Alex Hyun

In *Disability Among Equals*, Wolff offers three good reasons to favor "status enhancement" policies over "personal enhancement" policies: (1) status enhancement is non-stigmatizing, (2) status enhancement is inclusive, and (3) status enhancement benefits everyone (p. 31). But Wolff also recognizes that these three reasons are not always decisive in favor of a status enhancement policy. This is because it's oftentimes the case that there is an important reason to favor personal enhancement policies: it's oftentimes much more effective and much less costly (p. 23). I take it that in many cases in which we have to choose between personal enhancement and status enhancement, we'll have to weigh the goods mentioned in (1)-(3) against the good of cost effectiveness. I was surprised that Wolff, though he raised this problem, made no attempt to offer guidance on how to perform this weighing process. How costly must status enhancement be before its costliness makes a personal enhancement policy preferable? What is a principled way to approach this question?

Paul Gibbons

Jo Wolff discusses two important ideas in contemporary political philosophy – luck egalitarianism, and capabilities approach. Early in his paper he critiques both – generally and how they apply to disability. I'm interested in exploring these theories further and his critique.

Wolff's introduction of risk, and how it affects welfare, is interesting. Is risk something we ought to, or practically could, compensate for?

The distinction impairment versus disability merits some discussion. It seems that impairment may be specific (sight or mobility), but that disability takes into account the whole person's functioning.

Wolff's three way (internal resources, external resources and social structure) – as a way of looking at functionings is interesting. A dyslexic in a pre-literate society would endure no hardship, a wealthy wheel-chair user could restrict the effect of physical limitations. It strikes me as an interesting framework for understanding disability AND an interesting way of looking at compensatory measures.

Is there a moral significance to how one becomes disabled? If I listen to loud music for a decade, does an egalitarian society owe me compensation for hearing loss? If lack of exercise and junk food consumption mean that I am unable to walk, is this different than an individual born without full use of legs? If I take risks (free climbing) and become injured, do we think differently about how I ought to be treated? (This is an actual issue – as off piste skiers, and ocean racers frequently get into trouble which costs hundreds of thousands to redress.) I

conclude that disability carries with it the (constructed) norms of 'normal functioning', but also on 'normal behavior' with regard to self-preservation. What do others think?

Noel Howlett

Silvers' overview of how disability has been/is conceived of was very useful to my thinking on disability. Though some of the models for disability were rather easy for me to dismiss, others seemed to have strong elements of good sense to them. The medical model, for example, though itself highly flawed, contains components that seem to be reasonable given a particular social reality. It is the addition of the social model that makes these elements somewhat less tenable than I had previously considered. What appears to be of most consequence is the notion that disability is not bound to disadvantage. While this sounds exciting, I am not sure I agree. I find it reasonable to say that disability, by its very nature, may be bound to some form of disadvantage. Obviously to say particular disadvantages are tied to particular disabilities would be in error, but to say that blindness, for example, carries with it certain disadvantages where the blind person struggles to do things the seeing person does not seems to be a fairly safe assertion.

Disentangling disability and disadvantage may give us a finer lens to look through in considering what counts as disability vs. mere variations in functioning and what disadvantages we expect the individual to account for and which we as a society are responsible for. However, it seems to be an error to think that disability does not convey disadvantage. Thinking back to our discussion on compensating the sick through other realms, it seems clear that disability does not share these traits. We try to help those unable to walk do so or get around with other means; those unable to hear function through language, lights, or other means as though they could hear; those who cannot see be led or read non-visual language. The compensation in all of these cases is directed at the disability and not at other realms. Even where we concede we cannot directly remediate the disability itself we seek to provide functioning similar to those not living with disability rather than other means of compensation to "make up for" such disadvantage.

To me, the question ultimately boils down to what we think our society is able/willing/trying to do. If we are making a society in which people do certain things, and some people are less able to do those things perhaps only certain levels of support are warranted or guaranteed. If, on the other hand, we are making a society in which people have the opportunity to do certain things we may have a greater moral imperative to provide support to the disabled. The social disadvantages the disabled endure then would be largely socially constructed and our responsibility. Clearly the latter is more egalitarian, but the degree to which we are able to stay committed to this ideal seems questionable, as we must balance this imperative with all the others with which a society wrestles.

