**Luck Egalitarianism and the History of Political Thought[[1]](#footnote-1)\***

*Carl Knight, University of Glasgow and University of Johannesburg*

1. **Introduction**

Luck egalitarianism is a family of egalitarian theories of distributive justice that give a special place to luck, choice, and responsibility. These theories can be understood as responding to perceived weaknesses in influential earlier theories of both the left – in particular Rawls’ liberal egalitarianism (1971) – and the right – Nozick’s libertarianism (1974) stands out here. Rawls refused to give a fundamental or systematic role to individual choice or responsibility when it came to the distribution of goods, and is therefore subject to the traditional complaint that theories of the left fail to reward hard work and prudent decision making. Nozick, by contrast, gave choice a central role, rewarding those who appropriate unowned goods or receive them through free exchange, but his refusal to acknowledge any duties of justice to support those who miss out on these processes (for instance, because they are born later when there are no unowned goods left) leaves him open to the usual complaint that theories of the right are unduly harsh on the poor and dispossessed. Like Rawls, luck egalitarianism calls for a significant redistribution of resources, especially to the benefit of the worst off. But it does so in a ‘responsibility sensitive’ way, so that those who are responsible for bringing about greater benefits receive greater rewards. In this way luck egalitarianism’s proponents see it as drawing from the strengths of left-wing and right-wing thought alike.

Unlike Rawls and Nozick, luck egalitarianism’s main proponents have shown virtually no interest in the historical antecedents of their view. Rawls put great emphasis on the continuity of his theory with the great social contract theories of modern political thought, particularly emphasising its Kantian character, while Nozick overtly develops his theory as an elaboration of John Locke’s account of property. By contrast, how luck egalitarianism is related to the history of political thought or philosophy more generally has been left unexplored by its proponents. Perhaps this is because they see luck egalitarianism, with its focus on individual choice and association with such contemporary concerns as equality of opportunity, as without significant predecessors in the canon.

My purpose in this chapter is to make the tentative first steps towards identifying some historical antecedents of luck egalitarianism among the main works of Western political thought. I do not claim that any full-blown luck egalitarian theory can be found prior to the 1980s articles by Richard Arneson, G. A. Cohen and (though he subsequently denied that he is a luck egalitarian) Ronald Dworkin (Arneson, 1989; Cohen, 1989; Dworkin, 1989; 2003). Certainly, no historical theory as closely approximates the mainstream forms of luck egalitarianism as Locke approximates Nozickian right-libertarianism on the one hand and left-libertarianism on the other (see Steiner, 1994; Vallentyne and Steiner (eds), 2000). Rather, I argue that there are *precursors of certain distinctive aspects of luck egalitarianism among the great texts of political thought.* This is really all that Rawls can claim of Locke, Rousseau, Hume or Kant. Since certain parallels between Rawls’ ideas and those advanced by historical writers are considered of wide interest, so I believe there should be at least some interest in the similar parallels, so far neglected, concerning luck egalitarianism.

Before I begin in earnest, a brief note on method is in order. I broadly follow the approach to the history of ideas pioneered by Arthur O. Lovejoy. Lovejoy’s ‘initial procedure may be said – though the parallel has its dangers – to be somewhat analogous to that of analytical chemistry. In dealing with the history of philosophical doctrines, for example, it cuts into the hard and fast individual systems and, for its own purposes, breaks them into their component elements, into what may be called their unit-ideas’ (Lovejoy, 1936, p. 3). In this spirit, and notwithstanding the ‘dangers’, I aim to identify certain recognizably luck egalitarian unit-ideas – or perhaps more accurately, idea-complexes (see Knight, 2012) – in major historical works. In doing this, I do not of course claim that any thinker’s overall system of thought, as opposed to specific ideas therein, have a proto-luck egalitarian character.

1. **Definitions**

In order to locate luck egalitarian ideas in texts, we must get clear what we mean by luck egalitarianism. In broad terms, we can define luck egalitarianism as a family of egalitarian theories of distributive justice that give a special place to luck, choice, and responsibility. From that point, we can develop two more specific definitions of luck egalitarianism.

A common alternative name for luck egalitarianism is ‘responsibility-sensitive egalitarianism’. This suggests something like the following:

*Responsibility sensitivity* – each individual’s advantage level should reflect the individual’s exercises of responsibility.

