

## From Rawlsian Autonomy to Sufficient Opportunity

Liam Shields

liam.shields@manchester.ac.uk

### 0. Introduction

Equality of Opportunity is widely thought of as the normative ideal most relevant to the design of educational institutions. The intuitive foundation of such views is the thought that it is unjust for some to have greater opportunities than others in virtue of at least some arbitrary factors, such as race, class or genetic material. Since we have reasons to distribute some advantageous opportunities to the most talented, the distribution of educational opportunities, which develop talent, will have a huge influence on the opportunities and success enjoy. Therefore, equality of opportunity has particular relevance to the design of educational systems.

One intuitively plausible and widely discussed interpretation of the ideal of equality of opportunity is Rawls' principle of Fair Equality of Opportunity, which states that those with the same native talent and ambition should have similar prospects for success.<sup>1</sup> This intuitive principle has been subject to certain criticisms, most notably from Richard Arneson who claims that Rawls's own justification, which appeals to the special importance of self-realization, is inconsistent with Rawls' aim to develop a theory of justice that eschews social evaluation of conceptions of the good.<sup>2</sup>

In this paper I argue that theories, like Rawls', that give priority to the achievement of individual autonomy, are committed to a principle of sufficient opportunity. Thus, our primary focus when designing educational institutions should be on sufficiency and not equality. I then show that recognition of the importance of sufficiency within theories like Rawls' has at least three attractive implications. Firstly, it enables defenders of Fair Equality of Opportunity to overcome Richard Arneson's powerful objections. Secondly, it suggests a revised version of the principle of Fair Equality of Opportunity that is more plausible. Thirdly, it has attractive practical implications for educational provision.

The structure of the paper is as follows. In Section One, I show that autonomy requires some measure of self-knowledge, knowledge of one's own talents, which itself requires that these talents been sufficiently developed. In Section Two, I argue that Rawls can now avoid Arneson's criticism since his commitment to self-realization can be grounded in autonomy and not well-being. In Section Three, I show that the requirement of sufficient self-realization suggests a revision of Fair Equality of Opportunity that makes it more plausible. In Section Four, I discuss the practical implications of prioritising sufficiency at the

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<sup>1</sup> J. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: a restatement*, (Harvard University Press, 2001), 18-19.

<sup>2</sup> Criticisms of Fair Equality of Opportunity can be found in L. Alexander, 'Fair Equality of Opportunity: John Rawls' (Best) Forgotten Principle', *Philosophy Research Archives*, 11 (1986), 197-208; Arneson, 'Against Rawlsian', 89; C. Chambers, 'Each Outcome is Another Opportunity: Problems with the Moment of Equal Opportunity', *Politics, Philosophy, Economics*, 8 (2009), 374-400; A. Mason, 'Equality of Opportunity and Differences in Social Circumstances', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 54 (2004), 368-388.

expense of equality in educational provision. In Section Five, I conclude that sufficient self-realization should play an important role in our thought.

### 1. From Autonomy to Self-Realization

The claim that liberal theories of justice attach special importance to individual liberty is about as obvious a claim one can make in political philosophy. In many of the most plausible of those theories individual rights and liberties are given a rationale or justification by appeal to the ideal of individual autonomy.<sup>3</sup> Broadly speaking, individual autonomy is the ideal that one's life should be lived in accordance with one's own authentic ideals free from external manipulation or coercion.<sup>4</sup> I will argue that a commitment to autonomy includes a commitment to sufficient self-realization. Though my focus in this paper will be on Rawlsian liberalism the claims that I make are by no means limited to that strand of liberalism. The argument of this section will apply to any liberal theory of justice that gives that kind of autonomy a certain priority.<sup>5</sup> However, in this paper I do not wish to defend the priority ordering in Rawls' own theory. I assume throughout that a satisfactory defence of the priority of something like Rawlsian autonomy is available.<sup>6</sup>

We can get from Rawlsian autonomy to sufficient self-realization because autonomy requires a certain kind of self-knowledge, which is available only if we are sufficiently-self-realized. Recall Rawls' first principle that contains a commitment to the capacity for a conception of the good, which

“is the capacity to have, to revise, and rationally to pursue a conception of the good. Such a conception is an ordered family of final ends and aims which specifies a person's conception of what is of value in human life or, alternatively, of what is regarded as a fully worthwhile life.”<sup>7</sup>

