

Reconsidering the Value of Equality

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Abstract

Some people believe that the equality of people's well-being makes an outcome better, other things being constant. Call this *Telic Egalitarianism*. In this paper I will propose a new interpretation of Telic Egalitarianism, and compare it with the interpretation that is proposed by Derek Parfit [1995] and widely accepted by many philosophers. I will argue that my proposed interpretation is more plausible than Parfit's. One of the virtues in my interpretation is that it shows his Levelling Down Objection does not undermine Telic Egalitarianism. I also believe that my interpretation better explains the important similarity and difference between Telic Egalitarianism and his proposed Priority View.

I. Introduction

Some people believe that the equality of people's well-being makes an outcome better, other things being constant. Following Parfit [1995], I call this *Teleological Egalitarianism*, or *Telic Egalitarianism* for short.¹ In this paper I will propose a new interpretation of Telic Egalitarianism, and compare it with Parfit's interpretation. According to Parfit's interpretation, equality (or inequality) is good (or bad) in itself, and is a part of states of affairs. On the other hand, according to my proposed interpretation, equality is good-making, and is a feature of how we aggregate people's well-being into the goodness of a state of affairs. I will argue that my interpretation is more plausible than Parfit's. There are three advantages in my interpretation. Firstly, my interpretation shows that his Levelling Down Objection to Telic Egalitarianism does not undermine Telic Egalitarianism, whereas many philosophers believed that it does. Secondly, my interpretation elucidates the similarity and difference between Telic Egalitarianism and his proposed Priority View in a clear way. Thirdly, without imposing an unnecessary restriction, my interpretation avoids a further counterintuitive implication that proponents of Parfit's interpretation would encounter.

The structure of this paper is as follows. In section II, I will first present Parfit's interpretation of Telic Egalitarianism, and his Levelling Down Objection to it. I will then propose my own interpretation of Telic Egalitarianism. In section III, I will present Parfit's Priority View, and clarify what exactly is needed to avoid the Levelling Down Objection. The remaining three sections are devoted to explaining three advantages in my interpretation. In section IV, I will show that my interpretation avoids the Levelling Down Objection. In section V, I will explain the important features of Telic Egalitarianism that are captured by my interpretation but not by Parfit's; my interpretation better captures the similarity and difference between Telic Egalitarianism and the Priority View. In section VI, I will show that my interpretation avoids a further counterintuitive implication that Parfit's interpretation would encounter. I will also consider what is called conditional egalitarianism, which is a revised version of Parfit's interpretation, and argue that my interpretation is preferable to conditional egalitarianism.

II. Two interpretations of Telic Egalitarianism

According to Parfit [1995: 4], Telic Egalitarianism holds at least one principle. It is the *Principle of Equality*.

Principle of Equality: It is in itself bad if some people are worse off than others.

The Principle of Equality alone, however, would not constitute a plausible distributive principle. Suppose that a distributive principle considers only the disvalue of inequality. According to this distributive principle, the goodness of states of affairs is a function of the disvalue of inequality. That is, the goodness of a state of affairs, G , is given by

$$G = f(I),$$

where I is some measure of inequality and $f(\)$ is strictly decreasing in I . This distributive principle would judge that one perfectly equal distribution is just as good as another perfectly equal distribution, even though one is strictly better for everyone than the other. To illuminate, compare two distributions in the two-person case, $x = (200, 200)$ and $y = (100, 100)$, where the brackets show the well-being of two people. If the Principle of Equality is not combined with another

principle, it would be judged that x is equally as good as y , whereas most people would judge that x is strictly better than y . The Principle of Equality should be combined with another principle, e.g. the *Principle of Utility*.

Principle of Utility: It is in itself better if people are better off.

This Principle may be understood as the maximization of the total sum, or the average, of people's well-being. When the Principle of Equality is combined with the Principle of Utility, the goodness of a state of affairs, G , is given by

$$G=f(W, I),$$

where W denotes the total sum, or the average, of people's well-being, and $f(\)$ is strictly increasing in W and strictly decreasing in I . According to this principle, the goodness of a state of affairs is the aggregated value of people's well-being and inequality. Inequality is an argument that is a negative component. Together with the Principle of Utility, the Principle of Equality judges that $x = (200, 200)$ is strictly better than $y = (100, 100)$. For Parfit's purposes, however, it suffices that Telic Egalitarianism holds at least the Principle of Equality. According to him, Telic Egalitarianism means a principle such that it is in itself worse if some people are worse off than others.