For the view to be a responsibility-sensitive *egalitarian* view, something else is needed in addition to responsibility sensitivity. In the absence of responsible choices, responsibility sensitivity by itself says nothing about a distribution, so inequality might be permitted, which seems unfairly arbitrary from an egalitarian point of view. Hence a further condition is needed (Hurley, 2003):

*Equality default view –* in the absence of responsibility, advantages should be distributed equally.

Responsibility sensitivity and the equality default view together provide a first, responsibility-based definition of luck egalitarianism.

A second definition focuses on luck. Specifically, it says that luck egalitarianism endorses the following proposition:

*Luck neutralization* – the distributive effects of some or all luck should be nullified.

The ‘some or all’ equivocation is explained as follows. The standard luck egalitarian position, ‘brute-luck egalitarianism’, only neutralizes the distributive effects of brute luck – that is, the upshot of unanticipated and non-declinable risks (Dworkin, 1981; Arneson, 1989; Cohen 1989). The less common ‘all-luck egalitarian’ view additionally neutralizes the effects of option luck (the upshot of anticipated and declinable risks) (Knight, 2013; cf. Segall, 2010, ch. 3).

Most luck egalitarians treat the two definitions set out above as equivalent, and freely move between describing their view in terms of responsibility sensitivity and luck neutralization. It is worth bearing in mind that this is only the case where we make further assumptions. For one thing, we have to assume that responsibility is the inverse of luck (Hurley, 2003; cf. Nussbaum, 1986, p. 4). Nevertheless, for most purposes in normative political philosophy the two definitions can safely be treated as equivalent. However, as we shall see, there is value in distinguishing them when it comes to the history of political thought.

1. **Aristotle on justice**

An obvious starting point when discussing the roots of any theory of distributive justice is Aristotle’s famous account. I will argue, however, that that account has rather more of a connection to luck egalitarian themes than it does to other contemporary egalitarian views.

Aristotle argues that justice ‘does mean equality – but equality for those who are equal, and not for all. Again, inequality is considered to be just; and indeed it is – but only for those who are unequal, and not for all … a just distribution is one in which there is proportion between the things distributed and those to whom they are distributed’ (Aristotle,1995, 1280a). So on Aristotle’s account, neither equality nor inequality are intrinsically just; what matters is whether an individual’s share is proportional to some relevant property or characteristic of that individual.

Even at this preliminary stage we can see a structural similarity between Aristotle’s view and luck egalitarianism. Both views maintain that where individuals are identical in their relevant properties, their distributive shares should be equal, and where individuals are non-identical in relevant properties, their shares should be unequal. This may seem such a general view that it has nothing in particular to do with luck egalitarianism, but several of its egalitarian rivals would not endorse the view. Outcome egalitarianism would not accept it, as it would not allow that individuals are ever non-identical in a distributively important sense. Nor would democratic equality (Anderson, 1999) accept it. As this view says that the distributively important respect is community membership, it will, (1) like outcome egalitarianism, deny that members are ever non-identical in a distributively important sense, and (2) deny that members should be unequal with non-members – it offers minimum guarantees for members but makes no attempt to regulate distributions between members and non-members. Finally, Rawls’ justice as fairness only achieves proportional justice in respect of one of its three principles (Rawls, 1971). The principle of equal basic liberties again denies that individuals can be non-identical in the relevant sense. The fair equality of opportunity principle does seem to achieve a kind of proportional justice, as it allows inequalities to arise in response to individual efforts to acquire offices and positions. The difference principle may also seem promising, as it too allows inequalities. However, these inequalities cannot be portrayed as necessary to achieving a proportion between the goods being distributed and the relevant personal properties of those receiving them, but are rather designed with the very different goal of maximizing the position of the worst off. In short, whatever the merits of these non-luck egalitarian theories, they can not satisfy even the loosest definition of proportional justice, as luck egalitarianism can with ease.

Are these findings reinforced when we consider which particular personal properties Aristotle considers to be relevant to distributive justice? Aristotle holds that this must be a matter of personal merit or desert (Aristotle, 2000, 1158b). This is in turn set by the end for which the city has been formed: ‘For everyone agrees that justice in distribution must be according to merit, but not everyone means the same by merit; democrats think that it is being a free citizen, oligarchs that it is wealth or noble birth, and aristocrats that it is virtue’ (Aristotle, 2000, 1131a; see also Aristotle, 1995, 1280a-1281a). Here we can see two contrasts between luck egalitarians and Aristotle’s account. In terms of justificatory strategy, luck egalitarians do not see the end for which the community was established as part of the argument about appropriate distributive shares. In terms of substantive principle, luck egalitarians do not give a role to the personal property of virtue or excellence.

