

Capabilities vs. Opportunities for Well-being

Peter Vallentyne, University of Missouri-Columbia

Short Introduction for reprint in *Capabilities*, edited by Alexander Kaufman:

Distributive justice is concerned with the justice of distribution of benefits and burdens. A very basic question concerns the nature of the benefits and burdens that are the ultimate concern of distributive justice. This question is independent of the question of how these benefits and burdens should be distributed (e.g., equally, so as to maximize the value to the least advantaged, or so as to maximize the total). Probably the most natural view is to hold that the relevant benefits and burdens are captured by net wellbeing (quality of life; e.g., happiness). This view, however, does not allow individuals to be held accountable for their choices (since it is not sensitive to how their wellbeing was generated). Several theorists—notably, G.A. Cohen, Richard Arneson, and John Roemer—have therefore endorsed something like *opportunity for wellbeing* as the relevant net benefit of justice. Justice, they claim, is concerned with the distribution of the opportunity for wellbeing and not with the distribution of wellbeing.

Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum have defended an apparently alternative view according to which the relevant net benefits are *capabilities* understood as opportunities to function in life. This appears to be different than the opportunity for wellbeing approach because it emphasizes the value of activity over passive enjoyment. I shall argue, however, that, although some versions of the capability view are incompatible with some versions of the opportunity for well-being view, the most plausible version of the capability view is identical to a slight generalization of the opportunity for well-being view.

Abstract: Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum have argued that justice is concerned, at least in

part, with the distribution of capabilities (opportunities to function). Richard Arneson, G.A. Cohen, and John Roemer have argued that justice is concerned with something like the distribution of opportunities for well-being. I argue that, although some versions of the capability view are incompatible with some versions of the opportunity for well-being view, the most plausible version of the capability view is identical to a slight generalization of the opportunity for well-being view.

1. Introduction

Amartya Sen (1979, 1980, 1982, 1985a, 1985b, 1985c, 1992, 1993, 1997, 1999) and Martha Nussbaum (e.g., 1988, 1990, 1999) have argued that justice is concerned, at least in part, with the distribution of capabilities (opportunities to function). Richard Arneson (1989, 1990), G.A. Cohen (1989, 1990), and John Roemer (1993, 1998) have argued that justice is concerned with something like the distribution of opportunities for well-being. I shall argue that, although some versions of the capability view are incompatible with some versions of the opportunity for well-being view, the most plausible version of the capability view is identical to a slight generalization of the opportunity for well-being view.

This thesis is not novel. The significant similarity of the two views is obvious and has been noted by Arneson (1989, pp. 90-93), Cohen (1989, pp. 941-44; 1990, pp. 378-380), and Sen (1993, pp 42-46). There are, however, many different versions of the capability view, and many of these are radically different from the opportunity for well-being view. I shall identify each of the ways that the capability could diverge from a generalization the opportunity for well-being view, and argue that none of them is plausible.

2. Background

The issue that concerns us is the “distribution of what?” question in the theory of justice, and not the “what form should the distribution take?” question. Much of Sen’s writing has rightly focused on criticizing views, such as utilitarianism, that are insensitive (except contingently) to issues of distributive fairness. In what follows, I shall assume that justice is sensitive to distributive fairness, but I shall not be concerned with how it is so concerned. It might be sufficientarian (concerned that people get enough), prioritarian (concerned with giving people as much as possible, but with extra concern for benefits to those who have less), or egalitarian (concerned giving people equal benefits), some combination of these, or other principles.¹ Our focus is on the nature of the benefits with which justice is concerned.

