Just to be sure? An analysis of security in relation to the values of well-being, freedom, and equality

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Chapter 5

Finding Security in Equality: On the Securities (Not) to Be Offered by an Egalitarian Society

5. Finding Security in Equality: On the Securities (Not) to Be Offered by an Egalitarian Society[43]

5.1. Security on the left

In 2018, the Dutch Labour Party launched a campaign centred around one core theme: '*zekerheid*', a word that literally means 'sureness', but is more commonly translated as 'security', connoting something like continuity, certainty, and confidence about the future. In a set of slogans all starting with the phrase '*zeker zijn van*', 'being sure of', the party promised security in relation to things as varied as housing, healthcare, education, and neighbourhood safety. The campaign was an attempt to win back voters' trust after the social democrats had suffered the biggest electoral defeat ever in the parliamentary history of the Netherlands. With left-of-centre parties losing ground throughout the continent, the defeat seemed to exemplify what Keating & McCrone (2013) had at that point proclaimed to be a wider 'crisis of social democracy in Europe' (p. 1). According to Keating & McCrone, the most serious challenge for European social democracy was posed by the populist right, which had managed to frame not only increasing economic insecurity but also immigration and European integration as threats to the security of 'an imagined community of insiders' (p. 7). In their analysis, this created the need for social democratic parties to develop 'an alternative security prospectus that is both effective and convincing' (p. 10). With the launch of its security campaign, the Dutch Labour Party seemed to take a step in that direction.

Aside from the interesting empirical questions that this story raises – can the adoption of security discourse indeed serve social democrats electorally, or does it only play to the narrative of their populist competitors? – the case also inspires a question with an important philosophical dimension: what can left-of-centre parties promise voters in terms of security, while staying true to their typical commitment to equality? In other words, what securities does an egalitarian society have to offer? And might there also be securities that such a society can*not* offer? Behind these

[43] A version of this chapter has been submitted to an academic journal. In turning that article into this chapter, I have kept the adjustments to a necessary minimum: aside from minor cosmetic improvements, the only revisions that I have made to the paper are those that were strictly needed in order to attain maximal conceptual consistency across the chapters of this dissertation.

questions lies the assumption, to be elaborated below, that security is something that people generally do value, and have reason to value, at least to some extent. As suggested above, those who champion political ideals other than equality – conservatives, libertarians, authoritarians – often seem successful in presenting their agenda as an answer to people's longing for security. As we will see later, however, this framing may actually be deceiving. The question is, then, if egalitarians *are* able to put forward an ideal in which people can find security.

Although contemporary political philosophy has so far not addressed this question head-on, it does harbour various resources to draw on in search of an answer. When it comes to thinking about equality, the starting point for the present inquiry is a body of thought that we may, in the well-known terminology of Anderson (2010), refer to as 'relational egalitarianism'. Within this tradition, equality is viewed not in the first place as a property of distributions of goods, but rather as a quality of relations between persons. Thus understood, equality can be construed as a rich ideal with implications spanning what I take to be three core domains of society: the moral domain, which considers the allocation of *respect* or *recognition*; the economic domain, which regards the distribution of *resources*; and the political domain, which concerns the exercise of *rule*. In order to establish what exactly equality demands in each of these domains, in the next sections of this chapter, I build on the works of prominent thinkers within the relational egalitarian school, including Scheffler's (2015) account of respect within egalitarian relations, Anderson's (1999) depiction of an egalitarian economy, and Kolodny's (2014) egalitarian justification of democracy. In addition, I draw on the writings of some neo-republican theorists, who – given their central commitment to the relational ideal of non-domination – could also be qualified as relational egalitarians (Garrau & Laborde, 2015, p. 50). Together, these texts provide us with an inclusive picture of what an egalitarian society would look like.

The thinkers just mentioned, however, generally do not frame their ideas about equality in terms of security. When it comes to understanding security, the starting point for the current study lies with the works of Waldron (2006) and Herington (2019). Inspired by their analyses, we can view security as a mode in which *individuals* can enjoy *goods*. We may refer to these goods explicitly, as when we speak of people's 'security of health' or

'job security', for example. Or the reference may be implicit, as when we speak of 'security' simpliciter, perhaps thinking of people's security of bodily integrity or basic needs fulfilment, for instance, but without actually mentioning these goods. Now, what would it mean for an individual to have security of a good? In earlier papers (Daemen, 2022a, 2022b), I have characterised security as having a factual aspect, a cognitive aspect, and an emotional aspect. If an individual has security of a good, I proposed, ideally this means that she *is in fact* bound to enjoy this good in the future, she *believes* that she will, and she *has no fear* that she won't.[44]

Connected to these three aspects of security, I have also shown earlier, there are different ways in which security can be seen to be of value for people. If an individual *is in fact* bound to enjoy a good over the course of time, instead of only enjoying it momentarily or intermittently, this means that she can continuously derive benefit from the presence of this good in her life. If she also *believes* that she will enjoy this good stably over time, this supports her in preparing for the future and using her resources, energy, and time efficiently. And if she also *has no fear* that she will miss out on this good at some point, this serves as a foundation for much of her physical and mental functioning. In these ways, security can be considered to make a significant contribution to somebody's well-being (Daemen, 2022a, pp. 8–13; cf. Herington, 2019, pp. 185–198; Wolff & De-Shalit, 2007, pp. 68–69), as well as her positive freedom (Daemen, 2022b, pp. 12–14). Thus we can see why security may indeed be something for people to value.