Kevin Cunningham

Let me tell a fanciful tale to drive home Anderson and Wolff's theory of disability and redistribution. Imagine if one day an evil demon obviated all the light in the visual spectrum, plunging the world into absolute darkness. This change alters the relative advantage and disadvantage between two groups. The first group contains those that were known as (and who I will subsequently call) the blind. The second contains those were known as the sighted. Before darkness, being a member of the sighted was the statistical norm and was considered advantageous to functioning in the world. After darkness, however, the blind, though remaining the statistical minority, seem to have comparative advantage. They possess the necessary capacities to function in a world without sight. Besides enjoying the more robust use of other senses, many also possess skills like reading Braille and navigating physical space without the sense of sight. According to Wolff's formulation of disability, the sighted are now the disabled.

The first thing to take away from this story is how any notion of disability radically relies on social structures and the environment. As Wolff puts it, internal and external resources are what you have to play with, while structure provides the rules of the game. Talk of species functioning or natural teleology seems undermined by this story. The second thing to consider is how different theories of distribution would operate in this newly darkened world. Anderson's approach asks only one question: do people have the capabilities necessary to function as equal citizens in a democratic state? If the sighted do not have the capabilities to participate in civil society (which requires mobility, the ability to transmit information, basic resources, etc.), then the plight of the sighted is relevant to the state.

Note which concerns are irrelevant to Anderson. If the sighted lack these desired capabilities, it doesn't matter whether the sighted brought about their plight through bad option luck (e.g. the demon's act was prompted by Sodom-and-Gomorrah-like impiety) or mere brute luck. If the members of both groups have these capabilities, then it doesn't matter that the blind have some exceptional abilities relative to the sighted. Thus, this egalitarian is not committed to (if it was even possible) redistributing the blind's skills to the sighted, thereby benefitting the worst off but also bringing down the most capable. In addition, against some version of resource egalitarianism, we wouldn't suddenly, once darkness falls, switch payments from the blind to the sighted in order to compensate for relative disadvantage.

Tatiana Alfonso

Anita Silvers y Jonathan Wolff

The first question that I would like to discuss is why disability is an important issue for an egalitarian society. The answer to this question will lead us to choose a particular kind of policy and I would like to draw a couple of arguments to defend the choice in favor of the social model and public policies that try to enhance structures, change cultures and transform discriminatory practices, instead of an individual model of disability.

Disability could be important either because of the deviation from the norm and the consequent difference between individuals or because of its outcomes in other fields as employment, access to education, or stigmatization and discrimination. The first case would correspond to the

medical problem (Silvers 1998), which tends to suggest that individual enhancement (Wolff 2005) policies are required. The second case seems to fit within the social model of disability, which poses a lot of questions about the policies to address the 'status enhancement' (Wolff 2005).

If the final decision were that disability should be addressed as a medical model we would have serious problems to define the priority of the individuals to be subjects of medical intervention, without a clear chance to define a fair criteria for the priority to "make the disable people normal". The medical model also reproduces the idea of natural impairment. Therefore, it also reproduces the stigmatization about disabled people. Besides that, in the cases that the medical intervention cannot solve the problem (think about autism or absolute deafness), would the society condemn the person to the marginality and exclusion?

The Social model of disability (Silvers 1998) assumes that the impairment is determined by the social environment and therefore is artificial and mutable. It seems a better model to define mechanisms of inclusion for disabled people in a particular society. In this model, disability is important because it has an impact on the performance of individuals and also an important impact on the economic and social outcomes. It also has an important effect on the dignity of the individuals.

The typical case to think about the way to enhance disabled people in that model is the people that have to use wheelchair. In that case is relatively simple to think about ramps to access, especial spaces in the workplace, etc. Basically the accessibility right for disabled people. However, it is not so easy when we think about other type of physical disability, even worse when we think about mental disability. There is a serious question about the different nature of disabilities in the social model and the way to address the differences between types of disabilities in the public policies. Should we deal with specific types of disability instead of the generic term? Should we design programs to add moral and cultural value to disabled people without pity? The social model also implies that people who do not have any handicap, take actions in favor of disabled people. How should we deal with the economic costs? Should we design affirmative actions for disabled people?

