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Equality and Position: Measurement and Social Significance of (in)equality of Positional Goods

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Abstract

This paper is to illuminate the social significance of positional goods and to assess the desirability of equality of these goods. I begin with a characterization of strict and moderate egalitarianism and their implications about equality; and I discuss the leveling down principle as well as its objection. Further, I turn to the issue of positionality and non-positionality; define positional goods; clarify the distinction between positional goods with non-positional aspect and non-positional goods with positional aspect; and demonstrate what a notable case equality (and leveling down) of positional goods is in the field of political philosophy and economics. I then proceed to an elaborate discussion about the desirability of equality of positional goods. I conclude that equality of these goods is <u>not</u> desirable and defend this claim on three egalitarian grounds: (1) non-positionality; (2) social growth; and (3) fair competition.

Key Word: Equality, Egalitarianism, Leveling Down, Position, Positional Goods, Competition

Chapter 1: Introduction

- *First Man: "How are you, children?"*
- *Second Man: "Compared to what?"*

This dialogue from Harry Frankfurt's article *Equality as a Moral Ideal* (1987) perfectly illustrates the main discussion I would like to bring forward in this paper, namely: what social significance is attached to positions and positional competition and what role do they play in the well-being of society? Alternatively, I will discuss the nature, measurement and social significance of positional goods from an egalitarian perspective and will eventually answer the following question: 'Is equality of positional goods really desirable?'

In chapter 2, I will illuminate the notion of equality and egalitarians' stance on its significance. Firstly, I will examine the views of non-strict egalitarianism, the common good conception of equality and the idea that some inequalities are more just than some equalities. Then, I will proceed to strict egalitarianism and its implications for equality. Namely, unlike non-strict egalitarians, strict egalitarians argue that the equal distribution of goods is *always* preferable to the unequal one and that there is *nothing* that could make it just for some people to be worse off than other through no fault of their own. Due to that, extreme egalitarians tend to favor the *leveling down principle* as a plausible way of reaching

equality. Finally, I will conclude this chapter with a discussion on the biggest disagreement between strict and non-strict egalitarians –the *leveling down objection*.

In chapter 3, I will discuss extensively what Fred Hirsch (1999) calls 'Positional Economy' and 'Positional Goods'. By definition, positional goods are all aspects of social services, work positions and other social relationships the value of which depends on the number of relevant others possessing the same good. Positional goods are thus education, power, political influence, legal representation, and social inclusion. The reason these goods are called *positional* is because of the competitive value they have. Hence, one's access to one or more of these goods gives her a certain position in a society *compared* to the rest enjoying the same good and competing for the same position. Consequently, one's position with respect to these goods is ascertained by comparison with all those being in a higher, in a lower and in the same position. In other words, one's relative position in the distribution of positional goods affects one's absolute position with respect to that good.

Next in this chapter, I will discuss the issue of positionallity and non-positionality. As will be demonstrated, positional goods can have a non-positional aspect, meaning that the value of these goods does not (always) depend on the number of others possessing the same good. Likewise, non-positional goods – health, environment, leisure – can also have a positional aspect. The fact that positional goods (as well as non-positional goods) can be valued in two rather different manners will play a fundamental role in the assessment of the desirability of equality of these goods. As will be explained, equality of goods with competitive value (positional aspect) leads to completely different results than equality of goods with non-competitive value (non-positional aspect). Here I should lay stress upon the fact that that in practice, when it comes to positional goods, the two aspects – positional and non-positional – are impossible to separate.

Lastly in this chapter, by applying the leveling down principle, I will demonstrate what a peculiar case equality of positional goods can be. Namely, it seems that this distinctive competitive value these goods possess, when leveled down, can provide reasons for not just egalitarians but also utalitarians, prioritarians and sufficientarians to favor equality. Evidently, equality of positional goods improves not just the relative but also the absolute position of people with respect to the given good, which means: (1) the average utility increases; (2) the worse off are made better off in absolute terms; and (3) everyone has a fair, or sufficient, chance of participating as well as succeeding in the positional competition. Last but not least, of course, equality is improved. There seem to be thus sound arguments supporting the desirability of equality of positional goods.

Nevertheless, in chapter 5 I will refute these arguments and will claim instead that allowing an unequal distribution of positional goods has far more positive implications for people's well-being than an equal one. I will base the defense of this claim on three grounds: (1) non-positionality; (2) social growth; and (3) fair competition. With respect to the former, and as briefly introduced above, all positional goods seem to have a non-positional aspect. That is to say that one's possession of these goods leads to personal development and personal satisfaction - aspects that have nothing to do with competition. Equality of non-positional goods thus (or goods with non-positional aspect) does not improve the absolute standing of the worse off in the distribution meaning that leveling down of such goods is worse for some people and better for no one.

The second reason for defending inequality of positional goods, and probably the most significant one, is social growth and its effects on the well-being of society. As I will demonstrate, social growth is created by intensive positional competition which occurs only by constantly increasing or changing the obstacles for reaching the desired positions. In other words, ensuring social growth means ensuring positional inequality. I will conclude thus that social growth and equality of positional goods are mutually exclusive. Furthermore, I will investigate the question: 'why would an egalitarian be concerned with social growth and thus support inequality?'. The answer I will provide is the following: 'because an unequal distribution of positional goods (i.e. social growth) improves the situation for society in general and for the worse off in particular.

The third and final egalitarian reason which I will provide in support of inequality of positional goods concerns the issue of fair competition. Generally, when speaking of competition for material goods the term 'fair' often means 'equal'. This is, however, not necessarily the case with regards to positional goods. Namely, the competition for a specific position in the job market is not among everyone but among everyone with similar interests and/or similar qualifications. It seems thus premature to argue that complete leveling down and total equality of opportunity with respect to positional goods is necessary. I will support this claim – pure equality of positional goods is irrelevant to the issue of fair competition - by referring to Rawls' second principle of justice.

Based on the forgoing discussion, I will conclude that equality of positional goods: (1) makes some people worse off and no one better off when considering their non-positional aspect; (2) stops social growth and thus prevents people, including the worse off, from improving their well-being; and (3) is irrelevant to the issue of fair competition. In other words, even an egalitarian (non-strict that is) has reasons to favor *inequality of positional goods*.

Chapter 2: Egalitarianism and the Notion of Equality

For decades now the notion of equality has been actively debated by philosophers, politicians and economists. Many questions have been raised, such as: when is one inequality worse than another?; what kind of equality should one seek?; and, how is equality measured? (Temkin, 1993: 3). Before diving into arguments about the different aspects of inequality, however, let us first define it. Larry Temkin (1993:26) defines inequality as the status of being worse off "through no fault of your own". With this definition in mind, it seems that people are naturally opposed to inequality simply because it is not *fair* for someone to be worse off through no fault of their own (Parfit, 2000: 84). This very approach to inequality, or fairness, is egalitarian. Egalitarians, Derek Parfit argues (2000:84), believe in equality, but so do most people. So how do we know if one is an egalitarian? And what are the different egalitarian approaches? I will hereby illustrate two of the main types of egalitarianism – instrumental and non-instrumental – and will focus on the latter by discussing its views, advantages and disadvantages with respect to equality.

Non-instrumental egalitarians value equality as a moral ideal in itself- in contrast to instrumental egalitarianism, where equality is valued "as a constitutive element of some wider ideal" (Clayton & Williams, 2000:4). Non-instrumental egalitarians are, therefore, concerned with equality in terms of outcomes or results, rather than the mere means to achieving some other goals (Parfit, 2000:84). However, even among non-instrumental egalitarians there are different perspectives about equality – hereafter I shall call these different conceptions strict (or extreme) and non-strict (or moderate) egalitarianism. Both strict and non-strict egalitarians share the view that equal distribution of any kind of goods and services is the ideal distribution. Nevertheless, non-strict egalitarians tend to accept the idea that in certain situations some inequalities are more just than some equalities (in terms of outcomes) (Christiano & Braynen, 2008: 394). Strict egalitarians, on the other hand, argue that regardless of the specifics of a given situation, an equal distribution is *always* better than an unequal distribution at least in one respect- it improves equality (Persson, 2007:83). In the following sections I shall present and compare the stances of both strict and non-strict egalitarianism concluding with a discussion of the biggest disagreement these two types of non-instrumental egalitarians face- the leveling down principle and the leveling down objection.

2.1. Non-instrumental Egalitarianism and the Common Good Conception

Non-strict, or moderate, egalitarians, as briefly explained above, are non-instrumentalists who claim that, even though equality is the *ideal* distribution, it is not necessarily the most *just* distribution. Having said that, non-strict egalitarians do support fairness and equal distribution of goods but they argue that equality is "only one consideration among many" (Christiano & Braynen,2008: 394). Scholars, such as Thomas Christiano and Will Braynen (2008: 394), argue that in certain situations some inequalities are more just or more fair than some equalities (in terms of outcomes). Christiano and Braynen (2008: 395) call this the *common good conception* of equality. According to them, this conception constitutes two main elements: "(1) in each circumstance there exists an ideal distribution (or the ideally just distribution), and (2) in evaluating how just the world is, it will matter how far your actual distribution is from the ideal distribution".

To illustrate this philosophy I will use Garrett Hardin's (1974) famous example of the life boat, also known as *lifeboat ethics*: suppose that a life boat can only carry 2 people but there are currently 3 on board. In this situation one could choose to sacrifice 1 person's life by pushing her off the boat so that 2 are saved; or to let all 3 people drown. Non-strict egalitarians claim that, since it is impossible to save everyone, the best option would be to distribute lots to all the passengers and the one with the shortest (or the longest) lot to be removed from the boat (Christiano & Braynen,2008: 393). This way no one will be discriminated against and still two people will be saved. The moral here is that simply letting everyone die does not improve the situation for anyone in particular.