Nevertheless, this still does not tell us whether society ought to provide its members with particular securities, and if so, what securities those would be. In other words, what (if any) are the goods that people should get security of? By exploring how this question may be answered from a relational egalitarian perspective, this chapter builds a bridge between acclaimed work about equality on the one hand, and the study of security on the other. It thereby contributes to a growing scholarship connecting these (or closely related) themes. In the field of critical security studies, for example, Booth (1991) and other members of the so-called

[44] For a further elaboration of my concept of security, see chapter 2 of this dissertation. There I emphasise (among other things) that in order for an individual to count as having full security of a good, the belief and the emotional condition as described above also have to be 'appropriate': they have to be based on an awareness of the facts. In order to avoid wordiness, I omit this detail in the current chapter.

'Aberystwyth School' have long pressed for linking the notion of security to emancipation. More recently, political theorists such as Lorey (2015) and Näsström & Kalm (2015) have problematised the insecurities produced by neoliberal policies under the heading of 'precarity'. Relatedly, Standing (2011) and Bieber & Moggia (2021) have proposed ways to reinforce securities for those in the most precarious positions in the economic domain. Finally, Wolfendale (2017) and Milstein (2020) have explored avenues for more egalitarian conceptions and practices of security in the moral and political domain.

All of these works make valuable contributions to our understanding of the relations between equality and security, and some of them provide important pieces of the puzzle that I here aim to complete. That puzzle is a full story of the securities that are – and are not – to be found in an egalitarian society. The first part of this chapter constructs the positive side of this story, setting out the securities that an egalitarian society *does* have to offer its members (section 5.2). The second part addresses the negative side, exploring what securities such a society does *not* have to offer (section 5.3). Ultimately, I suggest that the securities that *are* on offer in an egalitarian society are the best we can get when it comes to security, if that is something to be enjoyed by all (section 5.4).

5.2. The securities that an egalitarian society does have to offer

I start with the positive question: what securities *does* an egalitarian society have to offer to its members? In the coming three sections, I address this question by considering the moral, economic, and political domain of society in turn. For each of these domains, I take a similar approach. Drawing on relational egalitarian literature, first I explore the demands of equality in the domain at issue. Analysing the implications of these demands in terms of security, I then list a particular set of securities that an egalitarian society does provide its members with. In order to distinguish these from the securities that an egalitarian society cannot or should not offer to its members – which we will encounter later on in this chapter – I bring the securities that such a society does have to deliver under the heading 'egalitarian security'.

5.2.1. Egalitarian moral security

Although the egalitarian ideal has many implications for the way in which a society should structure its economic and political life, the most fundamental demand of equality is located in what I earlier called the 'moral domain' – the domain that concerns the allocation of *respect* or *recognition*. Like much of contemporary political thought on these themes, relational egalitarian thinking has been greatly influenced by the work of Kant. According to Kant (1785), respect is owed to all persons just in virtue of the fact that they are beings with a rational and autonomous will, and this puts constraints on what we may do to them. This idea also inspires Darwall's (1977) account of 'recognition respect', which entails that we take seriously and weigh appropriately the fact that others are persons in deliberating about what to do (p. 38). Egalitarians, too, tend to reserve a central place in their thinking for the notion of respect or recognition – whereby the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably, or refer to ideas that are strongly related (see, for instance, Anderson, 1999, pp. 289, 314). In an egalitarian society, it is generally held, respect and recognition are enjoyed by all members equally. Or, as Scheffler (2015) puts it, in a 'society of equals', 'each member accepts that every other member's equally important interests should play an equally significant role in influencing decisions made on behalf of the society as a whole', and 'each member has a normally effective disposition to treat the interests of others accordingly' (p. 35).

The demand of equal respect has a strong connection to the idea of equal basic liberties. On the famous account by Rawls (1971), these at any rate comprise political liberty, freedom of speech and assembly, freedom of conscience and thought, freedom of the person and the right to hold property (p. 61). To interfere with a person in these intimate spheres – unless it were strictly necessary for protecting others in *their* spheres of personal choice – would be to deny her status as a person; to disregard her interests; to express disrespect. In an egalitarian society, then, all members are entitled to equal basic liberties. Crucially, this principle must be legally codified and publicly known. This is not just so that it can be effectively enforced. It is also because the principle of equal basic liberties, by giving public expression to the idea of equal respect for all members of society, supports people's disposition to treat one another's interests as equally important. In the words of Milstein (2020), through both their protective

and expressive functions, '[e]qual rights before the law anchor the capacities of citizens to recognize each other, understand themselves, and act in a democracy as equals' (p. 845).

In order to see what the demand of equal respect might imply for people's security, it helps to bring in Pettit's (2015) account of respect as what he calls a 'robustly demanding good' (p. 12). In line with the above, Pettit connects the 'rich' good of respect to the 'thin' benefit of 'non-interference or restraint in the basic liberties' (p. 86) – whereby he specifically mentions freedom in the spheres of speech, religion, association, movement, occupation, leisure, and property. Furthermore, just like the thinkers mentioned earlier, Pettit relates the enjoyment of respect by a person to the existence of a certain disposition on the part of others: a disposition not to interfere in this person's basic liberties; a disposition to show restraint. Finally, Pettit, too, believes that the law can play a significant role in supporting a respectful disposition in people. Now, what is important about his account here, is that it allows us to see how all of this could link to security. As Pettit stresses, if a person enjoys respect from the others in her society – that is, if they have a disposition to treat her with restraint – this does not just entail that they *actually* refrain from interference in her personal decisions, but that they would do so *across a range of possible scenarios*. They would also leave her be, for example, in the case that her choices were less congenial to them, or mingling in her life was more convenient for them. If a person enjoys respect, then, we could say in Pettit's words, she is thereby guarded in an important way 'against the will of others', and provided 'with an important form of security' (p. 111).