Parfit [1995: 16-18] raises the *Levelling Down Objection* to Telic Egalitarianism thus construed.ⁱⁱ Levelling-down occurs when the well-being of a better off person is lowered to the level of a worse off person without benefiting any person. According to Parfit, Telic Egalitarianism holds that a levelling-down is, at least in one respect, better. This is because the levelling-down makes the outcome more equal. However, those who raise the Levelling Down Objection hold that it is not better in any respect, and that this implication of Telic Egalitarianism is absurd. This is his Levelling Down Objection to Telic Egalitarianism (the *Objection* hereafter).

It should be noted that the Objection is not concerned with the all-things-considered judgement about the relative goodness of states of affairs. It does not object to Telic Egalitarianism that the distribution is made, all things considered, better by the levelling-down. It only objects that the

state of affairs after the levelling-down is, *at least in one respect*, better than the state of affairs before the levelling-down. The Objection highlights one respect with regard to which the levelling-down is better, not the overall goodness of states of affairs.

It is easy to see how the Objection works when we look at Parfit's Telic Egalitarianism that I presented in a formal way. It is the disvalue of inequality I that offers the respect with regard to which the levelling-down is judged to be better. According to Parfit, Telic Egalitarianism holds at least the Principle of Equality. As far as the goodness of a state of affairs is given by a function that takes the disvalue of inequality in its argument, there is always one respect with regard to which the levelling-down is better. I believe that the Objection is derived from this particular interpretation of Telic Egalitarianism that he has in mind, and that the Objection does not work for the interpretation that I will propose.

Here is my proposed interpretation. Inequality is not an object of aggregation for estimating the goodness of a state of affairs, but a feature of an aggregative process for estimating the goodness of a state of affairs. That is, I does not appear as an argument of the function. It is only W that appears as an argument. Equality is integrated as a feature of the function. To use the formal expression, on my interpretation, the goodness of a state of affairs is given by;

$$G = f'(W)$$

where $f'()$ is some strictly increasing, egalitarian function. According to this formula, the disvalue of inequality does not appear as an argument. This interpretation of Telic Egalitarianism takes the list of people's well-being as the informational basis of distributive judgments, and aggregates people's well-being in such a way that a more equal distribution is strictly better than a less equal one, other things being constant. Since the disvalue of inequality, I , does not appear as an argument of the function, as I argue in section IV, my interpretation does not have the respect with regard to which the levelling-down is better, and thus it is not susceptible to the Objection.

Consider the following simple formula as an example of Parfit's interpretation of Telic Egalitarianism. Suppose that there are two people, and that the goodness of a state of affairs is

given by the average of people's well-being and the disvalue of inequality. Suppose further that the disvalue of inequality is measured by the absolute difference between two people's well-being, normalized twice by the number of people (I will explain why this is so later). Then, the goodness of the state of affairs is given by:

$$g(w_1, w_2) = \frac{1}{2}(w_1 + w_2) - \frac{1}{4}|w_1 - w_2| \quad (1)$$

This formula represents Parfit's interpretation of Telic Egalitarianism. The disvalue of inequality, $\frac{1}{4}|w_1 - w_2|$, represents what he calls the Principle of Equality. The average of people's well-being represents the Principle of Utility. Therefore, equation (1) is clearly a typical combination of these two principles. But there is another way to look at Telic Egalitarianism as equation (1).ⁱⁱⁱ By a simple rearrangement, equation (1) is written as the following equation that best represents my proposed interpretation of Telic Egalitarianism.

$$\begin{aligned} g(w_1, w_2) &= \frac{1}{4}w_1 + \frac{3}{4}w_2 && \text{if } w_1 \geq w_2 \\ &= \frac{3}{4}w_1 + \frac{1}{4}w_2 && \text{if } w_1 \leq w_2. \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

The different mathematical formulations represent the different interpretations of Telic Egalitarianism. Parfit's interpretation of Telic Egalitarianism, which is represented by equation (1), considers the value of people's well-being and the disvalue of inequality, and judges the relative goodness of states of affairs by the aggregated value of these two considerations. On his interpretation, inequality is one of the objects in estimating the goodness of a state of affairs. On the other hand, my interpretation, which is represented by equation (2), considers only people's well-being, and aggregates people's well-being in such a way that the relative position of two people determines the moral importance of each person's well-being. On this interpretation, inequality is a feature of the aggregative process.