In addition to developing certain deliberative capacities this kind of autonomy requires a certain degree of self-knowledge. One cannot be autonomous in this sense without having some idea of what human beings generally and what you as a particular human being are capable of. In order to revise and rationally to pursue a conception of the good one must be able to determine what ends are fundamentally worth pursuing, something we may think can be, but is perhaps not best, pursued by reflection alone without knowledge of our

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<sup>3</sup> Examples of such theories include R. Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue: The Theory and Practice of Equality*, (Harvard University Press: 2001); J. Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, (Clarendon Press, 1986) and J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, revised edition, (Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> J. Christman, 'Constructing the Inner Citadel: Recent Work On Autonomy', *Ethics*, 99 (1989), 109-24.

<sup>5</sup> This includes Andrew Mason's view which grounds equality of opportunity in Razian autonomy through respect for agency, see Mason, *Social Circumstances*, 378-379.

<sup>6</sup> R. Taylor, 'Rawls's Defense of the Priority of Liberty: A Kantian Reconstruction', *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 31 (2003), 246-271; R. Taylor, 'Self-Realization and the Priority of Fair Equality of Opportunity', *Journal of Moral Philosophy*, 1 (2004), 333-347;

<sup>7</sup> Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*.

particular talents. However, in addition, one must be familiar with the means that are available for the achievement of those ends. When planning to pursue a worthwhile life we must make judgements about what concrete roles best instantiate those values. If, for me, at least part of what makes a human life worthwhile is the promotion of the well-being of others I must ask myself whether becoming a priest or a medical research scientist best realizes this commitment.

I must also ask myself whether these roles will best realize my conception of the good when I inhabit them. It may be true that a medical research scientist, on average, makes a greater contribution to the well-being of others than a priest. But I may not have the requisite natural talents to become a research scientist. I may have a certain disposition that makes it difficult for me to master complex scientific theories or I may not work well in teams, as such scientists must. However, it is true that I am a good listener and I am told I give good advice and consolation. Since I like my own company and draw great strength and joy from reading the Bible I should probably elect to join the priesthood. My own pleasure and enjoyment of the role is also a factor in determining what more concrete goals to pursue. If I am likely to be a frustrated and miserable research scientist but a happy and fulfilled priest then this rationally weighs against my opting to pursue the scientific career. I can rationally revise my plan on these grounds and so, when I am denied knowledge of these grounds I am denied opportunities to rationally revise my plan.

This self-knowledge is very important as it affects our ability to rationally revise and pursue our conceptions of the good. Of course, self-realization itself is not always to be given such importance. Our reasons to become more and more self-realized are not equally weighty. After some point our reasons to develop our talents further depend upon our own ambitions and preferences. We have less reason, if any, to develop talents we will never exercise. Autonomy requires that our natural talents are developed to a certain degree since our knowledge of what we are capable of is sensitive to these talents being developed. Self-realization is required to at least a sufficient level, sufficient, that is, for Rawlsian autonomy. Once enough is secured our reasons shift and we may only have reasons of well-being to secure further self-realization, but an additional reason applies to securing enough self-realization for Rawlsian autonomy. This is an especially important requirement of justice.<sup>8</sup> This leads us to accept, as part of autonomy, a requirement of sufficient self-realization.

Now, we do well to notice that the move from self-knowledge to sufficient self-realization requires an empirical assumption that self-knowledge is only or best available through self-realization. There are two ways that the requirement of sufficient self-realization is *fact sensitive*.<sup>9</sup> If we could have access to the knowledge of the extent and kind of our natural talents without their development, because some technology capable of profiling such talents were available then we would have less reason to have them

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<sup>8</sup> L. Shields, 'The Prospects for Sufficiencyarianism', *Utilitas*, 24 (2012), 101-117.

<sup>9</sup> For discussion of fact sensitivity of principles see G. A. Cohen, *Rescuing Justice and Equality*, (Harvard University Press, 2008), Ch. 6.

developed. Also, if we could have access to the pleasure we would derive from exercising these talents without their being developed and exercised in fact, again through some advancement in technology, then we might not require sufficient self-realization for autonomy, and therefore justice. It is important to note that the requirement is contingent in these ways. However, since we currently lack these technologies, we require sufficient self-realization as a route to that knowledge that is necessary for autonomy.

In the following three sections I will draw out the implications this principle has for certain criticisms of Rawls' philosophy, for his much maligned principle of Fair Equality of Opportunity, and for practical debates about educational equity.

