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## PRIORITARIANISM

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## Prioritarianism

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**Abstract:** Prioritarianism holds that improvements in someone's life (gains in well-being) are morally more valuable, the worse off the person would otherwise be. The doctrine is impartial, holding that a gain in one person's life counts exactly the same as an identical gain in the life of anyone equally well-off. If we have some duty of beneficence to make the world better, prioritarianism specifies the content of the duty. Unlike the utilitarian, the prioritarian holds that we should not only seek to increase human well-being but also distribute it fairly across persons by tilting in favor of the worse off. A variant version adds that we should also give priority to the morally deserving – to saints over scoundrels. The view is a standard for right choice of individual actions and public policies, offering a distinctive alternative to utilitarianism (maximize total well-being), sufficiency (make everyone's condition good enough), and egalitarianism (make everyone's condition the same).

**Keywords:** well-being, equality, utilitarianism, public policy, normative political theory

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