Below, we shall examine more carefully the nature of capabilities and of opportunities for well-being, but it will first be useful to compare them in broad terms with *the commodity view*, which holds that justice is ultimately concerned with the distribution of resources, either for their own sake (independently of their value) or for their general value. One version is *resourcism*, according to which justice is concerned with the distribution of the value of resources, where this value is determined by its competitive value (based on demand and supply) in society.² Another version is *the primary goods approach*, which holds that justice is concerned with the distribution of primary goods, where these are understood as resources that every rational person would want more of.³ The commodity view agrees with the capability approach and the opportunity for well-being approach that: (1) Justice is concerned with distribution of certain kinds of opportunities rather than outcomes (as opposed, for example, to standard utilitarianism and outcome egalitarianism). (2) Justice is, or at least may be, concerned both with the distribution of non-personal resources (money, material objects, etc.) and with personal resources (abilities, etc.). (Of course, some commodity theorists may reject this claim, but the point is that

it does not follow from resourcism or the primary goods approach as such.) (3) Justice requires, at least in some cases, that people with inferior personal resources be given superior non-personal resources.

Sen criticizes resourcism and the primary goods approach for failing to recognize that resources and primary goods are but means to what ultimately matters for justice, namely the opportunity for a good life. Each fails to take into account that individuals vary in their ability to convert these means into a good life. Both of these views take the value of a resource—relevant for the justness of distributions—to be determined by how people in general value it. They are thus relatively insensitive to how particular recipients value it and what they can do with it. The opportunity for well-being view is not, at least not obviously, subject to this objection, since it holds that resources matter because they provide opportunities to individuals to have a good life. The capability view and the opportunity for well-being view are thus similar in this respect.

Before considering the details of the capability view, we need to identify and set aside two ideas that are sometimes associated with it. First, the capability view is sometimes offered as a conception of *well-being* (good life) rather than as a specification of the goods with which justice is concerned. According to this view (roughly), the quality of one's life depends not only on one's functioning, but also one's opportunity to function.⁴ This is not an implausible view, but it is not our present topic. We are concerned with the "distribution of what?" question for justice, not the "what is well-being?" question. We shall leave open what the most plausible conception of well-being (quality of life) is, and focus instead on the currency of justice. Although I shall claim below that justice is concerned with something like the opportunity for well-being, this does not commit us to any particular conception of well-being.

The second point to note is that both Sen and Nussbaum sometimes seem to give a mixed answer to the "distribution of what?" question. They both seem to think that there are at least some

very basic functionings for which justice is concerned that these *functionings*—as opposed to merely with the opportunity for those functionings—be adequate. Sen and Nussbaum, that is, sometimes suggest that justice is concerned both with functioning and with the opportunity to function (capabilities). Although I would argue against the outcome-based concern, it is beyond the scope of this essay to do so. In what follows, I shall limit myself to *pure* capability views. These may not be the views of Sen and Nussbaum.⁵

We are finally ready to begin to examine the capability view in more detail. There are three main questions that I shall address: (1) Exactly what kinds of *functioning* are relevant for capabilities? (2) Exactly what kinds of *opportunity* to function are included in capabilities? (3) How is the *value* of opportunities to function assessed? Adequate answers to each of these questions will, I shall argue, leave us with a generalized version of the opportunity for well-being view.

3. The Relevant Functionings: The Selection Problem Part 1

Capabilities are opportunities to function, but what are functionings? Sen makes it clear that functionings include not only doings but also states of being.⁶ Thus, physical and mental activities (running, playing piano, etc.), as well as physical and mental states (such as being adequately nourished, being in good health, being happy), count as functionings. The question that concerns us here is whether *all* functionings are taken into account or only a subset. An adequate view, I shall argue, must take all functionings into account (although, depending on the theory of value, not all functionings may be deemed valuable).

The first point to note is that functionings need to be understood as including both desirable functionings (e.g., states of pleasure) and undesirable functionings (e.g., states of pain). Any theory that considered only desirable functionings would be oblivious to possibly very

important differences in people's lives on the negative side. People often write as if all functionings are desirable, but this is, I believe, only for the sake of brevity. It seems clear that both positive and negative functionings need to be considered.