Gina Schouten

I thought Wolff's paper was very helpful in thinking about questions of justice as it pertains to disability. One issue I'd like to talk more about is the preference for status enhancement over personal enhancement. In particular, I wonder whether we can argue about the preferability of one type of enhancement over the other without being more specific about the particular aspects of wellbeing that a disability might affect (or the particular functionings the disability might render unavailable).

Wolff suggests that there are reasons to prefer status enhancement irrespective of what functioning we're trying to make available, since status enhancement is non-stigmatising, inclusive, and beneficial to everyone (17). But whether status enhancement does better on these counts than personal enhancement strikes me as a contingent question. Suppose there is an operation to restore sight to some blind individuals (depending on the cause of their blindness).

With regard to the stigmatization point: Why is it more stigmatizing to provide sight-restoring operations to those individuals than it is to (for example) require schools to provide blind children with instruction in reading Braille? (Why does simply identifying someone as having a limited functioning set constitute stigmatizing them, and why does status enhancement require less identification of limited functioning than personal enhancement?) With regard to the inclusiveness point: Why is it more inclusive to enable them to engage with written materials by learning Braille than it is to enable them to do so by restoring their sight? With regard to the beneficial-to-everyone point: Why would it be more beneficial to the sighted to know that society will ensure that they be taught to read Braille should they become blind than it would be to know that society will ensure that they receive the sight-restoring operation?

I agree with Wolff that status enhancements might score better than personal enhancements on these counts in many cases, but I'd like to talk more about whether these considerations give us reason to prefer status enhancements in general.

Paul Hanselman

Because health and disability are related, this week's readings have the potential to clarify some of the discussion from last week, and it might be worth briefly revisiting some of the previous points. One passage I flagged in particular was Silver's discussion of illness vs. disability (pp. 76-80). Another is Wolff's definition of disability and the distinction between impairment and disability (p.17-18).

One point I'd like to explore in class is what Wolff refers to as a 'radical' approach— the move to emphasize similarity between disability and other forms of disadvantage, such as race, gender, and poverty (discussed on p. 19). I don't know where I stand on this point. While I agree that there are similarities in the ways that disability and race lead to social exclusion from genuine opportunities for secure functioning, my intuition is that the two should be held apart. It seems to me that one important difference is how to repair genuine opportunities for secure functioning, which sheds light on the original mechanisms of disadvantage. To use Wolff's example, most forms of poor vision can be corrected with eyeglasses; repairing the impairment means to nullify in the physical realm of optics and photons. This suggests that there were real (objective?) disadvantages in terms of physical functioning, such that it would be legitimately unsafe for the poor-eyesight individual to drive. It does not make sense to outlaw driving, and it might be possible to structure society in ways to limit the necessity of driving, but the most obvious way to repair the underlying physical disadvantage is to repair the functioning of the individual. By contrast, the disadvantages associated by race are completely social. And because there are not physical bases to the disadvantages experienced by minorities, it does not make sense to think of "repairing" individual functioning; social structures and relations of esteem are the obvious site for egalitarian intervention (think of how objectionable the individual approach would be: a medical "treatment" for race).

In other words, it seems to me that at least part of the answer to remediating disability involves addressing an individual's physical functioning, while none of remediating race does so (in fact we should talk about remediating racism, etc…). On the other hand, I'm chastened by the fact that race was and still is considered by many a mark of distinct biological and physical

functioning. Is my common sense view of disability as rooted in physical impairments just as horrendous?

Miriam Thangaraj

Silvers and Malhotra both point out that definitions of disability have mostly been about deviance from what is unproblematically assumed to be normal species-level functioning. As a result, the disabled are wrongly labeled as incompetent, reducing their ability to participate socially and economically. In addition, the notion of 'deviance', typically proposed as a medical reality, is oppressive for the disabled because it stigmatizes their condition, through institutional sanctions, or as a result of self-esteem related issues. The focus on the individual and his/her level and mode of activity as a result of such understandings, means that justice has been conceived, wrongly, in terms of individual-level resources towards either curing or compensating.