The themes of equality, recognition, and security are linked even more explicitly in Wolfendale's (2017) account of what she terms 'moral security' (p. 238). Echoing core themes discussed previously in this section, Wolfendale proposes to view a person as possessing moral security when this person *believes* that her basic interests and welfare are accorded moral recognition by her society, and *as a matter of fact* her interests and welfare are regarded by her society as morally important – for instance, when violence against her is taken to warrant the same punishment and condemnation as similar violence against others (ibid.). In order to grant this security for all members of a community, Wolfendale suggests, formal legal and political equality – think of the equal basic liberties advocated by Rawls

(1971), Milstein (2020), and Pettit (2015) – may well be necessary. Yet, she emphasises, equal rights alone are not sufficient. After all, as cases of racial and sexual discrimination and violence make clear, equality before the law does not always translate into equal treatment under the law. Therefore, she argues, 'rather than seeing the goal of equality as separate from or even secondary to the goal of ensuring security, measures to combat discrimination may be required by the state's duty to ensure citizens' right to security' (p. 238).

Let us take stock now: considering the demands of equality in the moral domain, what securities could we say the members of an egalitarian society must have at any rate? This section took the fundamental demand of equality to be that all members of society enjoy equal respect or recognition. This means that they acknowledge each other's status as persons, that they regard one another's interests as important, and that they have a disposition to treat each other accordingly – all of this backed up by a legal code that gives public expression to the idea of equal respect by specifying equal basic liberties for all. The result is that in a true community of equals, everyone has security of restraint on the part of others in the sphere of her personal choices; security of being treated respectfully; security of not facing violence. Let me put these securities under the heading 'egalitarian moral security'.

5.2.2. Egalitarian economic security

Above I suggested that of all the demands of the egalitarian ideal, the demand located in the moral domain – that all members of society enjoy equal respect or recognition – is the most fundamental. Nevertheless, relational egalitarians generally hold that this also has significant implications for the proper allocation of goods other than respect or recognition, that is, for the way in which *resources* should be distributed – which is the concern of what I termed the 'economic domain'. The reasons are twofold. Firstly, the principles by which resources are distributed in a society express something about the character of that society, thereby also impacting how members think of themselves and others within their community. If a society is to be an egalitarian one, and its members are to regard themselves and others as equals, then the principles regulating its economic domain – just like the rules defining its other basic arrangements – ought to reflect the idea that all members deserve equal respect. Secondly,

the distribution of resources in a society, by affecting what people can do to each other, and what they can make each other do, influences the relations in which people stand to each other. If they are to relate to one another as equals, then this distribution must not – in neo-republican language – give some people a form of dominating power over others. Summarising in the words of Anderson (2010), the principles ordering the economic domain of an egalitarian society must 'express, embody, and sustain relations of social equality' (p. 2).

What this could mean concretely becomes clear from Anderson's (1999) description of the economy under her own version of relational egalitarianism, called 'democratic equality' (p. 289). According to Anderson, egalitarians essentially want to realise two goals: the negative goal of ending oppression, and the positive goal of constructing a community of equals. Democratic equality, then, 'requires that everyone have effective access to enough resources to avoid being oppressed by others and to function as an equal in civil society' (p. 320). What resources would those be? Inspired by Anderson's account of the conditions of equal citizenship, we could divide them into three categories. Firstly, a number of resources are essential for functioning *as a human being*: Anderson lists 'the means of sustaining one's biological existence – food, shelter, clothing, medical care' (p. 317). Secondly, there are resources that one needs in order to function *as a participant in a system of cooperative production*, namely 'the education needed to develop one's talents', 'the means of production', and 'fair value for one's labor' (p. 318). Finally, some resources are required for functioning *as a citizen of a democratic state*: 'public spaces such as roads, parks, and public accommodations including public transportation, the postal service, and telecommunications', as well as 'private spaces' where one is 'protected from the scrutiny and intrusions of others' (ibid.). It is to a sufficient level of these resources that people ought to have access in order not to be oppressed by others and stand as equals in society.

To see how Anderson's (1999) theory of equality connects to the topic of security, note that she proposes to guarantee all citizens access to sufficient resources 'over the course of an entire life' (p. 319). Hers is thus not a starting-gate theory, which would have people start off with equal resources, but allow any disparities between them to emerge from their own choices afterwards. Under democratic equality, no member will ever be

denied access to the resources that she needs in order to stand as an equal in society.[45] From an egalitarian perspective, this matters for two reasons. Firstly, this principle expresses precisely the idea of equal respect that egalitarianism can be considered to revolve around: society will never give up on any of its members. Secondly, it prevents that some people end up in relations of domination: even if someone is taken to have lost her resources as a result of her own choices, she is not allowed to sink to a position where others can push her around or take advantage of her. All of this is not to say that equality demands that people be provided with resources completely unconditionally. To obtain the resources needed for functioning in society as an equal, one may still have to exercise responsible agency, by making a productive contribution to society, for instance, insofar as one's circumstances allow it and the terms of cooperation are fair. Yet, access to the resources listed above, even if it is not entirely unconditional, should indeed be granted to all for the duration of their whole lives. Using the preferred language of this chapter, I conclude that under democratic equality, all members of society have *security* of access to a level of resources that is sufficient for avoiding oppression and participating as an equal in the community.