## 2. Responding to Arneson

Fair Equality of Opportunity requires that offices and positions that confer social and economic advantages are available to all and that all should have a fair chance to attain them. This supplements the "careers open to talents" view, which holds that in the competition for jobs the best candidate should win, with a fair chance condition, which requires that those with similar natural talents and ambitions should have similar life chances.<sup>10</sup>

This principle has been criticised by Richard Arneson.<sup>11</sup> I focus on Arneson's criticisms as they particularly worrying for Rawlsians. They are particularly worrying since they claim to show that Rawlsian reasons do not eschew evaluation of conceptions of the good and that they cannot resist Arneson's considered position, which is that we should have a single distributive principle applying to well-being.

Arneson observes that,

"the only comment Rawls makes that supports the priority of Fair Equality over the Difference Principle appeals to the point that Fair Equality regulates the distribution of goods that may be more important to human fulfilment than the social and economic benefits regulated by the Difference Principle."<sup>12</sup>

In Rawls' words,

"if some places were not open on a fair basis to all, those kept out would be right in feeling unjustly treated even though they benefited from the greater efforts of those who were allowed to hold them. They would be justified in their complaint not only

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<sup>10</sup> J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 63. "Those with similar abilities and skills should have similar life chances. More specifically, assuming that there is a distribution of natural assets, those who are at the same level of talent and ability, and have the same willingness to use them, should have the same prospects of success regardless of their initial place in the social system."

<sup>11</sup> R. Arneson, 'Against Rawlsian Equality of Opportunity', *Philosophical Studies*, 93 (1999), 77-112.

<sup>12</sup> L. Alexander, 'Fair equality of opportunity: John Rawls' (best) forgotten principle', *Philosophy Research Archives*, 11 (1986), 197-208; Arneson, 'Against Rawlsian', 89.

because they were excluded from certain external rewards of office such as wealth and privilege, but because they were debarred from experiencing the realization of self which comes from a skilful and devoted exercise of social duties. They would be deprived of one of the main forms of human good.”<sup>13</sup>

Arneson’s challenge, then, has two parts. Firstly, Arneson argues that any Rawlsian justification of the principle of Fair Equality of Opportunity must not make a social evaluation of people’s conceptions of the good. It must remain, in the spirit of Rawls’ theory, neutral.<sup>14</sup> Secondly, Arneson argues that even if self-realization linked to jobs is an especially important part of well-being it can be accommodated within the currency of well-being more generally.<sup>15</sup> Positions and offices sometimes play an important part in flourishing human lives, but sometimes they do not, and so in the fundamental expression of our principles of justice our concern should be with flourishing. Putting this together, the challenge for defenders of Fair Equality of Opportunity is to show that there is an argument for the special importance of self-realization which,

- A) Explains the non-instrumental importance of self-realization and
- B) Does not rely upon social evaluations of the good life

In the first section I argued that Rawls is committed to the value of some level of self-realization through his commitment to autonomy. This suggests an adequate response to both parts of Arneson’s challenge. Rawls’ commitment to autonomy, and therefore his commitment to self-realization is, at least partly, independent of its contribution to well-being. He can, then, resist Arneson’s invitation to join him in accepting a single distributive principle applying to well-being. Knowledge of our talents affects our ambitions and what we view as being worthwhile for us. Again, assuming a distribution of natural talents, as Rawls does in Fair Equality of Opportunity, talents can go easily unnoticed. It is important that individuals understand both the extent and kind of talents they have not only because it will make it easier for them to contribute to their own well-being but because it enables them to make informed decisions about the revision and rational pursuit of their conception of the good, which is central to their self-understanding as free and equal moral persons. Indeed it is hard to imagine someone sensibly refining their conception of the good and rationally pursuing it without such knowledge.

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<sup>13</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 73.

<sup>14</sup> Arneson, ‘Against Rawlsian Equality of Opportunity’, 89. “Within Rawls’ theory, which eschews any social evaluation of people’s conceptions of the good, there does not seem to be a basis for affirming that the goods of job satisfaction and meaningful work trump the goods that money and resources distributed by the difference principle can obtain. From the different perspectives afforded by different and conflicting conceptions of the good, individuals will differ on this question. So it will not suit Rawls to argue for the priority of Fair Equality by appealing to the superiority of the human goods associated with job satisfaction.”