Moreover, *all* functionings should be considered. None should be excluded from consideration. By way of contrast, consider, for example, the view that justice is concerned only with the distribution of *basic capabilities*, on some (non-empty) criterion of basicness. There are different criteria of basicness that might be invoked to select the subset of relevant functionings. One is the *species-normal adult criterion*, according to which the relevant functionings are those that are exercised by most adults of the species on a regular basis.⁷ Another is the *basic needs criterion*, according to which the relevant functionings are those necessary for survival and non-poverty (on some specified criterion). Another is the *human flourishing criterion*, according to which the relevant functionings are those that are necessary for a good human life. There are, of course, many other possibilities.

Each of these criteria has some problems specific to its content, but I shall not address these. Instead, I shall argue that, no matter what the criterion, it is a mistake to hold that there are some functionings (the non-basic ones) the opportunities for which are irrelevant to justice. The crucial point is that, for any functioning, there are some circumstances in which it would affect the quality of one's life, and justice is concerned with the opportunities for a good life. There are, for example, lots of functionings that are not necessary for a good human life, but which can radically enhance one's life. Singing beautifully can very much enhance the quality of one's life, but it is not necessary for having a good human life. Given that any functioning could, under some circumstances, enhance (or otherwise affect) the quality of someone's life, it is a mistake to exclude some functionings from consideration. To do so, would leave out something that is relevant to justice.

The problem generated by excluding some functionings is especially powerful for criteria of basicness that exclude lots of functionings. The species-normal adult criterion, the basic needs criterion, and even the good human life criterion are highly exclusionary. The former restricts basicness to those functioning that *most* adults of the species exercise on a *regular basis*. The latter two restrict basicness to those that are *necessary* for a certain kind of life (respectively: survival and non-poverty, and a good human life), and there are many functionings that are not so necessary but which have a significant impact on whether that kind of life is achieved. Other criteria may be less exclusionary, but any exclusion of functionings is problematic.

This criticism is based on the assumption that the justice of a distribution of capabilities is determined by the distribution of the *value* of those opportunities to function for individuals. Functionings matter, as Sen himself has emphasized, because they are either means to, or constitutive of, good lives or other things that agents have reason to value. Hence, it is arbitrary to exclude some functionings that can contribute to such value.

One might think that, if justice is only concerned with getting people above a certain threshold (e.g., either non-poverty or minimal flourishing), then certain functionings, and the opportunities therefor, don't matter. That, however, would be a mistake. What matters for justice is the *value* of a person's capabilities. Even if justice is only concerned with ensuring that the value of each person's capabilities is adequate, no capability that contributes to the value of a person's capabilities should be excluded. Instead, all capabilities should be included, their value assessed, and then, if appropriate, improvements beyond the specified threshold can be deemed irrelevant to justice. (We shall consider below the question of how the value of capabilities is assessed.)

This is not to deny, of course, that, for the purposes of public policy, some selection of functionings and capabilities will be needed. Public policy will, of course, need to focus on the

most important and most easily assessable capabilities. The point here is that the basic principles of justice do not exclude any capabilities.

4. The Relevant Opportunities: The Selection Problem Part 2

Capabilities are opportunities to function, but what is the relevant notion of *opportunity*? One aspect of this question, as Sen (e.g., 1985a) has emphasized, is whether the concern is with *control freedom* only or more broadly with *effective freedom*. Control freedom to function is based on those possible functionings that one can bring about, or at least sufficiently influence the probability of coming about, through the appropriate exercise of one's will. Effective freedom to function includes all possible functionings independently of whether one's will (as opposed to nature and the choices of others) plays any role in bringing them about. Consider, for example, a person who is temporarily in a coma. Her freedom to be adequately nourished is in no way under her control, but if others are disposed to provide intravenous nutrition, she has effective freedom (but no control freedom) to be adequately nourished.