The importance of such security for the realisation of equality also becomes apparent from recent works on precarity. Näsström & Kalm (2015) describe precarity as 'a generalized state of insecurity produced by neoliberal economic reforms' (p. 562) – among them the flexibilisation of employment, retreat of the welfare state, and promotion of market solutions in more and more spheres of society. Precarity-inducing policies can threaten the egalitarian ideal in at least three ways. Firstly, people who experience great insecurity with regard to their work and income are often especially vulnerable to oppression. As Bieber & Moggia (2021) suggest in their discussion of low-skilled gig work, those who hold such precarious positions may be unable to turn down work offers, which can put them into relations of domination or exploitation (p. 291). Secondly, people who face extensive economic insecurity may have trouble participating in society as

[45] One exception must be mentioned here: if one is convicted of a crime, Anderson (1999) points out, then one's access to these resources may indeed be taken away, and one may lose one's status as an equal in civil society. Yet, she adds, even convicted criminals 'retain their status as equal human beings, and so are still entitled to basic human functionings such as adequate nutrition, shelter, and medical care' (p. 327).

equal citizens – or engaging with others in political activity at all. Indeed, Lorey (2015) describes the flexibilisation of labour and trimming of the welfare state as ways in which workers are individualised and traditional possibilities for collective organisation are eroded (pp. 5-7). Thirdly and relatedly, it is doubtful whether the principles upon which neoliberal policies operate – arguably making people responsible for their own welfare alone; turning fellow workers and citizens into competitors – really 'express, embody, and sustain relations of social equality', to speak with Anderson (2010) once again (p. 2). Näsström & Kalm (2015), at any rate, argue that precarity-producing policies, 'by displacing onto individuals a responsibility that ought to be shared and divided between citizens', are incompatible with 'the principle of democracy' (pp. 557, 565).

From the inegalitarian implications of insecurity, let us now return to the positive question that this section set out to answer: looking at the demands of equality in the economic domain, what securities can we say the members of an egalitarian society should enjoy? Most importantly, we learned, the principles that regulate the distribution of resources must express, embody, and sustain equal respect for all citizens. Following Anderson's interpretation of this idea, we could say that every member of the community should be guaranteed effective access to enough resources in order to stand as an equal in society over the course of her entire life. Concretely, this means that in a real community of equals, each member has security of access to sufficient means to fulfil her human needs; security of access to education, work, and a fair income; security of access to public goods making civic engagement possible. I refer to these securities under the heading 'egalitarian economic security'.

5.2.3. Egalitarian political security

So far, I have elaborated the demands of equality in the moral domain – all members of society must enjoy equal respect – and in the economic domain – resources ought to be distributed according to principles that endorse relations of social equality. To conclude my exploration of the securities that an egalitarian society should offer its members, let me now turn to the demands of equality in what I named the 'political domain' – the domain that concerns how society is *ruled*. In order to establish what kind of rule fits with a community in which people relate to one another as equals, we could

follow Kolodny (2014) and start by considering what characterises relations of social *in*equality. In relations of social inequality, Kolodny suggests, some are 'above' others in the sense that they have greater power over others, greater authority over others, or attributes that attract greater consideration than those of others (pp. 295-296). Now, to enjoy influence over political decisions clearly is to enjoy a kind of power and authority over others. Given that such decisions cannot be escaped at will, Kolodny argues, 'it is a particularly important component of relations of social equality among individuals that they enjoy equal opportunity for influence over the political decisions to which they are subject' (p. 308).

In principle, equal opportunity for influence over political decisions can be realised in a number of different ways. One possibility, Kolodny (2014) points out, would be anarchism: 'that no political decisions are made at all' (p. 310). Let us assume, however, that political decisions will in fact be made. This still leaves us with two options: decisions can be reached 'without giving any of us any opportunity for influence, such as by lottery', or 'by giving each of us some positive, but equal, opportunity for influence, such as by voting' (p. 313). Although both procedures would be in line with the demand of equal opportunity for influence over political decisions, the latter option may be preferable for reasons that are not straightforwardly grounded in social equality – for instance because positive democracy would be more reliable than lottery in producing substantively good decisions. Again, Kolodny shows, different formal arrangements are possible: from direct to representative democracy, and from simple majority to supermajority requirements (pp. 317-332). At the same time – and this will become important later on in this chapter – equal opportunity for influence over political decisions demands a lot of informal conditions: given that people's opportunities for influencing political decisions can vary considerably with their level of resources, resource inequalities may also have to be countered in order to fulfil the demands of equality in the political domain (pp. 332-336).