On the other hand, the authors call for a focus on the social environment that that turns disability into a disadvantage – "disablement is not produced by the plaintiff's condition but rather by the character of conduct to which the plaintiff was subjected." (Silvers, p 55) Justice then requires that individuals' opportunities for social participation are not irrationally limited because of their disability. (This formulation is itself a bit reductive…? Equalizing "opportunities for social participation" to result in a non-discriminatory "character of conduct" to which the disabled are subjected – cannot be achieved merely by changing institutional rules/ disability definitions…? What kind of institutional/social infrastructure can assure a just distribution of opportunities for social participation?) Silvers argues, I think, for Rawlsian fair opportunity, and insists on the social bases of respect to be justly distributed to preclude mislabeling of the individual disabled person as unable/incompetent to participate. (Yes?) Fair opportunity may protect against discrimination, but that hardly seems enough.

Malhotra also focuses on definitions of disability, but more from the point of view of the consequences of being so classified for the whole class of individuals – he takes issue with the link between self-worth and full-time employment, foundational to capitalism. Thus, he argues for changing the structure of economic opportunity to a more just one, through participation of the disabled as a class. But this approach is rather generic, i.e., disability is not "special", and justice requires a distribution of work and income that does not disadvantage those whose access to work and income is attenuated for any reason, including disability. Again, this does not seem enough.

I found the idea that it is social environment that turns disability into disadvantage very compelling. But the point is not merely that disability is social constructed, but that these constructions have a material reality that reclassifications alone will not do away with. To me, neither providing fair opportunity nor democratizing work seems sufficiently strong in terms of being able to achieve just outcomes for the disabled.

Kelly Robbins

I think Anderson gets a lot of things right about what equality means and why we really care about it: she is right that we should really be concerned about providing an un-squanderable safety net of rights and capabilities such that any member of a society can function as an equal member (or as she says, citizen). She claims that in order to do this without bankrupting the state, we must establish a perfectionist list of the goods we will provide, and she further claims that limiting the perfectionist list to goods related to citizenship will help us avoid paternalism on the part of the state (316/337, 314). This seems like a strange claim; generally speaking I would say that perfectionism and paternalism are good bedfellows. It is especially plausible in the case of disability. Some of the severely disabled will function at such a level that, as Gina suggested in our conversation about children, providing them with equal effective access to opportunities will just be giving them those things. One would imagine Anderson would be sensitive to this, since she suggests that collective obligations are not determined by collective preferences (310), or by anyone's preferences. So if we are dedicated to giving the disabled the opportunity for a nourishing diet (320) or meaningful work, say, in some cases this will amount to feeding them or giving them that work, whether they (know to) ask for it or not.

Justin Lonsbury

I think that Wolff and Anderson do a convincing job of demonstrating the need to consider issues other than the distribution of material resources when attempting to meet the needs of society's least advantaged. However, I think that the divisions between the distribution-oriented and socially-oriented projects described need not be as large as the authors make them out to be. How can we call forth democratic equality out of substantial existing inequality if not through distribution, perhaps even unequal distribution in the form of, say, reparations for past injustices? While Anderson's separation of equality of fortune and democratic equality was clear and at times entertaining, her portrayal of the former was a bit uncharitable. I think that the option of targeted payments should be kept on the table, not trashed completely just because such approaches could stigmatize people. Obviously, the fact that they can/do stigmatize people should inform our cautious use of such interventions and force us to consider more thoughtfully possible unintended consequences. However, giving people resources because they possess certain traits doesn't have to be insulting and pity-driven.

Furthermore, Anderson's approach seems a touch too optimistic. People aren't going to become democratic equals just because we suppose that they should be. Obviously, Anderson doesn't say exactly this. She does, though, it seems, gloss over the costs that relative material positions in society have on people's feelings of self worth, actual health, and willingness and ability to engage with others. Relative wealth and social status affect the way that individuals view their capabilities and shape their interests. Even in situations of similar wealth and education, what counts as cultural capital (a prerequisite for entry into the decision-making elite) shifts to preserve existing power relationships. Cultural changes that need to occur to create a society of equals may take generations, and need to begin with radical redistributions of wealth now, even if that redistribution requires that some groups are targeted to receive those resources.

All of this is to say that I agree that the ramifications of being disabled or otherwise disadvantaged must be interpreted socially, perhaps even as a constellation of disadvantages that limits the degree to which people can realize genuine opportunities for secure functioning, as Wolff suggests. I also agree that disabilities should not be equated with lack of talent, illness, or social inferiority. However, to actually create a more just and inclusive society rather than just imagine one, we need to act simultaneously in economic, political, cultural, and social spheres, with an initial priority towards economic (re)distribution. Otherwise, anything approximating the cooperative society Anderson describes seems just as pie-in-the-sky as the proposals we discussed during the work week.