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 89. “This premise does not support Fair Equality, but rather the inclusion of the goods of authority and responsibility within the scope of the difference principle, with extra weight attached to these goods in an index of primary social goods that measures individuals’ condition for the purposes of determining if they are justly treated.”

Consider the example of Clever Dick, a young boy who has a talent for Mathematics but who is regularly told by his family that he is stupid and will never amount to anything. Or consider the example of Singing Sarah, a young girl who has an excellent singing voice but is always told to “shut up” by her parents because she “sounds like a bag of cats”. These people have not only been cheated of an important possible source of well-being, derived from the skilful exercise of their talents, and any economic rewards. They have also been cheated in a further way, which violates their autonomy and status as a free and equal person. They have been denied knowledge central to the planning and pursuit of their conceptions of the good, such knowledge could form a reason to revise either the ends or the means they would use. This illustrates the way that self-realization is not wholly reducible to well-being. Instead, self-realization is grounded in a conception of autonomy that does not make evaluations of people’s conceptions of the good.

Moreover, Rawls’ commitment to autonomy does not require a social evaluation of conceptions of the good. Rawls’ commitment to autonomy is an attempt to so eschew such evaluations. Rawlsian autonomy is the capacity to pursue and revise our own conceptions of the good and this requires some degree of self-realization. This degree of self-realization, however, does not glorify self-realization as a conception of the good any more than the requirement of Rawlsian autonomy glorifies an autonomous way of life. The reasons that justify autonomy’s place in Rawls’ theory are not grounded in a controversial account of human flourishing, they are grounded in a conception of the person and free and equal and capable of identifying and pursuing the most suitable conception of flourishing for her. Autonomy, and therefore self-realization, is required only to develop our two moral powers, those we have in virtue of our free and equal status, to the requisite degree and no further. This shows that the commitment to self-realization need not involve an evaluation of conceptions of the good. He can, then, resist Arneson’s invitation to eschew neutrality consistent with grounding Fair Equality of Opportunity in self-realization.

The forgoing remarks about the discovery of talent bear most obviously on debates about justice in education. Schools, it seems, are well-placed to discover talent and to help us achieve sufficient self-realization, which is a part of autonomy. I shall say more about that later. But in addition to having a certain kind of education the requirement of sufficient self-realization requires that no one be denied access to these positions on any grounds other than that, after sufficient opportunity, no talents were found. Those with little or no talent are not denied that self-knowledge by being denied opportunities to exercise talents they do not have. It is worth considering a possible difficulty. It may seem that if our educational institutions were designed to secure sufficient self-realization for each child then there would be no reason to privilege adult positions and offices as distribudenda. This suggests that more must be done to establish Fair Equality of Opportunity in positions and offices. I merely note that self-realization sufficient for Rawlsian autonomy does not involve social evaluation of conceptions of the good and that this self-realization does not reduce to well-being and, therefore, Rawlsians can resist one powerful critique.

Arneson could, of course, contest the non-instrumental value of autonomy but in flagging up this available response we can see that Arneson must apply pressure elsewhere and I believe that applying it to autonomy will be a more difficult proposition because it is less plausible to say that autonomy is only instrumentally valuable than it is to say that the special goods related to jobs are not reducible to well-being. This is because autonomy is often associated with certain well-being trumping values such as the respect for agency that is constitutive of treatment as an equal.<sup>16</sup>

### 3.0 Fair Equality of Opportunity and Sufficient Opportunity

In this section I will show that Rawls' principle of Fair Equality of Opportunity is implausible in the way it defines cohort membership for the purposes of egalitarian comparison. Different interpretations of cohort membership are available and on these different interpretations the plausibility of the principle varies. I argue that by taking the principle of sufficient self-realization as prior to the principle of fair equality of opportunity we should remove reference to native talents the definition of cohort membership and that this makes it more plausible.

Fair Equality of Opportunity supplements the Careers Open to Talents View, which requires that public offices and social positions are formally open to all. Fair Equality of Opportunity requires that all have a fair chance to attain these offices and positions, or in other words, everyone must have a fair chance to be the victor in the meritocratic competition for jobs.<sup>17</sup> Everyone has a fair chance when those with the same talents and motivation have the same prospects of success in pursuit of jobs.<sup>18</sup> Whether an arrangement is just turns on whether those who are equal along two dimensions, talent and ambition, are equal along another dimension, in their prospects for success in the attainment of offices and positions. Thus, one's cohort for egalitarian comparison is determined by one's talents and ambition.