Notice that these two mathematical formulations merely represent two different *interpretations* of the same distributive principle. I am not proposing a new distributive principle. Telic Egalitarianism is a distributive principle about the relative goodness of states of affairs. It

determines the relative goodness of, and the ranking of, the states of affairs. Given that equation (1) and (2) are mathematically equivalent, these two interpretations refer to the same distributive principle. Two equations that represent two interpretations of Telic Egalitarianism make the same distributive judgements for any pair of states of affairs, and rank the states of affairs in exactly the same way. Therefore, as far as the distributive judgments are concerned, there is no difference between the two equations. The only difference between Parfit and me lies in interpretation. In what follows, I will argue that my interpretation is more plausible than Parfit's interpretation for three reasons. However, before I explain these reasons, I need to explain his Priority View in order to clarify what exactly is needed to avoid the Objection.

III. Parfit's Priority View

The Objection motivates Parfit to propose an alternative distributive principle, which has become known as the Priority View. Telic Egalitarianism is concerned, at least to some extent, with the relation between different people's well-being. Its concern about the relation between different people's well-being offers the respect with regard to which the levelling-down is better. Parfit [1995: 23] attempts to eliminate the relational elements from his proposed principle. That is, the Priority View does not hold that it is in itself bad if someone is worse off than others. However, the Priority View holds that we should give priority to a person who is at a lower absolute level: the Priority View is concerned with the absolute level of each person's well-being, not the relation between different people. The Priority View maintains that how much each person's well-being counts in the goodness of a state of affairs should be determined independently of other people's well-being. Parfit calls this claim *non-relational* [1995: 24-25].

Instead of claiming that inequality is bad in itself, the Priority View contends that the moral goodness derived from giving a certain benefit to a person at a lower absolute level is greater than that derived from giving the same benefit to another person at a higher absolute level. That is, the moral goodness of a person's well-being diminishes as the absolute level of his well-being gets higher regardless of how well off others are. This is what Parfit calls *the law of diminishing moral goodness* [1995: 19].

Given non-relationality and the law of diminishing moral goodness, Parfit presents the Priority View as follows. [1995: 19]

The Priority View (informal): Benefiting people matters more the worse off these people are.

Let me explain why the Priority View is believed to avoid the Objection, using a more formal expression. Formally, the Priority View is best represented by the following formula.

The Priority View (formal): a state of affairs $x = (w_1, w_2, \dots, w_n)$ is at least as good as another state of affairs $y = (w'_1, w'_2, \dots, w'_n)$ if and only if $g(w_1) + g(w_2) + \dots + g(w_n) \geq g(w'_1) + g(w'_2) + \dots + g(w'_n)$, where $g(\)$ is some strictly increasing, strictly concave function. ^{iv}

An increasing, strictly concave function is one whose graph slopes upwards but bends downwards. The shape of the graph is given independently of the spread of people's well-being, and determines how much each person's well-being counts in the overall goodness of a state of affairs.

It is believed that the Priority View is not susceptible to the Objection. This is clear when we look at the formal presentation of the Priority View. The Priority View avoids the Objection because the goodness of a state of affairs is given by the weighted sum of people's well-being, and there is no respect with regard to which the levelling-down is better. Admittedly, according to the formal presentation above, if we lower the level of a better off person's well-being to the level of a worse off person without benefiting any person, it is just worse for the better off person, and it is not better in any respect. If the goodness of state of affairs is given by the weighted sum of people's well-being, it would be claimed that this distributive principle is not susceptible to the Objection.

IV. The first advantage

Now I will argue that the Objection applies only to Parfit's interpretation, not to my proposed interpretation. I will show that, according to my interpretation, Telic Egalitarianism can be

represented by the weighted sum of people's well-being like the formula of the Priority View, thus avoiding the Objection.

