

Where are we going?

Philosophy in the
Anthropocene

4. Equality







Questions to think about

- What is the basis of equality?
- What gives us the right to say *we are equals*?
- Does equality count only for citizens, or for all human beings? (Or non-humans too?)
- What are we ethically or socially obliged to give our equal?

What do we mean by
equality?



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Poverty in the UK is 'systematic' and 'tragic', says UN special rapporteur

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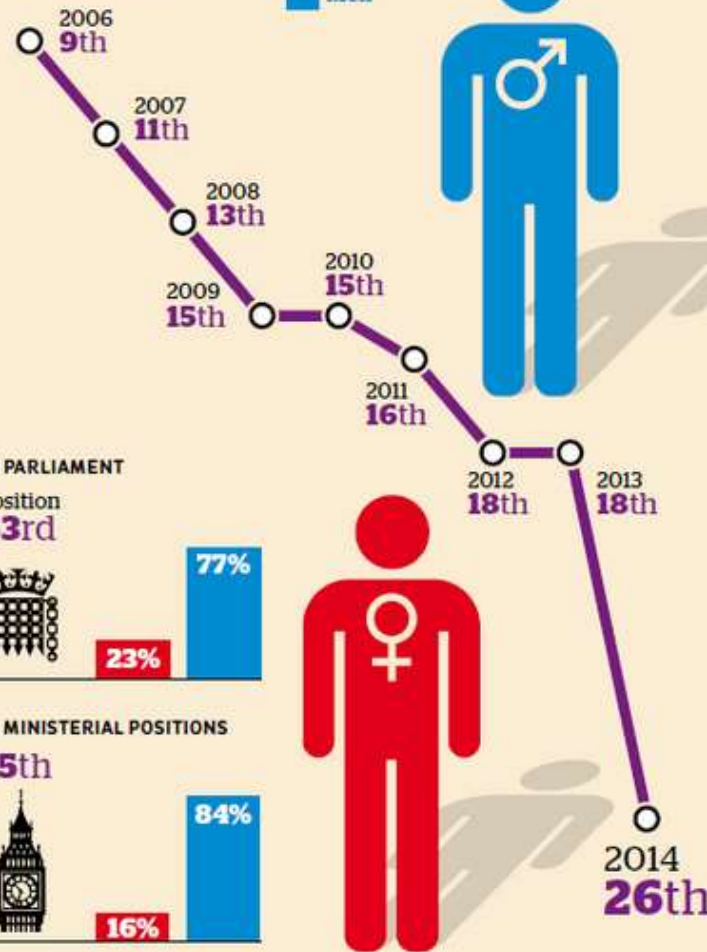




The UK's performance on gender equality

Ranked out of 136 countries

BRITAIN'S FALLING POSITION
IN WORLD EQUALITY



IN PARLIAMENT

Position
63rd



IN MINISTERIAL POSITIONS

75th



ENROLLED IN UNIVERSITY
AND FURTHER EDUCATION

Position
1st



LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

48th



ESTIMATED EARNED INCOME
PER PERSON

64th



POLITICIANS, SENIOR OFFICIALS
AND MANAGERS

64th



PROFESSIONAL AND
TECHNICAL WORKERS

66th



SOURCE: WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

GRAPHIC: ROB BROOKS

What do we mean by inequality?

The difference in social status, wealth, or opportunity between people or groups.

Synonyms: imbalance, discrepancy, bias, prejudice, discrimination, etc.

Aequalis/aequus – level, even, flat, the same

- To be equal is not be identical or the same
- Does equality refer to what *already is equal* (descriptive) or *what should be equal* (normative)?

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...the purpose of the United Nations has in the Charter...
...in fundamental human rights, in the dignity...
...human persons and in the equal rights of men and women...

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

Human Rights

[illegible][illegible]

Declaration of Independence (1776)

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness

Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen (1789)

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only on the general good. 2. The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptable rights of man. These are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.

UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world





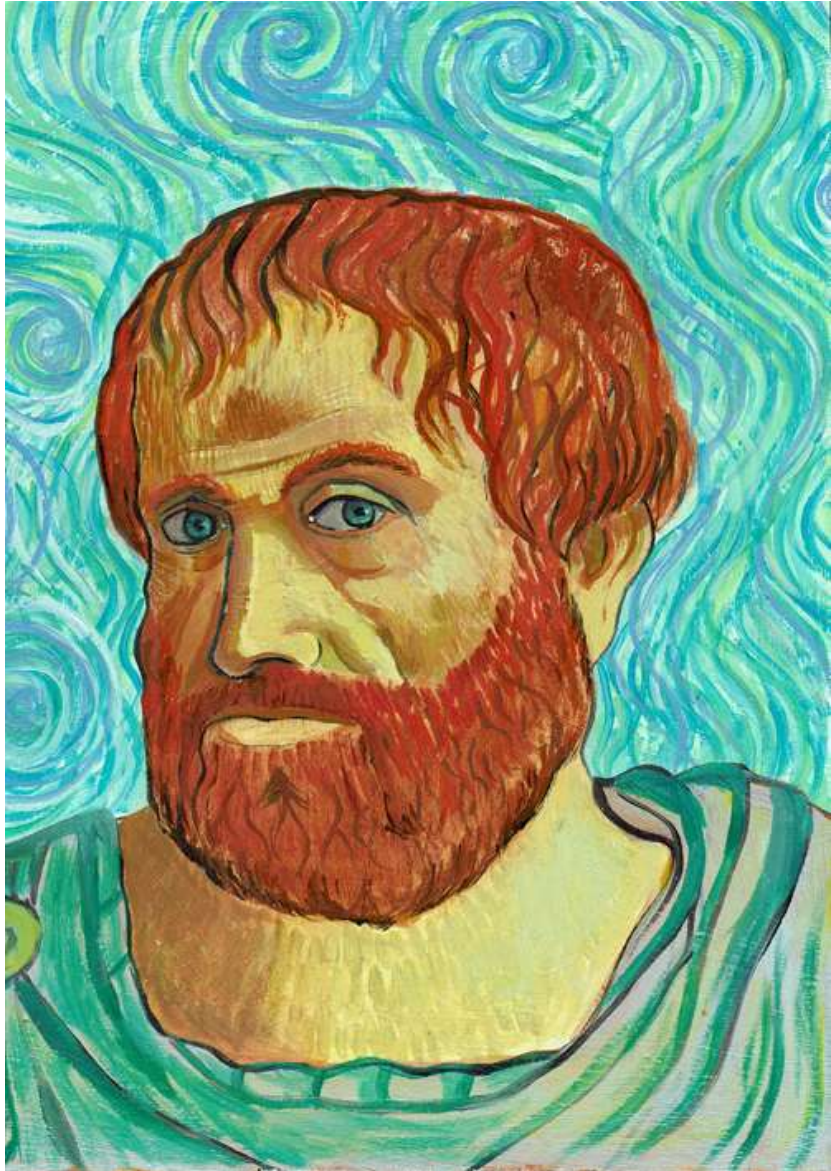


Democracy in Ancient Greece

‘Democracy arises out of the notion that those who are equal in any respect are equal in all respects; because men are equally free, they claim to be absolutely equal.’ — Aristotle

‘Democracy is a charming form of government, full of variety and disorder, and dispensing a sort of equality to equals and unequal alike.’
- Plato





How should individuals best live together?

On a simple level, we all seek *eudaimonia* or well-being...

