**LECTURE 4**

Welcome to the fourth and final lecture on Egalitarianism. My hope is to leave you with a sampling of work that pushes even beyond the story that I've been telling you over the past three weeks. So the plan is this: I’ll start with a brief recap of the back-and-forth on egalitarianism through Rawls and Nozick and the luck and relational egalitarians that we've covered. Then I’ll talk about the "redistribution-recognition" dilemma, which problematizes the relationship between distributive and relational concerns--and pushes toward a radical solution. Next I'll outline some new arguments from self-consciously “radical” egalitarians in the relational tradition, who push the theory in directions that might be harder for us to imagine or accept. And finally I'll say a little a bit about recent criticisms of political philosophy as whole for being overly occupied by what's called "ideal theory".

[*Have students read aloud Existential Comic.]*

Hopefully that was a good reminder of the debate between Rawls and Nozick. And remember we can think of the luck egalitarians - Dworkin, Arneson, Cohen - as trying to find a middle way between the two: they accept Rawls' claim that the natural lottery is arbitrary and unfair, but also they want to preserve Nozick's emphasis on responsibility and choice and therefore his attention to *how* some inequality came about. So their solution was to say that inequalities resulting from choice (option luck) are acceptable, but inequalities that result from circumstance (brute luck) are not. We then discussed some relational egalitarians - Elizabeth Anderson, Samuel Scheffler, Jonathan Wolff - who reject this distributive approach altogether. According to relational egalitarians, the answer to the "equality of what?" question is *not* some thing like resources or welfare that can be distributed equally; instead the answer is that there should be *relationships of equal status* between people. That means eliminating oppressive relationships of exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (Young) across the structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power (Collins).

Recall that according to the relational egalitarians, equal distribution is NOT the goal in and of itself, but certain patterns of distribution will be required *instrumentally* in order to uphold relationships of equality. A wealthy employer who takes all the profits from workers who earn so little that they're scared to protest and lose their jobs, for instance, stands in an inegalitarian relationship of exploitation and domination over those workers. Or, to put it differently if inequalities become so large that the least well-off aren't even getting the share of the pie that they would without those inequalities, then they are *not* benefiting from the society as a system of mutual cooperation while others are; that's a relationship of exploitation. Or again, if one group in society holds all the wealth so that they control universities, media, and everything else, then their standards of knowledge, beauty, and culture will be dominant on reading lists, in movie theaters, and so on. That kind of cultural imperialism puts them in an inegalitarian position of advantage over the non-dominant, otherized groups who get stuck into certain categories and don't get viewed as individuals. Rectifying some of the these oppressive relationships will require some changes in distribution. But Nancy Fraser has pointed out a problem with trying to bring about these equal relationships, which she calls the redistribution-recognition dilemma.

Fraser distinguishes two different sorts of remedies for inequality: some aim at socioeconomic injustice through changing the political-economic structure of society, while others aim at cultural or symbolic injustice in patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication. Here are some examples she gives of these.

exploitation (having the fruits of one's labor appropriated for the benefit of others)

economic marginalization (being confined to undesirable or poorly paid work or being denied access to income-generating labor altogether)

deprivation (being denied an adequate material standards of living)

cultural domination (being subjected to patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture and are alien and/or hostile to one's own)

nonrecognition (being rendered invisible by means of the authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretative practices of one's culture)

disrespect (being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life interactions)

(Note that Young's categories of exploitation and marginalization will be socioeconomic, while cultural imperialism is symbolic.). Also, let me just note that Fraser is drawing all of her distinctions only *analytically*, not necessarily *empirically* - what that means is that we can distinguish them in principle, even though in real life they might always be inseparable. But it's useful to separate them in analysis because it will allow us to see a particular kind of problem.

Since there are these two kinds of injustice, this means that there are two different kinds of remedies, which Fraser calls "redistribution" and "recognition". For example:

redistributing income, reorganizing the division of labor, subjecting investment to democratic decision making, or transforming other basic economic structures

upwardly revaluing disrespected identities and the cultural products of maligned groups; recognizing and positively valorizing cultural diversity.

wholesale transformation of societal patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication in ways that would change *everybody*'s sense of self

That sounds a little vague, but I'll explain.

