Institutional Luck Egalitarian Role Sheet

**Core Beliefs**

You are a proponent of K.C. Tan’s *Institutional Luck Egalitarianism*, as outlined in his essay, “A Defense of Luck Egalitarianism.” This paper is the foundation of your beliefs, your thinking, and your behavior. Sometimes it may be pretty obvious how Tan’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 Tan’s principles require you to say or do. So long as your speech and actions don’t contradict Tan’s institutional luck egalitarian principles, you will be living up to your role.

Your central belief is that individuals should not be advantaged or disadvantaged due to bad lack when it comes to the resources they possess. While you accept that distributive inequality can be permissible, such inequality is just when it reflects the choices people have made rather than brute luck. Thus like other luck egalitarians such as Ronald Dworkin and Richard Arneson, you abide by the slogan that distributive justice should be choice-sensitive but luck-insensitive.

What is distinctive about your position is its institutional focus. Some luck egalitarians define resources broadly to include natural talents, abilities and dispositions. According to those theorists, an injustice can occur when one person is stronger or more intelligent that others, or even has a more cheerful disposition. You are distinctive in that you do *not* regard natural inequalities as a matter of injustice. Injustice occurs rather when social institutions are designed so that natural inequalities result in economic inequality. It is entirely reasonable to tax high-paid professional basketball players, for example, and give the money to others, as height and other unchosen factors are partly why they became rich in the first place. Similarly, some people were able to develop lucrative skills because they grew up in middle class households with parents who took the trouble ensure they received a good education. This too is an unchosen attribute that justifies redistributing some of their wealth to the less fortunate. The economy is the most obvious example of an institution that must be subject to justice as you define it.

Some previous versions of luck egalitarianism suggested that if someone loses all their resources through poor choices, society can abandon them to their fate. Your theory does *not* recommend this outcome. This is because it applies the luck/choice principle only to the distribution of resources above a basic minimum that people need to survive. Your theory recognizes that people do need such a basic minimum, regardless of the role choice played in placing it at risk. So where some versions of luck egalitarianism apply the luck/choice principle to all distributive inequalities, yours applies it more narrowly, but in your view much more wisely.

**Major Goals**

Like most characters in this game you have a strong interest in the policies the assembly adopts. You will for example be supportive of highly redistributive economic measures, a stance that will align you with both liberal factions against the minimal government faction. Similarly, your concern with global distributive equality means you will favor immigration policies that reduce unchosen inequalities at a global level: inequalities that are a result of where someone is born are clearly unjust on your view. Your view on minority rights is perhaps less obvious, but it will favor measures that reduce inequalities due to the culture a person is born into.

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 be revised according to a different design, one that reflects your view that distributive justice should be choice-sensitive but luck-insensitive. 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.”

A central purpose of your HDI resolution is to establish the final triumph of luck egalitarianism over the rival approach of democratic egalitarians such as Elizabeth Anderson. You have formulated your version of luck egalitarianism to rescue the theory from challenges posed by critics such as Anderson. You are confident that your revised version can withstand such criticisms. A resolution affirming the luck/choice principle as a major conceptual tool of international development would firmly establish the popular appeal of your theory in the face of the democratic egalitarian critique.

**Tips and Strategies**

Your dispute with Anderson, Rawls and other proponents of democratic equality is at a high level of abstraction. Often you will be on the same side when it comes to particular policy measures, such as how extensive the welfare state should be. A unique feature of your role is that while you will likely work side by side with democratic egalitarians on a policy level, they may be your strongest and most outspoken critics when it comes to passing your HDI resolution. You should regard it as normal if you find yourself voting with them one moment and squaring off against them the next.

Many of the philosophers whose work other roles are based on have written on distributive justice and its basis. Doing some digging to discover what and others have written could be of great benefit to you, if you take the time to do the research.

**Primary Essay:**

K. C. Tan, A Defense of Luck Egalitarianism. *The Journal of Philosophy*, *105*/11 (2008), 665-690.

**References and Further Reading:**

Tan, K. C. (2011). Luck, institutions, and global distributive justice: A defence of global luck egalitarianism. *European Journal of Political Theory*, 10(3), 394-421. This paper applies your theory to international justice in a slightly more concrete way that your primary essay, and emphasizes your cosmopolitanism.

**Victory Conditions**

The assembly endorses your HDI proposal: two points

The assembly votes on your HDI proposal (without passing): one point

The assembly endorses an HDI proposal sponsored by Elizabeth Anderson: minus one point

The assembly passes a resolution on a topic or topics other than the HDI endorsing your view that distributive justice should be choice-sensitive but luck-insensitive assembly: one point per resolution