our reasons once enough is secured, and for that it would avoid the indifference objection.

Some will claim that shift-sufficientarianism is not distinct from prioritarianism and as such it faces a decisive problem faced by upper-limit sufficientarianism: redundancy.<sup>39</sup> But this is

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<sup>38</sup> For this criticism see Arneson, 'Good Enough is not Enough', pp. 26-32; Casal, 'Sufficiency is not Enough', pp. 312-14; Robert Goodin, 'Egalitarianism, Fetishistic and Otherwise', *Ethics* 98 (1987), pp. 44-49, at 49; Brad Hooker, 'Fairness, Needs and Desert', *The Legacy of H. L. A. Hart: Legal, Political and Moral Philosophy*, ed. B. Colburn, C. Grant, A. Hatzistavrou and M. Kramer, (Oxford: 2008), pp. 181-199, at 189-191; Segall, Shlomi. "What is the Point of Sufficiency?." *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 33.1 (2016): 36-52. Sufficientarians have responded in various ways: Axelsen and Nielsen in "Essentially Enough"; Yitzhak Benbaji, 'Sufficiency or Priority?', *European Journal of Philosophy* 14 (2006), pp. 327–348, at 340; Lasse Nielsen, "What's Wrong with Sufficiency?" and Nielsen, Lasse. "Sufficiency grounded as sufficiently free: A reply to Shlomi Segall." *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 33.2 (2016): 202-216; Shepley Orr, 'Sufficiency of Resources and Political Morality' *Unpublished* (2005), pp. 20-3, available: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/~uceswwo/>; Ed. Page, 2007. 'Justice between Generations: Investigating a Sufficientarian Approach', *Journal of Global Ethics* 1 (2007), pp. 3-20 at 15-16.

<sup>39</sup> Axelsen and Nielsen in "Essentially Enough" p. 111 and Kantisch "Why Sufficientarianism is not Indifferent to Taxation". 89 agree that the shift betrays the motivation for the sufficiency view.

a mistake. While some sufficientarian views will be similar to prioritarian views, not all will, and even the most similar views are distinct. What is distinctive is the shift-thesis: once a person has enough our reasons to benefit her change in their nature. Prioritarians believe either that our reasons to benefit people diminish consistently or that our reasons to benefit people diminish inconsistently and the rate of diminution changes at a certain level of advantage.<sup>40</sup> If they believe our reasons diminish consistently, they are not identical to sufficientarianism since there is no shift, and no fundamental role for sufficiency thresholds. If they believe our reasons diminish inconsistently they can be called sufficientarian only if sufficiency has a fundamental role for them in determining the change in the weight of demands of distributive justice. Again, this turns on the quality of the explanation. They must explain why the rate changes and why it changes where it does. Invoking a sufficiency threshold seems a plausible way to do this, though perhaps not the only way. Needless to say, insofar as they do, they adopt sufficientarianism by giving an indispensable role to considerations of sufficiency in their account of distributive justice.

But sufficientarians do not have to hold a view that is consistent with the general prioritarian claim that the worse off a person is the more important it is to benefit her. As well as those positions, sufficientarianism includes positions that state that once people have secured enough we should distribute benefits and burdens in a way that is sensitive to equality or responsibility or desert. This change or shift in the nature of our reasons of distributive justice is what makes sufficientarianism distinctive. So it is not true to say that sufficientarianism is indistinct or that the shift thesis is equally redundant as the negative thesis.

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<sup>40</sup> For a prioritarian view that makes essential reference to sufficiency see Brown, Campbell. "Priority or sufficiency... or both?." *Economics & Philosophy* 21.2 (2005): 199-220. For standard interpretations of prioritarianism, where there is no "shift" in the discount rate based on some particular level of advantage that could be called "enough" see Holtug "Prioritarianism", in Nils Holtug & Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen (eds.), *Egalitarianism: New Essays on the Nature and Value of Equality*. Clarendon Press. pp. 125--156 (2007) p. 134