An important question arises, however, when we consider the obviousness of our natural talents and the lengths we should go to in order to reveal these talents, which may be hidden and would remain undeveloped. The difficulty of specifying talents for the purposes of specifying a cohort for egalitarian comparison is not merely an epistemic one. If the problem was merely that it is difficult to *know* who has what talents we should use the best proxy.<sup>19</sup> In our case the problem is a normative one. It is raised by considering what our best is, and, indeed, if we should do our best for some or all, or if we should instead secure

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<sup>16</sup> G. Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy*, (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 80; Mason, 'Social Circumstances'.

<sup>17</sup> Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 43. "Fair equality of opportunity is said to require not merely that public offices and social positions be open in the formal sense, but that all should have a fair chance to attain them."

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*: 44.

<sup>19</sup> Epistemic problems are discussed in C. Chambers, 'Moment of Equal Opportunity', 382-385. I do not think epistemic problems are problems that should concern political theorists for the reasons given above.

enough, as I believe. Thus, the following question is an important one. “How should opportunity for the development of knowledge of our talents be distributed?”

Rawls’ own answer seems to be that all native talents, known and unknown, count in the determination of one’s cohort for egalitarian comparison.<sup>20</sup> In explaining the principle Rawls uses the phrase “distribution of native endowments” and it is easy to see why when we consider that he thought that social class of origin should not affect relative differences in prospects for success.<sup>21</sup> Rawls’ focus on talents as native endowments can be explained by reference to the effect social class has on the opportunity we have to develop them. If we take developed talents rather than native talents as our interpretation of talents then we end up justifying the vast inequalities that exist due to social class, which Rawls clearly thinks are unjust. So the idea is that, given that there is some distribution of natural talents or native endowments, those with the same native talents should be in the same cohort with respect to success if they also have the same level of ambition. If we accept this view then we would hold the complete talents view.

*Complete Talents:* When determining cohorts for the purposes of fair equality of opportunity we are to count all and only the native talents that individuals have.

An objection to this view is that, since our ambitions and our willingness to develop these talents requires their being known to us, these talents need not be developed at all according to the complete talents version of Fair Equality of Opportunity. Thus, those with undeveloped natural talents will be unlikely to have similar ambitions to those with the same profile of natural talents but whose talents are more developed. Our ambitions are often talent-sensitive. They are certainly formed in light of knowledge of our talents. For this reason it is implausible to hold that only inequalities in prospects for success between those with the same native talents and motivation are unjust. If we accepted this view as a principle to regulate educational opportunities, talented but ignorant poor children would fare much less well than talented and knowledgeable rich children, but we would not be able to criticize this. These equally naturally talented children would not likely be in the same cohort for egalitarian comparison because they would have different ambitions from one another. This failure to capture the egalitarian intuitions behind the principle provides grounds to reject the complete talents interpretation.

One could avoid the objection that ambitions are formed relative to talent development by supplementing Complete Talents with a view about Complete Ambitions.

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<sup>20</sup> It is a further question of ‘when’ such comparisons should be made and how regularly. For the original identification and discussion of these problems see *Ibid*. I believe that on any of the options available to Rawlsians, either a whole lives perspective or an age of reason perspective, the addition of a requirement of sufficient opportunity makes that view more not less plausible for the reasons I give.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*: 44.



*Complete Ambitions:* When determining cohorts for the purposes of fair equality of opportunity we are to count ambitions as those that the individual would have if they had complete knowledge of their talents.

This view, however, is also objectionable on the grounds that our actual ambitions are more important than hypothetical ambitions. If, under full knowledge of her talents, Trudy would, but currently does not, want to undertake a PhD on the topic of “Basket Weaving in Norway from 1350-13-90 AD”, it would still be wrong to judge inequalities between Trudy and someone who has that actual ambition and talent in pursuit of doctoral funding as unjust. Our ambitions are endogenous, and rightly sensitive, to our actual talents. Thus, I think we have decisive reason to hold the following view about ambitions.

*Actual Ambitions:* When determining cohorts for the purposes of fair equality of opportunity we are to count ambitions as those that the individual actually has.<sup>22</sup>

Rather than revising Actual Ambitions we should reject Complete Talents. An alternative specification of talents would hold that only talents that become known are to count in the determination of cohort membership. If we accepted this response we would hold the actual talents view.

