

A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of several modern skyscrapers with glass facades, converging towards the top of the frame against a pale sky. The perspective creates a sense of height and scale.

HAVING Too MUCH

PHILOSOPHICAL
ESSAYS ON
LIMITARIANISM

EDITED BY
INGRID ROBEYNS



<https://www.openbookpublishers.com/>

©2023 Ingrid Robeyns (ed.). Copyright of individual chapters is maintained by the chapters' authors.



This work is licensed under an Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 International license (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). This license allows re-users to copy and distribute the material in any medium or format in unadapted form only, for non-commercial purposes only, and only so long as attribution is given to the creator. Attribution should include the following information:

Ingrid Robeyns (ed.), *Having Too Much: Philosophical Essays on Limitarianism*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0338>

In order to access detailed and updated information on the license, please visit <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0285#copyright>

Further details about the CC BY-NC-ND license are available at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

All external links were active at the time of publication unless otherwise stated and have been archived via the Internet Archive Wayback Machine at <https://archive.org/web>

Any digital material and resources associated with this volume will be available at <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0338#resources>

ISBN Paperback: 978-1-80064-966-8

ISBN Hardback: 978-1-80064-967-5

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-80064-968-2

ISBN Digital ebook (EPUB): 978-1-80064-969-9

ISBN Digital ebook (XML): 978-1-80064-971-2

ISBN DIGITAL ebook (HTML): 978-1-80064-972-9

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0338

Cover image: Skyscrapers, photo by Roland Pierik, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

Cover design: Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal

Preface

Ingrid Robeyns

This is the first volume that brings together philosophical papers on limitarianism—the view that it is not permissible to have more than a certain upper limit of resources. Or, put colloquially, the view that there are moral limits to how rich a person can be, or how many other types of scarce and valuable resources they can appropriate.

There is a lot of interest in these issues in society. That is not surprising, since in many countries the media are paying more attention to the increasing gap between the best-off and the rest of society. While in recent years most people have experienced more difficult times—first because of the increasing effects of climate change, then because of the Covid-19 pandemic, and most recently because of rising energy prices due to the Russian war in Ukraine—the position of the richest in society has not been negatively affected. While everyone else is experiencing a stagnation or decline in their living standards, the richest are getting richer.

Due to this widespread societal interest and the fact that this book is published open access, members from a general readership might pick up this book. However, this is not a book written for a broader audience. This is a book in which academic philosophers present their research to their colleagues and advanced students; it presupposes at least some training in (analytical) political philosophy, and for most chapters also a good understanding of contemporary political philosophy. The broader audience might find more accessible arguments on the moral problems with excessive wealth in Neuhäuser (2018) and on limitarianism specifically in Robeyns (2024).

In putting together this volume, I have been very lucky to work with a wonderful group of contributors. I thank Matthias Kramm, Danielle Zwarthoed, Robert Huseby, Dick Timmer, Colin Hickey and Fergus Green for granting permission to reprint their earlier published articles. In addition, Dick Timmer, Colin Hickey, Elena Icardi, Christian Neuhäuser and Tim Meijers enthusiastically wrote new papers for the volume. As former members of the Fair Limits project, which ran at Utrecht University from 2018 until the end of 2022, Dick, Colin, Fergus and Tim also served as a great group of advisors on various editorial decisions that had to be made. It has been a real pleasure to work with them on the Fair Limits project, and I am delighted that we can close it with this collective publication.

Unfortunately, limited resources forced me to make a choice in which earlier published articles on limitarianism to reprint, and many fine articles could not be included. But they are mentioned in the Introduction, and some of those papers are discussed in more depth in certain chapters. I hope this volume will thus serve as a useful introduction to the philosophical literature on limitarianism, and allow interested readers to find their way to additional articles.

A book is always a project to which many people contributed, not just by providing chapters but also in other ways. I would like to thank the two referees of the volume—who were first anonymous, but later turned out to be Tammy Harel Ben Sahar and Alexandru Volacu. They provided very helpful comments on the new chapters and did so in a very short time frame. In addition, thanks also to Morten Fibieger Byskov and Adelin-Costin Dumitru for providing anonymous referee reports on one particular chapter, as well as many other colleagues who provided comments on various chapters. They are thanked in the acknowledgements of those specific chapters. Thanks also to Bart Mijland, who was the practical coordinator of the Fair Limits team for most of the duration of the project, and to Emma Hulsbos who provided some editorial assistance in the early stages of the work on this volume. I would also like to thank the editorial team at Open Book Publishers, in particular OBP's director Alessandra Tosi; Melissa Purkiss, Mark Harris and Lucy Barnes for their editing work; and Jeevan Nagpal for the cover design. Thanks also to Roland Pierik for providing us with a picture for

the cover. The cover picture symbolizes the view that the sky is the limit, which limitarianism rejects.

This edited volume will be published both in English and in Spanish translation. For the Spanish translation, I am grateful to Iñaki Larrínaga Márquez, who spent countless hours translating all these philosophical papers into Spanish. I hope that many Spanish-speaking readers will enjoy the fruits of his efforts.

Finally, the financial support for by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No. 726153) is gratefully acknowledged.

References

- Neuhäuser, Christian. 2018. *Reichtum als Moralisches Problem*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Robeyns, Ingrid. 2024. *Limitarianism. The Case Against Extreme Wealth*. London: Allen Lane/New York: Astra House.

1. Introducing the Philosophy of Limitarianism

Ingrid Robeyns

1. The Basic Intuition of Limitarianism

We are all familiar with the many reasons why we should fight poverty. Poor people do not have enough money to meet their basic needs, are excluded from society, are often not given proper respect, or can become easy prey at the hands of others who want to dominate them. In the domains of both material and immaterial goods, there is a widespread understanding about what it means when someone is deprived, that is, when they do not have enough important goods such as income, wealth, power, authority, water, food, housing, or energy. Virtually everyone, regardless of their political persuasion, agrees that every person should have access to enough of what matters.

If the claim is made that we should, if possible, avoid poverty, it is often made as a moral claim which suggests that poverty is bad or wrong (some non-altruistic persons might only endorse it as an instrumental claim, for example because they only care about physical security and stability, and hope that eradicating poverty will avoid their being confronted with pitchforks). We could make it into a political claim by saying that our social institutions should be designed to avoid poverty to the extent that this is feasible (and some might add to the extent that avoiding poverty does not come at a greater loss of other values that matter).