Nevertheless, we can find similarities here too. First, some versions of luck egalitarianism are directly responsive to desert (see Arneson, 2001; Vallentyne, 2003). Second, even the standard version of luck egalitarianism, which does not respond to desert or virtue, nevertheless responds to responsibility. This is clearly a related notion; for Aristotle, virtue is in large part a matter of action.

These remarks do not, of course, show any tight fit between Aristotle’s account of the personal properties relevant to distribution and luck egalitarian’s account of these properties. It seems, however, that there is more of a fit than one would find when considering other modern egalitarian theories. Like luck egalitarianism, there is no role within outcome egalitarianism, democratic equality and justice as fairness for justifications based on the end of the community, nor is there any substantive distributive role for virtue or excellence. But these latter three theories are less potentially accommodating of desert than luck egalitarianism is, and they do not make use of the related concept of responsibility.

To make the main point clear, we can formulate Aristotle’s view on distribution as follows:

*Desert sensitivity:* each individual’s advantage level should reflect the individual’s desert.

This view is the same as the luck egalitarian principle of responsibility, except that ‘exercises of responsibility’ are replaced by the related notion of desert. There is no even vaguely similar principle in major recent non-luck egalitarian theories. Even Nozick, seemingly favourably disposed to desert claims (e.g. Nozick, 1974, pp. 154-155), is hostile to ‘patterned’ principles such as this.

Furthermore, Aristotle also seems to be committed to an analogue of the equality default view, the second part of the first, responsibility-based definition of luck egalitarianism provided above. Just as luck egalitarianism holds that, in the absence of responsibility or choice, equality is required, so Aristotle would seem to hold that in the absence of desert or merit, equality is required. So Aristotle’s account of proportional justice has a double structural similarity to luck egalitarianism. Both views are distributively sensitive to broadly similar personal properties, and in the absence of these properties insist on equality.

1. **Machiavelli on Fortuna**

We have seen that there is a structural resemblance between Aristotle’s account of proportional justice and the first, responsibility-orientated definition of luck egalitarianism. Though we have noted some differences in the substance of these views, we have thus far neglected the greatest one. Aristotle clearly makes no attempt to neutralize luck. Indeed, of all the political thinkers in the canon, he may be the most overtly ‘luck sensitive’, as is especially clear in his account of natural slavery (Aristotle, 1995, 1254a-b). Though desert and responsibility are related, Aristotle evidently uses desert in such a way that distributive shares are set largely on the basis of brute luck. Even in considering personal conduct, Aristotle concludes that the good life has at its heart pursuits that are open to great misfortune (Nussbaum, 1986, chs 11-12).

Augustine queried the worship of the Roman goddess Fortune (‘How, then, is the goddess Fortune good, when she comes to both good men and bad without any discrimination’ (Augustine, 1998*,* IV. 18), but it is with Machiavelli that we see a systematic but – crucially – prudential form of luck neutralization. His recommendations in this respect are manifold. A wise prince does not use mercenaries or auxiliaries, which makes one ‘completely subject to Fortune’, but rather uses his own soldiers (Machiavelli, 1979a, XIII). He does not relax in times of peace, but prepares so that he might survive misfortune (Machiavelli, 1979a,XIV). Those that are armed with prudence and weapons can keep a state even when fortune turns against them (Machiavelli, 1979b, I, XIX). Just as one can prepare for floods with embankments and dikes, so too can Fortuna be resisted by ‘organized strength’ (Machiavelli, 1979a, XXV).

