

# A CRITIQUE OF THREE RECENT STUDIES ON MORALITY'S DEMANDS: MURPHY, MULGAN, CULLITY AND THE ISSUE OF COST

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## Abstract

This paper critically discusses three studies about the question of how much morality may demand of moral agents. These studies may together constitute the most prominent literature about this question to emerge in recent years. In reverse order, they are: Garrett Cullity's *The Moral Demands of Affluence* (Oxford, 2004), Tim Mulgan's *The Demands of Consequentialism* (Oxford, 2001), and Liam Murphy's *Moral Demands in Nonideal Theory* (Oxford, 2000). The paper's first part very briefly presents the position that these studies defend, and in addition it is argued that all three studies risk denying, for unconvincing reasons, an intuitively very plausible statement, namely that moral agents morally ought to do great good whenever they can do so at little cost to themselves. The second part of the paper then considers the critical position that the three mentioned books take towards an 'appeal to cost to the moral agent'. Such an appeal, the details of which will be discussed in the paper, has often been prominent in arguments for limiting the demands made on moral agents. I argue that the doubts that the three studies have about this appeal, are unwarranted.

**Keywords:** demands of morality; appeal to cost; Liam Murphy; Tim Mulgan; Garrett Cullity.

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## 1. The three studies and the permission not to do great good that one can do at little cost

1.1. Liam Murphy's *Moral Demands in Non-Ideal Theory* defends a principle of beneficence

that says, most importantly, that moral agents should maximize overall well-being, but with the following limitation: they have no duty to incur greater costs to their own well-being than they would incur if everyone tried to maximize overall well-being.<sup>2</sup> Put simply, Murphy asserts that moral agents do not have a requirement of beneficence to take up the slack from the non-compliance of others.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, Murphy's position often comes down to permission not to do great good which one can do at little cost to oneself. Now since it is intuitively plausible that moral agents should do great good whenever they can at little cost to themselves, it is incumbent on Murphy to provide good reasons for a permission not to do so.

Murphy asserts that, ultimately, his principle of beneficence is supported by the tally of considerations.<sup>4</sup> He is not, however, very explicit about what this tally involves. If we try to reconstruct this from his book, it seems to involve, among other things, the following. Firstly, Murphy's principle has relatively plausible implications; and secondly, it treats those involved in beneficence, which Murphy sees as a cooperative project, not as forces of nature but as agents.<sup>5</sup> I will only consider this second idea here. Let us, for the sake of the argument, grant that beneficence should be seen as a collective project. How is it that on such a conception of beneficence, we arrive at the idea that collaborators in the collective project should not have to take up the slack from non-collaborators? Murphy clearly thinks that an idea of *fairness* tells us that agents in a cooperative project should be treated as agents in the more specific sense by which it is all right for cooperators not to take up the slack of non-cooperators.

However, I would object that to let people starve (and the like) for the sake of fairness of this sort is certainly, as Peter Singer puts it, 'taking fairness too far'<sup>6</sup> – regardless of whether one has a collective conception of beneficence or not. For firstly, this kind of fairness – and the view of human beings with which it is allegedly connected, namely, that human beings are not forces of nature but agents – does not seem to point to a clear and great *good* for the sake of which one could decide to let people starve when one could help. Furthermore, it also cannot be considered – in a contractualist framework, for example – as an acceptable reason for letting people starve whom one could help. Or so, at least, authors such as Scanlon and Rawls seem to think, since they strongly suggest that one should, even if this means taking up slack, at least always do great good whenever one can do so at little cost to oneself.<sup>7</sup> In short, by appealing to Murphy's kind of fairness, moral agents cannot offer good reasons for not doing great good that they one do at little cost to themselves.

It may be objected that the considerations just mentioned are hardly conclusive evidence: one could hold a different view concerning which goods are great goods and which reasons could be offered in a contractualist framework. Nevertheless, the problem with Murphy's appeal to fairness is serious. Even if one should accept fairness as a great good or as an acceptable consideration, Murphy's particular notion of fairness seems very questionable. Murphy's own discussion shows this. He discusses an objection to his view: "It could be objected that ... [the] 'victims' of non-

compliance are likely to be worse off than the compliers whom [an act-consequentialist] requires to take up the slack, and we would normally think it fairer to let some cost fall on the better-off of two people”<sup>8</sup>

However, this objection, Murphy says: “(...) assimilates a concern with the fairness of the way a principle of beneficence imposes responsibility on agents to a general concern about the fairness of the distribution of well-being”<sup>9</sup>.