To demonstrate what the common good conception of equality represents, consider the above-mentioned example of the life boat. In this case, the ideal distribution would clearly be (3.3, 3.3, 3.3) (with 10 being the maximum overall welfare and 0 being the minimum), meaning that everyone lives (*ibid.:*415). In the case of only one person dying the distribution would be (5, 5, 0); and in the case of everyone dying the distribution would be (0, 0, 0). According to the common good principle the (5, 5, 0) distribution is the most feasible one since it rates closest to the ideal one. How is this calculated? Christiano and Braynen (2008:410) develop a formula for that purpose which they call the *difference summing principle*:

$$D(S_{actual}, S_{ideal}) = |x^* - x| + |y^* - y|$$

It measures the departure from justice by calculating the difference between the ideal distribution (x* and y*) and the actual distribution (x and y). The closer the result is to 0, the closer the actual distribution is to the ideal one. To illustrate, consider two different states in one of which the

distribution is (7, 3), in the other one it is (2, 2), and the ideal one is (5, 5). In the first state we know that the average utility is higher than in the second one but we also know that there is at least one person who is worse off. The second state is the opposite- the average utility is lower but people in it are doing equally well (or badly) off. Now let us determine which of the two states is more just by calculating both departures from the ideal distribution (5, 5). In the first state the calculation will go as follows: |5-7|+|5-3|=|-2|+|2|=4. The result is 4. Now, in the second state: |5-2|+|5-2|=6. We find out that the result of the first state is closer to 0 than the result of the second. Conclusively, the first state (7, 3) is more just (or less unjust) than the second state (2, 2) because it fares closer to the ideal distribution (5, 5). With this example Christiano and Braynen demonstrate that an equal distribution is not necessarily the most just distribution.

I would like to focus some more attention on the common good principle and the above explained formula by sketching one more example. I will do so in order to illustrate that the common good conception is not a utilitarian approach, as it can be concluded from the previous example. Hence, when determining departures from justice, a non-instrumental egalitarian is not concerned with maximizing the average utility but with minimizing the difference between the ideal distribution and the actual distribution.

Now consider two different states: first one again with distribution of welfare (7, 3) and second one with (4, 4). The ideal distribution is (5, 5). Once again, we know that the average utility in the first state is higher, just like in the previous example. We also know that in terms of equality the second state fares better than the first one. Now let us calculate how they both fare in terms of justice compared to the ideal distribution (5, 5). For the (7, 3) state we already know the result is 4. For the (4, 4) state the calculations will go as follows: |5-4|+|5-4|=2. Seemingly, the second result is closer to 0 leading to the conclusion that, even though in state (7, 3) the average utility is higher, state (4, 4) fares twice as close to the ideal distribution. Even though a utilitarian would still favor state (7, 3), a non-instrumental egalitarian, based on the common good conception, would conclude that state (4, 4) is more just that state (7, 3).

To conclude, the common good conception supports the idea that equality is a vital value, but holds that it is only one among many others. Non-strict egalitarians, therefore, argue that in certain situation some (outcome) inequalities are more just (or less unjust) then some equalities. The departure of the actual distribution from the ideal distribution is determined by the difference summing principle. This principle clearly shows that, excluding the ideal distribution, a *just* distribution is not necessarily an *equal* distribution. I agree with these conclusions and will return to that point later on when I compare

these views with the ones of strict egalitarians as well as when I assess the desirability of equality of positional goods in chapter 4.

2.2. The Leveling Down Principle & The Leveling Down Objection

Not all non-instrumental egalitarians share the views of Christiano and Braynen explained above– some inequalities are more just than some equalities. The so called *strict egalitarians*, also known as extreme or radical egalitarians, argue that *any* unequal distribution of goods is unjust because inequality is, in itself, bad (Clayton & Williams, 2000:3; Parfit, 2000:84; Christiano, 2007:42). These are the egalitarians who attach intrinsic importance to equality, meaning that, according to them, equality should be valued for its own sake; that equality does not simply bring goodness to other aspects of life, rather it has the goodness in itself (Korsgaard, 1983:170). As Ingmar Persson (2007:83) formulates it in his defense of extreme egalitarianism:

> (1) A state is just if and only if everyone (capable of being well or badly off) is equally well off in it.
>
> (2) A state is just if and only if everyone (capable of being well or badly off) is equally well off in it unless there is something to make it just that some are better (or worse) off than others.
>
> (3) There is *nothing* to make it just that some are better (or worse) off than others.

Clearly, proviso (3) expresses the extreme egalitarian stance utmost. Whereas a moderate egalitarian could have a reason to favor (2), as demonstrated in the previous section, a strict egalitarian finds any kind of inequality morally unacceptable and unjustifiable.

Accordingly, the strict egalitarian believes that any reduction of the gap between the worst off and the best off is an improvement even if it is not an improvement for anyone in particular (Clayton & Williams, 2000:3; Holtug & Lipper-Rasmussen, 2007:23). In other words, since equality itself is the moral ideal, diminishing the gap between the disadvantaged and the advantaged is justifiable even if there is no one for whom the situation will be improved. Strict egalitarians, therefore, do not distinguish between different types of inequality or inequality of different goods *per se*. They argue that equality itself is a vital virtue and we, as a society, need to always strive to achieve it (Clayton & Williams, 2000:4).

This very idea is what the *leveling down principle* represents. Leveling down literally means bringing those who are better off in a society to the level of those who are worse off, which results in the

elimination of the gap; ergo equality. Strict egalitarians favor the leveling down principle as a method of achieving equality and argue that, since inequality is bad, its disappearance is in at least one respect an improvement, "*however this change occurs*" (Parfit, 2000:97-98). Let us look at another example. Using diagram 1, consider two states, one of which has an unequal welfare distribution (A) and the other has an equal one (B). In state (A) the average utility is higher but we know that there is at least one person with absolute advantage and at least one person with absolute disadvantage. In state (B), on the other hand, everyone has a fair share of the overall welfare. One could see, however, that *everyone* in state (B) is doing worse than the worst off group in state (A). A strict egalitarian, nonetheless, would claim here that state (B) is the just one because there is no gap between the social groups which means that there is *pure* equality.

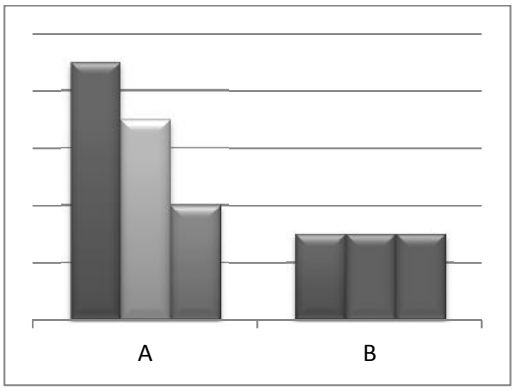

Diagram 1

Admittedly, if one is concerned with the state of equality alone, leveling down is indeed a plausible way of achieving it. For strict egalitarians the magnitude of the gap between the worse off and the better off represents the difference of the well-being of people within one society; the gap is nothing but a symbol of inequality and therefore it needs to be reduced (Scalnon, 2000:42). Having said that, a strict egalitarian attaches only intrinsic value to equality and, therefore, there are many objections to the leveling down principle (Temkin, 2000,130-1). The so called *leveling down objection* is applied in cases where achieving equality is worse for some people (the better off) and better for no one (Parfit, 2000:110; Holtug & Lipper-Rasmussen, 2007:23).

These cases are the ones which cause the deepest disagreements between strict and moderate egalitarians (*ibid.*). The latter usually reject the leveling down principle based on a position which Temkin (1993: 248-9) calls the *Slogan*. The Slogan holds that "one situation cannot be worse (or better) than another if there is no one for whom it is worse (or better)" (Temkin, 1993:248). In other words, if a change does not affect anyone, either in a positive or a negative way, there is no purpose in making that change. For example, consider again diagram 1. If everyone in state (A) is leveled down to the level of

state (B) no one actually benefits. The worst off would still have little, albeit equal, share of the welfare, hence their situation would neither be improved nor would it be impaired.

Likewise, Parfit (1984: 391-417) refers to a similar position as the Person-affecting Claim, arguing that "if an outcome is worse for no one, it cannot be in any way worse". Similarly to the Slogan, the Person-affecting Claim holds that outcomes of a change should be assessed based on the way the "sentient beings" (Temkin: 2000:132) are affected for better or worse. Hence, a change leads to a positive outcome if individuals are benefited (affected positively), and it leads to a negative outcome if individuals are harmed (affected negatively). Furthermore, Nils Holtug and Kasper Lipper-Rasmussen (2007:24) support the person-affecting claim that, since equality is so tightly and inevitably connected to well-being, it follows that "equality is valuable only when accompanied by benefits [for people]". Hence, if persons' well-being is not improved in any way, there is no reason to equalize them in the first place.

Based on the Slogan, and the latter considerations, some moderate egalitarians, and most of the non-egalitarians that is, reject the leveling down principle. Parfit (2000:99), for example, claims that if equality is achieved through leveling down, there would be absolutely nothing positive about what has been done: "if some natural disaster makes everyone equally badly off, that is not in any way good news" (*ibid.*). He agrees that inequality as such is bad, but he argues that it is not necessarily bad *for people* (2000:110).

Parfit is a prioritarian, but even some egalitarians, like Christiano and Braynen (2008**:**393) as well as Holtug and Lippert-Rasmussen (2007:24), as explained previously, agree with that view. Temkin, on the other hand, defends the leveling down principle arguing that those supporting its objection are rejecting equality as a moral ideal and are therefore not egalitarians: "the Leveling Down Objection is, perhaps, the most prevalent and powerful anti-egalitarian argument, and it underlies the thinking of most non-egalitarians as well as many who think of themselves as egalitarians" (2000: 126).