Whereas Kolodny leaves open quite a broad variety of options for the formal realisation of equal opportunity for influence over political decisions, Anderson (1999) clearly favours a more specific form of rule. To live in a society of equals, she suggests, is 'to live together in a democratic community, as opposed to a hierarchical one', whereby democracy is to be

understood 'as collective self-determination by means of open discussion among equals, in accordance with rules acceptable to all' (p. 313). Realising democracy on this thicker interpretation requires, firstly, that all citizens enjoy formal rights to political participation, including freedom of speech and the franchise. Informally, they must also enjoy 'effective access to the goods and relationships of civil society', including 'the social conditions of being accepted by others, such as the ability to appear in public without shame, and not being ascribed an outcast status', as well as access to the resources already listed in the previous section (p. 318). And just like access to these resources, the formal rights and informal conditions for political participation mentioned in the present section have to be guaranteed to citizens throughout their whole lives. In the language of the current chapter, we could say that all members of society should have *security* of these rights and conditions.

We might observe another link between democracy and security if we consider the neo-republican ideal of non-domination. Neo-republicans generally agree that in order not to be dominated by the state, the people must somehow be involved in its government (Laborde & Maynor, 2008, p. 11). In the words of Pettit (1997), we could say that citizen involvement is necessary for ensuring that state interference will be 'forced to track the interests and ideas of the [persons] suffering the interference' (p. 55). In this sense, democracy can indeed be seen as a condition for 'security against arbitrary interference' (p. 46), namely: security of citizens against arbitrary interference by the state. It is important to emphasise, however, that democracy can only be regarded to give citizens security against arbitrary interference by the state on a specific understanding of the term 'arbitrary'. After all, democracy does not ensure that any political decision will be in line with *all* citizens' interests and ideas: actually, those who make up the minority that is outvoted will *not* find that the state only interferes to their own benefit. Democracy provides security against arbitrary interference, then, not in the substantive sense that it guarantees that state interference never goes against any citizen's interests or ideas, but in the procedural sense that it guarantees that all citizens have the opportunity to make their interests and ideas weigh in the process by which decisions about state interference are reached (see Bellamy, 2008, p. 164). Trying to make our

terminology more sensitive to this nuance, we could say that democracy offers citizens security against state interference 'on an arbitrary basis'.

Let us end with an explicit answer to the core question of this section: what securities can the members of an egalitarian society derive from the demands of equality in the political domain? We saw that egalitarians advocate equal opportunity for influence over political decisions more generally, and – at least under the circumstances of the present world – democratic rule more specifically. This requires that citizens are granted a range of formal political rights and a number of informal conditions, and implies that certain bases for exercising rule are out of the question. Using the language of security, we could say that in any egalitarian society worthy of the name, each member enjoys security of the ability to form and voice her own political views; security of the chance to have a say in the political decisions of her community; security of not facing state interference on an arbitrary basis. Let me bring these securities under the heading 'egalitarian political security'.

5.3. The securities that an egalitarian society does not have to offer

My positive account of security, setting out the various securities that a community of equals *does* have to offer its members, is now complete. So it is time to turn to the negative question: are there also securities that an egalitarian society does *not* have to offer? Yes, I am going to argue in what follows. Again, I discuss the moral, economic, and political domain of society in turn. Revisiting the demands of equality in each of these domains, I argue that egalitarians are indeed unable to promise a particular set of securities. Noting that these are securities that certain actors at the right of the political spectrum do seem to offer, and distinguishing these securities from what I earlier called 'egalitarian moral security', 'egalitarian economic security', and 'egalitarian political security', I bring the securities that an egalitarian society cannot provide under the respective headings 'conservative moral security', 'libertarian economic security', and 'authoritarian political security'.

5.3.1. Conservative moral security

Previously, I claimed that the most fundamental demand of equality is found in the moral domain. It entails that all members of society ought to receive

equal respect or recognition. Meeting this demand, I argued following Rawls (1971), Milstein (2020), and Pettit (2015), requires that all citizens are granted equal basic liberties by the law. Nevertheless, I added following Wolfendale (2017), formal equality alone may not be enough to really instill in people a disposition to treat each other as equals. This becomes particularly clear from the existence of social hierarchies such as those based on race, gender, or sexuality. Typically, the interests of those in the lower echelons of these orderings receive less regard than the interests of those in the upper ones. In other words, those at the bottom enjoy less respect than those at the top. Trying to approach the ideal of equal respect as much as possible, then, requires efforts to topple these hierarchies. My earlier analysis suggests that such efforts ideally result in a situation where each member of society enjoys what I called 'egalitarian moral security': security of restraint on the part of others in the sphere of her personal choices; security of being treated respectfully; security of not facing violence. Presently, however, I want to argue that the pursuit of equal respect may simultaneously put other securities out of reach.

To see why, consider what it may take to remedy inequalities in respect or recognition, besides the formal institution of equal rights. Fraser (1995) suggests that whereas resource inequalities can be corrected through redistribution, recognition inequalities must be amended through some form of cultural or symbolic change. She distinguishes between two strategies for bringing such change about. 'Affirmative remedies', on the one hand, 'redress disrespect by revaluing unjustly devalued group identities, while leaving intact both the contents of those identities and the group differentiations that underlie them' (p. 82). As an example, Fraser mentions the gay identity politics movement, which aims to remedy homophobia and heterosexism by revaluing gay and lesbian identity. 'Transformative remedies', on the other hand, 'redress disrespect by transforming the underlying cultural-valuational structure' (p. 83). Such remedies do not only 'raise the self-esteem of members of currently disrespected groups' – in fact, by 'destabilizing existing group identities and differentiations' they 'change *everyone's* sense of belonging, affiliation, and self' (ibid.). To illustrate this strategy, Fraser points at queer theory, which does not aim to strengthen gay identity, but rather upsets all fixed sexual identities by deconstructing the homo-hetero dichotomy.