Justin Horn

I'm generally sympathetic to luck egalitarianism, but some of Anderson's points give me pause. I'd be interested in talking about whether some of her main criticisms of the view are fair.

On envy: Anderson complains that luck egalitarians endorse a theory which gives considerable normative weight to envy, but fail to explain why envy has any normative weight. This just seems wrong to me. "Envy" (stripped of its emotional connotations to simply mean "preferring one set of resources to another") plays a heuristic role in Dworkin's philosophy to help us determine whether two shares of resources are "equal" or not. But I doubt any luck egalitarian thinks that envy has serious normative weight. It's worth considering, for instance, that there still might be plenty of envy in a luck egalitarian society; those who made poor choices might envy those who are better off as a result of making better choices. Can a luck egalitarian meet Anderson's objection here by simply pointing out that what has normative weight for the luck egalitarian is *equality*, not envy?

On the letter from the State Equality Board: The letter was amusing, but it also seemed wildly uncharitable. Such a letter (not that there should actually be one!) could say something like this instead: *We realize that your disability has given you certain challenges that others do not face. Since your disability is not something you freely chose, it is only fair that we as a society should give you extra resources to provide you with the same opportunities that the rest of us have.* Perhaps this is merely a change in rhetoric, but does this version really sound so disrespectful?

On the injustices of nature: Anderson complains that luck egalitarians are trying to correct "cosmic injustice (288), while democratic egalitarians have the more modest aim of correcting socially imposed oppression. This, too, seems to me to be an rather uncharitable reading of luck egalitarianism. Injustices are necessarily socially imposed. There is nothing unjust in the fact that you were born better-looking than me; what is unjust is if we structure society so that your good lucks give you opportunities that I do not have. Can't the luck egalitarian take this sort of line consistently? There's nothing unjust about some people being born disabled. What is unjust is allowing such an arbitrary factor to deeply shape individuals' life prospects. In summary, can't luck egalitarians hold (against Anderson's criticisms) that there is no such thing as "cosmic injustice" and that their theory is concerned merely with eliminating *social* injustices?

Ed Connery

1.   One issue seems, to me, to warrant further discussion and exploration – the possibility of treatment or cures. By this, I do not refer to available treatments in the sense that expensive, cutting-edge treatments exist but are, for many people, entirely unavailable. The question of *availability* is one of justice and equality in healthcare, information, and technology distribution.

Instead, I refer to the mere existence of a treatment. Setting aside distributive issues, whether there is or is not a treatment for an ailment seems to directly affect how we assess the ailment. Is it a disability? Is it illness? Is it mere difference?

2.   Wolff raises the complex issue of how internal resources and external resources relate to one another. I would like to hear how others felt about this relationship. For me, he appears to offer a potentially valuable solution to the problem of what is a disability and what is not. But this solution also presents some significant hazards. If external resource can legitimately disqualify an impairment as a disability, how do we know when we have crossed into the realm of an illegitimate disqualification?

3.   Finally, if possible I would like to return to an issue we attempted to address last week – health. First, is health special? Why or why not. Secondly, we all agreed that disability could and should be set aside in that discussion. But I think it would be valuable to discuss why. How do health and disability relate to one another? Where do they converge? Where do they diverge?

For the sake of discussion, I am inclined to consider an example that Wolff uses – visual impairment (extensive enough to require glasses but not blindness).

1.   The existence of glasses seems to mean that this is not a true disability. But, was it a disability before the development of corrective eyewear?

2.   According to Wolff, the fact that I *have* glasses means that my impaired vision does not make me disabled. What if glasses were outside my means and weren't part of my external resources. Would my eyesight *then* constitute enough of a disability to earn me special protection or treatment – e.g., glasses provided at society's expense? (Assuming of course that we agree that disability warrants special treatment or protections.)

   Do the glasses remove the disability for good? What if special, costly contacts would be an even better solution? Am I "disabled enough," despite my glasses, to deserved contacts from the state as well?

