Principles of beneficence

Practical and moral considerations

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Introduction

In this essay, I will explore possible answers to two questions: "what is a good way to increase well-being in the world" and "how much are we morally compelled to do for those who suffer"? The debate about how much we ought to do for others boomed in modern time with the well-known article by Peter Singer named "Famine, Affluence, and Morality". During the time of his writing, a civil war in Bangladesh had millions put in a state of extreme poverty and starvation. He argued that "we ought to give until we reach the level of marginal utility – that is, the level at which, by giving more, I would cause as much suffering to myself or my dependents as I would relieve by my gift."¹ Many responses to this have been made since and many independent theories on the subject have been developed.

Principles that answers our two questions are called principles of beneficence. They are joint answers to both of these questions. They are instructions on our moral obligations, and at the same time, they work as propositions on how to increase well-being. The reasoning in this essay about these questions will not only include moral considerations, but also discussion on practical limitations, which lead us to our final answer. I begin our journey by exploring the implications of utilitarianism, which is the biggest theory on how to increase well-being, and provide instructions on how to do so. We shall see that utilitarianism is merciless against its compliers who, in being impartial and meeting extreme demands, can't be partial towards themselves or their close, or enjoy freedom of choice – things that are important for well-being in life. This will not attract many followers. And there are specific issues for utilitarianism under full compliance; since the utilitarian compliers always would want to maximize the utility that a commodity can generate, and accounting for the law of diminishing marginal value, total material equality would occur. Total equality would lead to a shortage of motivation to work, and possibly a collapse of society. On this background we can see that principles of beneficence need to keep in mind the importance of partiality and autonomy in human life, and still focus on increasing well-being. For I will argue that the implicit goal of all principles of beneficence is to increase well-being, hence we can evaluate them by how much they would generate if applied to the real world. I am not going into depth about the counter-arguments against how I present utilitarianism. My intentions are not to destroy utilitarianism, I merely use utilitarianism to illuminate some problems that principles of beneficence need to direct special care to.

Other theories, on how much we should do for others, are those of Murphy and Cullity.

Murphy says that one only needs to do one's fair share, while Cullity says that one only need to help until you have met certain criteria. They both, however, lack a definition on when people no longer are entitled to help. Such a definition, I will add to these theories and call it "the Limit", I will also merge the theories of Murphy and Cullity together to create a new principle of beneficence called "the merged principle of beneficence". This principle, I will try to prove, is our best practical choice of a principle of beneficence because of some practical reasons that are nevertheless backed up by moral reasoning. Much like when the crisis in Bangladesh was, we today have a refugee crisis happening in the middle east and Europe. This essay could be seen to contain suggestions on how distribution of responsibilities, among countries able to help towards the refugees, could look like.

In this essay I will talk a lot about "help" and giving from the rich to the poor. The easiest way to represent different forms of help is with money. Money is easy, both theoretically and practically, to work with and can represent anything that could have a monetary value. Throughout this essay money will represent all forms of help. It will help me in writing since money is easy to work with and use in examples and such. For example, working voluntarily in shelters for the homeless is a kind of help and can be translated to an amount of money. So if I say that "she should give $100 to the poor" that does not necessarily mean that this is the only thing she can do for the poor. It does not have to be money that is given in the effort of helping those in need, it can be any form of help that relieves their need. This help is easily represented by a sum of money.

Decisions

I will here present the first out of three pitfalls of utilitarianism, which will function as the base from where we conduct our further analysis on principles of beneficence. The principle of utilitarianism, we shall call it the optimizing principle of beneficence, the name lent from Murphy, is aimed directly at maximizing utility. It says that an action is right if and only if it is the option of a set of alternatives that leads to the most good. All other alternatives are wrong. Utilitarianism is very clear on this. In real life, we rarely make those decisions that lead to the absolutely most good, so according to utilitarianism, we almost always act wrongly. If we were to follow utilitarianism strictly and only try to choose the actions that lead to the best consequences, important areas in what

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2 Principles of beneficence only consider need for help in terms of well-being. There could be more reasons to help people, even if they have high well-being, for example if they suffer injustices or have their rights violated. Injustices and rights violations, and other reasons to help people, are only concerned, in the sphere of principles of beneficence, to the extent they affect peoples well-being.

makes life good would be threatened. Decisions in the optimizing principle of beneficence have two kinds of backlashing effects for utilitarianism. One concerns the actual decisions when knowing what choice would lead to the best consequences, and the other concerns the calculating of what option of a decision would be best when not knowing what their expected output of utility would be.