Sen sometimes writes as if he were concerned only with control freedom,⁸ but as he himself recognizes, this is not a plausible view. Control clearly is important, but it is not the only thing that matters for the purposes of justice. Consider two individuals who have the same control freedom to function, but for which one has a much greater effective freedom to function (e.g., to be adequately nourished). Justice is concerned with this difference. Indeed, suppose that they each have no control freedom (because they have lost volitional control), but one has effective freedom (because of nature and the choices of others) to have all basic needs met and to flourish, while the other has no effective freedom to have even basic needs met. It's quite implausible to think that justice is unconcerned with this difference. To do so, as Sen has emphasized, is to fail to recognize the extent to which economic, social and political structures

(as well as natural structures) can significantly affect one's opportunity to function. Hence, freedom to function must be construed as effective freedom. (Admittedly, it is misleading to call prospects to function that depend on the will of others, and not on one's will or interests, "freedoms", but I will simply follow Sen here and use "freedom" in this loose way.)

This conclusion has been challenged by Pettit (2001). He usefully identifies a third kind of freedom intermediate between control and effective freedom, and claims that justice is concerned with it. *Favor-independent freedom* includes control freedom, effective freedom provided by nature, and effective freedom provided by others when they have an enforceable obligation to provide it. It excludes, however, effective freedom provided by others when they have no enforceable obligation to provide it (i.e., when they are simply doing it as a favor).

Justice, we can grant, is concerned with favor-independent freedom to function, but it is not solely concerned with this freedom. It is, pace Pettit, also concerned with favor-dependent freedom. Consider, for example, the case (modified from an example of Sen 2001) of two mobility-disabled persons who are able to get out of their houses only with the help of others. Suppose that there is no enforceable obligation to provide such help, but one is able to get out because others are highly disposed to provide such help as a favor, and the other is not able to get out because others are highly disposed not to provide such help. Neither person has the favor-independent freedom to get out, since the outcome (getting out) is highly dependent on the favors of others. Justice, however, is surely concerned with the difference between the two individuals because the effective freedom to get out of one is significantly better than that of the other. (Sen 2001 makes roughly this reply.) Favor-independent-freedom may be more valuable (even, perhaps, in a lexical way) than favor-dependent-freedom, but that is not a reason for restricting capabilities to only those freedoms. All effective freedoms can be valuable, and all should be included in capabilities. The relative value of different kinds of effective freedoms should be

addressed in the evaluation of capabilities, not in their definition.

The capabilities with which justice is concerned, then, are *effective* opportunities to function. One's capabilities at a given time, however, depend in part on one's past choices, and we now need to consider whether justice is concerned only those capabilities that one has as a matter of brute luck or also with those that are the result of past option luck. A state of affairs is a matter of *brute luck* for an agent to the extent that the agent could not have (reasonably) deliberately influenced the possibility or probability of its occurrence or non-occurrence. A state of affairs is a matter of *option luck* otherwise.⁹ The effects on one's capabilities due to one's initial genetic endowment, one's early childhood environment, and unforeseeable adult events (e.g., being struck by an unforeseeable meteor) are a matter of brute luck. The effects on one's capabilities of one's past choices (e.g., whether to go mountain climbing) are a matter of option luck.

Consider two individuals, Diligent and Indolent, who start adult life (as a matter of brute luck) with identical capabilities. Suppose that Diligent wisely works very hard at developing her capabilities, while Indolent unwisely chooses short-term pleasures over the significant long-term benefits of capability development. Now, after many years, Diligent's capabilities are significantly better than Indolent's. What does justice have to say about this situation? Does, for example, Indolent have a claim to more resources than Diligent because her current (as opposed to initial) capabilities are more limited?

The central point at issue is whether individuals can in principle be held accountable for their past option luck in the sense of having no claim against others to compensation when things turn out unfavorably. Brute luck theorists (whether egalitarian, prioritarian, or sufficientarian) claim—and I fully agree—that individuals can be so held accountable and that they have no valid claims to compensation for bad option luck.¹⁰ More specifically, justice is only concerned with brute luck capabilities—that is, the capabilities that one has as a matter of brute luck (i.e., ignoring

any impact from option luck).