Temkin goes even further in his objection to the non-strict egalitarian view and claims that the Slogan is the *only* strong argument supporting the leveling down objection (2000:132). Hence, if the Slogan is rejected there would be nothing else refuting the principle of leveling down. Be that as it may, Temkin also admits that the Slogan is a widely accepted argument not only in philosophy but also in political science and economics (1993:249). He argues that the Slogan, just like other universally approved claims- for example, each person deserves equal human rights –is an "ultimate moral principle" (*ibid*.). To paraphrase, the Slogan provides justification for other claims, but it does not need to be *itself* justified (*ibid*.). On this very argument non-strict egalitarians, as well as non-egalitarians, base their defense of the leveling down objection.

To summarize, egalitarians in general have a high regard for equality. Some egalitarians argue that there is no other virtue prevailing over the value of equality. Nevertheless, other egalitarians claim that in certain situations other values, such as opportunities and deserts, might play a greater role when assessing how just the world is. This latter consideration will come into use in chapter 4 when I examine the advantages and disadvantages of inequality of positional goods and assess its desirability from an egalitarian perspective.

Chapter3: Positional goods

Fred Hirsch developed the theory on *Positional Economy* in the book *Social Limits to Growth*, firstly published in 1976. In his book, he compares material economy – the physical goods – with positional economy, where he defines the latter as "all aspects of goods, services, work positions, and other social relationships that are either (1) scarce in some absolute or socially imposed sense or (2) subject to congestion or crowding through more extensive use" (Hirsch, 1999:27). Likewise, Harry Brighouse and Adam Swift (2006:474) define positional goods as those goods "the absolute value of which, to their possessors, depends on those possessors' place in the distribution of the good—on their relative standing with respect to the good in question". In other words, the value of the positional good one possesses is determined by the number of other people possessing that same good. Examples of positional goods are: education, power, political influence, legal representation, and social inclusion.

The reason these goods are called *positional* is because one's access to one or more of these goods gives her a certain position in a society *compared* to the rest enjoying the same good. For example, when compared to those with secondary school diplomas and those with master's degrees, a bachelor's diploma gives a person a specific position within a society. Accordingly, a bachelor's degree in one society, say the United States, would represent a different position than a bachelor's degree in another society, say Yemen: "The absolute value of a positional good depends precisely on how much of it one has compared to others" (*ibid*.).

In contrast, the value of non-positional goods - health, environment, leisure – does not depend on comparison with others. For example, a person with diabetes is not regarded to be more ill when compared to someone who has the flu, the same way she is not healthier when compared to someone who has cancer. One's health is not judged based on how healthy others are. In the case of positional goods, however, one's position with respect to those goods *completely* depends on others' possession of the same goods. I will return to this comparison between positional and non-positional goods later on in this chapter.

Positional goods differ from material goods in one fundamental aspect: competitiveness. Hence, unlike any other goods, positional goods have a competitive element and this very competitiveness is what adds value to the good in question, i.e. what creates the *positionality*. Consider the following example. If someone only has five euros and wants to buy bread with that money she could go to the store and buy that bread regardless of all other people who have more money than her and also want to buy bread. Nevertheless, if one wants to run for a mayor of a town and she only has a bachelor's degree

or only has 10 years of relevant working experience, whether she is suitable for the position or not will be determined by the (level of) qualifications of the other candidates competing for the same position. In other words, determining whether certain qualifications are good enough to fulfill given requirements depends precisely on how qualified others are. Hence, the acquisition of positional goods, unlike that of material goods, "is determined not by how much one has absolutely but by how much one has relative to relevant others" (Brighouse & Swift, 2006:475).

Another difference between material and positional goods is that, whereas for the former the consumer spends money, the latter requires the "expenditure of both time and effort" (Hirsch, 1999:28). Consider again the previous example. If someone wants to buy bread which costs, say, 1 euro, everyone who has at least one euro can go to the store and exchange the money for the product. Buying a physical good only requires having enough money to afford that good. Nonetheless, if one wants to become a mayor she would first need to complete a certain level of education and to gain certain type of experience. None of the latter conditions (necessarily) require the expenditure of money. What they do require, however, is the investment of both time and effort.

Hirsch (1999:52) argues that positional goods are one of the most vital elements of social growth. One can observe social growth only when there is intensive *positional competition*. Positional competition Hirsch (1999:52) defines as "competition that is fundamentally for a higher place within some explicit hierarchy and that thereby yields gains for some only by dint of losses for others". Because of this nature of the competition, Brighouse and Swift (2006:477) argue that positional competition is a zero-sum game - the winner wins what the loser loses. In other words, one's education degree is of a high value only because someone else's degree is considered less valuable. Likewise, one acquiring a master's degree automatically disvalues, or at least undermines, the bachelor's degree of someone else.

Hirsch, however, argues that the positional competition could also be a positive-sum game (Hirsch, 1999: 52). Namely, the positional competition in education improves the performance, the motivation and/or the enjoyment of those acquiring degrees higher than those of the rest of the society. Think of education. Getting a master's degree does not simply enable you to find a better paid job than those with lower degrees. Doing a master's studies develops your analytical skills and broadens your perspective of the world and the way it functions. Thus when a master's graduate is hired at a higher position she not only enjoys the higher salary (what a less educated person is deprived of) but also the personal satisfaction of being responsible for and contributing to a field or industry she knows and understands. In other words, more often than not, the winner wins more than the loser loses. (This is one of the elements of social growth. The full process will be discussed extensively in chapter 4)

This satisfaction of the possession of positional goods is highly dependent on the extensiveness of use of these same goods by others (Hirsch, 1999: 29). The more people possess the same good – something Hirsch calls *congestion* or *crowding* – the less quality this good is perceived by others. Thus, once everyone has the same (level of) positional good, the value of that good is being depreciated. As Hirsch (1999:49) puts it: "it is a case of everyone in the crowd standing on tiptoe and no one getting a better view". Nevertheless, this process of crowding begins with only a few people standing on tiptoe and having a better view compared to others. Others are then forced to follow *if* they want to have as good of a view as those better off. It is the same case in the job market – everyone who wants to have a higher position needs to be at least as good as the rest in that position. This process continues until everyone has the same position – crowding - hence social growth stops (*ibid.*). (In reality, however, *all* people never end up at the same position. The reasons for that will be explained in the next chapter).

This process of crowding leads to the reduction in quality of a specific good, which in addition leads to *social waste*. Social waste, hence, results from unfulfilled ambitions, unachieved goals, disappointed expectations and frustrating experiences (Hirsch, 1999:51). For example, social waste would be if people are let down by their legal representation; or if one is deprived of pursuing higher education relevant to her talents or ambitions; or if people have to settle for jobs where they do not use their skills. Basically, any restriction of access to (or distribution of) positional goods can lead to social waste. When it comes to positional goods, therefore, distribution is very tightly connected to growth (Hirsch, 1999:32). Thus, the more the social waste increases, the less social growth there is (Hirsch, 1999:51).

3.1. Positional Goods with Non-Positional Aspect vs. Non-Positional Goods with Positional Aspect

Having established what positional goods are – intangible goods the value of which depends on how many relevant others possess the same good – I will now go deeper into the issue of positionality and non-positionality. Evidently, positional goods may have a non-positional aspect, as well as non-positional goods may have a positional aspect (as discussed by Brighouse and Swift, 2006: 477-483).

Let us begin with the latter. Non-positional goods are intangible goods whose value, in contrast to positional goods, *does not* depend on others' possession of that good. As discussed previously, one's health does not depend on how healthy (or how ill) others are. Hence, being healthy (or ill) does not affect one's (or other's) position in society.

Health, however, can and does have a positional aspect. Consider the following: there are certain requirements for one to become a pilot- you need to have a college degree, to finish flight training, to have a medical certificate etc. If Bob is qualified in all of the above but is, say, color-blind, he would not be allowed to become a pilot. Being color-blind does not affect one's ability to work, one's motivation or performance. In this specific *position*, however, - a pilot – being color-blind might endanger other people, thus Bob would not be allowed to become a pilot. In other words, his health condition does affect his position.

Consider another example. Mary has applied for the position of a managing director in some local firm. She fulfills all the requirements there are and, in addition, she has 10 years of experience in that same position. On the day of her interview, however, she does not feel well and calls to reschedule. Nevertheless, by the time she gets better the hiring board had already met with another suitable candidate who got hired. Mary then is deprived of the opportunity to present herself in an interview because of the timing of her sickness. Her health condition, therefore, has an effect on her position.

These are just a few simple examples but they do illustrate how a non-positional good can have a positional aspect. Seemingly, one's health can have a competitive value implying that the value of one's health (in certain situations) does depend on the healthiness of others. After all: "In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king" (Brighouse & Swift, 2006:480).

Let us now consider positional goods with non-positional aspect. Imagine the following: Lisa is doing a master's study in History of Arts together with 100 other students. After graduation, however, Lisa does not apply for a job position related to her studies. She is happy with her job at the flower shop, the theater, or the museum. The only thing Lisa sought to acquire from her studies is not a diploma or a well-paid job but personal satisfaction since she has always been keenly interested in the subject of arts. In this case, thus, Lisa's master's degree does not affect the value of the diplomas of anyone else in her class as she is not willing to compete with them. Education does not simply enable you to find a well-paid job, as already discussed; it causes you to think, act and perceive the world differently – aspects that have nothing to do with competition. One's education, therefore, has a non-positional aspect.

Consider another example. For a couple of years now, John has been actively involved in the political and the social life of his home town – he has been organizing festivals, participating in fundraising events, and trying to help his fellow-citizens to improve their standard of living. John is, however, never planning to run for a mayor of the city. He does what he does from personal interest and for personal satisfaction. His political and social input, therefore, do not affect the competition between

other people interested in the position of a mayor. Once again, we can see how a naturally positional good can have a non-positional aspect.