Fraser starts off by identifying a group that primarily needs redistribution, but not recognition: the working class.

She explains: “Class is a mode of social differentiation rooted in the political-economic structure of society. A class exists as a collectivity only by virtue of its position in that structure its relation to other classes. Thus, the Marxian working class is the body of persons in a capitalist society who must sell their labor power under arrangements that authorize the capitalist class to appropriate surplus productivity for its private benefit. The injustice of these arrangements, moreover, is quintessentially a matter of distribution…The remedy for the injustice, consequently, is redistribution, not recognition. Overcoming class exploitation requires restructuring the political economy so as to alter the class distribution of social burdens and social benefits. In the Marxian conception, such restructuring takes the radical form of abolishing the class structure as such. The task of the proletariat, therefore, is not simply to cut itself a better deal but ‘to abolish itself as a class’. The last thing it needs is recognition of its difference. On the contrary, the only way to remedy the injustice is to put the proletariat out of business as a group.”

And then, on the other end of the continuum, she identifies a group that primarily needs recognition, but not redistribution.

Here: “Sexuality in this conception is a mode of social differentiation whose roots do not lie in the political economy because homosexuals are distributed throughout the entire class structure of capitalist society, occupy no distinctive position in the division of labor, and do not constitute an exploited class. Rather, their mode of collectivity is that of a despised sexuality, rooted in the cultural-valuational structure of society. From this perspective, the injustice they suffer is quintessentially a matter of recognition. Gays and lesbians suffer from hetereosexism: the authoritative construction of norms that privilege heterosexuality. Along with this goes homophobia: the cultural devaluation of homosexuality. Their sexuality thus disparaged, homosexuals are subject to shaming, harassment, discrimination, and violence, while being denied legal rights and equal protections--all fundamentally denials of recognition…The remedy for injustice, consequently, is recognition, not redistribution. Overcoming homophobia and heterosexism requires changing the cultural valuations (as well as their legal and practical expressions) that privilege hetereosexuality, deny equal respect to gays and lesbians, and refuse to recognize homosexuality as a legitimate way of being sexual. It is to revalue a despised sexuality, to accord positive recognition to gay and lesiban sexual specificity.”

So far, so good. But the problem, Fraser thinks, is that there are some groups that need *both* redistribution *and* recognition. Race and gender are the prime examples of these *bivalent* groups. And we get into trouble because these can conflict with one another.

We can see this problem more clearly if we go back to some of those remedies. Let's look at what Fraser calls "affirmative" remedies of redistribution and recognition. Affirmative remedies, for Fraser, are ones that keep the system the way it is but promote a devalued group to a better position in the system.

For example, an *affirmative* *redistributive* remedy, Fraser says, would be the liberal welfare state: redistributing income, or giving more people a voice in making decisions, while preserving the market system and the underlying political economic structure. Similarly, an *affirmative* *recognition* remedy would be gay identity politics: showing that LGBTQ people are not deviant and not inferior. They're *different* from heterosexuals, yes, but not *worth* any less; i.e. they deserve to get married just the same, to adopt children just the same, etc. The idea is to revalue certain identities, while leaving intact the group identities themselves: straight vs. gay.

But what Fraser argues is that affirmative redistribution + recognition *put together* is self-defeating. Let's look what happens when we try to do them with gender. Affirmative remedies for gender would be things like affirmative action and wage compensation - they would give women their fair share of jobs without changing the number of jobs or the kind of jobs that currently exist; they would compensate women for the wage gap without changing the system of wages. And what Fraser calls “cultural feminism” seeks to revalue femininity, while leaving in place the gender distinction itself between man vs. woman.

She writes: "Leaving intact the deep structures that generate gender disadvantage, it must make surface reallocations again and again. The result is not only to underline gender differentiation. It is also to mark women as deficient and insatiable, as always needing more and more. In time women can even come to appear privileged, recipients of special treatment and undeserved largesse. Thus, an approach aimed at redressing injustices of distribution can end up fueling backlash injustice or recognition. This problem is exacerbated when we add the affirmative recognition strategy of cultural feminism. That approach calls attention to, if it does not performatively create, women's putative cultural specificity or difference…to have the effect of pouring oil onto the flames of resentment against affirmative action. Read through that lens, the cultural politics of affirming women's difference appears as an affront to the liberal welfare state's official commitment to the equal moral worth of persons."