Thus Murphy holds that there are different kinds of fairness, and that he is talking about one kind of fairness only. However, even if Murphy does not want to address the other kind of fairness, it seems a much more compelling kind, and it would not lead to the conclusion that we do not have to take up the slack.<sup>10</sup>

1.2. Tim Mulgan, in *The Demands of Consequentialism*, offers a theory that is based on a distinction between two kinds of values that, according to Mulgan, call for very different moral responses. These values are needs and goals. Needs are ‘[roughly speaking] the biologically determined necessities of life’, while goals are ‘our chosen pursuits, projects, and endeavors’.<sup>11</sup> To highlight the differences between these kinds of values and between the appropriate moral responses to them Mulgan also speaks of ‘the realm of necessity’ and the ‘realm of reciprocity’, respectively. According to Mulgan, with regard to needs, act consequentialism may well be an acceptable theory.<sup>12</sup> However, in a world where all needs are fulfilled and that thus falls entirely within the realm of reciprocity, rule consequentialism would be an acceptable moral theory.<sup>13</sup>

There are some contexts in the real world where all needs are fulfilled and in this section I will focus on these. The form of rule consequentialism that, according to Mulgan, would be adequate in such contexts is much like Brad Hooker’s, which states that ‘an act is wrong only if it is forbidden by the code of rules whose internalization by the overwhelming majority of people (say 90%) in each new generation has the greatest expected value.’<sup>14</sup> Since there may be a difference between what such a code (which may be called the ‘ideal code’) would say and what it is best to do at this moment, it is, on the face of it, possible that moral agents would, while abiding by this code, be allowed not to do great good that they could do at little cost. If so, would it do so for a good reason?<sup>15</sup>

Mulgan might say yes. He could, firstly, argue that even for a consequentialist theory it is not necessary to hold that one should always promote at least as much as one can at little cost to oneself (this is the natural consequentialist version of the thought that one should do great good, at least when one can do so at little cost to oneself). For although Mulgan sees the promotion of value as the central idea of consequentialism,<sup>16</sup> he holds that this idea can be fleshed out in a variety of ways, including deviations from the *maximization* of value and the *individual* promotion of value.<sup>17</sup> Such deviations could lead to forms of consequentialism that violate our statement, but that could be defended by pointing out that they are intuitively appealing ways of fleshing out what the

promotion of value amounts to, or that they are intuitively appealing *tout court*.<sup>18</sup> One may object, however, that it is difficult to recognize any consequentialist inspiration in those who hold that a moral agent can sometimes be permitted not to maximize value where they can do so at little cost. To be sure one can define consequentialism so as to make such permissions part of a consequentialist theory, or so as to be able to categorize them as 'broadly consequentialist'. But the issue is whether there is still a genuinely consequentialist inspiration recognizable in such permissions. I find such an inspiration hard to recognize where a moral agent is permitted not to do great good even if they can do so at little cost; and the general intuitive appeal of such a permissions is questionable at the least.

A second good reason for not fighting evils even when one can do so at little cost to oneself could be that there are really no evils to be fought. Sometimes when talking about goals, Mulgan seems to be sympathetic to this idea.<sup>19</sup> He takes goals, which at one point he describes as 'our chosen pursuits, projects, and endeavors',<sup>20</sup> to have a number of characteristics, one of the most interesting of which is that they are *very flexible*.<sup>21</sup> If this is so, then there may be no goals that are pre-given to a theory of right and that call for maximization – and this would condemn many forms of consequentialism, as well as other moral theories that work with pre-given goals. Rather, a theory of right may help us choose goals, for instance those goals and such pursuits of them that avoid competition with the goals and pursuits of other individuals.<sup>22</sup> Mulgan goes a long way towards thinking that individuals could choose goals that are non-competitive with those held by other individuals. If this picture is correct, the reproach that a moral code allows people not to fight great evils that they could fight at little cost to themselves, comes to nothing.<sup>23</sup>