Why are these aspects important? As demonstrated above, one can value positional goods (as well as non-positional goods) in two rather different manners. This consideration will play a vital role later on when I try to assess the desirability of equality of positional goods. As will be explained in the next section and in the following chapter, equality of goods with competitive value (positional aspect) leads to completely different results than equality of goods with non-competitive value (non-positional aspect). It is important, therefore, to stress that in practice, when it comes to positional goods, the two aspects – positional and non-positional – are impossible to separate.

3.2. Leveling Down of Positional Goods

Previously, I have established that the competitive character of positional goods gives them a special distinction from any other goods. Nevertheless, they are even more special than one accounts for. Namely: when it comes to equality, positional goods are an exceptionally rare case where not just egalitarians, but also prioritarians, sufficientarians and even utilitarians favor equality. It seems thus that the complex nature of positional goods can provide more reasons for leveling down than just the one-improving equality itself. In this section I will present these reasons and the arguments behind them, proving that equality of positional goods is indeed a peculiar phenomenon in both political philosophy and economics.

Positional goods have the special property that "one's relative place in the distribution of the good affects one's absolute position with respect to its value" (Brighouse & Swift, 2006:472). This means that those at the bottom of the distribution are (1) *relatively* worse off, because they have less than others do; but also (2) *absolutely* worse off, because (since many people are in higher positions) their possession of the positional good is being disvalued in absolute terms**.** (Later on it will be demonstrated how this is measured.) The negative effect of an unequal distribution of positional goods on the absolute position of people logically implies that the equal distribution of these goods will then have a positive effect on their absolute position: "So while it might indeed be perverse to advocate leveling down all things considered, leveling down with respect to positional goods benefits absolutely, in some respect, those who would otherwise have less than others" (*ibid.*).

The reason leveling down of positional goods improves one's absolute position is exactly this distinctive competitive value they have. For instance, in a world where people have bachelor's, master's

and doctorate's degrees those with only a bachelor's are clearly in a disadvantaged position. The mere fact that there are people with higher education already disvalues their absolute position with respect to education. If, however, for some reason, people in that same world are forbidden to pursue a PhD, the highest degree anyone can achieve would be a master's degree. This leveling down of education would not benefit the worst off per se – they would still just have a bachelor's degree – thus the non-competitive value (the value of the non-positional aspect) will decrease (I will elaborate on this in the next chapter). Nevertheless, what it would do is increase the *competitive value* of the bachelor's degree. Hence, even though the same people would still have the same (still lower) degree, their absolute position with respect to that good would be improved. I could go even further, and suggest that even master's degrees should be forbidden. In this case, the value of the bachelor's degree, and the absolute position of those having one, will improve even more. It is evident, therefore, that leveling down of positional goods improves not just the relative but also the absolute position of the worse off (in terms of the competitive value of that good).

In order to clarify the foregoing discussion even further, I will demonstrate how exactly equality of positional goods affects the absolute position of the individual possessing that good. There is of course no established way of measuring the values of the positional and the non-positional aspects of positional goods. I will therefore examine all scenarios. I will do so by, firstly, measuring the value of the positional aspect against the value of the non-positional aspect for the positional good X. Let us thus assume that:

$$Vx = V_{PA} + V_{NPA}$$

Where Vx is an index of individual's well-being with respect to X; V_{PA} is the value of the positional aspect of X; and V_{NPA} is the value of the non-positional aspect of X. In other words, individual's well-being with respect to the positional good X is the sum of the values of the positional and the non-positional aspects of X. There could be therefore three possible ways of measuring Vx: (1) assuming that the value of the positional aspect of X is worth just as much as the value of the non-positional aspect ($V_{PA} = V_{NPA}$, for example, (5, 5)); (2) assuming that the value of the positional aspect of X is worth more than the value of the non-positional aspect ($V_{PA} > V_{NPA}$, for example (5, 3)); and (3) assuming that the value of the positional aspect of X is worth less that the non-positional aspect ($V_{PA} < V_{NPA}$, for example (3, 5)). We then have three possible measurements of V_{PA} and V_{NPA} of the good X.

Secondly, I will assess how these measurements affect people's well-being with respect to the value of X. As already established, when the positional good X is leveled down ($V_X \downarrow$), on the one hand the value of the positional aspect increases ($V_{PA} \uparrow$), and on the other hand the value of the non-

positional aspect decreases ($V_{NPA}\downarrow$). Once again, there could be three plausible assumptions here: (1) after leveling X down, the value of the positional aspect increases just as much as the value of the non-positional aspect decreases ($V_{PA}\uparrow = V_{NPA}\downarrow$); (2) after leveling X down, the value of the positional aspect increases more than the value of the non-positional aspect decreases ($V_{PA}\uparrow > V_{NPA}\downarrow$); and (3) after leveling X down, the value of the positional aspect increases less than the value of the non-positional aspect decreases ($V_{PA}\uparrow < V_{NPA}\downarrow$).

The measurement of each of the former three possible values against each of the latter three possible outcomes creates a matrix with nine scenarios (see table 2). In table 1, I have indicated the value of X (Vx) for each situation before leveling down. Consider the first column. Where $V_{PA} = V_{NPA}$, they both have a value of 5. Where $V_{PA} > V_{NPA}$ and $V_{PA} < V_{NPA}$, the values are (5, 3) and (3, 5) respectively. The calculations in the first case thus go as follows:

$$Vx = V_{PA} + V_{NPA} = 5 + 5 = 10$$

And in the second case:

$$Vx = V_{PA} + V_{NPA} = 5 + 3 = 8$$

In the third case the procedure is the same. All the calculations can be found in Appendix 1. I will return to these numbers later on when I compare the value of X (Vx) before leveling down and the value of X after leveling down ($Vx\downarrow$).

Value of X before leveling down

	Vx
$V_{PA} = V_{NPA}$	10
$V_{PA} > V_{NPA}$ $V_{PA} = V_{NPA}$	8
$V_{PA} = V_{NPA}$ $V_{PA} < V_{NPA}$ $V_{PA} = V_{NPA}$	8

Table 1

Now consider table 2. For the sake of consistency, I have used the same values as in table 1. Once again, in the first column $V_{PA} = V_{NPA}$ and they both have a value of 5. $V_{PA} > V_{NPA}$ and $V_{PA} < V_{NPA}$, have values of (5, 3) and (3, 5) respectively. The first row then indicates the increase of the value of the positional aspect of X ($V_{PA}\uparrow$) and the decrease of the value of the non-positional aspect of X ($V_{NPA}\downarrow$) after leveling down. In all situations I have leveled down with 2 points. New calculations for $V_X\downarrow$ (the average well-being with respect to X after leveling down), using the first case as an example, will then go as follows:

$$Vx\downarrow = V_{PA}\uparrow + V_{NPA}\downarrow = (5 + 2) + (5 - 2) = 10$$

Obviously in this case, where both V_{PA} and V_{NPA} are equal, as well as $V_{PA}\uparrow$ after leveling down increases just as much as $V_{NPA}\downarrow$ decreases (with 2 point each) the value of X remains the same (10).

Now consider the middle case ($V_{PA} > V_{NPA}$ measured against $V_{PA}\uparrow > V_{NPA}\downarrow$). Here we have values of V_{PA} and V_{NPA} of (5, 3) respectively. We also know that after leveling down $V_{PA}\uparrow$ increases more than (let us assume twice as much as) $V_{NPA}\downarrow$ decreases. The calculations of the new $Vx\downarrow$ then would go as follows:

$$Vx\downarrow = V_{PA}\uparrow + V_{NPA}\downarrow = 2(5+2) + (5-2) = 15$$

Value of X after leveling down

	$Vx\downarrow$		
	$V_{PA}\uparrow = V_{NPA}\downarrow$	$V_{PA}\uparrow > V_{NPA}\downarrow$	$V_{PA}\uparrow < V_{NPA}\downarrow$
$V_{PA} = V_{NPA}$	10	15	13
$V_{PA} > V_{NPA}$	8	15	9
$V_{PA} < V_{NPA}$	8	13	11

Table 2

We can thus see that in 6 out of the 9 possible cases, after leveling down, individual's well-being and their absolute position with respect to the positional good X increases (for all calculations see Appendix 2). It can also be observed that the more the value of the positional aspect increases the more the average value of X rises. One could reasonably disagree with this last conclusion of mine by arguing that if the absolute position of individuals (including the worse off) improves than this is by no means a process of leveling down. Here I should make two things clear. First of all, when it comes to positional goods, I use the term 'leveling down' in its strict sense meaning that some people (the better off) are deprived of obtaining more X than they want/need and other people (the worse off) do not get to possess more X than they did before. Secondly, when any positional good X is leveled down, apart from the increased value of the positional aspect, one could observe the decreasing of the value of the non-positional aspect, the effects of which on individual's well-being are not positive. In this chapter I have not discussed the non-positional aspect's implications on individual's well-being. I will examine this issue extensively in the next chapter.

Returning to the main issue, clearly an egalitarian would favor leveling down since it improves equality. A prioritarian, however, who is not primarily concerned with equality but rather with benefiting the worst off in a society, would also be in favor of leveling down for an obvious reason- when the better

off are leveled down, the worse off benefit in *absolute* terms (Brighouse & Swift, 2006:475). Once again returning to the example above, if people in one society, for whatever reason, are deprived of obtaining a PhD, the absolute position of those holding a bachelor's degree would be improved absolutely, not just relatively so. In other words, even if the worst off are not made better off all things considered– as there will still be people with master's degrees – after leveling down, they will be good-specific better off in *absolute* terms – their (still lower) education will then be much more valuable than it was before. Another example: if someone is deprived of hiring private (and assuming better) legal representation, inevitably, the absolute position of those unable to afford that would be improved in absolute terms; and so on (*ibid*.). Conclusively, in the special case of positional goods, a prioritarian also has a reason to favor equality.