Observe equation (1), which represents Parfit's interpretation. It would be claimed that this representation of Telic Egalitarianism encounters the Objection. Suppose that person 1 is strictly better off than person 2, namely that $w_1 > w_2$. If w_1 is reduced to the level of w_2 , the value of $\frac{1}{4}(w_1 - w_2)$ is reduced to nil, and hence the disvalue of inequality is reduced. It seems that the levelling-down of w_1 is better in terms of the inequality reduction. On the face of it, Telic Egalitarianism as equation (1) seems to be susceptible to the Objection. However, according to equation (2), which represents my interpretation of Telic Egalitarianism, the levelling-down is *not* better in *any* respect. Suppose again that $w_1 > w_2$. According to equation (2), the levelling-down of w_1 is not better for person 2. It is just worse for person 1. There is no respect with regard to which the levelling-down of w_1 is better. No wonder, Telic Egalitarianism as equation (2) is represented by the weighted sum of people's well-being just like the formula of the Priority View. If it is claimed that the Priority View avoids the Objection, it would also be claimed that my interpretation of Telic Egalitarianism avoids the Objection. When we look at Telic Egalitarianism represented as equation (1), there is a sense according to which the levelling-down is better at least in one respect. However, when we look at exactly the same principle represented in a different way, the levelling-down is not better in any respect. The Objection merely suggests that one interpretation of Telic Egalitarianism appears absurd. It does not establish that Telic Egalitarianism itself is absurd. An analogous example may help to illustrate my point. Suppose that the morning star appears dull. This does not mean that the planet Venus itself is dull, as the evening star may well appear beautiful. Thus, my proposed interpretation shows that the Objection does not undermine Telic Egalitarianism itself as a distributive principle. I take this to be one of the advantages in my interpretation.

Before I move on to explaining the second advantage, let me make a quick remark. It might be asked why the coefficient should be $\frac{1}{4}$ in equation (1). If the coefficient is large enough (i.e. if it is strictly greater than $\frac{1}{2}$), the levelling-down is better in some respect according to equation (2) as well as equation (1). Here is a reason why it should be strictly smaller than $\frac{1}{2}$. Suppose that the coefficient is $\frac{1}{2}$. Then, my interpretation of Telic Egalitarianism is represented by;

$$\begin{aligned}
g(w_1, w_2) &= w_2 && \text{if } w_1 \geq w_2 \\
&= w_1 && \text{if } w_1 \leq w_2
\end{aligned}$$

This means that if one person is worse off than the other, the well-being of the better off person does not count at all. In which case, Telic Egalitarianism violates the Principle of Utility. It is easy to generalize this to cases where the coefficient is strictly greater than $\frac{1}{2}$. If the coefficient is strictly greater than $\frac{1}{2}$, the well-being of the better off person counts negatively. In which case, again, Telic Egalitarianism violates the Principle of Utility. This is why the coefficient must be smaller than $\frac{1}{2}$. My interpretation explains that the weight for our egalitarian concern should be constrained.^v

On the other hand, from Parfit's interpretation, we cannot tell anything about the constraint on the weight of equality. Proponents of Parfit's interpretation would believe that we can choose the degree of egalitarian concern by choosing some weight for the Principle of Equality. That is, they would believe that if we choose a greater weight for the disvalue of inequality, say greater than $\frac{1}{2}$, we can make Telic Egalitarianism more egalitarian without violating the Principle of Utility, because we still consider people's average well-being to some extent (i.e. insofar as W appears in $G = f'(W, I)$). However, my interpretation shows that this belief is clearly false. Parfit's interpretation leads us to the false belief such that we can have a stronger version of Telic Egalitarianism without violating the Principle of Utility.

V. The second advantage

The second advantage in my interpretation is that it better explains the important similarity and difference between Telic Egalitarianism and the Priority View. On Parfit's interpretation, we cannot see the similarity and difference that I discuss in this section.

Observe equation (2) again. It is easy to understand that the well-being of the better off receives the weight of $\frac{1}{4}$ and the well-being of the worse off receives the weight of $\frac{3}{4}$. That is to say, when some benefit is available, we can obtain a greater amount of good if we give it to the worse off. This means that, just like the Priority View, Telic Egalitarianism gives priority to the worse off; both Telic Egalitarianism and the Priority View agree concerning the claim of giving priority to the

worse off. From Parfit's interpretation of Telic Egalitarianism, it is difficult to notice this similarity between Telic Egalitarianism and the Priority View. Thus, my interpretation better demonstrates the similarity between the two principles.