It is clear, however, that this picture of why the mentioned reproach is not applicable, depends on the inadequacy of thinking of goals as quite inflexible and liable to promotion by a theory of right. But is this way of thinking really so inadequate? The best way to show that it *is adequate* may be to offer a theory of human goals – or, more generally, of the human good – which is relatively plausible and in which the human good is seen as relatively inflexible and as something that can be promoted or maximized. Elsewhere I defend one such theory, which holds that a good life basically consists in having a real choice from a reasonable number of projects that realize most of one's key capacities to a certain extent – and that this is true whether or not people regard it as true.<sup>24</sup> Having such choice seems to me to be a relatively inflexible good that can be maximized. If my defence succeeds, Mulgan has yet to provide a good reason why one has sometimes permission not to do great good at least as much as one can at little cost to oneself. A good reason is needed here, because it is intuitively plausible that it is *not* permissible to refrain from doing great good if one can do so at little cost. So the burden of proof lies with those who hold that this is sometimes permissible.

1.3. We turn to Garrett Cullity's book *The Moral Demands of Affluence*. One guiding thought in the first part of this book is that we have a moral reason (of beneficence) to help someone

whenever *they need* help. It may immediately seem, therefore, that Cullity agrees with the idea that if you can do a great deal of good or fight great evils, at little cost to yourself, then morally you must do so.<sup>25</sup> However, this conclusion is drawn too hastily, as Cullity also argues (in the second part of his book) that there are other moral reasons that can countervail against the moral reason for helping someone who is in need. The most important reason he discusses stems from the thought that if someone is obviously required to help me obtain or keep a certain thing, or a way of life for example, then it cannot be wrong for me to obtain or keep it.<sup>26</sup>

Now even if we follow this line of thought we may well end up subscribing to the statement that if you can do great good at little cost to yourself, you ought to do it. It seems to me that, on the most natural reading of cost (you incur great cost if you are kept from having and keeping the key pursuits of your life, or something like that), Cullity does indeed agree with this thought. Generally speaking, he says that only things that are costly for me in this sense generate requirements on others to help me.<sup>27</sup> If so, there is no bar to my having to give up what is not costly for me to give up in the above-mentioned sense; and because there is a moral reason to help someone who needs help, I ought to give up that which it is not costly for me to give up.

Yet I find Cullity's position risky, for it might, after all, justify my not doing a great good for others even if I can do so at little cost to myself, and it might justify this for no good reason. Let me explain. Cullity sees a moral reason for not doing something for someone in need, *not* by appealing to direct considerations concerning cost to myself *but* by appealing to what would generate requirements on others to help me, coupled with the consideration – to which we will come back to shortly – that if a pursuit of mine generates a requirement on others to help me obtain it, then it cannot be wrong for me to have it. Now it seems highly possible to defend a position by which others would be required<sup>28</sup> to help me obtain or keep rather small things that I could give up without great cost to me. These would probably be weak requirements, but they could be moral requirements nonetheless, and then it would according to Cullity follow that it is not wrong for me to obtain or keep these small things, even though to give them up for the sake of someone else would not be costly for me.<sup>29</sup> Cullity's position would then justify my not doing great good that I could easily do.

In those cases where a position such as Cullity's would justify this, would it do so for a good reason? I would say not. Cullity's countervailing reason is that (a) people are obviously required to help me obtain or keep certain things; *and* (b) if they are so required, it cannot be wrong for me to obtain and to hold on to these things. However, I would doubt at least this last element.<sup>30</sup> If others are required to help me obtain or keep something, it does not follow that it is not wrong for me to obtain or keep that thing. Indeed, some relatively plausible forms of moral thinking *would* sometimes require you to help people obtain or keep things that they ought not to have or that they ought to give up. For example, you can be required to help me develop something, for example, my cognitive capacities, even though I must not develop these, but instead must do something, for instance, that will cost me my life. A consequentialist might defend this: if helping me develop my cognitive

capacities is, overall, the best thing you can do, you must do it. However, since my position in the world is different from yours, it may also be that I must perform an act which involves not developing my cognitive capacities. Furthermore, according to a consequentialist, you might be obliged to help me develop my cognitive capacities even if I do not go ahead and sacrifice them, that is, even if I act wrongly; for in this case too, helping me develop my cognitive capacities may still be the best thing for you to do. This is why Cullity's position, where it would permit me not to do great good that I could do at little cost, would give this permission for no good reason.