The issue is, of course, complex. There are lots of important issues about the exact nature of brute luck, and it is controversial that justice is only concerned with the impact of brute luck. Furthermore, unlike my earlier claims about functionings and opportunities therefor, the present claim is exclusionary rather than inclusionary. My earlier claims were that all functionings (and not just basic functionings) and all opportunities (and not just control-freedoms or favor-independent-freedoms) should be included in the specification of capabilities. Those inclusionary claims are much easier to defend, since they do not require that the specified functionings or opportunities ultimately be relevant to justice (since the theory of value for capabilities may deem them irrelevant, and thus their inclusion may have no effect). The present claim, on the other hand, is exclusionary, and hence much more difficult to defend. If the relevant opportunities do not include option luck opportunities, then the latter are irrelevant to justice (no theory of value can make them relevant if they are not part of the thing being assessed).

Although the irrelevance to justice of option luck opportunities to function is not uncontroversial, it has been given strong defenses and is widely accepted.¹¹ I shall therefore assume that a plausible conception of the capability approach will limit capabilities to brute luck opportunities to function.

5. The Evaluation of Opportunities to Function: The Metric Problem

Capabilities are opportunities to function, but how is the value of a capability set determined?

There are at least two central issues here: (1) How is the value of *functionings* assessed? (2) How is the value of *opportunities* to function based on the value of the possible functionings?

How is the value of functionings assessed? Some of the main possibilities include: narrow self-interest (i.e., self-regarding quality of life),¹² well-being (i.e., overall quality of life,

including, for example, the impact on one's quality of life of other-regarding concerns), and overall agency goals (everything that the agent has reason to value, even if it does not affect the quality of her life). Furthermore, well-being can be interpreted subjectively (in terms of the agent's experiences; i.e., in welfare terms) or objectively (e.g., certain forms of perfectionism). Sen (e.g., 1985, 1993) tends to favor, for the theory of justice, well-being evaluations, or perhaps both well-being and agency goal evaluations. He has also raised powerful objections against evaluating well-being as welfare (i.e., subjectively).

These are, of course, extremely important issues, but for the present purposes we can set them aside. The specification of the object of evaluation (capabilities) is independent of the specification of how that object is to be evaluated.¹³ The generic capability approach could be combined with any theory of evaluation for capabilities, and for the present purposes there is no need to settle the evaluation issue. I shall return to this issue below when I shall suggest that whatever theory of evaluation is adopted by the capability approach, this same theory can be adopted by a generalization of the opportunity for well-being view.

One might think that a fundamental difference between the capability approach and the opportunity for well-being approach is that the latter, but not the former, is committed to the commensurability in value of different functionings (and opportunities to function). One might think, for example, that the opportunity for well-being approach, but not the capability approach, is committed to the view that the effect on value of *any* decrease in *any* functioning can be offset by a sufficiently large increase in *any* other functioning. Admittedly, opportunity for well-being approaches are often presented as if well-being and the opportunities therefor were fully commensurable in this sense, but there is nothing in the approach that is committed to this claim. No amount of money, or other resource or functioning, may be able to fully compensate for having multiple sclerosis, but that does not invalidate the opportunity for well-being approach.

Suppose, for example, that justice is concerned with *equality* of opportunity for well-being, and that the only relevant features of individuals are the presence or absence of multiple sclerosis and the amount of money that they have. Consider a two-person society in which one person has multiple sclerosis and the other doesn't. If no amount of money compensates for having multiple sclerosis, then justice will require curing the disease if possible. If that is not possible, then it requires giving all the money to the person with the disease. Given that the absence of multiple sclerosis is more valuable than any finite amount of money, this will (assuming interpersonal comparisons, which are granted by capability theorist) leave the disease-free poor person better off than the rich person with the disease. This is not perfect justice, but it is, by assumption, the most just feasible alternative, and capability reaches the same judgement. The issue of commensurability of functionings and opportunities therefor does not separate the two.