My interpretation better explains the precise difference between Telic Egalitarianism and the Priority View, too. Parfit notices the difference, but it is difficult to capture it from his interpretation of Telic Egalitarianism. Let me explain. The Priority View gives priority to people who are at a lower absolute level regardless of how well off others are. On this view, if some benefit is available, we should give it to the worse off person. But this view has a further implication. It is that, given a total well-being constant, a transfer of some benefit from a better off person to a worse off person makes the outcome strictly better. This is because the increase of one unit in the well-being for the better off is less important than the increase of one unit in well-being for the worse off and, in turn, the decrease of one unit in well-being for the better off is strictly less important than the increase of one unit in well-being for the worse off. By transferring the benefits from the better off to the worse off, the outcome is made strictly better insofar as the total well-being is not altered. This process of transfer continues up to the point where the absolute level of the worse off becomes the same as the absolute level of the better off. This means that, given a total well-being constant, the goodness of the state of affairs is maximized when people are at the same absolute level of well-being. There is a built-in effect that the Priority View produces more equal outcomes. Parfit himself acknowledges this [1995:25].

But, since this view has a built-in bias towards equality, it could be called Egalitarian in a second, looser sense. We might say that, if we take this view, we are *Non-Relational Egalitarians*.^{vi}

The Priority View is thus egalitarian in this non-relational sense. Presumably, Parfit would claim that Telic Egalitarianism is *Relational* egalitarian. However, from his interpretation of Telic Egalitarianism, it is difficult to see what exactly is meant by the difference between Non-Relational and Relational. On the other hand, my interpretation explains the precise meaning of the difference. Yet again, observe equation (2). Telic Egalitarianism gives the weight of $\frac{1}{4}$ to the better off person and the weight of $\frac{3}{4}$ to the worse off person. The weights are determined by the rank-order position

of the person in the ranking by well-being level. The weights are determined by the relative positions of different people. Therefore, my interpretation shows that the relation between different people determines how much priority (or moral importance) we give to each person's well-being.

On the other hand, on the Priority View, the weight of a person's well-being is determined independently of other people's well-being. It is given by some strictly concave function that I elucidated in section III. Thus, the difference between Relational and Non-Relational lies in the ways in which we determine the weights of people's well-being. This is made clear when we look at equation (2) that represents my interpretation. But it is not clear if we only look at equation (1) that represents Parfit's interpretation. Thus, my interpretation better explains both similarity and difference between Telic Egalitarianism and the Priority View.

VI. The third advantage

The third advantage in my interpretation is that it avoids another counterintuitive implication that Parfit's interpretation would encounter. In order to recap Parfit's interpretation of Telic Egalitarianism, let us revisit how the Objection proceeds. He claims that Telic Egalitarianism holds at least the Principle of Equality, according to which it is in itself bad if some people are worse off than others. On this interpretation, the Principle of Equality is sufficient for a distributive principle to be Telic Egalitarianism, although it should be combined with other principles such as the Principle of Utility. Given this interpretation, we are led to detach the value of equality from other values such as the value of people's well-being, and to focus on the value of equality in isolation from other values. Parfit then proceeds to point out that the Principle of Equality provides the respect with regard to which the levelling-down seems better. By saying that equality is good in itself, we have the impression that the disvalue of inequality can be detached from the other values. The Objection takes advantage of this impression. Thus, the force of the Objection is derived from the use of the Principle of Equality in interpreting Telic Egalitarianism.

Can we consider equality in isolation from other considerations such as the Principle of Utility? No, we cannot. Equality is intimately related to the value of people's well-being. It is easy to see why this is so. Firstly, equality (or inequality) itself cannot exist in isolation from people's well-being. If

there were no people, there would exist no inequality in the first place. The value of equality, or the disvalue of inequality, assumes that there are two or more people. Equality or inequality exists only when there are two or more people. Thus, we cannot isolate equality from other values such as people's well-being.