Slowly, we can begin to see why striving to fulfil the demand of equal respect may be incompatible with realising particular securities. For a start, consider that any remedy of recognition inequalities ultimately entails a change in the cultural or symbolic architecture within which *all* members of society are placed. A transformative strategy might aim for more radical change than an affirmative one, but it would be mistaken to think that either of these strategies would only impact how members of one particular group perceive themselves. Both gay identity politics and queer theory, for example, do not just seek to change the self-conceptions of gay people, they also intend to alter the views of other members of society – who should at any rate unlearn negative biases towards gay people, but might also come to think differently of their own sexual identity, no longer seeing it as 'natural' or 'static', for instance.

It is also important to consider that the kind of cultural or symbolic change required for remedying recognition inequalities is something that an egalitarian society must de facto *always* remain open to. Even if at some point it seems that there are no social hierarchies in place anymore, new recognition inequalities may always come into existence or rise to the surface, and the ideal of equal respect may yet again require some alteration of society's cultural or symbolic architecture. As gay liberation activism was followed by the transgender rights movement, the transgender rights movement will likely be followed by another group calling for equal recognition. From the viewpoint of equality, then, it is unrealistic that society's cultural or symbolic architecture is ever really 'done'. Borrowing the terminology of Huysmans (1998), we could say that an egalitarian society cannot provide full 'ontological security', as it resists permanently 'fixing social relations into a symbolic and institutional order' (p. 242).

All in all, looking at the demands of equality in the moral domain, we find that there are indeed certain securities that an egalitarian society cannot offer its members. In practice, striving to realise equal respect for all will require that society remains forever open to forms of cultural or symbolic change that to some extent impact all members' perceptions of themselves and others. Therefore, an egalitarian society will be unable to offer its members security of an unchanging cultural or symbolic order; security of a fixed identity or self-conception; security of always being viewed and treated by others in accordance with this exact image. Since

these are securities that conservative politicians – who typically treasure tradition and caution against cultural change – sometimes do appear to offer, let me bring them under the heading 'conservative moral security'.[46]

5.3.2. Libertarian economic security

Earlier I explained that although equality's most fundamental demand may be located in the moral domain, there are also implications for the way in which a society should organise its economic domain. Essentially, I took it from Anderson (1999, 2010), the principles by which resources are distributed ought to express equal respect for all members of society, and promote relationships of social equality between them. More specifically, I proceeded, they must all be guaranteed access to sufficient resources in order to avoid oppression and participate as equals in society. By implication, I concluded, in a truly egalitarian society, all members enjoy what I termed 'egalitarian economic security': security of access to sufficient means to fulfil their human needs; security of access to education, work, and a fair income; security of access to public goods facilitating civic engagement. At the same time, I want to argue presently, fulfilling the demands of equality in the economic domain may be incompatible with promising another set of securities.

To understand why this would be so, consider the steps that may be necessary in order to make sure that resources are distributed in accordance with the demands of equality. Most obviously, intervention is required if some citizens do not enjoy access to a level of resources sufficient for functioning as an equal in society, whereas others enjoy means beyond this level. In that case, wealth from the latter group must be used to lift the former group up to the level of sufficiency. This may be done, for example, by expanding the provision of public goods, or by instituting a more generous social security system, in each case drawing the required funds from increased taxation of those who have more than enough. But intervention in the economic domain may also be required given the demands of equality in the political domain. As I highlighted earlier, Kolodny

[46] I deliberately say that these are securities sometimes offered by conservative *politicians*. What I write here does not necessarily apply to conservative *philosophers*, many of whom have developed rich and nuanced theories that cannot simply be characterised as 'treasuring tradition and cautioning against cultural change'.

(2014) suggests that disparities in resources may have to be squeezed if they cause inequalities in opportunities for influencing political decisions. Making this more concrete, Robeyns (2019) argues that in order to stop the superrich from exerting undue influence over political processes, we need to adopt not just institutional measures aimed at preventing economic power from turning into political power, but also a wealth cap above which no one should be allowed to rise at any rate (p. 256).

We can now start to see why fulfilling the demands of equality in the economic domain cannot go hand in hand with granting people some particular securities. Clearly, the steps described above can be seen to benefit citizens in the sense that they may raise the welfare level of some, promote egalitarian economic security for all, or bring society closer to the ideal of a community of equals which likely appeals to many. Yet, they may also entail that some members of society actually lose something that they are reluctant to give up – be it a part of their absolute level of income or wealth, a position of relative economic privilege, or some immaterial benefits that come attached with material advantage. The prospect or even just the possibility that this will happen may instill in them a feeling of insecurity that we could, using a well-known phrase coined by Ehrenreich (1989), describe as a 'fear of falling': a fear to lose an acquired level of prosperity; a fear to slide down from a position of socioeconomic privilege.