So Fraser is trying to warn us against halfhearted commitments, against only going *part of the way*. Her point is this: if you want to bring up one group to the same level as the other group, while hanging onto a system that inherently produces inequalities - well, first, it's sort of like being in a ship with a hole, the water keeps on coming in and you keep on bailing it out with your bucket. But the real problem is that when you combine that with the project of affirmative *recognition* of group differences (with putting the group in the spotlight to emphasize and celebrate their differences) that is going to *make it* *look like* they're getting special treatment because they're different, rather than what's really going on. What’s really going on is a levelling of the playing field because they started out exploited and marginalized. Redistribution gets in the way of recognition. Fraser says:

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So Fraser doesn't think that the liberal welfare state and mainstream multiculturalism are the right way to go. Instead, she thinks that we can resolve the redistribution-recognition dilemma if we adopt what she calls *transformative* strategies. A transformative strategy wouldn't just keep the existing division of labor and compensating the gender or racial wage gaps - instead, it would completely eliminate the division where women work's is in the household and men's work is outside it. It wouldn't just promote some people having better access to the market; it would fundamentally change the entire economic structure for *everyone*. Her example of transformative redistribution here - the alternative to the liberal welfare state - is socialism. Socialism wouldn’t just increase the *consumption* power of some groups in giving some people more income to spend; it would completely change the relations of *production* in giving people ownership over the means of production. Analogously, the example of transformative recognition - the alternative to gay identity politics - is *queer* politics, where the idea is to completely break down the dichotomy between homosexuality and heterosexuality, and to say instead that there's a more complex continuum or field of sexuality.

*Now*, if we seek transformative remedies for gender inustice, we no longer have a contradiction. Because if we want to abolish gendered divisions of labor altogether, and we want to abolish the gender dichotomy itself, what we're trying to do is fundamentally transform the system from the very bottom up so that *everyone*'s identity is changed: there won't be gender as we know it at all anymore. Instead there will be something much more fluid and complex. And similarly, we would have to do away with racial categories altogether. Now, Fraser, recognizes that transformative remedies are pretty radical. She says: "If it has a drawback, it is rather that both deconstructive-feminist cultural politics and socialist-feminist economic politics are far removed from the immediate interests and identities of most women, as these are culturally constructed…[F]or this scenario to be psychologically and politically feasible requires that all people be weaned from their attachment to current cultural constructions of their interests and identities."

But she warns that if we don't, we'll be stuck: "If that is right, then we can begin to see how badly off track is the current U.S. political scene. We are stuck in vicious circles of mutually reinforcing cultural and economic subordination. Our best efforts to redress these injustices by means of the combination of the liberal welfare state plus mainstream multiculturalism are generating perverse effects. Only by looking to alternative conceptions of redistribution and recognition can we meet the requirements of justice of all."

Continuing down this radical path, let me present some recent proposals that have been made by John Baker. Baker starts off by observing that current egalitarian theories don't seem to go far enough:

“In today’s very unequal world, even the set of weaker interpretations that I characterize as liberal- egalitarian implies the need for significant social change, but it still seems to me to be more concerned with limiting and justifying inequality than with imagining what it would mean to do away with inequality altogether…[My aim] is, rather, to show how an admittedly ambitious desire to ameliorate inequality in [social relations and distributions] might be superseded by a more robust aspiration to eliminate inequality of the same general type, or at least to reduce inequality much more dramatically than is generally proposed.”

So, Baker proposes three dimensions of social equality where we might try to really eliminate as much inequality as possible. This gets us into things that we might not have thought could really be made equal.

First, there are what Carina Fourie calls hierarchies of *esteem*. Esteem can be of all sorts. Fourie says: “We honor people with favorable attitudes, awards, medals and privileges based on skills, personal attributes or behaviors. Entire groups of people—the intelligent, the beautiful, the moral—are often held in esteem, while those lacking in the admired or privileged characteristics are often scorned, explicitly ignored or simply disregarded.”

