Relational Egalitarian/Andersonian Role Sheet

**Core Beliefs**

You are a proponent of Elizabeth Anderson’s *Relational Egalitarianism*, which she calls “Democratic Equality,” as outlined in her essay, “What is the Point of Equality?” This paper is the foundation of your beliefs, your thinking, and your behavior. Sometimes it may be pretty obvious how Anderson’s principles require you to speak and act. Other times, however, it may be unclear how to apply these principles to current political issues. In such cases, you’ll need to decide for yourself what Anderson’s principles require you to say or do. So long as your speech and actions don’t contradict your Relational Egalitarian principles, you will be living up to your role.

The supreme principle of Relational Egalitarianism is that *people in society should stand as equals to one another or have equal social statuses to one another*. There should be no status hierarchies. Social justice demands equality in social status, or that people treat and relate to each other as equals. This is because, as persons with equal moral worth, people are entitled to equal respect and concern, and treating people as equals is how to give them the equal respect and concern to which they’re entitled. Equality is thus one of your core values, and your central aim is a community of equals.

According to Anderson, people stand as equals *when the social conditions of freedom are equally in place for everyone*. This has both a negative and a positive dimension. On the one hand, standing as an equal to others means *being free from oppressive relations*: no one is dominated, exploited, marginalized, demeaned, unjustly coerced, or subject to arbitrary or unjust violence. On the other hand, standing as an equal to others means *being free to participate as an equal citizen in social, political, and economic life*. As a Relational Egalitarian, then, you demand that people be free in these ways, and so you’ll demand that people have the capabilities needed to (1) avoid or escape oppressive relations and (2) function as equal citizens. These capabilities to function as equal citizens include (a) the ability to function as a human being by having effective access to adequate nutrition, shelter, clothing, and medical care; (b) the ability to function as a human agent by having effective access to the knowledge of one’s circumstances and options, means-ends deliberation, the psychological conditions of autonomy, and freedom of thought and movement; (c) the ability to function as an equal in a system of cooperative production by having effective access to the means of production and to education to develop talents, choice of occupation, and the rights to make contracts and enter cooperative agreements, to receive fair value for your labor, and to be recognized for productive contributions; (d) the ability to effectively exercise the rights to vote, to free speech, and to free association; (e) effective access to both private spaces and to public spaces (e.g. roads and parks) and public goods (e.g. public transportation, post offices, telecommunication); and (f) the ability to appear in public without shame or being treated as a social outcast. Besides equality, then, freedom is a core value for you, where you understand freedom in the same way that Sen’s Capabilities Approach understands it: in terms of “welfare freedom” or capabilities to achieve certain functionings (i.e., beings and doings).

Your core values of freedom and equality are likely to appeal to your peers, and they’ll probably join you in the fight against oppression. You also endorse many basic rights and freedoms that all three major factions and at least most other indeterminates will endorse as well, so all of these points of commonality are good to utilize when trying to strike up agreements or forge alliances with others. Like the Utilitarians and the Uniform Liberals, you believe in the necessity of the welfare state. In fact, you favor a strong or extensive welfare state because people are entitled to effective access to adequate nutrition, shelter, clothing, and medical care. Like the Small Government Faction, you are concerned about preventing governmental overreach and unjustified intrusion into our lives.

Though your peers will likely agree with your values of freedom and equality, they might disagree with you on what it means for people to be free and treated as equals. Your idea of what it means for people to be free and treated as equals requires a lot of social infrastructure that provides people with effective access to all kinds of goods that they may not be able to secure on their own, and this probably requires a rather large and extensive governmental body that significantly intervenes in our lives, which will probably not sit well with the Small Government Faction.