## 2. In defence of the appeal to cost

So far I have expressed my uneasiness about some prominent recent positions about the demands of morality, in that they allow moral agents, for no good reason, sometimes not to do great good that they can do at little cost. And they need to provide good reasons here, because it is intuitively very plausible that one ought to do great good at least when one can do so at little cost to oneself. So the burden of proof is on those who wish to deny this.

Murphy, Mulgan and Cullity could reply to this charge in a way that has not yet been addressed. Their work contains arguments as to why it is unviable to argue that morality's demands should be limited on the ground of some type of *cost* to the moral agent. Now if they are right here, it is probably also unviable to argue that a moral agent should at the least always do great good whenever they can do so at little *cost*.

We will now pursue the (partly implicit) arguments that the three books contain against an appeal to cost to the moral agent. I will argue that these arguments are unconvincing and that the appeal to cost remains viable.

I should add that the viability of this appeal is of wide philosophical importance, because the appeal has been very influential in the literature at least since Scheffler (1982). Scheffler argued for a deviation from consequentialism that allowed moral agents to accord more weight to their own interests than these interests would have in an impersonal, consequentialist calculus. In other words, he argued that it was permissible for moral agents not to maximize the overall good when it was in some sense excessively costly for them to do so - an idea which can be and has been fleshed out in many different ways. Indeed, I believe this idea may still point the way to future debates. All I shall argue here, however, is that it can survive some serious criticisms.

2.1. I first discuss Liam Murphy. Murphy observes that when it is objected that a moral theory – often utilitarianism – is ‘overdemanding’ or, as we may say, ‘excessively costly’ for the agent, the objector is usually concerned with how much an agent loses, or how little remains for an agent after undertaking the actions that utilitarianism requires. Murphy continues, asking why a

moral agent should not also complain about a moral theory that entails losing a lot – or that leaves the agent badly off – if most or all<sup>31</sup> *other* moral agents follow this theory.<sup>32</sup> Now, once we see the problem of ‘too heavy demands’ in this broader way – and it is hard to see, says Murphy, how we could resist seeing it in that way<sup>33</sup> – the original, apparently clear problem of ‘too heavy demands’ becomes very unclear. For almost every moral theory will now seem very demanding for some people, and the best we can now make of the original problem is to say that those theories demand *too* much which, when fully complied with, are harshest on the least well-off, compared with alternative theories.<sup>34</sup> However, this is a far cry from the original, intuitively clear problem of a theory being too demanding or excessively costly for a moral agent.<sup>35</sup> Murphy goes so far as to say that problems that have to do only with the demands of a moral theory, are ‘dissolved’,<sup>36</sup> and that there is no problem of excessive demands.

I would reply that once one thinks that the above-mentioned criticisms are all about the wellbeing of people or something similar – and this, incidentally, is what Murphy does<sup>37</sup> – then Murphy may well be right. If a moral theory leads to your loss of wellbeing when *others* act in accordance with it, then this may be just as bad for you as a case in which it leads to your loss of wellbeing when *you* act as it requires. However, why can’t we say that a theory is ‘excessively costly’ for the moral agent on grounds that are different from wellbeing? More specifically, it is not the same thing to suffer some loss of wellbeing at the hands of others as it is to inflict it on yourself. One could object to a moral theory that required me to do the latter but not to a moral theory that required me to do the former – not because a greater loss of wellbeing is involved in the latter case, but because a moral agent is required to inflict a loss of wellbeing *on themselves*, a requirement which can be interpreted as implying a kind of cost that cannot be conceived in terms of wellbeing. Whether it is indeed plausible to object to a moral theory for how it requires moral agents to treat *themselves*, may well depend on one’s conception of morality.<sup>38</sup> It is not possible to discuss such conceptions here; but I do wish to point out that contractualist accounts of morality, by which I mean accounts which consider all moral agents at the same time and try to coordinate their behaviour in some suitable way, may have greater trouble to find the mentioned objection plausible than some non-contractualist accounts of morality. This is because contractualist accounts, always having all moral agents simultaneously in view, cannot think of active demands without immediately also thinking of passive demands. Certain alternative accounts of morality, by contrast, could more easily restrict themselves to considering active demands only.