How, then, is the value of a set of *opportunities* to function (i.e., capabilities) based on the value of the possible functionings? One question here is whether opportunities are only instrumentally valuable for the functionings that they make possible. This seems implausible. Freedom (especially control freedom) sometimes matters for its own sake and the value of opportunity sets should reflect this. Another question is whether (ignoring for the moment the intrinsic value of freedom) the value of an opportunity set is based on the expected (i.e., probability weighted) value, the minimum (i.e., worst case) value, or some other mathematical function of the value of the possible functionings—on the assumption, for example, that the agent chooses reasonably in some specified sense. These are very important issues, but fortunately we need not decide these issues either. We can allow all possible conceptions of the value of opportunities.

We are now finally ready to show that a plausible version of the capability approach is a version of a slight generalization of the opportunity for well-being approach.

6. Capabilities as Opportunities for Well-being

Capabilities are opportunities to function. Functionings include both doings and states of being, and no functionings are irrelevant to justice (justice is not concerned solely with basic functionings). Opportunities are to be understood as effective freedoms and not merely as control freedoms, but they include only brute luck opportunities and not the effect of past option luck on one's current opportunities. With two qualifications, this gives us a version—indeed a plausible version— of the opportunity for well-being view. The latter looks at one's effective brute luck opportunities for a good life, and, given the broad construal of functionings (all doings and states of being), this is just the effective brute luck opportunities to function—that is, capabilities.

One qualification concerns the evaluation of *functionings*. The opportunity for well-being approach evaluates functionings on the basis of the well-being of the agent. Some early versions of the opportunity for well-being view (e.g., Arneson 1989) assumed that well-being was *welfare* (i.e., some subjective conception of the quality of life). The opportunity for well-being approach, however, is not committed to this subjective method of assessment (and indeed Cohen (1989, 1990) rejects it). Strictly speaking, however, the opportunity for well-being approach is committed to evaluating opportunities on the basis of their contribution to *well-being* (quality of life, whether understood objectively or subjectively). An agent's well-being is based only on the quality of *her life*, and not on how well the world in general conforms to her desires and values. Sen (1985a) draws a useful distinction between *well-being freedom*—which is the freedom to achieve well-being (have a good life)—and *agency freedom*—which is the freedom to achieve that which one has reason to value. One has reason to value one's well-being, but one also can have reason to value many other things (e.g., the well-being of a loved one or the health of the environment).

If, as Sen tends to endorse, capabilities are assessed on the basis of their well-being freedom, then the capability view, so understood, is equivalent to a version of the opportunity for well-being view. If, however, capabilities are assessed on the basis of the agency freedom, then the two are not equivalent. A small generalization of the opportunity for well-being view, however, reintroduces the equivalency. Understand the *opportunity for value view* to be the same as the opportunity for well-being view, except that it does not require that functionings be assessed on the basis of well-being. It also allows that they be assessed on the basis of other agency goals (i.e., other states of the worlds that the agent has reason to value). With one remaining qualification, the capability view is equivalent to the opportunity for value view.

The second qualification concerns the evaluations of *opportunities*. Opportunity for value (e.g., well-being) views have tended to assume that opportunities are only instrumentally valuable. They have tended to assume that freedom has no value except as conducive to achieving valuable functionings. We need not resolve this debate here. We need simply to ensure that opportunities may be evaluated in part on the basis of the freedom that they provide over and above the instrumental value that such freedom provides for obtaining valuable functionings. To make this explicit, we might better call it this *the value of opportunity view*, which makes clearer that opportunities may have intrinsic value.

A plausible version of the capability view, we can now see, is equivalent to a version of the value of opportunity view.