Fourie is worried about hierarchies of esteem because she thinks that:

“Where groups of people are seldom accorded esteem because they are lacking admired characteristics, those of lower status could reasonably feel inferior and their self-worth could be damaged as a result of these differences in status.”

Now, Fourie and Baker both realize that it would be absurd to demand total equality of esteem. For one thing, if *everybody* got the same amount of esteem, then that wouldn't be *real* esteem at all: it would be like participation medals rather than first-, second-, and third-place medals. But what Fourie and Baker point out, first, is that many of our standards of esteem are themselves vary narrowly defined by our current hierarchies. Baker says:

“A society in which people have a broad, expansive, and generous appreciation of diversity obviously presents fewer obstacles to relationships of equal esteem than one in which people have narrower views. Quite a lot of the movement towards greater equality of esteem in our own times has been based on a greater acceptance, appreciation and, indeed, celebration of diversity. ..These revaluations have mostly resulted from on-going struggles for recognition related to a wide range of social factors including gender, disability, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, social class, migration, and religion.”

To take one example of how esteem could be diversified, we can think about the "Black is Beautiful" movement which really successfully widened the diversity of hair types and styles that can be seen as beautiful (which some of you may have noticed in Beyonce's latest music video “Formation”). Moreover, it's pretty obvious that many existing standards are the way they are just because some people are already in a position of higher status. Why were White features considered more beautiful than Black features? Because White people had all the wealth and power and prestige in the first place. We couldimagine similar sorts of diversification for different kinds of standards. For example, there have been psychological theories about different types of intelligence beyond just the ones that get measured by the SATs or A-levels. Or, we might morally admire not just ethics of justice based on impartiality and universal principles, but an ethics of care based on responsiveness to interpersonal relationships. It looks like, then, there’s a lot of room for admiring lots of people fairly equally if we have a diversity of standards of beauty, intelligence, and morality.

That brings us to another dimension that Baker is concerned with: relationships of love, care, and solidarity. Baker thinks that in addition to equal relationships of *respect* which are characteristic of an ethics of justice, egalitarians should also be concerned about these kinds of deeper, interpersonal relationships. In particular, he thinks that these kinds of relationships - love for personal intimates, care for people we have face-to-face relationships, and solidarity for strangers - are especially important ways in which we truly relate to other people as equals. When we love or care or have solidarity someone, we treat their needs as important as our own. And I think he gives a quite interesting argument here:

“In a society of equals, everyone would have some loving relationships and everyone’s needs for loving relationships would be satisfied…[Deeply unequal societies] generate deeply unequal opportunities for engaging in affective relationships. For just one reminder of this, we can look at racial patterns on OkCupid - there are clear biases toward and against certain groups. It follows that if we aspire to a world in which everyone is both the giver and recipient of love, care, and solidarity, we need to join that aspiration to a broader egalitarian program of social transformation. In any society, however, some of us are likely to have better luck in our affective relationships than others. As [Anca] Gheaus argues, that is a form of luck that it may be impossible or undesirable ever to fully rectify. But it does suggest that those who have been fortunate in this respect have a particular obligation to love and care for others.”

I think you can see a hint of a Rawlsian difference principle in there - an encouragement for those lucky enough to have received lots of love and care to be make an effort to be more loving and caring to others who might not be so lucky.

Finally, Baker wants to call into question the idea that there have to be relationships of unequal power at all, even ones that we take to be totally necessary: employers over employees, office-holders over citizens. He thinks that a radical egalitarianism would try to transform these as well: "if power relations consist in some people controlling others, then it seems contradictory to talk about egalitarian relations of power. Egalitarianism, one might imagine, would consist of the absence of power relations altogether…Such a view would take seriously the idea of eliminating power over altogether, and replacing it with relations of genuine cooperation.”

What Baker has in mind here are perfectly ordinary relationships such as this:

“In some contexts, with some groups of people, it seems perfectly appropriate to aspire to cooperative arrangements for making and implementing decisions, even if, being imperfect beings,

we cannot always live up to the aspiration. I am thinking of various kinds of collectives including groups of friends, households, workers’ cooperatives, academic departments and social movement organisations.”