The more we level down with respect to positional goods, the more the competitive value of these goods increases, which in result leads to a major growth of the average utility (value of X). In other words, even a utilitarian, who by nature neither favors equality, nor is concerned with the worse off, also has a reason to level down. Consider the following. In one state where there are people with PhD's, being the highest level of higher education one can obtain, master's degrees, and bachelor's degree, being the lowest higher education level, the distribution could look like this: (10, 6, 3); or (10, 7, 4); or (10, 5, 2) and so on, depending on, how many people possess the different degrees. The essential point here is, that the average welfare is always somewhere between the best and the worst off. If, however, the maximum level of education one can obtain is a bachelor's degree, the competitive value of this degree will increase in *absolute* terms, meaning that the *average* welfare (with respect to this good) will be the highest possible- (10). Unarguably, when it comes to positional goods, a utilitarian would also have a reason to level down.

Clearly, one does not need to be an egalitarian to argue in favor of leveling down of positional goods. The supporting arguments, however, do not stop here: "Where a good is positional because its value is competitive**,** the value of fair competition may provide a further reason to prefer equality to inequality, even where that means leveling down with respect to the good in question" (Brighouse & Swift, 2006:475). In other words, the consideration of fair competition constitutes an additional reason to level down, this time from a sufficientarian perspective (*ibid.*). How so? Consider the following examples. Someone with greater political influence has a bigger chance of successfully realizing her ideas, leading to a greater political and social input, than someone with little or no political influence. The same way, a master's graduate has a greater chance of acquiring a more interesting and well-paid

job than a bachelor's graduate. In the case of positional goods therefore, as in most other cases that is, a fair competition could require equal competitors (or competitors with equal resources) (*ibid*.).

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy to point out that the foregoing consideration is neither egalitarian, nor prioritarian. Fair competition of positional goods does not necessarily imply that everyone needs to be equal with respect to the good in question; it also does not imply that, in this competition, priority should be given to the worst off group. Fair competition of positional goods does imply, however, that everyone needs to be given *enough* of a chance: "One's reason for leveling down with respect to competitively positional goods […] may be that, when it comes to labor market opportunities, or legal or political victory, only this kind of leveling down will give all competitors enough of a chance" (Brighouse & Swift, 2006:476). This last deliberation naturally arises the most fundamental question sufficientarians face- what exactly is considered *enough* of a chance. Obviously, the scale of the leveling down of positional goods will depend on what represents a fair chance. This is, however, another point of discussion which I will not elaborate on in this paper. Nonetheless, an important conclusion can be drawn, namely: when it comes to positional goods and their competitive nature, sufficientarians too have a reason to favor equality through leveling down.

To summarize, the foregoing suggests that equality of positional goods is indeed a peculiar case. There are plausible arguments and strong reasons for egalitarians, prioritarians, sufficientarians and utilitarians to not just prefer equality of these goods, but even to favor the leveling down principle. It seems that this controversy is caused precisely by the competitive character of the goods in question. As established previously in this chapter, however, positional goods also have a non-positional (or non-competitive) aspect- one that plays a vital role in the consideration about the desirability of equality of these goods and one that has not been discussed yet. I do agree that there are strong enough reasons supporting the patronage of equality, and even leveling down, of positional goods. Be that as it may, in the next chapter I will refute these arguments by demonstrating that equality of positional goods is of greater disadvantage for individuals than one probably realizes. Alternatively, I will support the idea of inequality of these goods and I will do so from an egalitarian perspective.

Chapter 4: Is equality of Positional Goods really desirable?

4.1. Inequality defended on Non-positionality Grounds

As discussed in chapter 3, there is a sound reason why many (if not all) could favor equality and leveling down of positional goods. This very reason is the competitive or positional aspect these goods have. But as explained earlier, positional goods also have a non-positional (non-competitive) aspect. Does leveling down of positional goods (or goods with positional aspect) lead to the same result as leveling down of non-positional goods (or goods with non-positional aspect)? The answer is 'no'. Consider the following examples: if a child in a given school has diabetes, how would her situation be improved if all other children were to be infected with diabetes?; similarly, how would the situation be improved if a child of a wealthy family, as a result of leveling down, knows less history than a child of a poor family? The crucial difference here between leveling down of positional and of non-positional goods is that, unlike the former, the latter has absolutely no effect on the absolute position of the worst off. To paraphrase, leveling down of the non-positional aspect of positional goods (and all positional goods have a non-positional aspect) improves nothing but equality itself.

The foregoing arises one critically vital question, precisely: 'Since leveling down of positional goods improves the absolute position of the worse off considering the positional aspect, why should an egalitarian be concerned with the non-positional aspect? In order to answer this question, let us return to the calculations of V_X, V_{PA} and V_{NPA} from chapter 3. Evidently, if one wants to measure the value of the positional aspect against the value of the non-positional aspect, there could be three possible ways of doing so: 1) the values could be equal; 2) the value of the positional aspect could be greater than the value of the non-positional aspect; and 3) the value of the positional aspect could be smaller than the value of the non-positional aspect (see table 3).

Next to that, it was also established that there could be three possible outcomes of leveling down of positional goods: 1) the value of the positional aspect increases just as much as the value of the non-positional aspect decreases; 2) the value of the positional aspect increases more than the value of the non-positional aspect decreases; and 3) the value of the positional aspect increases less than the value of the non-positional aspect decreases. The former three values and the latter three outcomes create a matrix of nine possible scenarios. Previously, we saw that the more V_{PA} increases, the more $V_X \downarrow$ increases, which is an index of individual's well-being with respect to the positional good X after

leveling down. I concluded thus that, when considering the positional aspect, leveling down of positional goods improves the overall well-being (utility) of individuals with respect to that good.

Now, however, let us investigate the departures from justice for each of the nine possible cases. I will do so by using Christiano and Braynen's difference summing principle introduced in chapter 2. The measures that I will use are not the initial values of V_{PA} and V_{NPA}, but rather their values after leveling down ($V_{PA}\uparrow$ and $V_{NPA}\downarrow$). Once again, the closer the result is to zero, the closer the actual situation is to the ideal one. The ideal distribution in this case is (5, 5)

Departure from justice after leveling down

	D		
	$V_{PA}\uparrow = V_{NPA}\downarrow$	$V_{PA}\uparrow > V_{NPA}\downarrow$	$V_{PA}\uparrow < V_{NPA}\downarrow$
$V_{PA} = V_{NPA}$	4	11	3
$V_{PA} > V_{NPA}$	6	13	5
$V_{PA} < V_{NPA}$	2	7	1

Table 3

The calculations go as follows: in the first situation ($V_{PA}\uparrow = V_{NPA}\downarrow$ and $V_{PA}\uparrow = V_{NPA}\downarrow$) after leveling down, the values of V_{PA} and V_{NPA} changed from (5, 5) to (7, 3) respectively. With these new values I will now calculate the departure from justice with respect to V_X (i.e. departure from justice of individual's well-being regarding X):

$$D = |x^* - x| + |y^* - y| = |5 - V_{PA}\uparrow| + |5 - V_{NPA}\downarrow| = |5 - 7| + |5 - 3| = |-2| + |2| = 4$$

The result is 4. The same principle of computation is applied to the rest of the cases. All calculations can be seen in Appendix 3, the results of which can be found in Table 3. Interestingly enough, it can be observed that where V_{PA} is worth more, the departure from justice with respect to individual's well-being is greater. Consider, for example, the middle case ($V_{PA} > V_{NPA}$; $V_{PA}\uparrow > V_{NPA}\downarrow$). Where both the value of the positional aspect is greater than the non-positional one and it also increases with more than the non-positional one does after leveling down, we can see the greatest departure from justice. If we consider the last case, however, ($V_{PA} < V_{NPA}$; $V_{PA}\uparrow < V_{NPA}\downarrow$) where the value of the non-positional aspect is greater than the positional one, one could see that individual's well-being with respect to X is almost ideal.

The preceding clearly answers the question 'Why should an egalitarian be concerned with the non-positional aspect of positional goods'. Namely: because the non-positional aspect seems to play a

vital role in assessing how just a given situation is regarding positional goods. It also suggests a rather interesting conclusion. On the one hand we saw previously that, when considering the positional aspect, leveling down of positional goods increases the average well-being with respect to a certain positional good. On the other hand, however, we also observed that, again considering the positional aspect, leveling down of positional goods makes the situation more unjust with respect to people's well-being regarding X.

Here we return to the discussion in chapter 2 – are some inequalities more just than some equalities? Some egalitarians argue, as explained previously, that they are. Evidently, *all* positional goods are valued in two rather distinct manners: (1) as the means to achieving a higher position with respect to that good and to competing with/for it (positional aspect); and (2) as an opportunity to enjoy being well educated, or hired in a responsible position, or useful to society (non-positional aspect) (see Table 4). Respectively, when positional goods are leveled down, on the one hand (1) the competitive value of these goods increases which improves the absolute position of the worse off as well as the average utility and, therefore, the majority of scholars have a reason to favor doing so (positional aspect); on the other hand, however, (2) it results in people being deprived of reaching higher positions with respect to that good which in no way benefits the worse off or improves the average well-being and, therefore, no one but strict egalitarians have a reason to favor leveling down (non-positional aspect).

	Positional Aspect	**Non-Positional Aspect**
Positional Goods - Education - Power - Social Inclusion - Social/Political Input	• Provides the means to achieving a higher position • Affects other's chances for achieving the same position • Affects other's status with respect to that position	• Provides opportunities for self-enjoyment and personal/ professional life satisfaction • Does not affect other's chances for possessing the same good • Does not affect other's status with respect to that good
Non-Positional Goods - Health - Environment - Leisure		

Table 4

It is vital here to keep in mind that the two aspects cannot be separated- education will always have both positional and non-positional aspect and they will always be affected by leveling down. The non-competitive benefits, clearly, raise rather different distributive concerns from the instrumental competitive ones (Brighouse & Swift, 2006:483). The question is: when it comes to equality of positional

goods, does the benefit of equality for some people, considering the positional aspect, outweighs the losses for other people, considering the non-positional aspect? Is positional equality better, in more than just one respect, than non-positional inequality?