People with abundant means might experience such insecurity specifically in the face of a transition from an inegalitarian economic system to a more egalitarian one. But even after such an initial transition, in practice, an egalitarian society cannot guarantee that those with more than enough means will never be required to give up some of their wealth in the name of equality. After all, the economy may always be hit by unexpected events – wars; pandemics; natural disasters – as a result of which further redistribution is necessary in order to prevent some people from dropping below the level of sufficiency. In that sense, the demands of equality in the economic domain may be vulnerable to a version of Nozick's (1974) famous criticism of so-called 'end-state' or 'patterned' principles of justice: that such standards cannot be 'continuously realized without continuous interference with people's lives' (p. 163). Although in this formulation the criticism would be too strong, we must submit that an egalitarian society *cannot* guarantee that there will *never* be interference with people's lives aimed at correcting

the distribution of resources. At the same time, there are good reasons for thinking that egalitarians, when making decisions about redistribution, will always want to pay decent consideration to the rights that people previously acquired in their property (Buchanan, 1975, p. 424) and the expectations that they built up under society's lawful institutions in the past (see Brown, 2011, 2017). Nevertheless, egalitarians will presumably have to bite Nozick's bullet at least to some degree: in an egalitarian society, indeed, people's property rights cannot be entirely absolute, and their legitimate expectations will only be paid consideration as one important concern alongside others.

From the demands of equality in the economic domain, then, it appears that there are again some securities that an egalitarian society is unable to offer its members. In order to guarantee that all citizens have access to sufficient resources to stand as an equal in society, and in order to prevent that any of them come to own so much that it offends equality in political power, in practice, society must always remain open to the possibility of interventions in the distribution of resources. This implies that one cannot expect an egalitarian society to offer full security of income or wealth over and above the sufficiency level; security of one's acquired economic privilege; security of never having to give up any property unless one freely chooses to dispose of it. Given that these are securities that some libertarians – who endorse a more absolute form of property rights – do seem to offer, I bring them under the heading 'libertarian economic security'.[47]

5.3.3. Authoritarian political security

Based on the demands of equality in the moral and economic domain, I have so far identified two sets of securities that an egalitarian society is unable to offer its members. This leaves me with the question if equality's demands in the political domain, too, entail that some securities must remain out of reach. The core demand here, I suggested previously following Kolodny (2014), is that all members of society enjoy equal opportunity for influence

[47] I deliberately say that these are securities sometimes offered by *some* libertarians. What I write here does not necessarily apply to those who adhere to some form of *left*-libertarianism, which takes individuals to have strong rights to self-ownership, but not to unlimited appropriation of external resources (Fried, 2004, p. 67).

over political decisions. In principle, this leaves open the options of anarchy and lottocracy as well as democracy. Anderson (1999) clearly favours the latter form of rule, whereby all citizens have an actual opportunity to take part in the self-determination of their community. Under this option, I argued, all members of society must enjoy what I named 'egalitarian political security': security of the ability to form and voice their own political views; security of the chance to have a say in their community's political decisions; and, by implication, security of not having the state interfere with them on an arbitrary basis. However, I want to argue now, indeed there are also securities that an egalitarian society cannot offer its members as a result of fulfilling the demands of equality in the political domain.

This becomes clear already if we look at the practical reality of representative democracy as we know it in countries around the world today. Here, citizens periodically elect rulers or representatives who are then to make key political decisions about their community for a limited stretch of time. Obviously, but importantly, the outcome of true democratic elections – and ensuing political decisions – can never be certain beforehand. In a recent analysis, Müller (2021) emphasises the fine balance that representative democracy requires in practice. On the one hand, he writes, '[t]here's got to be a reasonable chance that our side can win again; we need to be certain that this is at least somewhat of a possibility, for otherwise why not quit the game altogether?' On the other hand, he adds, 'if we were always assured of winning, we might well like that outcome, but observers would rightly suspect that democracy has disappeared'. In a democracy, then, 'political outcomes – elections, above all – have to be uncertain' (p. 71). Indeed, borrowing the words of Przeworski (1991), Müller (2021) describes democracy as 'institutionalized uncertainty' (ibid.).

The connection between modern democracy and uncertainty may also be observed at a more fundamental level. In an influential account, Mouffe (2000) argues that what distinguishes modern from ancient democracy is 'the acceptance of pluralism' (p. 18): the end of the idea that we may identify a substantive conception of the good life, which all members of society could or should get behind. In a pluralist society, Mouffe believes, conflict and antagonism are permanent and inevitable. The goal of democratic politics, therefore, is not to discover or produce a view that all reasonable people would share. Instead, the aim is to turn the antagonism

between individuals who do hold different views from a 'struggle between enemies' into a 'struggle between adversaries' (pp. 102-103): into a conflict between people who combat one another's ideas, but do not put each other's right to defend those ideas into question. Because the outcome of this conflict – the political decision that is ultimately taken – is never a consensus, in a sense, it must always be preliminary; it must always remain open to contestation. As Mouffe puts it: 'What is specific and valuable about modern liberal democracy is that, when properly understood, it creates a space in which [agonistic] confrontation is kept open, power relations are always being put into question and no victory can be final' (p. 15). From this account, some degree of uncertainty; some degree of insecurity emerges as an inescapable condition of democracy in a pluralist society.