*Actual Talents:* When determining cohorts for the purposes of fair equality of opportunity we are to count all and only the talents that the individual has actually developed.

However, this view could have terribly counter-intuitive implications if we do not supplement it with a requirement to discover talents to a certain extent. If we only count known talents then this could generate massive and unjust class inequalities where wealthy parents spend more resources on making their children’s talents known than poorer parents. Indeed, Actual Talents plus Actual Ambitions just is ‘careers open to talents’. It enables wealthy families to spend their resources on developing and making known the native talents of their children to put them at a relative advantage. If the discovery of talents is left to parents then the inequalities present in one generation will most likely be repeated in the next. Because of this we should direct our attention to the pertinent question of “How should opportunity for the development of knowledge of our talents be distributed?” The imperative is to ensure that Actual Talents meet some standard not to take something other than actual talents as specifying the correct cohort, as Fair Equality of Opportunity currently requires.

One option would be to propose that we fully reveal all of the talents of all individuals would place a huge burden on education systems and this seems similar to

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<sup>22</sup> We might want to supplement this with some kind of authenticity or autonomy requirement to avoid the prospect of brainwashing but this would be ruled out by the Rawlsian prior commitment to autonomy anyway.

Rawls' fair chances condition. Presumably the best way to achieve Fair Equality of Opportunity would be for all native talents to become known and then careers open to talents would work fine. However, it is implausible to think that education systems are required by justice to discover and develop any native talent anyone may have, however obscure or well-hidden. At some point the benefit of uncovering more talents will be outweighed by the costs of devoting resources to discovering talents. For example, I have a hunch that, given adequate training and encouragement I would have been a rather good cricketer, especially had my school picked up on this at an early age. However, my school spent more time attempting to cultivate any rugby playing ability I had, which, I might add, was already somewhat obvious by that time. If the school, or society more generally, had recognized my potential, which was not manifest, for cricket and had instead given me fairly minimal training I could have had an opportunity to take it further and may have been an excellent cricketer. Then I could have made informed decisions about whether to develop that talent further and whether to add cricket to one of my hobbies and ambitions that would contribute to my well-being. Even if my hunch is correct, I doubt that this would have been an injustice. I had adequate scope for the development of many of my potentials. This particular failure to develop a native talent is not an injustice because I was good at other things and other talents were developed. This is the case even though this failure lowered my prospects for success relative to other similarly talented people.

A more plausible option, when responding to the problem of making talents known, is to offer to all a variety of exercises known to reveal a good spread of talents. Given adequate conditions under which a good spread of natural talents can become known, Rawlsian Equality of Opportunity requires that those with the same known talents have the same prospects for success in the pursuit of positions. The aim of such a policy would be to see that each individual secured sufficient self-realization for Rawlsian autonomy. It is convenient that this attractive way of supplementing the principle of Fair Equality of Opportunity is already included within Rawls' prior commitment to autonomy. Any plausible principle of justice applying to education must take this adequacy view of the discovery of talents seriously or else it will treat those with known talents and those with unknown talents the same or provide no imperative to treat people fairly in the discovery of their talents. Moreover, any theory of justice that takes autonomy seriously will be committed to a weighty requirement to provide sufficient opportunity to develop talents as part of self-realization. This would lead us to accept Actual Ambitions and Actual Talents, or career open to talents, alongside Sufficient Opportunity.

*Sufficient Opportunity:* We have very weighty reasons to ensure that Actual Talents are those one has after sufficient self-realization.

There may, of course, be additional reasons of justice to be concerned about inequalities above the threshold. If children from wealthier backgrounds received far more resources to facilitate talent discovery than children from poor backgrounds we may find

this objectionable even when all have secured enough. However, these claims of injustice would have to be made on different grounds than those offered by the principle of sufficient autonomy. Here I have only sought to establish that the principle of sufficient self-realization for autonomy gives us especially weighty reasons to develop talents and can help to solve a problem with the principle of Fair Equality of Opportunity. I have not made the claim, often associated with sufficientarianism, that inequalities above the threshold are not disturbing from the point of view of social justice.<sup>23</sup>