At this point it is important to consider a possible objection to the way that I have framed the debate and, in particular, the way that I have understood the negative thesis. As I have stated it, the negative thesis is the claim that “no distributive principles apply to the distribution of benefits and burdens once everyone has secured enough.” However, it may be formulated differently, and, indeed, it has been formulated differently in some places. Most notably, Casal states that “The *negative thesis* denies the relevance of certain additional distributive requirements.”<sup>41</sup> On the most literal reading of this statement, the negative thesis does not deny the relevance of all additional distributive requirements, as I have taken it to do, but only of certain additional distributive requirements. To explain why I take the version I do, I simply have to point to the fact that almost all sufficientarians do seem to adopt the version I articulated. Some, such as Crisp, do suggest that aggregative requirement may apply, but even he denied further distributive requirements. But that isn’t very important. The problem raised by Casal’s version is that the negative thesis has not been given a fair hearing. In its most charitable form, it is compatible with the relevance of further additional distributive requirements. The negative thesis may simply entail, on some version of sufficientarianism, that we should not care about inequality above the threshold, but we could still care about benefitting the least advantaged. The negative thesis would then be a kind of exclusionary reason that directs us to ignore some set of reasons we have below the threshold, but not a reason that directs us to overlook all distributional defects. The first thing to say is that since almost all self-described sufficientarians do not understand the negative thesis in this way my critique is still significant. But the second thing to say is that on this interpretation the negative thesis just describes a kind of shift in our reasons, just like the shift thesis does. The negative thesis says that some criteria that applied below the threshold do not apply above it. That

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<sup>41</sup> Casal ‘Why Sufficiency is not Enough’, p. 298

is just one way in which the criteria above and below can be different. Another way, that the shift thesis also captures, is that there are some additional criteria that apply above but didn't apply below. As the shift thesis captures more of the relevant ground it should be our preferred statement of what is distinctive about sufficiency.

## **VI Conclusion**

The contribution of this paper was to show that almost all versions of sufficientarianism that have been advocated since the publication of Harry Frankfurt's seminal "Equality as a Moral Ideal" in 1987 should be rejected. This is not, as most critics have claimed, because the negative thesis has intuitively implausible implications, but rather it is because, upon closer inspection, the negative thesis is either incoherent or renders those versions of sufficientarianism redundant. However, rather than rejecting sufficientarianism entirely, our response should be to develop and defend alternative versions of sufficientarianism, those that see sufficiency thresholds as a shift in our reasons of distributive justice and not an upper-limit to them.

I began by explaining that the debate between sufficientarians and their critics has focussed on the intuitive plausibility or implausibility of the negative thesis. What is needed is an explanation of why the indifference that the negative thesis requires is appropriate. If one can be found, then the counter-intuitive implications of upper-limit sufficientarianism can be explained away. If one cannot be found, as I have argued, then upper-limit sufficientarianism should be rejected.

Sufficientarians have suggested that the negative thesis can be explained by appeal to the justice-irrelevance of supra-threshold distributions. However, this explanation makes sufficientarianism a position about the scope of distributive justice and renders that position

indistinct from its traditional rivals: equality and priority and therefore redundant. To avoid such redundancy, then, sufficientarians endorsing the negative thesis must also hold the supra-threshold distributions are justice-relevant. But this claim entails that there are distributions that are a concern of justice, which do not require principle of distributive justice to assess them. This is incoherent. Given that the negative thesis must judgement supra-threshold distributions as either 'justice relevant' or 'justice irrelevant', the upper-limit sufficientarians who endorse it hold an indistinct or incoherent position.

Finally, I considered the implications this has for sufficientarianism more generally. I showed that sufficientarianism should not be rejected in general because there are views that retain a distinctive and coherent commitment to the importance of sufficiency as a demand of distributive justice. These shift-sufficientarian accounts hold that once enough is secured we have positive reasons to be concerned with the distribution of benefits and burdens, though they are of a different kind to the reasons we have to be concerned that individuals secure enough. Moreover, since there are versions of shift-sufficientarianism that retain an attitude of almost indifference, very little is lost by adopting these views rather than the upper-limit sufficientarian view, and much is gained in that the shift-sufficientarian view does not face the same dilemma as upper-limit sufficientarianism. Though there are some questions we should ask about the intuitive plausibility of shift-sufficientarianism, it is at least distinctive and coherent and so, if we are going to be sufficientarians these are the sorts of sufficientarians we should be.

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