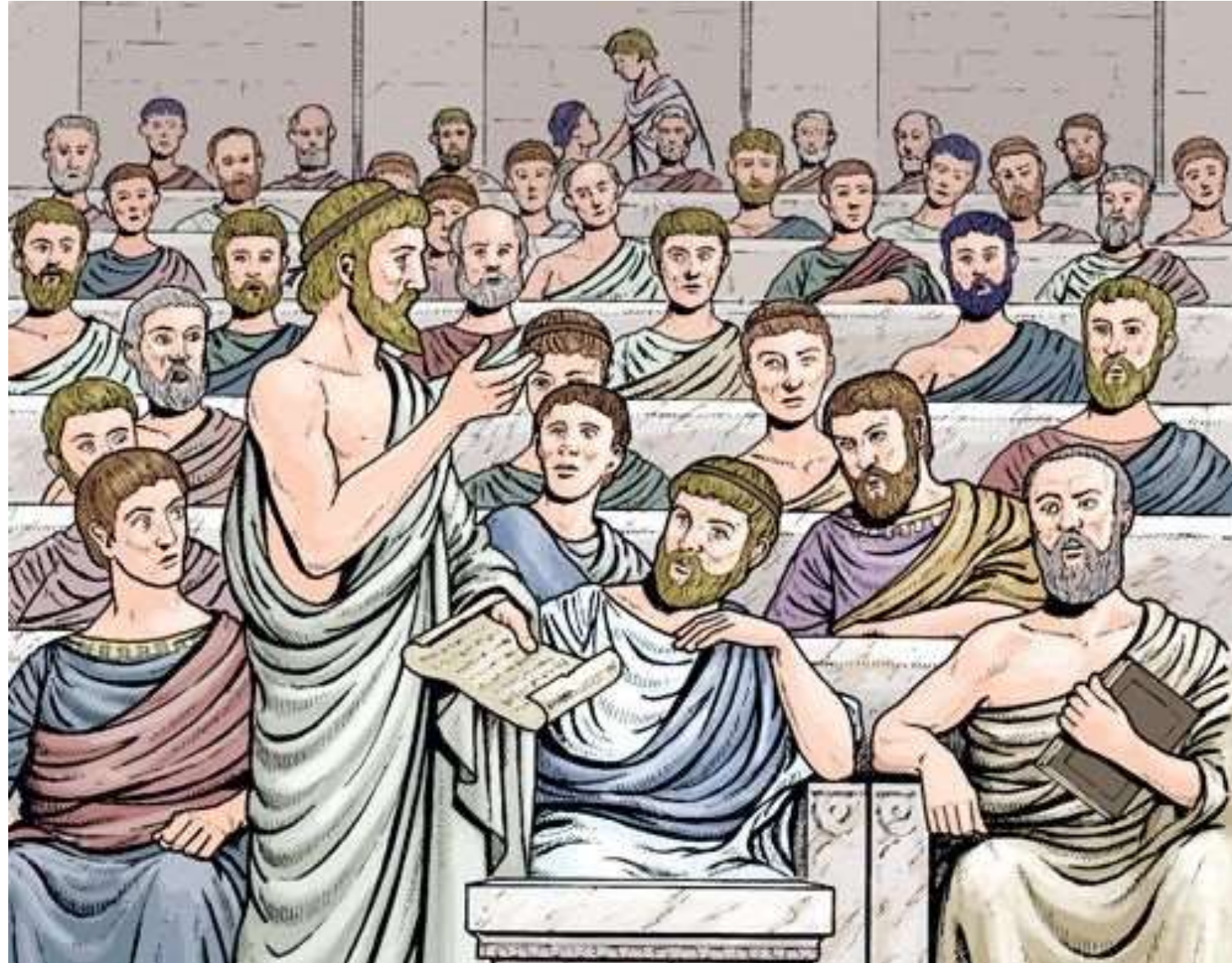
A way of life based on consciously choosing and living up to what is reasonable, just, beautiful and good

Question:

- Why is equality so important for justice?
- Why should justice be proportionate?



- ‘the judge tries to equalize things by means of the penalty’ (85)
- ‘Now the judge restores equality; it as though there were a line divided into unequal parts, and he took away that by which the greater segment exceeds the half ... And when the whole has been equally divided, then they say they have ‘their own’ – i.e. when they have got what is equal.’ (87)
- ‘the just man is said to be a doer, by choice, of that which is just’, and who gives ‘what is equal in accordance with proportion’ (90)



- ‘Now the laws in their enactments on all subjects aim at the common advantage either of all or of the best or of those who hold power, or something of the sort; so that in one sense we call those acts just that tend to produce and preserve happiness and its components for the political society’ (81)
- ‘This is found among men who share their life with a view to self-sufficiency, men who are free and either proportionately or arithmetically equal’ (91)
- ‘we do not allow a *man* to rule, but *rational principle*, because a man behaves thus in his own interests and becomes a tyrant. The magistrate on the other hand is the guardian of justice and, if of justice, then of equality also.’ (91)



‘I do not wish them to have power over men; but over themselves’

‘If women be educated for dependence; that is, to act according to the will of another fallible being, and submit, right or wrong, to power, where are we to stop?’

- Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)



The Six Points OF THE PEOPLE'S CHARTER.

1. A VOTE for every man twenty-one years of age, of sound mind, and not undergoing punishment for crime.
2. THE BALLOT.—To protect the elector in the exercise of his vote.
3. NO PROPERTY QUALIFICATION for Members of Parliament—thus enabling the constituencies to return the man of their choice, be he rich or poor.
4. PAYMENT OF MEMBERS, thus enabling an honest tradesman, working man, or other person, to serve a constituency, when taken from his business to attend to the interests of the country.
5. EQUAL CONSTITUENCIES, securing the same amount of representation for the same number of electors, instead of allowing small constituencies to swamp the votes of large ones.
6. ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS, thus presenting the most effectual check to bribery and intimidation, since though a constituency might be bought once in seven years (even with the ballot), no purse could buy a constituency (under a system of universal suffrage) in each ensuing twelve-month; and since members, when elected for a year only, would not be able to defy and betray their constituents as now.





Who gets to be equal?

- The hard-working, tax-paying citizen... (who gets their due, Aristotle might argue...)
- Or every person living in a given society?
- Where do we draw the line between the right of one person to keep as much wealth as they earn, and pass it onto their children...
- And the rights of every child born to have an equal chance in life?



The luck egalitarianism debate

- Traditional mainstream philosophers have drawn a line between justifying full equality for all and ensuring choices have consequences
- Luck egalitarianism: ‘brute’ luck (unchosen) vs ‘option’ luck (chosen)
- Ronald Dworkin and John Rawls:
- Maximin, leximin: choice and responsibility but basic protections
- But something chosen isn’t always acceptable (Elizabeth Anderson)
- Doesn’t factor in social class, cultural aspiration; assumes social mobility and meritocracy