Don't worry, Baker recognizes that we're very far away from being able to eliminate power relationships.

He says: “I recognize that all of this may sound very starry-eyed, even (and perhaps particularly) to those who have had real experience of attempts at cooperation. They know that people often fail to cooperate fully, leaving groups with no choice but to violate their egalitarian principles, either by tolerating noncooperation or by punishing it…But I believe that many of these problems arise from attempting to establish prefigurative communities within deeply unequal societies. My hypothesis is that the more experience people have of nonhierarchical relationships, the less difficulty they have in maintaining them.

His point, again, is that a really radical egalitarian should be trying to think not just about deciding which inequalities are ok and which ones are not, but would it would be like to totally get rid of them as far as possible. As philosophers, we of all people shouldn't be afraid to question these assumptions and conceive these possibilities. We should admit that, right now, might be very far away from even being able to imagine what a truly egalitarian society would look like.

With that, let me finish up with a quick discussion of some criticisms of political philosophy as ideal theory.

*[Charles Mills video]*

Now, obviously Mills is being humorous here, but he's actually giving a very serious critique of the entire methodology of contemporary analytical political philosophy which, as I said way back at the beginning of these lectures, takes itself to have been reborn with Rawls. Rawls' idea was that what we need to do is FIRST, understand what justice in a perfectly ideal society would look like, and THEN, see how our actual non-ideal society falls short of that, to figure out how we can turn those principles of justice into reality. And Mills’ critique of this Rawlsian plan is that if you start with an ideal theory that is *so* removed from reality, then your theory *cannot* get you the principles you need to deal with injustice and inequality in the real world.

He writes: “It is not merely that Rawls, contingently, does not talk about colonialism, but that his foundational assumptions rule out such a world. How could a model world of largely self-sufficient societies, conceived of as cooperative ventures for mutual advantage and choosing whether to interact with one another or not, possibly serve to map an actual world consisting of Western powers trans-oceanically establishing and dominating exploited colonial territories that are part of their global empires? These are different realities, different worlds. To assume that a slave society or a European colonial outpost or a white settler state is a cooperative venture for mutual advantage is not to make a simplifying assumption for theoretical purposes, but to repudiate theorizing them altogether because you have assumed away the most fundamental and glaring fact about such societies, viz. that they are systems of oppression. You cannot, by a series of minor adjustments, then get closer to social reality afterwards; rather, you have given up on mapping social reality at all.”

He goes on: “it is difficult to see how a perfectly just society can constitute a normative target for deeply oppressive societies. When serious breaches of justice are involved, like genocide, slavery, and mass indigenous expropriation, an ideally just society in the Rawlsian sense will be unattainable because there is no way that the most well-meaning corrective measures (apologies, Holocaust Museums, financial settlements) will be able to bring about a social order morally equivalent to one where no such measures are necessary because no injustice was committed in the first place. The wrongfully dead cannot be restored to life, the suffering that has taken place cannot be historically erased, the legacy cannot be dematerialized even if rectification serves to palliate the legacy somewhat. A perfectly just society would really have to be one with no history of deep injustice because for any candidate with such a history, we could always (as with the ontological argument) imagine a superior society in which the injustice had not occurred in the first place. Instead, given the actual real-world history, what we have to make do with is a sub-optimal normative target that corrects injustices as best we can. But such a target cannot be founded on ideal theory in the Rawlsian sense—it is just too metaphysically remote from the actual world to be useful. The rectificatory ideal is necessarily going to be different from the ideal ideal.”

To give you a very simple example of the sort of problem Mills is worried about: we could imagine (plausibly) that an ideal world would be a colorblind one, right, where there nobody considers anybody's race in making decisions about jobs or college applications or partners or whatever. But there would be a problem if you just applied that colorblind principle to a world that is NOT ideal, and where certain racial groups face disadvantages that others do not *[cartoon].* Same goes for gender *[cartoon]*. That's why Mills argues that the principles of justice for an ideal society *are not going to be the same* as the principles of rectification that tell us how to *fix* an unjust society.