At this point, let me consider one potential criticism. From previous sections, it seems that the kind of egalitarianism discussed here already puts on the table quite a number of demands that a society would have to meet in order to realise the ideal of equality: the state should guard everyone's basic liberties, citizens should have access to a sufficient set of resources, no one should be so wealthy that it would undermine equality in political power… Do all of these demands even leave meaningful room for political decision-making; for democratic contestation; for uncertainty in the space of politics? In response, I want to make three points. Firstly, suppose that a society only meets some minimal conditions of equality – say, all citizens hold an essential set of fundamental rights, including the franchise. In that case, the larger ambitions of egalitarianism – say, full de facto equality in recognition, or complete absence of resource disparities compromising equal opportunity for influence over political decisions – must still be pursued by way of democratic decision-making. The ideal of equality, then, may at the same time prescribe that steps are taken to topple social hierarchies or squeeze resource inequalities, *and* that these steps are taken in a democratic way. Secondly, even when there is a democratic majority behind the ideal of equality, there may still be disagreement as to the interpretation of this ideal's demands. What exactly are the basic liberties to be enjoyed by all? How wide can wealth disparities be before they start undermining relations of social equality? Different answers are possible, and the proper way of settling such matters is the democratic way. Thirdly, the various demands of equality may also come into conflict with one another. What if, say, in a

pandemic, the only way to guarantee everyone's access to healthcare is by interfering with citizens' freedom of movement – that is, what if egalitarian economic security and egalitarian moral security are not straightforwardly compatible? Again, such questions must be decided democratically. For these reasons, in practice, the political domain of an egalitarian society *will* be meaningfully democratic – and therefore marked by some uncertainty; some insecurity.

It turns out, then, that the demands of equality in the political domain do imply that the members of an egalitarian society must remain deprived of a particular set of securities. If we follow Anderson (1999) and leave the options of anarchism and lottocracy to one side, we can say that an egalitarian society must be ruled in a democratic way. This means that rulers are not appointed for once and for all, the community's political course is never definitely decided, and incumbent powers must always be contestable. Therefore, in a society of equals, you cannot enjoy security of continuous rule by one particular person or party; security of society being led into the direction of your own individual liking; security of not just 'having a say' but also 'having it your way'. Because these are securities that authoritarians – who principally reject, or at least effectively block, contestation of ruling powers – do promise, be it only to a selected part of the community, let me bring them under the heading 'authoritarian political security'.

5.4. The best security we can get?

We now have a full overview of the securities that *are* to be found in an egalitarian society, and those that are *not* to be found in such a society. Firstly, all members of an egalitarian society enjoy security of restraint on the part of others; security of being treated respectfully; security of not facing violence – securities that can be united under the heading of egalitarian moral security. But a community of equals does not give people security of an unchanging cultural or symbolic order; security of a fixed identity or self-conception; security of always being viewed and treated by others in accordance with this exact image – that is, conservative moral security. Secondly, members of an egalitarian society enjoy security of access to sufficient means to fulfil their human needs; security of access to education, work, and a fair income; security of access to public goods

enabling civic engagement – that is, egalitarian economic security. But a society of equals does not provide people with full security of income or wealth above the level of sufficiency; security of their acquired economic privilege; security of never having to give up any property against their own will – that is, libertarian economic security. Finally, members of an egalitarian society enjoy security of the ability to form and voice their own political views; security of the chance to have a say in the political decisions of their society; security of not facing state interference on an arbitrary basis – that is, egalitarian political security. But such a society does not grant people security of continuous rule by one particular person or party; security of the community being led into the direction of their own individual liking; security of 'having it their way' in politics – that is, authoritarian political security. Thus an egalitarian society *creates* some securities on the one hand, but simultaneously *excludes* some securities on the other. This raises the question: when it comes to security, overall, how appealing is the egalitarian ideal? Let me end this chapter by giving some considerations in its favour.

Firstly, although an egalitarian society cannot deliver all the securities that people might desire, there are good reasons to think that the securities that it does offer provide people with a strong bedrock for dealing with any insecurities that remain. Being short of security of a fixed cultural order is a lot more bearable if you *do* know that you can always count on being treated with respect. Lacking security of your current prosperity level is far more endurable if you *are* certain that you will never lose access to a sufficient level of resources. And not having security of your own party's victory in the upcoming elections is much more tolerable if you *are* sure that you will again have a vote like everybody else in all elections yet to come. The presence of one set of securities, we could say, may enable people to handle the absence of another. In line with this, Inglehart (2018) claims on the basis of extensive empirical research that it was '[u]nprecedently high levels of economic and physical security' that 'reshaped the values and worldviews' of people in economically advanced countries after World War II, away from 'conformity to group norms' into the direction of 'gender equality, tolerance of gays, lesbians, foreigners and other outgroups, freedom of expression and participation in decision-making in economic and political life' (pp. 1-2). We might cautiously interpret this as an indication

that if people have a basic foundation of egalitarian security to build on, they are indeed better prepared to face the insecurities that may accompany the pursuit of greater egalitarian ambitions.

Secondly, even if egalitarian security would not be enough to satisfy people's need for security fully, it seems doubtful that the alternatives offered by some politicians of conservative, libertarian, or authoritarian bent would lead to a better outcome in terms of security *overall* – that is, if we consider the security of *all* members of society. Security of an unchanging cultural order would presumably serve only those who already feel perfectly at home in society, while sentencing those at the bottom of social hierarchies to continued risk of disrespectful treatment. Security of absolute rights in property would benefit mainly those who have already amassed abundant means, while potentially endangering the survival of those who have missed out. And security of uncontested rule by one particular strongman would of course just be great for him and his supporters, while giving the rest of society good reason to worry. Conservative, libertarian, and authoritarian security, then, seem to serve only some, while simultaneously undermining different securities of others. Egalitarian security, by contrast, at least provides a bedrock that in principle serves all members of society. Even though it would not deliver all the securities that we could possibly imagine or might ever hope for, we may conclude, egalitarian security is simply the best we can get when it comes to security, if that is something to be enjoyed by all.