It may be doubted here whether Machiavelli is really proposing that luck be neutralized. The central support for this doubt is his view ‘that men can assist Fortune but not oppose her; they can weave her schemes but they cannot break them’ (Machiavelli 1979b, II, XXIX). In reply, we should note that the textual support for the view that Machiavelli advises active resistance to, and even mastery of, Fortune is overwhelming. In addition to the material cited in the previous paragraph, we may note Machiavelli’s suggestion that states will often change as Fortune does ‘until someone arises so devoted to antiquity that he will rule Fortune in such a way that she will have no reason demonstrate, with every revolution of the sun, how powerful she can be’ (Machiavelli 1979b, II, XXX). To this we must add his remarkable claim that ‘Fortune is a woman, and it is necessary, in order to keep her down, to beat her and to struggle with her’. She can be ‘taken over’ by the young and impetuous, who ‘command her with more audacity’ (Machiavelli 1979a, XXV). It is difficult to reconcile these with the ‘assist but not oppose’ quotation, but not impossible. Machiavelli pictures Fortune as a force of nature, to be harnessed for the benefit of the prince or the republic. Here, the earlier flood metaphor provides a helpful illustration. One cannot literally oppose a great deluge by returning it to the sky, but one can master it with earthworks to direct it away from where it does harm. Such an approach seems to amount to luck neutralization. Luck egalitarians do not propose to stop all forms of luck from ever occurring. It is enough to neutralize its bad effects by, for instance, compensating people with congenital disabilities.

This comparison leads us back to the central contrast between the contemporary egalitarian notion of luck neutralization and Machiavelli’s account of Fortuna. The former is a thoroughly normative ideal, an attempt to achieve distributive justice, while the latter is an exercise in prudence, for either the prince personally or the republic more generally. The gulf between the two here may seem so great that it obliterates any similarity between doctrines. This would, however, be too hasty. It is not at all unusual to draw parallels between principles of morality and principles of prudence. Such parallels are at the heart of the utilitarianism of Bentham (1996) and Mill (1998) and the liberal egalitarianism of Rawls (1971) and Dworkin (1981) alike. Where one principle says that that ‘outcome X be achieved as a matter of justice’, and another says that ‘outcome X be achieved as a matter of prudence’, it is clear that these are (at least) structurally related principles, whether the outcome in question is maximization of the worst outcome, utility maximization, or luck neutralization.

Machiavelli’s prudential focus has an implication which bears on the structural parallel with normative luck neutralization. Machiavelli is concerned only with neutralizing *bad* luck; good luck serves one’s interests, so obviously should not be resisted. For example, he has no quarrel with new Princes’ efforts ‘to preserve what Fortune has put in their laps’ (Machiavelli, 1979, ch. VII). Luck egalitarianism does not at its heart treat good and bad luck differently, so there is a further contrast with Machiavelli here. However, this is mitigated in a couple of respects. First, it has been suggested that luck egalitarianism might treat good and bad luck asymmetrically, as Machiavelli suggests, while retaining its normative focus (de-Shalit and Wolff, 2011). Second, luck egalitarians invariably endorse additional principles (for instance, prioritarian ones) that would recommend that good luck on a societal level be allowed to stand rather than squandered (Arneson, 2000; Knight, 2009, ch. 6; Segall 2010, ch. 8). Luck egalitarians do sometimes treat good and bad luck differently, but not in anything like the comprehensive way that Machiavelli does.

Machiavelli does, then, advocate a form of luck neutralization, but only regarding bad luck, and most importantly, only as a prudential doctrine. While his account of distributive justice arguably has a meritocratic character (Benner, 2009, ch. 8; but cf. Barnes Smith, 2006), it makes no serious attempt to neutralize luck.

1. **Locke on property**

With both Aristotle and Machiavelli we found significant structural similarity between the historical figure and luck egalitarianism, paired with major departures in terms of substance. To achieve some significant degree of convergence in substance we must move forward to the Enlightenment. Here we see a rejection of the hierarchies taken as given by earlier writers, and renewed emphasis on the equal moral standing of all persons. The connections between recent theories of justice and Enlightenment philosophers are myriad, and explored in great depth elsewhere. To keep things manageable, my exploration of luck egalitarian themes in this context will be limited to one such philosopher, John Locke. I think this is appropriate given that Locke has been claimed by both the left and right wings of contemporary political theory, and that friends and foes of luck egalitarianism seem to agree that it combines the traditionally left wing idea of equality with the traditionally right wing idea of individual choice (Cohen, 1989; Anderson, 1999). I will argue that this combination is already apparent, in nascent form, in Locke.

Locke’s account of distributive justice is articulated as an account of property. To modern ears, to focus on property rights is already to suggest a conservative bias. However, Locke has a rather broader sense of ‘property’ than modern usage allows. He says that men join in society ‘for the mutual Preservation of their Lives, Liberties and Estates, which I call by the general Name, Property’ (Locke, 1988, §123). Locke’s sense of property is, then, close to what modern egalitarians call primary goods, resources, or (possibly) welfare. What we would now call property is only a subset of this, which Locke calls ‘Estates’.