Derrick Darby and Nyla Branscombe - a philosopher and a social psychologist - have made an argument on just that point, which is a challenge for *both* luck egalitarians and relational egalitarians. They note that, as a matter of fact, different groups have very different explanations of things like racial, gender, and income inequality. Unsurprisingly, the groups who are on the bottom of those dichotomies think that the explanation lies in circumstance - like discrimination, lack of opportunities, lack of safety nets - while those on top think that the explanation lies in choice - that certain groups work less hard. There are also what Darby and Branscombe call "differential injustice standards": group differences in the standards that people use to decide whether something is fair or unfair.

For example, advantaged and disadvantaged groups tend to use different comparison points when they judge whether things right now are fair or unfair: studies have shown that disadvantaged groups like women and minorities compare the way things are now with the way things ideally ought to be, so they think that things are unfair now since there's still so much implicit bias and discrimination and so much inequality, while advantaged groups compare the way things are now the way things used to be in the past, so they think that things are fair now because overt discrimination has been outlawed.

One of Branscombe's studies works like this: “First, men and women are given factual information about the extent of the gender wage gap (i.e., that women earn 74.3 cents for every dollar earned by equally qualified men, which translates into women earning $523,000 less than men over a lifetime). Then, how much evidence is needed to conclude that the wage gap is unfair to women is assessed, followed by respondents desire to reduce gender-based inequality. Men report requiring more evidence of inequality than women to conclude that the existing gender wage gap is unfair. Specifically, men reported that 40 percent of women would need to have salaries that are lower than those of men for them to call the existing gender wage inequality unfair, whereas women set the threshold at only 20 percent of women needing to have lower salaries to arrive at the same unfairness conclusion. By setting a more severe standard for judging inequality, men were able to conclude that the inequality that exists is less unfair.

We conclude that disadvantaged groups are more inclined to adopt a standard of injustice or inequality, e.g., viewing their choices as constrained by circumstances, because this a less stringent standard and puts advantaged groups on the hook for inequality. On the contrary, advantaged groups will be more inclined to posit a separation between choices and circumstances, and to view choices as free- standing determinants of inequality, because this is a more stringent standard of injustice.”

Now this, Darby and Branscombe think, is a real problem for a theory of justice under non-ideal circumstances. Because if people *can't agree* whether some inequality is caused by choice or circumstance, they won't agree that it should be eliminated. And the same problem comes up for relational egalitarians, because what matters for them is whether an inequality is caused by an *oppressive* relationship, but people will disagree about what counts as oppressive. These are all *backward-looking* theories that look at *how* some inequality came about:

“Both views can be described as “backward looking” insofar as they require us to take a stand on the causes of inequality to assess whether or not a purported inequality is unjust. The former relies upon an analytical distinction between choices and circumstances to distinguish just from unjust inequality. And the latter characterizes inequality as unjust when oppressive or hierarchical social relations cause it. An egalitarian theory of justice that grounds the demands of justice without requiring us to take a stand on the causes of inequality would be more attractive under the nonideal circumstances.

Pursuing justice is a complex matter because per- sons will bring different standards to bear in judging the amount and nature of evidence needed to convince them that particular inequalities are unjust or unfair. And we must not underestimate the significance of disagreement and divisions regarding the causes of inequality and the differential standards of injustice. These are significant obstacles to the pursuit of social justice for pragmatic reasons…This shortcoming is especially serious when we are interested in getting people to assume collective responsibility for doing something about inequality in the real world.”

The idea is that even if these are good theories, we won't be able to implement them under these non-ideal conditions, where there are groups with different advantages and disadvantages and corresponding cognitive and motivational biases. So, Darby in particular has tried to develop arguments that racial and other inequalities are bad whether caused by choice *or* circumstance, because inequalities represent obstacles to self-development *no matter* how they came about.

And this, in a way, brings us back full circle, and it's where I'm going to leave you all: should we be trying to divide inequalities into acceptable and unacceptable ones, or should we try to eliminate them as far as possible? Should we look at the histories of how inequalities came about, or just check how big and bad they are right now? Should we be looking at equal distributions of some good, or equal relations between people? Should we start with trying to understand what an ideally egalitarian society would look like, or should we start by trying to eliminate oppression and injustice? I hope that you all will try to come up with some new answers to these questions.