This question is crucial because if it proves to receive a negative answer – positional equality is *not* better in more than one respect – then even egalitarians should not favor equality of these goods. As already established, some egalitarians do agree that equal distribution where no one benefits is not preferable to unequal distribution where everyone, including the worse off, benefits. This conclusion concerns the non-positional aspect of the goods in question meaning that egalitarians do have a reason *not to* level down. So this is clear- equality of non-positional goods (or goods with non-positional aspect) is not desirable since leveling down with respect to these goods will make some people worse off and no one better.

When it comes to the positional aspect, nonetheless, as explained previously, everyone seems to have a reason to level down. Most of these reasons are of course instrumental ones and do not refer to the value of equality *stricto sensu*; hence they are not egalitarian. In addition, however, we saw that all egalitarians also have a (non-instrumental) reason to level down *unless* the unequal distribution proves to be more just than the equal one. The difficult question now remains: Is it? Now only looking at positional goods' positional aspect, is the equal distribution – where both the relative and the absolute position of the worse off are improved- worse than the unequal distribution?

4.2. Inequality defended on Social Growth Grounds

The benefits of equality of positional goods were already discussed in the previous chapter – leveling down of goods with a positional aspect increases the competitive value of these goods which in return improves the absolute position of the worse off and increases average utility. Let us now, however, examine the advantages (if any) of *inequality of positional goods.* The greatest benefit positional goods bring to society, as mentioned in chapter 3, is their contribution to social growth. Chiefly, social growth occurs when there is positional competition (Hirsch, 1999:52). Alternatively, positional competition occurs when people strive to reach a higher place within a certain hierarchy (*ibid.*). Hence, the more positional competition increases, the more social growth there is.

Julian Wolpert (1976: 4) defines social growth as the "progress towards community". In other words, individuals' separate gains and earns in any of the elements of social life – science, politics, religion, social service, study, profession etc. (Grubel, 1978: 153-154) – yield a composite social income.

Social income Gary Becker (1974: 1063) defines as the sum of these individuals' gains and earns. The more social income there is, the more interactions between the members of the formed community are stimulated and as a result this process generates growth (Wolpert, 1976: 4). Social growth thus refers to the development and maturity of social skills, behavior and attitude, and the increasing positional competition within a certain community as a group and the members of that community as individuals. As John Cummings (1898: 560) puts it, there is "this fundamental tendency of social growth to […] be progress from a state of society characterized by simplicity and equality in the distribution of wealth among those constituting the society, to a society more and more complex, characterized by greater and greater inequality."

Consider again the following. If for some reason all people in a given society are only allowed to have a bachelor's degree, how would this reflect on social growth? Yes, on the one hand the absolute position of these people with respect to the competitive value of that good will be improved. On the other hand, however, as discussed previously (Hirsch, 1999:29), the more people possess the same good, the less quality and desirable this good is perceived by these same people: "The choice facing the individual in a market or market-type transaction in the positional sector […] always appears more attractive than it turns out to be after others have exercised their choice" (Hirsch, 1999:52). In other words, and as discussed in the previous section, while equality of positional goods increases their competitive value, it also decreases the desirability and the value of the good itself (non-positional aspect).

Think of the 'new highway' example (Hirsch, 1999:31). If the crowding on a new highway, built to outsource the congestions on the other roads, reaches a point of being congested itself, it is no longer valuable to the drivers since using it is just as fast as (or even slower that) driving on the old roads. The competitive value (V_{PA}) of driving on the highway increases because all the cars from all other roads have the chance to reach their destination equally fast- as a group. The value of the highway itself (V_{NPA}), however, decreases since it no longer benefits the drivers- as individuals. Likewise, in a world with people with only bachelor's degrees, the competitive value of the degree (utility) increases, but the value of the person having that degree decreases. Since everyone else in one society has the same (level of) positional good, the value of the good itself (not its competitive value) is depreciated which leads to social waste. Evidently, the more equally educated people are, the more the competitive value of the specific education increases but the less special it is to be educated; thus social growth (with respect to that good) stops.

Let me examine the issue from the reverse angle. How does one create social growth? In general, education is usually valued extrinsically, meaning that educated people are (expected to be) better citizens, productive employees, responsible parents – aspects, all being reflected on the well-being of society (Hirsch, 1999: 49). Once we have established that, naturally comes the question: how do you make people want to be educated? Hirsch (1999: 30-1) argues that the answer is- create obstacles. For example, assume that all a person wants in her life is to buy a fast car. Since she cannot afford to buy such a car she would need to find a well-paid job. A well paid job, however, requires prior experience, maybe an internship. This internship then requires having a master's degree, which means she would need a bachelor's degree etc. Real life of course is more complex and, more often than not, people strive to accomplish more. Nevertheless, the line of though is the same. All these accomplishments are highly dependent on overcoming some obstacles. These very obstacles are exactly what creates social growth.

One could reasonably ask: what happens when all (or most) people reach the same position? Undoubtedly, social growth stops. Hirsch (1999:53) claims that if there is a shortfall in performance on the positional market, hence if social growth stops, it is "not because performance gets worse but because the demands on performance become greater". So how can social growth be kept? The best way of ensuring social growth, according to Hirsch (1999:31), is by constantly increasing or changing the obstacles and therefore generating incentives. For instance, when most people in one society are qualified to run for a mayor, extra 5 years of specific experience should be required (increasing the obstacles); when all graduates are eligible for a certain type of job, a foreign language should be required (changing the obstacles), and so on. To put it simply, Hirsch argues that ensuring social growth means keeping the positional competition going. There cannot be any intensive competition, however, if all people have the same position. Growth and equality are, therefore, mutually exclusive (Hirsch, 1999:32). To paraphrase, the only way of ensuring social growth is by ensuring positional inequality.

Clearly, inequality of certain positional goods is a vital factor for social growth. Some argue that "[i]n the wider political culture, it is frequently suggested that those who attend to relativities have simply failed to understand the benefits of growth**"** (Brighouse & Swift, 2006:472). So here comes perhaps the most essential question in this paper: why should an egalitarian be concerned with social growth, especially when it requires inequality? The answer is rather simple- because people in general, and the worse off in particular, would benefit more from an unequal distribution of positional goods than from an equal one.

Here is how. Assume that all people in a given society, through leveling down, have the least possible but equal political power. That is to say that everyone in that society can make decisions on local level,

for instance: where to build a playground; what time the shops should close; who should collect the garbage, etc. Admittedly, even though there is obviously no social growth, this situation is in one respect preferable than an unequal distribution of political influence. Nevertheless, the flaw in this example is apparent even to an egalitarian. No one has the right to make any important decisions about health care, immigration laws, peace and security etc.. Clearly, when it comes to thousands of people, the best way to coordinate them and their needs is through representatives. If appointed, however, these representatives would then have more political power than the rest which will decrease equality. Nevertheless, thanks to these slightly more powerful people, the whole community would benefit by having more regulated civil and political affairs on a higher level. As a result, even the worse off - the ones still having little political power – would have higher standard of living and would be more secure and protected than they would be in an equal distribution of political influence.

Now think of social inclusion. Generally speaking, one's race, gender, nationality or age often represents a certain position in a given society. What if, for the purpose of avoiding discrimination and inequality, instead of allowing people to freely interact based on common interests and ideas, everyone is restricted to communicate only with people from the same nationality; or the same culture; or the same race; or the same gender? Seemingly, the chances of anyone being excluded because of racist or any other sort of discriminatory reasons is eliminated. Nevertheless, when the like-minded people are prevented from interacting, how does the society as a whole, and the individuals in it in particular, benefit? Would a black woman, surrounded by white men all working in the same field and all sharing similar ideas, feel more repressed than being deprived of the opportunity to exercise her skills and apply her knowledge but is surrounded by other black women? Would an Italian, studying in a different country where no one speaks Italian, feel more repressed than living in Italy and not having the opportunity to do the studies she wants? Clearly, by ensuring equality of social inclusion, social growth is inevitably ceased. The benefits of such equality are many. The damages, however, are far more.

The foregoing distinctly illustrates how all things considered equality of positional goods has a negative impact on social growth. Alternatively, it was demonstrated how social growth affects the well-being of society as a group; of the worse off in particular; and of people as individuals. We can then assess equality in two different ways: (1) *good-specific* leveling down of positional goods might make some people better off with respect to that good; but (2) it does not necessarily make these same people better off *all things considered* (Brighouse & Swift, 2006:483). Conclusively, when it comes to positional goods and social growth, all things considered inequality attains major significance.

As Brighouse and Swift (2006:484) put it, "Conceived thus generally, it is hard to see why we should prefer (*a*) a society in which all have fair or equal chances of achieving wellbeing to (*b*) one in which those chances are unequal, but those whose chances are worse nonetheless have better chances, of achieving wellbeing all things considered, than in *a*". And as discussed in chapter 2, many egalitarians - based on the argument that some inequalities are more just than some equalities - would consider (b) to be more just than (a). Moreover, Brighouse and Swift's latter assumption as well as my defense of inequality of positional goods are in exact accordance with the maximin principle - a society is just if it maximizes the average level of the worse-off group (Rawls, 1971:266; Temkin, 1993: 31) (the maximin principle will be discussed in details in the next section). To paraphrase, even an egalitarian would prefer unequal distribution of positional goods (as long as it stimulates growth and improves everyone's well-being including the worse-off's) to an equal distribution where absolutely no one benefits, all things considered.