Murphy’s work contains another, and rather scathing criticism of the appeal to cost. He says:

[I]t is my claim that when we try to make a [judgment about the *appropriate degree* of potential conflict between self-interest and morality], we have nothing to say. We simply do not have any concrete intuitions on the matter; any conclusions we reach will reflect our prior beliefs – prior, that is, to reflection on the issue of demands – about how we ought, morally, to live<sup>39</sup>.

For our purposes, it may be helpful to rephrase Murphy’s claim in a simplified way, by drawing

on a utilitarian metaphysics – more specifically, by imagining a world that contains pleasure and pain as the only morally relevant phenomena. The claim would then be that we have no intuitions as to how much of our own pleasure we have to sacrifice in order to obtain the greatest sum of pleasure for the world as a whole.<sup>40</sup>

Two things seem worth noting about this very strong claim. First, it is somewhat strange to demand, as Murphy does, that reflection on the issue of demands should itself yield conclusions about how costly morality may be for the moral agent. For, when we give reasons as to why we think that a certain cost may be demanded of the moral agent, such reasons will not naturally come from our ideas about costliness itself but they will come from elsewhere – otherwise we risk ending up with tautologies. Second, once we relax the requirement that reflection on the issue of demands itself must yield reasons to limit what cost morality can rightly demand of moral agents, it seems that we *are* sometimes able to arrive at relatively definite conclusions. For example, in a (moral) universe of pleasure and pain only, the least we can say is that a small self-interest of one's own 'pleasure' (a scratch in one's little finger) does not provide sufficient moral reason to cause great 'pain' overall (like the destruction of the universe). Everyone, even if they think that my pleasure is morally in a different league for me than the pleasure of the rest of the universe, will concede this much, at least if they think that the moral perspective takes the perspective of the universe seriously to at least some extent; which to think is plausible enough. So after all, we do have some intuitions about the issues of cost and morality: morality can at least require us to incur some minimal level of cost to ourselves. Murphy's repudiation of the appeal to cost is too strong.

2.2. Tim Mulgan provides another important criticism of the appeal to cost. Can we really distinguish the reasons that morality provides from those that self-interest provides (a distinction that Liam Murphy leaves unchallenged)? Within morality, the question would be whether we can really separate out the moral reasons that self-interest provides from other moral reasons.<sup>41</sup> Mulgan has his doubts, and more specifically he suggests that the distinction between self-interest and the interests of all is not as important for distinguishing different kinds of moral reasons as is commonly assumed.<sup>42</sup> For, according to Mulgan, we cannot imagine someone living a fulfilling life – which to live would be in their supreme interest – if they did not care for the interests of other people.

Against Mulgan, I would defend the common distinction: moral reasons to further one's self-interest are likely to be very different from moral reasons to further the general interest – or, generally, than moral reasons that are not about furthering one's self-interest. To see that this is so, compare Thomas Nagel's thought that 'there is much more to us, and therefore to what is good and bad for us, than what is directly involved in morality.'<sup>43</sup> For our present purposes, we should say: there is much more to what is good and bad for us than what is involved in the general interest and also than what is involved in many moral reasons that are not about furthering our good (for example, reasons to keep promises or not to harm people or animals). Or, again in other words, in many cases it is not plausible that, on balance, I further my own good by behaving morally,<sup>44</sup> and therefore moral reasons to further one's own good will (if



there are such reasons) differ from other moral reasons. This implies that it remains viable and understandable for a moral agent to object to certain moral demands by appealing to the cost that they bring for them.

2.3. Garrett Cullity, finally, also comes up with an argument that may seem to undermine the appeal to cost as a sensible strategy for arguing against or for certain moral demands. His argument says that the appeal to cost, as it is usually made, already presupposes a certain approach to cost, namely an aggregative approach. This approach holds that it depends on my previous contributions whether or not a certain cost is great for me. This is indeed how an appeal to cost usually works: I refuse to give to the next charity appeal, not because to give the ten dollars they ask from me are *by themselves* a great sacrifice to me (e.g., I will go hungry without them), but because I have already given away two-thousand dollars and to give even more would allegedly be costly for me. As Cullity points out, this aggregative approach needs defence, exactly because I cannot say that it will *by itself* be costly for me to give a few more dollars to some needy person. In Cullity's words, I cannot say that to give these few dollars is, *iteratively* seen, costly for me. Given this, am I not unduly disregarding this person's need if I defend myself by pointing to what I have done *for others* and say that, on the basis of this history of giving, it would be costly for me to do even more?