Secondly, inequality cannot be measured without considering the overall distributional pattern of people's well-being. That is, to measure inequality, we need to see the well-being of all people. For example, we cannot measure inequality looking only at the absolute difference between a better off person and a worse off person. Suppose that there are two people, and compare two states of affairs, $x = (10, 5)$ and $y = (110, 105)$. The absolute difference between the better off person and the worse off person is the same in x and y . But the degree of inequality would be quite different. Needless to say, the total well-being, or the average well-being, is different in x and y : it is greater in y than x . To measure the overall goodness of the state of affairs and the inequality, we need to look at both the level of each person's well-being and the distributional pattern of people's well-being.^{vii} We cannot consider the disvalue of inequality in isolation from other values such as the Principle of Utility, as Parfit does.

Nonetheless, some philosophers would stick to Parfit's interpretation, and bite the bullet. That is, proponents of Parfit's interpretation would hold that the value of equality (or the disvalue of inequality) can be separated out from other values, and that the levelling-down is at least in one respect better. This is the first counterintuitive implication that they must accept. Then they must accept another counterintuitive implication. For the sake of argument, let us agree with proponents of Parfit's interpretation that the levelling-down is at least in one respect better. In many cases, the levelling-down would be, all things considered, worse, because the loss in people's average well-being would outweigh the gain in the reduction of inequality. However, there must be some cases where the levelling-down is, all things considered, better. Proponents of Parfit's interpretation cannot rule out this possibility. They not only admit that the levelling-down is, at least in one respect, better, but also that the levelling-down is, all things considered, better in some cases. Thus, they must bite another bullet.

On the other hand, my interpretation does not need to bite either bullet. As I explained in section IV, my interpretation shows that Telic Egalitarianism avoids the Objection. Furthermore, equation (2) clearly shows that the levelling-down always makes the outcome, all things considered, strictly worse, because the levelling-down is strictly worse for the better off and it is not better in any respect. By switching the interpretation from Parfit's to mine, we can easily avoid two counterintuitive implications. Why don't we adopt my interpretation, given that the two interpretations refer to exactly the same distributive principle? I see no reason not to adopt mine.

Before I conclude this paper, let me consider the last possibility that proponents of Parfit's interpretation might take. On Parfit's original interpretation, Telic Egalitarianism holds that equality is *always* good. In other words, on this interpretation, equality is good even if it does not benefit any person. The last possible version of Telic Egalitarianism limits the cases where equality is good, and holds that equality is not good in some cases. More precisely, it holds that equality is good only when it benefits some people. This possibility was mentioned by Temkin [2000: 157, fn. 4] as *conditional non-instrumental egalitarianism*, and put forward by Mason [2001] as *conditional egalitarianism*.^{viii} If this restriction on equality is added, then the levelling-down is not seen to be better in any respect, because the levelling-down does not benefit any person. Therefore, on this view, equality is not taken as a relevant consideration in the levelling-down cases. I agree that conditional egalitarianism thus construed can avoid the Objection.

I believe, however, that my interpretation has two advantages over conditional egalitarianism. Firstly, my interpretation does not impose any restriction on our egalitarian concern. On my interpretation, equality is always good-making. It is, say, *unconditional* egalitarianism. Without any restriction on the scope of equality, my interpretation shows that Telic Egalitarianism avoids the Objection. It seems to me that such a restriction on the scope of equality is unnecessary.

Secondly, in conditional egalitarianism, it is not clear how we measure the goodness of equality. Conditional egalitarianism only shows that it avoids the Objection. It does not tell how equality and other values are related in estimating the overall goodness of a state of affairs. Mason, for example, is fully aware of this, saying his conditional egalitarianism is 'counter-intuitive in some respects' because it regards equality to be valuable 'even when the alternative is an inequality which would

make all but one individual massively better off and that individual only marginally worse off' [2001: 252]. On the other hand, my interpretation clearly addresses how we aggregate different people's well-being into the overall goodness of states of affairs. Given these two advantages, I believe that my interpretation is still preferable to conditional egalitarianism.