This precise conclusion is based on the consideration that, even though equality (good-specific or all-things-considered) is an important value, it is not the only one an egalitarian is concerned with. Thus, justice as such comprises of not only equality, but also fairness, opportunities, deserts etc., all of which play a role in people's well-being. I would like to stress here that I too agree with the idea of equality being one of the highest moral values. I do not, therefore, try to argue that *all* inequalities are more just than *all* equalities. However, I do claim that, especially in the case of positional goods, there are sound reasons for someone concerned with justice and improving people's well-being to favor an unequal distribution of these goods. In the preceding, I illustrated two of these reasons- (1) all positional goods have a non-positional aspect, and the leveling down of these goods will only make some people worse and no one better off; and (2) inequality is a necessary element of social growth, both of which have positive effects on the well-being of all individuals, including the worse-off. I shall now provide one more egalitarian reason proving that leveling down of positional goods – and thus equality – is not indispensable, and therefore not desirable.

4.3. Inequality defended on Fair Competition Grounds

Think of the idea of justice and fair competition for a position. Naturally, when speaking of fairness and equality of opportunity, John Rawls comes to mind, and more precisely his second principle of justice (the maximin principle) (1971:266): "Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: (a) to *the greatest benefit of the least advantaged*, consistent with the just savings

principle, and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of *fair equality of opportunity*". Logically speaking, it seems that proviso (b) comes prior to proviso (a). That is to say that, while social and economic inequalities need to be arranged to the benefit of the least advantaged, the competition prior to acquiring these (advantaged) positions is not to be arranged in such a way: "Their [(a) and (b)] lexical ordering implies that fair equality of opportunity matters more than the benefit of the least advantaged and should not be sacrificed just to make them better off" (Brighouse & Swift, 2006:484). Simply put, formal fairness comes before equality.

Furthermore, the maximin principle states that "a society's political, social and economic institutions are just if they maximize the average level of the worse-off group" (Temkin, 1993: 31). Accordingly, Brighouse and Swift (2006:484-5) go even further in their evaluation of the relevance of equality of opportunity to positional goods and claim that "permitting an unfair competition is better for the worse off". They support this claim by an example of private and institutional education. For instance, preventing wealthy parents from paying for private education for their children could have damaging effects on both these children's and parents' motivation. Being deprived of the opportunity to invest their money in children's well-being, they will have fewer incentives for being productive, work less, consume more and therefore harm the economy, which in result harms the worse off group too. If given the opportunity to invest in their children, however, these parents might support not just the children but also the production of goods which will benefit the worse off. Here we clearly go back to the previous discussion on social growth and its effects on the worse off. Brighouse and Swift (2006:484-5) conclude that:

> Once we care about wellbeing, or prospects for well-being, all things considered, then the fact that some opportunity-related goods are positional seems a less weighty reason for distributing them equally. It remains true that in a competition you cannot improve one person's chance of achieving a particular desired outcome without damaging somebody else's. But if an unfair or unequal competition helps the worse off, all things considered, fairness considerations do not seem very weighty.

Matthew Clayton and Andrew Williams (2000:7) support that same stance and argue that "the introduction of certain inequalities may be *Pareto superior"* (*ibid*.), meaning better for some and worse for no one. They argue that if departures from equality are constrained by Rawls' difference principle, these inequalities must improve the position of the worse off. This will then result in diminishing the gap between them and the better off. Likewise, Temkin (1993: 33) claims that "Rawls' difference principle is best understood *not* as a compromise between

utility and equality […] but as a result of taking a concern for welfare and adjectivally modifying it with a concern for the worst off". The foregoing suggests two conclusions: (1) fairness does not necessarily mean equality; and (2) an unequal competition for positional goods benefits the worse off more than an equal competition would, which is in line with the maximin principle.

But let us now walk out of the shadow of who benefits from what and analyze the issue of fair competition by itself. I do admit that with respect to material goods or primary goods – such as food or shelter –everyone needs to have a fair chance of acquiring these goods (and in this context, when I say 'fair' I also mean 'equal'). When it comes to positional goods, however, this fairness or fair competition, I would argue, does not refer to *all* people in general but to those similar in talents, efforts, capabilities etc. In other words, competition for a specific type of job is not among everyone but among everyone having similar professional and/or education background; everyone who is keenly interested in the specific industry; everyone who has purposefully worked into the direction of getting such a job. Likewise, equal chance of pursuing a PhD should not be given to everyone in general, but rather to those interested in or passionate about academia; those tenacious and patient enough to wait before they see the fruits of their work; those willing to extend the boundaries of their knowledge and the knowledge of others. The competition for positions is thus not among *all people* and therefore it seems that leveling down of *all people* to a certain position, so that they *all* have equal chance, is unnecessary.

Hirsch (1999:49-50) also admits that in real life the only people who would persist with any competition are those fully convinced that the individual benefit of competing is worth the additional costs and efforts. It is thus noteworthy to point out that not all people need to (or want to for that matter) have a fair chance in the competition for a specific position. One could say then that, when it comes to positional goods, pure equality is irrelevant to fair competition.

Brighouse and Swift (2006:484) too agree that "[g]iving priority to fair equality of opportunity implies that it is more important for the similarly endowed and motivated to have equal chances of achieving unequally advantaged positions than for the least advantaged to enjoy the greatest possible benefits". Thus, when speaking of fair competition with respect to positional goods, even from an egalitarian perspective as implied by Rawls' second principle of justice, one needs to be concerned not with everyone in general (i.e. complete leveling down with respect to one good) but with those relevant to the competition in question. In other words, even for an egalitarian, pure equality is of secondary importance.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

There is much to discuss about egalitarianism and its implications about equality. In this paper I have presented a rather brief discussion on two of the main types of egalitarianism. On the one hand I examined the views of the so called non-strict egalitarians who share the idea that, even though equality is a fundamental value, it is not necessarily the most fundamental one. Alternatively, it has been suggested that in certain situation some inequalities might appear more just than some equalities. The reasoning of the latter consideration is based on the common good conception of equality- (1) in each circumstance there exists an ideal distribution; and (2) when evaluating how just the world is it matters how far the actual distribution is from the ideal distribution. Through the use of examples (and the difference summing principle) I have demonstrated that indeed in certain cases it appears that unequal distribution of some goods is more just than the equal distribution.

I then examined strict egalitarianism and its views on equality and justice. According to strict egalitarians, equality is a supreme value, good in itself, and therefore any equal distribution is always preferable to any unequal distribution. The so called extreme egalitarians believe that there is absolutely nothing which can make it just that some people are worse off than others through no fault of their own. Granted that, these egalitarians seem to favor leveling down as a way of improving equality. In other words, making some people worse off and no one better is in at least in one fundamental respect an improvement of the situation.

Based on the previous two views of justice and equality I have presented the leveling down objection. This objection applies in cases where reaching equality is worse for some people and better for no one. Those who disagree with the leveling down principle (non-egalitarians but also moderate egalitarians) usually base their objection on the Slogan - one situation cannot be worse (or better) than another if there is no one for whom it is worse (or better). Strict egalitarians seem to argue that anyone rejecting the leveling down principal also rejects equality as a moral ideal and is thus not an egalitarian. Non-strict egalitarians, however, argue that equality is indeed an essential moral value but egalitarians as such need to be pluralist and to have a broader understanding as well as vision of justice. That is to say that equality is one among many other considerations – such as fairness, opportunities, deserts - an egalitarian should be concerned with.

I have then elaborated on the nature and social significance of positional goods. By definition, positional goods are intangible goods the competitive value of which is determined by the number of relevant others possessing that same good. One of the elements that makes them special, and what

creates their positionality, is exactly this competitive value they have. As explained previously, one's position with respect to political influence, education or social inclusion is ascertained by comparison with all those being in a higher, in a lower and in the same position. In other words, one's relative position in the distribution of positional goods affects one's absolute position with respect to these goods.

Since the more equal positions there are the more the competitive value of these positions increases, there seem to be many reasons for not just egalitarians but also utilitarians, prioritarians and sufficientarians to favor equality as well as leveling down. Evidently, equality of positional goods increases not just the relative position but also the absolute position of everyone which means: (1) the average utility increases; (2) the worse off are made better off in absolute terms; and (3) everyone has a fair, or sufficient, chance of participating as well as succeeding in the positional competition. Not to mention equality itself is improved.

All the above arguments provide good reasons for the leveling down of positional goods with a positional aspect. As discussed in chapter 3, however, all positional goods appear to have a non-positional aspect too. That is to say that goods such as political influence, social inclusion and education also provide personal satisfaction and lead to personal development- aspects that have nothing to do with competition. Equality of non-positional goods thus (or goods with non-positional aspect) does not improve the absolute standing of the worse off in the distribution meaning that leveling down of such goods is worse for some people and better for no one. Obviously in this case there are no non-egalitarian reasons to support equality, Moreover, even some egalitarians have a reason to prefer inequality of positional goods with non-positional aspect (and all positional goods have a non-positional aspect).

In this paper I have argued that, even though there are clearly many reasons to support equality of positional goods, there are even more (or more socially significant) reasons to support inequality of these goods. Considering the non-positional aspect described above is one of them. The second reason, and perhaps the most notable one, is social growth and its effect on the well-being of society both as a group and as individuals. As discussed, social growth is created by intensive positional competition which occurs only by constantly increasing or changing the obstacles. In other words, ensuring social growth means ensuring positional inequality and the perpetual struggle for reaching a higher position. Conclusively, social growth and equality of positional goods are mutually exclusive.

On the question: 'why would an egalitarian be concerned with social growth and thus support inequality?', I gave the following answer: 'because an unequal distribution of positional goods (i.e. social growth) improves the situation for society in general and for the worse off in particular. Evidently, this

precise consideration is in exact accordance with the maximin principle. This argument I supported with examples of the negative effects of leveling down of positional goods (political influence and social inclusion). I concluded that, even though a good-specific equality is in one respect desirable, all things considered equality of positional goods seems to be unbeneficial for anyone. On this last note, it appears that even an egalitarian has a reason not to favor leveling down and thus not to favor equality of positional goods.