It is obvious that if we should have to adopt an iterative approach to cost, the appeal to cost can do hardly anything to limit the demands of morality on a moral agent. But even on Cullity's own account, we can, as he himself in the end argues, resist an iterative approach to cost. Cullity's argument involves the idea that if we follow through on an iterative approach to cost, we end up with very implausible ideas concerning which causes are worthy causes of beneficence. But I will not discuss his argument here, for I think that we can go further and give an argument against the iterative approach in which the appeal to cost itself can do more philosophical work. My point is that if we approach cost in an iterative way, we can only say that I suffer great cost when giving away an extra dollar (or ten dollars, say) by itself comes at great cost to me – but that won't be until I have given away almost everything that I have and thereby utterly impoverished myself. However, this implication is absurd, since it is intuitively clear that I suffer great cost by giving away money long before the extra dollar makes by itself a substantial difference to me. There is nothing question-begging about pointing to this implication. On the contrary, by doing so it can be shown that we can defensibly refuse to approach cost in an iterative way. In other words, we may instead choose an alternative way of approaching it, the main alternative being an aggregative approach. In order to justify an aggregative approach to cost, then, we need not appeal to what we have already done for others; we need only refer here to what it implies for ourselves to adopt an iterative approach.

## Conclusion

*To conclude:* Recent criticisms of the appeal to cost fail to show that this appeal is mistaken or unfruitful. Therefore, unless there are other and better counterarguments, it is still as appealing as ever to

argue against the demands of certain moral theories by referring to some sort of cost that they imply for the moral agent. Some may find it hackneyed or boring to appeal to cost<sup>45</sup>, but that doesn't make it false to do so. Maybe the truth is somewhat boring.

More generally, for all the interesting new insights that the three studies which we have discussed bring to the debate about what morality may demand, they do not speak the last word about this question. Importantly, I have argued for the statement that, contrary to what these studies suggest, we must always do great good when we can do so at little cost to ourselves. Murphy, Mulgan and Cullity do not in the end provide convincing arguments against this statement – even if their contributions are fruitful, and bound to be discussed for years to come.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Below, these three studies will be discussed in chronological order.

<sup>2</sup> For the full, and quite burdensome, formulation of Murphy's principle of beneficence, see Murphy (2000), p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *o.c.*, p. 77.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *o.c.*, p. 132-133.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *o.c.*, p. 77.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Singer (1999), p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> See Scanlon (1998), p. 224; Rawls (1971), p. 293–294.

<sup>8</sup> Murphy (2000), p. 92.

<sup>9</sup> *o.c.*, p. 92.

<sup>10</sup> Murphy might again try to defend himself by pointing out that his principle is only about duties of beneficence, not about all moral duties (cf. *o.c.*, p. 3ff.). However, whatever the exact outlines of such a defence, the really interesting thing is whether there is, according to Murphy, a moral duty to fight great evils that one can fight at little cost to oneself, even if fighting them means taking up the slack. It matters little whether this moral duty is a duty of beneficence or some other kind of moral duty. As Murphy's story stands it gives the strong impression that he denies the existence of such a duty.

<sup>11</sup> Mulgan (2001), p. 173.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. *o.c.*, p. 249.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. *o.c.*, p. 218ff.

<sup>14</sup> Hooker (2003), p. 291. For an alternative formulation see Hooker (2000), p. 33.

<sup>15</sup> Another possibility for Mulgan is to argue that rule consequentialism does not, on reflection, give a moral agent permission not to fight great evils where they can do so at little cost. But it is at least a real possibility that it does give such a permission, for as Mulgan admits, it is very hard to figure out what rule consequentialism would require. Furthermore, Mulgan asserts that in a world where all needs are met, rule consequentialism is practically speaking equivalent to contractualism. And as I argue elsewhere (Philips 2007, Ch. 3), contractualism has a persistent tendency sometimes to find it all right that one does not do great good for others that one could do at little cost.