7. Conclusion

The capability approach and the opportunity for well-being view are not equivalent in general. First, the capability approach might limit functionings to doings (but not states of being), to basic functionings (on some criterion of basicness), or to control-freedom (rather than effective

freedom) to function. The opportunity for well-being is incompatible with such restrictions, but such restrictions, I have suggested are implausible. Second, the capability approach might include all opportunities to function, and not only brute luck opportunities to function. Although the opportunity for well-being approach could also make this move, it is implausible, and has not been made. Finally, the capability approach could adopt a theory of value for functionings that includes more than the impact on well-being (quality of life). It could, for example, hold that the relevant value is that which the agent has reason to value. Strictly speaking, the opportunity for well-being is incompatible with this view, but a slight generalization—the value of opportunities view—is not.

Although they are not in general equivalent, a plausible version of the capability view is equivalent to a version of the value of opportunities view. If this is right, the real work is to determine the appropriate theory of value for functionings and the opportunities therefor.¹⁴

References

- Sabina Alkire, *Valuing Freedoms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- Elizabeth Anderson, "What is the Point of Equality?", *Ethics* 109 (1999): 287-337.
- Richard Arneson, "Equality and Equal Opportunity for Welfare," *Philosophical Studies* 56 (1989): 77-93.
- Richard Arneson, "Liberalism, Distributive Subjectivism, and Equal Opportunity for Welfare," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 19 (1990): 158-94.
- Richard Arneson, "Perfectionism and Politics," *Ethics* 111 (2000): 37-63.
- G.A. Cohen, "On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice," *Ethics* 99 (1989): 906-44.
- G.A. Cohen, "Equality of What? On Welfare, Goods, and Capabilities," *Recherches Economiques de Louvain* 56 (1990): 357-382. Reprinted in *The Quality of Life* edited by Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 9-29.
- Joshua Cohen, "Amartya Sen: Inequality Reexamined," *Journal of Philosophy* 92 (1995): 275-288.
- David Crocker, "Functioning and Capability: The Foundations of Sen's and Nussbaum's Development Ethic, Part 2," in *Women, Culture, and Development* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
- Norman Daniels, "Equality of What: Welfare, Resources, or Capabilities?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 50, supplement (1990): 273-96. Reprinted in *Justice and Justification* by Norman Daniels (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 208-231.
- Ronald Dworkin, "What is Equality? Part 2: Equality of Resources," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 10 (1981): 283-345. Reprinted with minor changes in Ronald Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).
- Martha Nussbaum, "Nature, Function, and Capability: Aristotle on Political Distribution," *Oxford*

- Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Supplemental Volume, 1988.
- Martha Nussbaum, "Aristotelian Social Democracy," in *Liberalism and the Good*, edited by R. Bruce Douglass, Gerald M. Mara, and Henry S. Richardson (New York: Routledge, 1990).
- Martha Nussbaum, "Women and Cultural Universals," ch. 1 of *Sex and Social Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- Philip Pettit, "Capability and Freedom: A Defense of Sen," *Economics and Philosophy* 17 (2001): 1-38.
- Thomas W. Pogge, "Can the Capability Approach Be Justified?" manuscript (2003).
- John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971),
- Ingrid Robeyns, "Sen's Capability Approach And Gender Inequality: Selecting Relevant Capabilities," *Feminist Economics* (forthcoming 2003).
- John Roemer, "A Pragmatic Theory of Responsibility for the Egalitarian Planner," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 22 (1993): 146-66.
- John Roemer, *Equality of Opportunity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).
- Amartya Sen, "Utilitarianism and Welfarism," *Journal of Philosophy* LXXVI (1979): 463-89.
- Amartya Sen. "Equality of What?," in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, vol. 1, edited by S. McMurrin (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1980), pp. 197-220. Reprinted in Amartya Sen, *Choice, Welfare, and Measurement* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), pp. 353-69.
- Amartya Sen, "Rights and Agency," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 11 (1982): 3-37.
- Amartya Sen, "Well-being, Agency, and Freedom: The Dewey Lectures: 1984," *Journal of Philosophy* LXXXII (1985a): 169-221.
- Amartya Sen, *Commodities and Capabilities* (Amsterdam: North Holland, 1985b).
- Amartya Sen, "Rights and Capabilities," in Ted Honderich, ed., *Morality and Objectivity: A Tribute*

to *J. L. Mackie* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1985c).