Actual decisions

Utilitarianism requires that one is impartial when making decisions. If one were partial and gave more weight to certain interests, other interests that could have yielded more utility will not be prioritized, hence, the most utility would not come out of being partial. So being impartial is required. However, in being impartial, one could have to act on options in decisions that one would not hope for. One extreme example would be in a life-threatening situation involving an actors own child and someone else’s child. The actor is the only one able to act in the situation. The two children are hanging from a cliff and the actor only have time to save one of them. If knowing that, in total, saving the other child would be the best option, the optimizing principle of beneficence would require the actor to do so.

In reality we are partial towards our near and dear, we give their interests more weight. Giving extra weight to interests, being partial and giving special care really is what friends and family is all about. It could be seen as a sort of contract, I will take care of you, you will take care of me, we take care of each other. The kind of extreme impartiality required by the optimizing principle of beneficence would not only impair close relationships in extreme cases, but also in everyday life. I would be cooking food for a starving guy, knowing this will satisfy more hunger, instead of cooking for my kids. I would be convincing my friend that need my help moving into a new apartment that a homeless guy should be allowed to move in there instead. Making decisions that are not biased towards those we care for would have severe effects on the well-being of not just oneself, but also the ones we care for. In breaking this contract of partiality over and over again, we can't have friends or a family or any kind of close relationship that requires partiality. Humans are social beings, and having close relationships is of fundamental importance, maybe even a necessary condition for well-being, and partiality is necessary for close relationships. Gains in well-being of acting impartially could therefore not outweigh the loss of well-being from lost close relationships.
Calculating decisions

We have just seen that making impartial decisions with the aim of maximizing utility can lead to quite the opposite. But it is not only acting on those decisions that can lead to alienation from close relationships, just thinking about making those kinds of decisions can too. To try to comply with the optimizing principle of beneficence, one would have to calculate the expected output of well-being of the alternatives in each decision we confront. It would actually take quite some time to do that. In the so-called "the tyranny of choice" we would get paralysed because of all our small, trivial choices in life. It would be incredibly time-consuming to try to calculate what kind of toothpaste has the highest benefit or trying to figure out what route to take to work today, and many more frequent small choices we make, often instinctively, each day. We would also risk losing the enjoyment of enjoyments as they are going on, like watching a movie or spending time with a friend, if we constantly thought about if it would be more enjoyable watching another movie or hanging out with another friend. Trying to calculate these kinds of choices would surely decrease our well-being in life, instead of increasing it. Calculating which option is best will also be very impractical when time is of an issue, like in the example where the two children were hanging off an edge of a cliff. As the actor stands there trying to figure out which child would be best to save, they both lose their grip and fall to their deaths.

But what I believe is the most severe consequence of having this calculating approach to life is that it would prevent us from having deep and trusting relationships with other people. "How would my relationship with my wife and kids end up, if I constantly thought about exchanging them for something better?" (my translation), professor of philosophy Torbjörn Tännsjö asks. Deeper bonds with other people are one of the most important things that give life its worth, that gives us true well-being, but having deeper bonds with people is rendered impossible if one would be thinking about, and being prepared to, pursuing other relationships instead, believing it would yield greater benefit. The relationship would give more benefit for the parties involved if they were biased for each other. Calculating is distracting and prevents relationships from going deeper to where the next level of enjoyment of relationships comes from.