<sup>16</sup> Mulgan (2001), p. 285.

<sup>17</sup> *O.c.*, p. 284–285.

<sup>18</sup> Mulgan points out that many contemporary rule consequentialists (such as Hooker) rest the case for their theory on its intuitive appeal *rather than* on consequentialist foundations, see e.g. *o.c.*, p. 58.

<sup>19</sup> However, I leave open to what extent Mulgan in the end endorses the response that I am proposing.

<sup>20</sup> *O.c.*, p. 173.

<sup>21</sup> E.g. *o.c.*, p. 196ff.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> One may also say that if this picture were true, this reproach would have an incorrect presupposition.

<sup>24</sup> This theory is developed in Philips (2006) and in Philips (2007).

<sup>25</sup> Cullity profoundly problematizes the notion of 'cost', as will be explained in section 2.4 below.

<sup>26</sup> Cullity holds that we are obviously required to help a talented person pursue a musical career *and* that on many occasions we should (probably) feed the hungry instead of helping that person pursue this career (see Cullity 2004, e.g. p. 136). If this is to be consistent, the notion of requirement in play here cannot be an 'all-things-considered requirement', but must be something like a 'pro-tanto requirement' (although that expression is somewhat awkward, and although Cullity himself does not use it). That is, the requirement that a moral agent has to help a talented person pursue a musical career can sometimes be overridden. And the thought then seems to be that ways of life and pursuits that it is wrong for someone to have, do not even generate a pro-tanto requirement on others to help that person obtain or keep them. Jeffrey Brand-Ballard (2005) helped me realize the use of the distinction between 'pro tanto' and 'all-things-considered' requirements. For similar distinctions, cf. Kagan (1989).

<sup>27</sup> For Cullity's extensive thoughts on 'requirement-grounding' goods and lives, see esp. his Ch. 9 (p. 165–166).

<sup>28</sup> As before, in a pro-tanto sense of this word.

<sup>29</sup> I do not see that Cullity provides any reason for thinking that the importance of a good is the *only* thing that can make it requirement-grounding.

<sup>30</sup> The point I make here has some similarities with a point that Jeffrey Brand-Ballard (2005) makes in his review of Cullity.

<sup>31</sup> Murphy also considers the demandingness of moral theories in situations where some but not most or even all other agents follow the theory in question, in other words, in situations of partial rather than (almost) full compliance with

that theory (e.g. p. 56ff.). However, I will leave such situations to one side.

<sup>32</sup> Murphy himself speaks of huge 'passive' demands of a theory in the latter case, of huge 'active' demands in the former. He takes this terminology from Kamm (1996).

<sup>33</sup> Murphy (2000), p. 60.

<sup>34</sup> Murphy also considers possible benchmarks other than this comparison with other moral theories, but it would take us too far from our point to go into these.

<sup>35</sup> For these thoughts see *ibid.*, esp. p. 56; p. 59–60; p. 70.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *o.c.*, p. 70.

<sup>37</sup> See esp. *o.c.*, Ch. 2.

<sup>38</sup> The mentioned distinction between objecting to some loss of well-being that others inflict on one vs. a loss has to inflict on oneself, need not turn on the idea that the latter case involves great demands of the will.

<sup>39</sup> Murphy (2000), p. 69, emphasis in original. For the sake of the argument, at this point in his book Murphy only considers active demands of morality.

<sup>40</sup> Some may reject this simplification, because they think that Murphy is not talking about the content but about the *authority* of morality: about how much weight moral considerations should carry among a wider range of practical considerations (cf. Scheffler 1992). However, the wider context of Murphy's book makes it clear that he intends to talk about the content of morality.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Mulgan (2001), p. 252. Here, Mulgan draws heavily on Raz (1986, 1999).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253, where Mulgan shifts from 'self-morality' to 'self-others'.

<sup>43</sup> Nagel (1986), p. 197.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. again Nagel: 'It may be the extremes of immorality constitute a dominant evil – that to be horribly wicked is so bad that no rewards of other kinds could imply that such a person would be worse off if he were not wicked. But the relation between morality and the good life in general is not determined by such cases.' (*ibid.*)

<sup>45</sup> Cf. e.g. Brand-Ballard (2005).

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