VII. Conclusion

In this paper, I proposed a new interpretation of Telic Egalitarianism, according to which equality is a feature of how we aggregate the well-being of different individuals, rather than an argument in a function that gives us the value of states of affairs. Telic Egalitarianism is a distributive principle. It is concerned with the relative goodness of, or the ranking of, states of affairs in a particular way. The task of Telic Egalitarianism is to rank the states of affairs. A state of affairs is the list (more precisely, the vector) of people's well-being, not the list of people's well-being *and* equality. More precisely, Telic Egalitarianism ranks $x = (w_1, w_2, \dots, w_n)$ and $y = (w'_1, w'_2, \dots, w'_n)$, not $x = (w_1, w_2, \dots, w_n, \text{equality})$ and $y = (w'_1, w'_2, \dots, w'_n, \text{equality})$. Equality is not an impersonal, non-person affecting value, which counts in with people's well-being. Rather, Telic Egalitarianism is concerned with how we aggregate different people's well-being into the real-value of a state of affairs. More precisely, Telic Egalitarianism is a distributive principle with a particular feature of function $f(\)$ such that $x = (w_1, w_2, \dots, w_n)$ is at least as good as $y = (w'_1, w'_2, \dots, w'_n)$ if and only if $f(w_1, w_2, \dots, w_n) \geq f(w'_1, w'_2, \dots, w'_n)$. In Telic Egalitarianism, equality is a feature of an aggregative function, not an argument of that function. The relevant feature is that equality is 'good-making' in a particular way. It is misleading to interpret Telic Egalitarianism in the way that Parfit does. Moreover, Parfit's interpretation does not capture the nature of Telic Egalitarianism, or help us to capture the similarity and difference between Telic Egalitarianism and the Priority View. My interpretation shows (a) that the Levelling Down Objection does not undermine Telic Egalitarianism, (b) the similarity and difference between two principles, and (c) that Telic Egalitarianism never judges the levelling-down to be, all things considered, better. Thus, I conclude that my interpretation is preferable to Parfit's.^{ix}

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ⁱ Some egalitarians understand inequality to be unjust or unfair. This type may be called *Deontic Egalitarianism*, but I do not consider this type here.

ⁱⁱ For other discussions on the Levelling Down Objection, see Brown [2003], Holtug [1998], Mason [2001], and Temkin [2000].

ⁱⁱⁱ I benefited here from discussion with John Broome. See Blackorby and Donaldson [1980: 115]. Equations (1) and (2) are known as the *Gini social welfare function* in economic theory. The general form of equation (2) is given by;

$$\frac{1}{n^2}\{w_i + 3w_j + 5w_k + \dots + (2n-1)w_n\}, \text{ for } w_i \geq w_j \geq w_k \geq \dots \geq w_n.$$

^{iv} The same formula appears in Broome [1993: 216], Jensen [1996: 121] and Rabinowicz [2002: 8].

^v There is a reason to choose a quarter in the two-person case that economists could offer. In the literature of inequality measurement, it is widely believed that the disvalue of inequality should be normalized twice by the number of people. This is because of what economists call the condition of *population invariance*. Consider two states of affairs with different population sizes: $x = (5, 10)$ and $y = (5, 5, 10, 10)$. The distributional pattern in x is the same as that in y , but the population is duplicated in y . Population invariance claims that x is just as unequal as y . To satisfy this population invariance condition, the disvalue of inequality is normalized twice by the number of people.

^{vi} Broome [2002] argues that insofar as the Priority View is egalitarian in some way, it is also susceptible to the Objection. On the Priority View, if people's well-being is equalized, the goodness of the state of affairs is maximized. To put this another way, if there is inequality, there is some wasted good, which could have been obtained under perfect equality. On the Priority View, the levelling-down is better at least in one respect because it reduces the disvalue of wasted goodness. Thus, Broome concludes, the Priority View is susceptible to the Objection.

^{vii} As I understand it, this point is the main motivation of Atkinson's [1970] social welfare approach to the measurement of inequality.

^{viii} Mason proposed two versions of Conditional Egalitarianism, CE1 and CE2. CE1 says that equality is extrinsically but non-instrumentally valuable, whereas CE2 says that equality is intrinsically and non-instrumentally valuable. The two are different only in the character of the value of equality. Both agree on the condition under which equality is valuable: equality is valuable only when it benefits at least someone. Since Mason claims this condition allows Telic Egalitarianism to avoid the Objection, I shall focus on the condition shared by the two versions, and ignore the distinction of the character of the value of equality.

^{ix} I wish to thank two anonymous readers for this journal for their detailed comments and suggestions.