Locke assumes that all humans should be ‘equal one amongst another, without Subordination or Subjection’ (Locke, 1988, §4). (This equality, like much of Locke’s political theory, has a theological basis, which I set aside in order to bring out the features of his view that are relevant for our purposes.) This seems to have distributive implications similar to (though, for reasons that will become clear, not as strong as) the luck egalitarian’s equality default view. That is, prior to individual labour, Locke does not seem to believe that there are grounds for distributive inequality. Also like luck egalitarians, he believes that moral equality is compatible with unequal outcomes created by individual choices. The first part of his argument in this respect is as follows (Locke, 1988, §25-26):

1. Humans have the right to preserve themselves.
2. In order to preserve themselves, humans must be able to appropriate things.

(1) seems fairly straightforward but (2) requires explanation. Locke remarks that ‘The Fruit, or Venison, which nourishes the wild Indian … must be his, and so his, i.e. a part of him, that another can no longer have any right to it, before it can do him any good for the support of his Life’ (Locke, 1988, §26). Explained in this way it does seem that *some* appropriation is required for human survival. However, this would only seem to establish the appropriation of a limited class of things (like ‘The Fruit, or Venison’) as justified on the basis of preservation. As Locke does not limit his account of property to these survival-orientated goods, it seems that he can not ultimately rely on preservation as a basis for this account. Nor does preservation have anything in particular to do with luck egalitarianism. We should, I think, set aside (1) and (2), and focus on a more direct argument for appropriation:

1. ‘every man has a Property in his own Person’ (Locke, 1988, §27)
2. ‘The Labour of his Body, and the Work of his Hands, we may say, are properly his’ (Locke, 1988, §27).
3. ‘Whatsoever then he removes out of the State that Nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his Labour with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his Property’ (Locke, 1988, §27).

(3) seems a reasonable claim, though, aside from the left libertarian branch of the family, luck egalitarians are not committed to it (or to its denial). (4) seems a reasonable extension of (3), which again luck egalitarians may or may not accept. I would suggest that (5) is the pivotal claim, and here there is something of a luck egalitarian flavour. The act of mixing labour is plausibly an exercise of responsibility. Since Locke intends to base distributive shares in such acts, his view seems to be to some extent responsibility sensitive. For instance, if one individual picks up acorns from under a tree, which another individual ignored, Locke maintains that the former can legitimately become better off than the latter on account of their respective choices.

Locke does not think that just any appropriation is permissible (Locke, 1988, §27, 31-38):

1. Appropriation is permissible only if it does not result in spoilage
2. Appropriation is permissible only if enough and as good is left in common for others.

Shorn of Locke’s theological assumptions, (6) may seem obscure. But there are similar ideas within contemporary thought. For instance, where fruit is allowed to rot, it is highly likely that the distribution is not Pareto optimal. (A distribution is Pareto optimal where no alternative distribution makes at least one individual better off without making at least one other individual worse off.) An alternative distribution may well be available in which the fruit is spread more widely, benefiting others at no cost to the original possessor. As most or all luck egalitarians accept Pareto optimality, it seems that they would have little quarrel with (6). In any case, Locke considers it to be bypassed where there has been tacit consent to money as a durable instrument of exchange (Locke, 1988, §36, 45-50), so it need not detain us.

In spite of Locke’s emphasis on spoilage, it is his second limitation on appropriation, the Lockean proviso ((7) above) that has received most attention. Nozick (1974, p. 176) argues that the proviso has stringent and weaker interpretations. On the weaker interpretation, appropriations are permissible only if others can still *use* what they could before*.* On the stringent interpretation, appropriations are permissible only if others can still *use and appropriate* what they could before*.* The stringent interpretation seems more plausible. It is hard to see how A can be said to have enough and as good as B, where B is able to appropriate and A is only able to use, as the weaker interpretation allows. Were an appropriation to have this result, it would seem very much to be ‘to the Prejudice of others’ (Locke, 1988, §37).