The third egalitarian reason which I provided in support of inequality of positional goods concerns the issue of fair competition. Clearly, when speaking of competition for material goods the term 'fair' often means 'equal'. Nonetheless, this is not the case with regards to positional goods. Namely, the competition for a specific position in the job market is not among everyone but among everyone with similar interests and/or similar qualifications. Thus, it seems premature for one to argue that total equality of opportunity with respect to positional goods is necessary. As implied by Rawls' second principle of justice, (1) fair opportunity of competition comes prior to equality; and (2) this competition is not to be arranged in the advantage of the worse off (i.e. the worse off are not the primary concern). I have argued, therefore, that a fair competition of the similarly endowed is indeed important but it does not require pure equality and the leveling down of all individuals with respect to a given positional good.

To summarize, equality of positional goods: (1) makes some people worse off and no one better off when considering their non-positional aspect; (2) stops social growth and thus prevents people, including the worse off, from increasing their well-being; and (3) is irrelevant to the issue of fair competition. I can thus draw the straightforward conclusion that even an egalitarian (non-strict that is) has reasons to favor *inequality of positional goods*.

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Appendix 1

Calculating the value of X before levelling down

	V_X
$V_{PA} = V_{NPA}$	10
$V_{PA} > V_{NPA}$ $V_{PA} \geq V_{NPA}$	8
$V_{PA} < V_{NPA}$ $V_{PA} \leq V_{NPA}$	8

$V_{PA} = V_{NPA} = 5$

$V_{X=} V_{PA} + V_{NPA} = 5 + 5 = 10$

$V_{PA} > V_{NPA}$; $V_{PA} = 5$; $V_{NPA} = 3$

$V_{X=} V_{PA} + V_{NPA} = 5 + 3 = 8$

$V_{PA} < V_{NPA}$; $V_{PA} = 3$; $V_{NPA} = 5$

$V_{X=} V_{PA} + V_{NPA} = 3 + 5 = 8$

Appendix 2

Calculating the value of X after levelling down

	$V_X \downarrow$		
	$V_{PA} = V_{NPA}$	$V_{PA} > V_{NPA}$	$V_{PA} < V_{NPA}$
$V_{PA} \uparrow$	10	15	13
$V_{PA} \uparrow$	8	15	9
$V_{PA} \uparrow$	8	13	11

$V_{PA} = V_{NPA} = 5;$ $V_{PA} \uparrow = V_{NPA} \downarrow = 2$ points

$V_X \downarrow = V_{PA} \uparrow + V_{NPA} \downarrow = (5 + 2) + (5 - 2) = \mathbf{7} + \mathbf{3} = 10$

$V_{PA} = V_{NPA} = 5$ $V_{PA} \uparrow > V_{NPA} \downarrow$

$V_X \downarrow = V_{PA} \uparrow + V_{NPA} \downarrow = 2(5 + 2) + (5 - 2) = \mathbf{14} + \mathbf{3} = 15$

$V_{PA} = V_{NPA} = 5$ $V_{PA} \uparrow < V_{NPA} \downarrow$

$V_X \downarrow = V_{PA} \uparrow + V_{NPA} \downarrow = (5 + 2) + 2(5 - 2) = \mathbf{7} + \mathbf{6} = 13$

$V_{PA} > V_{NPA}$; $V_{PA} = 5$; $V_{NPA} = 3$ $V_{PA} \uparrow = V_{NPA} \downarrow = 2$ points

$V_X \downarrow = V_{PA} \uparrow + V_{NPA} \downarrow = (5 + 2) + (3 - 2) = \mathbf{7} + \mathbf{1} = 8$

$V_{PA} > V_{NPA}$; $V_{PA} = 5$; $V_{NPA} = 3$ $V_{PA} \uparrow > V_{NPA} \downarrow$

$V_X \downarrow = V_{PA} \uparrow + V_{NPA} \downarrow = 2(5 + 2) + (3 - 2) = \mathbf{14} + \mathbf{1} = 15$

$V_{PA} > V_{NPA}$; $V_{PA} = 5$; $V_{NPA} = 3$ $V_{PA} \uparrow < V_{NPA} \downarrow$

$V_X \downarrow = V_{PA} \uparrow + V_{NPA} \downarrow = (5 + 2) + 2(3 - 2) = \mathbf{7} + \mathbf{2} = 9$

$V_{PA} < V_{NPA}$; $V_{PA} = 3$; $V_{NPA} = 5$ $V_{PA} \uparrow = V_{NPA} \downarrow = 2$ points

$V_X \downarrow = V_{PA} \uparrow + V_{NPA} \downarrow = (3 + 2) + (5 - 2) = \mathbf{5} + \mathbf{3} = 8$

$V_{PA} < V_{NPA}$; $V_{PA} = 3$; $V_{NPA} = 5$ $V_{PA} \uparrow > V_{NPA} \downarrow$

$V_X \downarrow = V_{PA} \uparrow + V_{NPA} \downarrow = 2(3 + 2) + (5 - 2) = \mathbf{10} + \mathbf{3} = 13$

$V_{PA} < V_{NPA}$; $V_{PA} = 3$; $V_{NPA} = 5$ $V_{PA} \uparrow < V_{NPA} \downarrow$

$V_X \downarrow = V_{PA} \uparrow + V_{NPA} \downarrow = (3 + 2) + 2(5 - 2) = \mathbf{5} + \mathbf{6} = 11$

Appendix 3

Departure from justice after levelling down

- Calculated by using the new values for $V_{PA}\uparrow$ and $V_{NPA}\downarrow$ (in bold in Appendix 2) for each situation
- Ideal distribution is (5, 5)
- $D(S_{actual}, S_{ideal})$ = |x* - x| + |y* - y|

	D		
	$V_{PA}\uparrow = V_{NPA}\downarrow$	$V_{PA}\uparrow > V_{NPA}\downarrow$	$V_{PA}\uparrow < V_{NPA}\downarrow$
$V_{PA} = V_{NPA}$	4	11	3
$V_{PA} > V_{NPA}$	6	13	5
$V_{PA} < V_{NPA}$	2	7	1

$V_{PA} = V_{NPA} = 5$; $V_{PA}\uparrow = V_{NPA}\downarrow$ = 2 points $V_{PA}\uparrow$=7; $V_{NPA}\downarrow$= 3

$D = |5 - V_{PA}\uparrow| + |5 - V_{NPA}\downarrow| = |5 - 7| + |5 - 3| = |-2| + |2| = 4$

$V_{PA} = V_{NPA} = 5$ $V_{PA}\uparrow > V_{NPA}\downarrow$ $V_{PA}\uparrow$=14; $V_{NPA}\downarrow$=3

$D = |5 - V_{PA}\uparrow| + |5 - V_{NPA}\downarrow| = |5 - 14| + |5 - 3| = |-9| + |2| = 11$

$V_{PA} = V_{NPA} = 5$ $V_{PA}\uparrow < V_{NPA}\downarrow$ $V_{PA}\uparrow$=7; $V_{NPA}\downarrow$=6

$D = |5 - V_{PA}\uparrow| + |5 - V_{NPA}\downarrow| = |5 - 7| + |5 - 6| = |-2| + |-1| = 3$

$V_{PA} > V_{NPA}$; $V_{PA} = 5$; $V_{NPA} = 3$ $V_{PA}\uparrow = V_{NPA}\downarrow$ = 2 points $V_{PA}\uparrow$=7; $V_{NPA}\downarrow$=1

$D = |5 - V_{PA}\uparrow| + |5 - V_{NPA}\downarrow| = |5 - 7| + |5 - 1| = |-2| + |4| = 6$

$V_{PA} > V_{NPA}$; $V_{PA} = 5$; $V_{NPA} = 3$ $V_{PA}\uparrow > V_{NPA}\downarrow$ $V_{PA}\uparrow$=14; $V_{NPA}\downarrow$=1

$D = |5 - V_{PA}\uparrow| + |5 - V_{NPA}\downarrow| = |5 - 14| + |5 - 1| = |-9| + |4| = 13$

$V_{PA} > V_{NPA}$; V_{PA} = 5 ; V_{NPA}= 3 $V_{PA}\uparrow < V_{NPA}\downarrow$ $V_{PA}\uparrow$=7; $V_{NPA}\downarrow$=2

$D = |5 - V_{PA}\uparrow| + |5 - V_{NPA}\downarrow| = |5 - 7| + |5 - 2| = |-2| + |3| = 5$

$V_{PA} < V_{NPA}$; V_{PA} = 3 ; V_{NPA}= 5 $V_{PA}\uparrow = V_{NPA}\downarrow$= 2 points $V_{PA}\uparrow$=5; $V_{NPA}\downarrow$=3

$D = |5 - V_{PA}\uparrow| + |5 - V_{NPA}\downarrow| = |5 - 5| + |5 - 3| = |0| + |2| = 2$

$V_{PA} < V_{NPA}$; V_{PA} = 3 ; V_{NPA}= 5 $V_{PA}\uparrow > V_{NPA}\downarrow$ $V_{PA}\uparrow$=10; $V_{NPA}\downarrow$=3

$D = |5 - V_{PA}\uparrow| + |5 - V_{NPA}\downarrow| = |5 - 10| + |5 - 3| = |-5| + |2| = 7$

$V_{PA} < V_{NPA}$; V_{PA} = 3 ; V_{NPA}= 5 $V_{PA}\uparrow < V_{NPA}\downarrow$ $V_{PA}\uparrow$=5; $V_{NPA}\downarrow$=6

$D = |5 - V_{PA}\uparrow| + |5 - V_{NPA}\downarrow| = |5 - 5| + |5 - 6| = |0| + |-1| = 1$