3.   Is my vision an issue of health? Disability? Or both? What, if anything, makes my naturally occurring, visual disadvantage special compared to the socially constructed disadvantage of my being a renter rather than home-owner?

This week's readings sought to discuss disability as it relates to disability. This discussion brings up a lot of interesting questions about conceptions of equality. Because people with disability are often viewed as individuals who are disadvantaged through no fault of their own, we often feel the need to make compensations for this disadvantage. This argument is made on the basis that one of the three resources, internal resources or natural assets, is significantly hampered. The point of equality, from this line of thinking, is to make sure that each individual has equal distribution of goods. Elizabeth Anderson and Jonathan Wolf provide a good critique of this conception of equality, especially as it relates to disability. They both argue that we should pay

more attention to status enhancement or what Anderson refers to as democratic equality. I agree with them. Equality must begin with the premise that all humans have equal moral worth. The claim for equality for people with disability should not be because of what they lack, but because of what they are. With the premise that we are all humans and we deserve to have the same capabilities for functioning, any extra resources for people who are disadvantaged should be provided because they are not getting something that they already deserve. With this approach, striving to provide "equality for all in the space of capabilities" is not discriminatory based on who is responsible, or who is part of the working force, or who is talented, etc. I endorse this approach for a couple of reasons. First, I think it avoids the complications that luck egalitarians often come up to, ie. who is responsible and who is not, which disadvantage due to bad luck and which is not. Also, the approach of democratic equality more fully captures the idea that all humans are deserving of the capabilities to successful functioning.

Jeffrey Grigg

Wolff offers a single metric about which we should be concerned: "genuine opportunities for secure functionings" which can be understood as an extension of Sen's capabilities approach (2005: 6-13). He suggests that there are three factors or determinants of an individual's opportunity for secure functionings: internal, external, social/material structure. I'm still preoccupied with a question from last week, which is the potential implication of making the factors fungible if one adopts a single metric. I think Wolff by avoiding welfare as the metric dodges some of the tricky trade-off questions that we got into last week, but I look forward to continuing the discussion.

In an earlier version of this interrogation I wrote that I believed the existence of disability in the medical sense is uncontroversial, but then I thought about the trends in ADHD diagnoses and realized I don't believe that at all. On the other hand, I don't think that all definitions as relative as Silvers seems to suggest with sentences like "the main ingredient of being (perceived as) normal lies in being in social situations that suit one—that is, in a social environment accustomed to people like oneself" (Silvers: 76). So I'll revise my point to say rather that I believe that most of the social construction arguments seem to appropriately focus on the implications of said conditions vis-à-vis opportunity. That is, whether an individual is blind or cognitively impaired is without question; the question that matters is the degree to which said impairment is salient or implicates an individual's ability to function or participate in society. These abilities are certainly socially and politically constructed (the buses in Madison make numerous accommodations, for example: they lower, extend ramps, and announce the stops), but I think Silvers is correct (along with others) to emphasize accommodation rather than treatment as the relevant question. That being said, is true that the definition of a disability requires the absence of a potential treatment or cure?

Eunhee Han

This week readings may shift our attentions from remedy for a bad luck to envisioning what an equal society looks like (goals of equal society). Anderson (1999) article is provocative and helpful in understanding and critically assessing the academic writings on equality. She claims that the negative aim of egalitarian justice is to remove oppression socially imposed rather than to compensate the bad luck. She also suggests that the positive aim of egalitarians is to create an egalitarian community, since democratic equality can integrate the demand equal social relations and equal distribution. Wolff (2005) also suggests a similar vision of an egalitarian society (providing genuine opportunity for secure functionings, and equal social relations) where focus is paid to the limited opportunities of the disabled rather than disability itself.

I think that this approach have implications for the health issue (the last week discussion). I'd like to ask again whether we care about the limited opportunities due to being unhealthy or care about health (or illness) itself?

However, neither Anderson nor Wolff could convince me how democratic egalitarianism can be achieved under the unequal material structure. Of course, capability approach gives insight over importance to teach people how to play game (not just distribute resources), but it is not easy to change the rules of game to create an egalitarian community. Anderson (1999) mentioned social movement to change the norm and culture; and Wolff (2005) suggests legal changes like anti-discrimination law to reduce stigma and improve fairness of the game. I wonder if (and how) people who now learn the rules of game will cooperate to change the rules of game and to pursue the equal relations (it may be a question beyond philosophy).