The stringent Lockean proviso might seem, at first glance, to reduce the responsibility sensitivity of the theory by limiting the available choices. In fact it strengthens it. Without the proviso, and after the invention of money, agents would have complete freedom to appropriate the commons. Individuals would be able to claim vast tracts of land. Others would have no opportunity to appropriate land for themselves, or even be able to use land freely, as there would be no commons left. They would be forced to work as hired hands for the lucky few, or face starvation. This is very far removed from luck egalitarian ideals. In the earlier example, an individual became disadvantaged as a result of choosing not to pick up acorns, as responsibility sensitivity and luck neutralization allow. Here we see individuals become disadvantaged without having made relevant choices – they are simply locked out of valuable appropriation opportunities. With the proviso, by contrast, each appropriator must, in effect, only appropriate an equal share of the commons. For instance, if there are 10 acres and 10 individuals, each individual can only appropriate 1 acre. If they appropriate any more, they will fail to leave enough land that other individuals are able to appropriate as much as they could before. This means that each individual has a reasonable chance to appropriate, and luck will play less of a role in the generation of inequalities.

This is not to say, however, that the Lockean proviso makes Locke’s theory strongly egalitarian. With her fairly appropriated land, an individual may be able to generate much more than an equal share. Some ways in which this comes about may be fair from a luck egalitarian perspective. For instance, if an individual works harder or makes better decisions (while having average initial effort- or decision-making abilities), luck egalitarians view resulting inequalities as justified. But there are three problems from a luck egalitarian perspective.

The first problem arises when we consider later generations. Locke makes no attempt to constrain the intergenerational transmission of wealth. Justly acquired property can be passed on to children and grandchildren. Considering these later generations, then, there will be dramatic differences in life chances grounded in parents’ or grandparents’ choices. For the current generation this is a matter of brute luck. Such inequality of life chances is clearly radically at odds with responsibility sensitivity and luck neutralization. (This is why I said that Locke endorses a weaker view than the equality default view. Prior to *any* choice, equality is required, Locke and the equality default view agree. But after early initial generations’ choices, Locke believes that equality is not required, even if the current generation have not made relevant choices. By contrast, the equality default view insists on equality in that case.)

A second problem is present in all generations. Though luck egalitarianism has no complaint with inequalities grounded in individuals working harder or making better decisions *while having average initial effort- or decision-making abilities,* these conditions might not be satisfied, yet Locke would still allow inequality. An individual might work harder and have above average effort-making abilities on account of brute luck. In that case it would seem that there were not, in Arneson’s (1989) terms, ‘effectively equivalent options’, a precondition for egalitarian justice to be satisfied. Even if appropriation options were nominally equivalent because the Lockean proviso had been satisfied, they would not be effectively equivalent if some could navigate those options more effectively, due to unchosen differences in temperament or ability.

The first two problems concern different ways in which brute luck interacts with choice. The final problem also concerns brute luck, but requires no involvement of choice. Every luck egalitarian seeks to neutralize the effects of brute luck. Though Locke partially achieves this objective through such measures as the proviso, he obviously does not target it as a general goal. He makes no attempt, then, to protect people from brute luck. Suppose a farmer’s crop is devastated by storms. Suppose also that the farm was inherited, that the farmer had no alternative means of subsistence, and that no insurance against such storms was available. In such a case, it seems clearly a matter of brute bad luck for the farmer that she has lost her crop. But Locke makes no suggestion that compensation for such bad luck should be made available, not even from a neighbouring farm which miraculously evaded the storms.

Of course, it is hardly surprising that someone writing hundreds of years prior to the welfare state did not take the alleviation of luck as a general social goal. The same point can be made of Aristotle, Machiavelli, or any other such figure. But it does show that, while in certain respects in Locke approximates luck egalitarian objectives, in others he departs from them significantly.

1. **Conclusion**

I have surveyed three historical political thinkers, picking out certain ideas as having something of a luck egalitarian quality, though always to a heavily mitigated degree.

Aristotle maintains that, where individuals are identical in their relevant properties, their distributive shares should be equal, and where individuals are non-identical in relevant properties, their shares should be unequal. While that may seem an obvious position to take, it is not actually common among current theorists of equality, but it is endorsed by luck egalitarians. Furthermore, Aristotle favours a merit- or desert-sensitive account of justice with broad similarities to the core luck egalitarian idea of responsibility sensitivity, as well as a counterpart to the luck egalitarian equality default view. Of course, in spite of these parallels, there is major substantive disagreement, most notably on the issue of luck neutralization.