Amartya Sen, *On Ethics and Economics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1987).

Amartya Sen, "Justice: Means versus Freedom," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 19 (1990): 111-21.

Amartya Sen, *Inequality Reexamined* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

Amartya Sen, "Capability and Well-Being," in *The Quality of Life*, edited by Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

Amartya Sen, *On Economic Inequality*, Enlarged Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
Original edition published in 1973.

Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1999).

Amartya Sen, "Reply," *Economics and Philosophy* 17 (2001): 51-66.

Robert Sugden, "Welfare, Resources, and Capabilities: A Review of *Inequality Reexamined* by Amartya Sen," *Journal of Economic Literature* 31 (1993): 1947-62.

Peter Vallentyne, "Brute Luck, Option Luck, and Equality of Initial Opportunities," *Ethics* 112 (2002): 529-557.

¹ Both Sen and Nussbaum seem to hold that ensuring that everyone's capabilities are at least adequate is an especially important (perhaps lexically primary) concern of justice.

² See, for example, Dworkin (1981). For a defense of resourcism against Sen's criticisms, see Pogge (2003).

³ See, for example, Rawls (1971), pp. 90-95 (where he limits his attention to social primary goods).

⁴ See, for example, Sen (1993). Sugden (1993, p. 6) notes that although Sen (1992, p. 50; 1993, p. 38) takes the capability set to include a specification of the actual functioning, it would be clearer to

leave this out and simply claim that well-being is function of both the capabilities and the actual functioning.

⁵ For a penetrating discussion of Sen, see Cohen (1995), Alkire (2002), and Robeyns (2003). For an insightful analysis of the differences between the views of Sen and Nussbaum, see Crocker (1995).

⁶ In places Sen writes as if functionings are restricted to doings (e.g., 1980, p. 218; parts of 1985b, pp. 10-11). Cohen (1990) so interprets him and criticizes him for ignoring states of being. Elsewhere (e.g., Sen (1985b, p. 10; Sen 1985a, pp. 197-98)), however, Sen has made clear that functionings include states of being.

⁷ Something like this is advocated by Daniels (1990).

⁸ See, for example, Sen (1993, pp. 31 and 38, and the definition of F in 1985b, p. 11). Cohen (1990) criticizes him for the exclusive emphasis on what is under one's control. Sen elsewhere clarifies (e.g., 1993, p. 43; 1992, pp. 64-66; 1985a) that he does not intend to limit capabilities to control freedom.

⁹ Dworkin (1981, p. 293) introduced the distinction between brute and option luck. For analysis thereof, see Vallentyne (2002).

¹⁰ In Vallentyne (2002), I argue that justice is only concerned with initial brute luck and not with (later) outcome brute luck. For simplicity, I here ignore this qualification.

¹¹ See, for example, Dworkin (1981), Arneson (1989, 1990), Cohen (1989, 1990), and Roemer (1993, 1998). For an important (but mistaken, in my view) recent criticism, see Anderson (1999).

¹² Sen (1993, p. 37) calls this "standard of living".

¹³ Cohen (1990) has argued persuasively that metric of value issues (e.g., welfarism vs. perfectionism) are independent of the outcome vs. opportunity issue.

¹⁴ For their helpful comments, I thank Dick Arneson, Ian Carter, Philip Pettit, Mathias Risse, Thomas Pogge, Jo Wolff, and two anonymous referees for this journal.