David Calnitsky

I think Anderson (1999) is basically right in shifting the discussion of equality from a narrow focus on what each person deserves—a view which stresses chances, luck and assumes we can assess individual responsibility—to systemic and socially imposed oppressive relations. Her paper seems to stand out among liberal philosophical discussions of equality in that it focuses on social structure and institutional arrangements—she mentions capitalism for example.

This stands in contrast to egalitarians that ignore, or abstract from social relations of power. As she notes, we can see this in the centrality of subjective preferences for resource egalitarians and welfare egalitarians. In those arguments, subjective preferences determine the price structure of the system of claims to potential benefits (and, for resource egalitarians, costs of potential burdens placed on others). Instead of viewing it as an aspect of a social order, this price structure is often taken as the neutral background used in answering the question of what people deserve.

One problem with Anderson's democratic equality position may be that as a theory of justice it is neutral once a certain level of capabilities has been achieved for an individual. While this does not seem bad in itself, it might be difficult to use the theory alone as a guide to policy and decision-making with respect to distribution among agents above that level.

Catherine Willis

More than any readings to date in this class, these readings have resonated with me and my own intuitions of what justice/injustice is. The distinction offered between society adjusting to people with disabilities and people with disabilities adjusting to society (Wolff 22) is key and is relevant to other forms of discrimination. I particularly appreciate Anderson's intuition to take seriously "what the disabled are actually complaining about" (334). This argument that we need to start thinking about justice in the places where injustice is felt, rather than starting from the perspective of a just world parallels some of Mills' arguments on Racial Liberalism.

Silvers argues that disability, like race and gender in the past, has been used to remove our normal responsibilities towards them as a citizen (56). For race and gender, we can easily see how the categories of race and sex are not legitimate basis by which to determine a hierarchy that justifies limiting rights or position in society and there is no rational grounds for arguing that one category is better than the other (eg. it is hard see in how being male is preferable to being female or vice-versa). Silvers' argument that disability can be seen as "social and economic impacts of being different from the majority"makes disability seem quite similar to race and gender. However, judging from the discussion we had last week in class, it seems like quite a challenge to see how we can remove the hierarchy around the different bodies that make up our world (we see someone with 1 arm as unfortunate compared to someone with 2 arms; and this holds true for obesity non-obesity etc.).

Ben Kilbarger

How should we define disability?

Should we follow the lines of the medical model and focus on the individual herself and the ways that she as an organism, cognitively and physically and emotionally (and otherwise) differs from the norm? This is attractive because it's so straightforwardly empirical. We can define certain norms for a species and then mark off all the ways a given individual deviates from those norms. Whatever other problems it has, this one is most troubling: the medical model doesn't seem to capture what it is to have a disability. We've described someone's physical and mental structure, but not their life. And it is facts about the latter, about how someone's life is going, what their prospects are, that we're concerned with when we're talking about questions of justice.

Yet the social model often feels like it goes too far in another direction. Writers like Julie Smart (see her Disability, Society and the Individual) couch disability almost completely in terms of the social structures rather than the intrinsic abilities of the individual herself. The amputee is unable to navigate around her hometown not because of her physical abilities (or lack thereof), but because the society in which she lives has made it the case that navigation is only convenient for sighted, ambulatory bipeds, with various other crucial abilities.

This extreme doesn't seem much more sensible to me than that of the medical model. There are of course aspects of the environment that reflect outright neglect and discrimination. But others are more conscionable. And our feelings about which are which has a lot to do with the incidence of a disability. No one thinks, for example, that the whole world should be sanitized

so that the boy in the bubble can come out and play. The kind of normativity that's going to be involved in drawing that line looks like it will push us back in the direction of the medical model, with its more objective notions of norms.

I wonder if the solution to this doesn't lie in the middle, or more specifically, triangulated to a third option that captures the best of both, and gets right at that thing lurking out there somewhere between the two. I keep thinking about a continuum of function all the way from zero up to infinity. Perhaps that's (way) too simple. Maybe the best concept of disability will involve a cluster of concepts instead of just one. A pluralism rather than my suggested functional monism. I kind of hope not. But perhaps maybe that's just my love of parsimony getting the best of me...