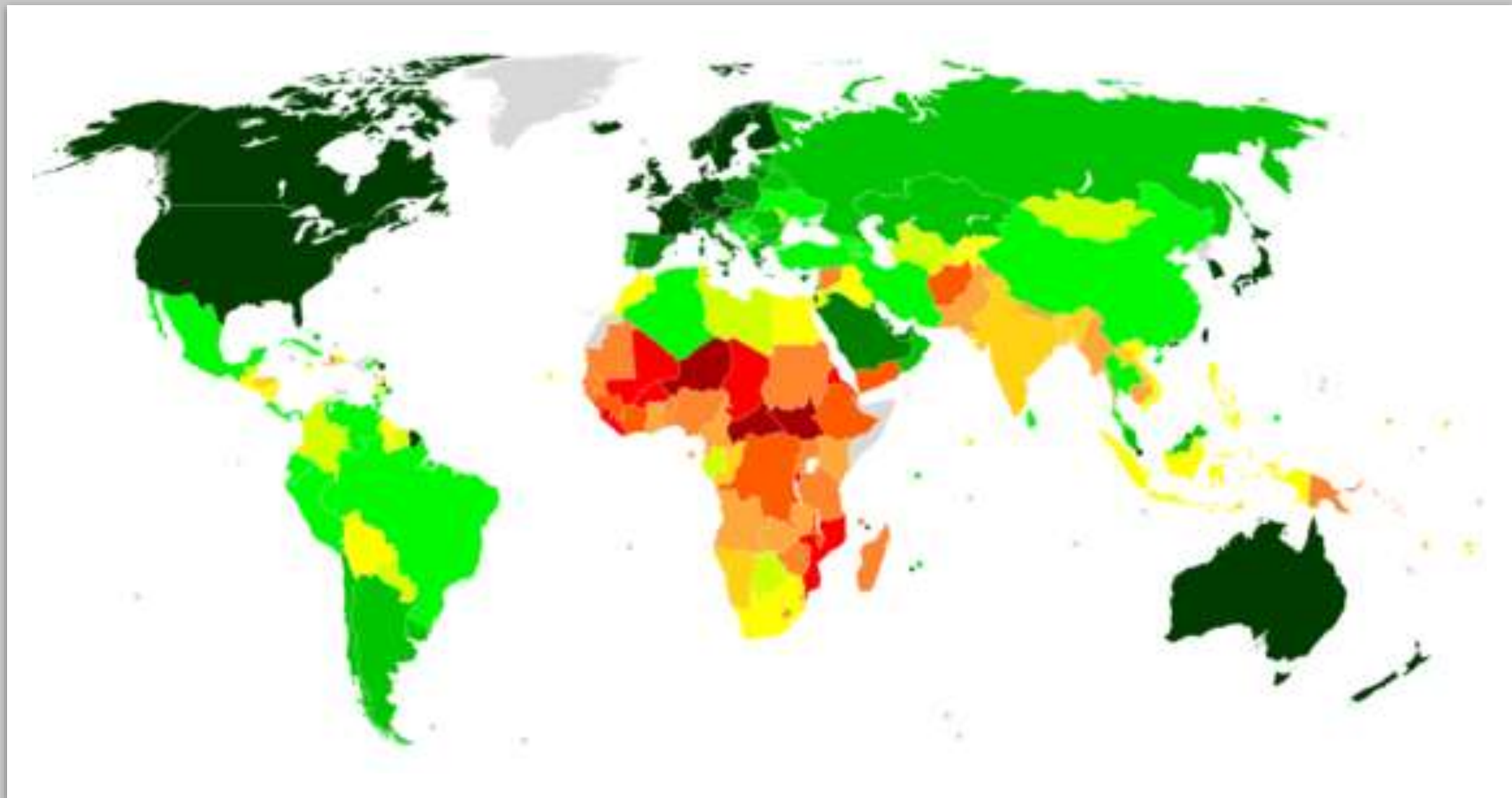
BREXIT PLAN



NOBEL PRIZE-WINNING ECONOMIST
AMARTYA SEN

Amartya Sen – Capabilities approach

- Equality ... but of what?
- Traditional theories of equality focus more on the distribution of means, and less on how individuals can use these to live well
- *Eudaimonia* isn't simply about how much wealth (utilitarian quality), pleasure (total utility) or access to basic social goods (Rawls) we have – it's about how we're able to live a life we value
- **Q: what is the basic capabilities approach? (218)**
Does it solve some of the problems we've been thinking about?



- ““basic capabilities”: a person being able to do certain basic things. The ability to move about is the relevant one here, but one can consider others, e.g., the ability to meet one’s nutritional requirements, the wherewithal to be clothed and sheltered, the power to participate in the social life of the community’
- ‘Primary goods suffers from fetishist handicap in being concerned with goods, and even though the list of goods is specified in a broad and inclusive way, encompassing rights, liberties, opportunities, income, wealth, and the social basis of self-respect, it still is concerned with good things rather than with what these good things *do* to human beings’

Amartya Sen – Capabilities approach

- Individuals differ in their abilities to convert the same resources into valuable functionings – focusing on the means isn't enough
- Focusing just on the mental state of the person (e.g. the happiness of traditional utilitarianism) isn't helpful – people rationalise intolerable circumstances and may not desire what they can't achieve – that doesn't ethically justify it
- Well-being is complex and culturally diverse. A limited view of happiness isn't always relevant. Capabilities approaches should be open-minded and under-theorised...





‘The first loss which the rightless suffered was the loss of their homes, and this meant the loss of the entire social texture into which they were born and in which they established for themselves a distinct place in the world. ...

The calamity of the rightless is not that they are deprived of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, or of equality before the law and freedom of opinion – formulas which were designed to solve problems *within* given communities – but that they no longer belong to any community whatsoever. Their plight is not that they are not equal before the law, but that no law exists for them’

- Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951)



Take-home Q:

What are we ethically or socially obliged to give our equal?

Does your sense of equality rest in what is your due as an individual from society... or in your shared life and identity as part of a community?

Next week: the individual vs the collective

Is freedom and human flourishing achieved by the individual, working to further their own interests, or achieved collectively, as a shared public life in a peaceful, prosperous and intellectually ambitious society?

Let's compare two different perspectives:

... Milton Friedman on individual self-interest, free market economies and why we should cut back on bloated, repressive states

... Against Spinoza's view that human life is inherently reliant upon others for its wellbeing and maximisation

1. Spinoza, *Ethics* – excerpts from Part 4
2. Milton and Rose Friedman, *Free to Choose* – Intro and Ch1

Any questions, email dan.taylor@marywardcentre.ac.uk