#### 4.0 Education and Sufficient Opportunity

In Rawls' theory, autonomy has lexical priority over Fair Equality of Opportunity and so, if sufficient self-realization is part of autonomy, as I have argued, Rawlsians and others should prioritise policy measures that seek to uncover for people their potential before equalizing opportunity. The requirement of sufficient self-realization gives us reason to favour sufficient opportunity and has an important link to the idea of comprehensive schooling, which was meant to provide children with a variety of educational challenges in various areas, not just traditional academics.<sup>24</sup> A wide-ranging curriculum would be required to uncover the diverse talents children have and the design of education institutions should be guided by the idea of uncovering a range of talents. This will most likely require comprehensive schooling for all where children are given significant opportunities to derive enjoyment from certain activities and to cultivate certain skills. This comprehensive schooling will advance each person's claim to have knowledge of where their talents and interests lie.

In terms of policy debates about education this requirement of justice does not rule out private education or even tell strongly against it like some egalitarian principles do. However, where the private education system can be shown to be a drain on universal provision, typically associated with state schooling, we should take steps to ensure that those who have less than enough opportunity to develop their talents are benefitted. A justifiable source of remedial funds would be those who send their children to private school. This is because it is sensible to assume that those who attend elite private schools receive more than enough opportunity to secure sufficient self-realization and that many of those at state schools do not. A concrete suggestion would be to tax private schools to pay for this requirement. In the UK we could revoke their charitable status and divert the revenue to programmes in state schools that seek to realize sufficient self-realization.

One may think that taxing private schools or revoking their charitable status is not the best source of revenue. We may think this for reasons of efficiency but we may also

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<sup>23</sup> R. Crisp, 'Equality, Priority, and Compassion', *Ethics*, 113 (2003), 745–63; R. Crisp, 'Egalitarianism and Compassion', *Ethics*, 114 (2003), 119–26; H. Frankfurt, 'Equality as a Moral Ideal', *Ethics*, 98 (1987), R. Huseby, 'Sufficiency: Restated and Defended', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 18 (2010), 178–97.

<sup>24</sup> Richard Pring and Geoffrey Walford, *Comprehensive schools: the history*, (1996). Available: <<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=92186&sectioncode=26>>

think this for reasons of fairness. Those who pay for private school for their children are not as wealthy as these bankers and those bankers who do not have children or do not pay for private schooling will be made no worse off under my proposal for funding sufficient self-realization. Since many plausible theories of justice hold that we have stronger reasons to redistribute from the richest than the less rich we should instead favour a banker tax over a private school tax. While I agree with that thought, the arguments I provide here do not help us to make this distinction. They only help us to make the distinction between those who have enough self-realization and those who do not and so I restrict myself to this claim.

We should note, however, that the principle of sufficient self-realization can provide a justification for private schooling. This, it may be thought, runs contrary to the egalitarian principles that have been for so long the focus on those concerned with the design of educational institutions. Private schooling can be justified if it is the only or best way to secure for all sufficient self-realization. This might be achieved through a voucher system or through taxing private schools as suggested above.

Finally, those adults who have been failed by their early education should not be denied opportunities to develop sufficient self-realization later on. As such, merit or qualification should not be used to reject the applications of these mature students from universities or colleges. Since individuals may not secure sufficient self-realization it is imperative that we make access to educational institutions available throughout all stages in life. We have reasons to secure sufficient self-realization and so we also have reasons to maintain that sufficient self-realization. This can be achieved through improving access to life-long learning schemes.

## 5.0 Conclusion

In this paper I have sought to defend a role for sufficient self-realization in theories of justice, in particular, the Rawlsian theory. I began by showing that Rawls' commitment to autonomy commits him to sufficient self-realization. I then showed that this allows us to defend his principle of fair equality of opportunity against Richard Arneson's objections, which state that self-realization is not a special good. I then showed that the most plausible interpretation of the principle of fair equality of opportunity appeals to self-realization and this yields a weighty requirement, on the Rawlsian framework, to secure sufficient opportunity for self-realization. Finally, I considered the implications of this requirement for educational institutions. To be sure, there is more work to be done in specifying how much enough is. Here I have defined enough as expected to reveal a good spread of talents and hope that this provides some guidance where the importance of developing talents, in a sense for their own sake, clashes with the importance of readying students for future work and providing them with a narrow set of skills and little or no knowledge of their underlying talents. I have not responded to further problems that have been raised with Fair Equality of Opportunity, and Equality of Opportunity in general, but any full defence of that view will have to proceed in several steps and I hope to have contributed to that process.