**Major Goal**

Your major goal is for people to stand in equal social relations, or for the social conditions of everyone’s freedom to be in place, which breaks down into two central aims: freedom from oppression and freedom to participate as an equal in society. You want people to have the capabilities needed to (1) avoid or escape oppression and (2) function as equals in society, where these latter capabilities includes a-f from above. Your main objective, then, will be to pass legislation that does the best job of securing these capabilities. Compromises in line with this objective are acceptable, and you can introduce your own legislation designed to secure these capabilities.

Your first vote will be on whether to raise or lower national welfare provisions, and even though you’ll favor a strong welfare state given that, for you, people are entitled to effective access to adequate nutrition, shelter, clothing, and medical care, you’ll have to figure out which policy option is called for by your aims of giving people the capabilities needed to avoid or escape oppression and to function as equals in society. The second vote will likely be on immigration policy, while the third vote will likely be on minority rights, so in each case you’ll need to figure out and endorse whatever policy option, in your judgment, does the best job of promoting your aims.

Unlike some other characters, you have a separate issue of concern. The United Nations will soon review its Human Development Index (HDI), an international ranking of countries according to their level of development. The notion of development that the HDI has traditionally employed is based on capabilities, reflecting the involvement of Amartya Sen. The review, however, means there is a real possibility that that may change. You believe that the HDI should not be revised but rather should continue to be broadly based on the notion of capabilities. It will be a major victory for you if you can convince the assembly to pass a resolution, written by you, stating as much. The purpose of doing so will be to send a message to the UN in the hope of influence its review.

Note that your resolution does not need to outline the particulars of the HDI in any detail: your concern is with the philosophy of its overall approach. So long as you can convince the assembly to endorse your broad philosophy as it pertains to the HDI, you will have achieved a significant personal victory. But be warned: there may be other players in the game who want the HDI to take a different approach. Remember that you can bargain with factions and other indeterminates, possibly voting to support a measure of theirs in return for their support of yours. More information on the HDI is available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev>. See in particular the section, “Intellectual and Historical Underpinnings.”

**Tips and Strategies**

Although you favor an extensive welfare state to secure the capabilities that people need, it’s not always clear what policy Relational Egalitarianism endorses. The indeterminacy of what your view calls for other than fighting *against* oppression and *for* people to be able to function as equals in society gives you flexibility and is what makes you a true indeterminate on the game’s central issues.

As a Relational Egalitarian, you have the potential for a wide range of alliances. Like Nussbaum, you endorse Sen’s Capabilities Approach to justice. Like the Utilitarian, you care about extensive and effective access to welfare. Like all of the three major factions, your core values are freedom and equality. Like the Utilitarian and the Uniform Liberals, you favor the welfare state. Like the Small Government Faction, you want to prevent governmental overreach and unjustified intrusion into our private lives. Find these kinds of commonalities with your peers and use them, if possible, to convince them to support your policy decisions. **If you can persuade other indeterminates to vote with you as a bloc, you will receive one point for each ally. These agreements must be written and submitted to the gamemaster.** The better you know the perspectives of your peers, the better you can convince them, using their own ideas, to agree with your policy decisions. The Small Government Faction will probably be your biggest challenge because your view calls for a rather extensive government to secure the needed capabilities for all. Accordingly, you should study the Small Government Faction’s (i.e., Nozick’s and Hayek’s) foundational principles and ideas closely so you’ll be ready to convince them, on their own terms, to agree with your policy decisions.

**Primary Essay:**

Elizabeth Anderson, “What is the Point of Equality?” Political Philosophy in the Twenty-first Century: Essential Essays. Steven Kahn and Robert Talisse, eds. (Routledge, New York, 2013), 31-56.

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| *Point Value* | *Action* |
| 2 | Increase national welfare provisions |
| 1 | Minority rights increased so social conditions are equal |
| 1 | You become speaker of the assembly |
| 1 | A uniform liberal becomes speaker of the assembly |
| 1 | UN HDI based on capabilities |
| -1 | Minority rights increased beyond equal OR minority rights not addressed |
| -2 | Decrease national welfare provisions |