This latter topic was viewed through the perhaps surprising prism of Machiavelli’s account of Fortuna. It was argued that this account has structural similarity to the luck neutralization proposed by luck egalitarians. Nevertheless, there are major differences, most obviously that Machiavelli is proposing a prudential doctrine, not a normative one. This has the further effect that Machiavelli aims to neutralize only bad luck, whereas luck egalitarianism generally (though not unreservedly) aims to neutralize good luck as well.

Finally, Locke’s account of property was found to show a significant degree of responsibility sensitivity, as to an extent it seems to assume equality as a default, and its account of appropriation allows responsible choices to give rise to inequalities. This is reinforced by the Lockean proviso, which prevents individuals from suffering the brute luck disadvantage of not having ‘enough and as good’ as earlier appropriators. However, brute luck can still arise through the intergenerational transmission of wealth, differential natural abilities, and unfavourable natural events.

With all three writers, though there is no systematic attempt to make distributions insensitive to luck, as luck egalitarianism proposes, there are nevertheless parallels with luck egalitarian thought.

**Bibliography**

Anderson, Elizabeth S. 1999. What is the Point of Equality? *Ethics,* 109, 287-337.

Aristotle, 2000. Nicomachean Ethics, trans. and ed. Roger Crisp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Aristotle, 1995. Politics, trans. Earnest Barker and rev. Richard F. Stanley. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Arneson, Richard J. 1989. Equality and Equal Opportunity for Welfare. *Philosophical Studies,* 56, 77-93.

Arneson, Richard J. 2000. Luck Egalitarianism and Prioritarianism. *Ethics,* 110, 339-49.

Arneson, Richard J. 2001. Luck and Equality. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society,* supplement, 75, 73-90.

Augustine, 1998. *The City of God Against the Pagans,* ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barnes Smith, Margaret Michelle. 2006. The Philosophy of Liberty: Locke’s Machiavellian Teaching. In Paul A. Rahe (ed.), *Machiavelli's Liberal Republican Legacy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Benner, Erica. 2009. *Machiavelli’s Ethics.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bentham, Jeremy. 1996. *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation,* ed. J. H. Burns and H. L. A. Hart. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cohen, G. A. 1989. On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice. *Ethics,* 99,906-44.

de Shalit, Avner, and Jonathan Wolff. 2011. The Apparent Asymmetry of Responsibility. In Carl Knight and Zofia Stemplowska (eds), *Responsibility and Distributive Justice.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dworkin, Ronald. 1981. What is Equality? Part One: Equality of Welfare. Part Two: Equality of Resources. *Philosophy and Public Affairs,* 10, 185-246, 283-345.

Dworkin, Ronald. 2003. Equality, Luck and Hierarchy. *Philosophy and Public Affairs,* 31, 190-8.

Hurley, S. L. 2003. *Justice, Luck, and Knowledge.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Knight, Carl. 2009. *Luck Egalitarianism: Equality, Responsibility, and Justice.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Knight, Carl. 2012. Unit Ideas Unleashed: A Reinterpretation and Reassessment of Lovejovian Methodology in the History of Ideas. *Journal of the Philosophy of History,* 6, 195-217.

Knight, Carl. 2013. Egalitarian Justice and Expected Value. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice,* 16, 1061-1073.

Locke, John. 1988. Second Treatise. In *Two Treatises of Government,* ed. Peter Laslett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lovejoy, Arthur O. 1936. *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Machiavelli, Niccolò. 1979a. The Prince. In *The Portable Machiavelli,* ed. and trans. Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa. New York: Penguin.

Machiavelli, Niccolò. 1979. The Discourses. In *The Portable Machiavelli,* ed. and trans. Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa. New York: Penguin.

Mill, John Stuart. 1998. *Utilitarianism,* ed. Roger Crisp. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nussbaum, Martha. 1986. *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nozick, Robert. 1974. *Anarchy, State and Utopia.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Rawls, John. 1971. *A Theory of Justice.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Segall, Shlomi. 2010. *Health, Luck, and Justice.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Steiner, Hillel. 1994. *An Essay on Rights.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Vallentyne, Peter. 2003. Brute Luck Equality and Desert. In Serena Olsaretti (ed.), *Desert and Justice.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Vallentyne, Peter and Hillel Steiner (eds). 2000. *The Origins of Left-Libertarianism: An Anthology of Historical Writings.* London: Palgrave.

1. \* Published in *Distributive Justice Debates in Political and Social Thought,* edited by Camilla Boisen and Matthew C. Murray (New York: Routledge, 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)