I think we can conclude that always calculating for the best options is not a viable method, even for utilitarianism, to achieve maximum utility. Utilitarians have been aware of this, at least since the 19'th century, and do not deny it. The early, prominent utilitarian writer Henry Sidgwick said: “if experience shows that general happiness will be better achieved if men frequently act from motives other than pure universal philanthropy, those other motives are preferable on utilitarian

4 Torbjörn Tännsjö, Grundbok i normativ etik, Thales, Stockholm, 2000, p. 43
principles”.

So what utilitarians instead propose we do, is that we take an alternative route to the maximization of utility, we should use another decision procedure. A decision procedure is a method of making decisions and answers the question of how we should decide what to do. Calculating expected benefit for each decision, for example, is a decision procedure. Such detours to getting to maximum utility can counter the arguments against utilitarianism that implies that it makes complying agents make decisions that make them miserable, as well as do calculating which makes them miserable. If making these kinds of decisions, or thinking about decisions, does not lead to the maximization of utility, then it is not the way to go, utilitarians could say. Nevertheless, defenders of utilitarianism always have to deal with these issues. A reminder: I am not trying to destroy utilitarianism; having explained how making and calculating decisions with the aim of maximizing utility can turn out, we now know that for a principle of beneficence to work, it needs to avoid this problem. The principles I am going to present later in the essay works as alternative decision procedures and deals with the issues of decisions and impartiality in different ways. Some include a guarantee that complying agents don’t have to lose access to important areas in life that makes it worthwhile, as close relationships do. Others demand impartiality in decisions to some extent but rarely completely.

Demands

Making decisions impartially and always be calculating decisions is not a sustainable way to reach for greater total well-being. The complying agents become miserable both under full and partial compliance. But there are even more ways the optimizing principle of beneficence takes its toll on its complying agents. Trying to maximize utility does not only alienate a complying agent from his or her friends and family, it would also demand a great deal in terms of workload and money.

There is great need in the world today. Many people are starving, many more are poor, there are refugees of war, there are epidemics, the list of misery on earth can be made long. Because there is a lot of help needed, there is much good work to be done. This work of doing good will often be what the optimizing principle of beneficence requires. A complier has a big task ahead. Having this burden, complying with the principle, will strip away a lot of things that the complier enjoys in life. First off, the complier may have to give away all her resources to charity, including selling all her belongings, and only spend a minimum on herself to sustain a living at minimum standard. She has

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to do this for as long as there are others that don't have better lives than her, and considering the fact that there are a vast number of people in great need, she might have to spend the rest of her life this way. This might seem to be a problem only for the more affluent people of the world, a problem for those with resources enough to make a change for the lives of the poor and miserable, but the optimizing principle of beneficence is not only for the rich, it is for everyone. Even the poor has to help, there are actions they may have to do which includes neglecting themselves. The poor must help the even more poor.

There could be scenarios when the best thing would be to live a monetary rich life, getting a high education, getting a well-paid job, keeping the money to buy houses and impressing your bosses to get the promotion so you can get even more money and invest them carefully to expand your wealth. But the goal of this, of course, would be to give it all away to charity. What most find is good about having money is the freedom it brings and all the fun things one can do for them. The only time the complier can enjoy this freedom and do fun things for her money is when it serves the purposes of utilitarianism. I'm sure that's far from always. The mere sense of not being allowed to do what you want, not to make choices, that feeling of confinement can reduce well-being. It can be claustrophobic. It is not just that a complier has to spend resources to help the needy that make her less well-off, but the fact that the spectrum of available choices for the complier is reduced to just one option.

There are no physical hinders to what anyone can do. Like the law doesn't physically stop someone from committing a crime, principles of beneficence doesn't stop people from doing maleficent deeds. Exempting those who don't care about the law, the rest of us law abiding citizens, in other words 'law-compliers', have our options limited to the extent of the law. Be it because we don't want to get punished, or that we agree with the principle of keeping society in order – no matter, it is the that we comply with it that matters here. So as compliers to the law, those actions that the law forbids are removed from our pool of options. In that sense, freedom of choice is reduced to just one option for a complier to the optimizing principle, because it forbids all actions that are not the best action for the maximization of utility, and that is no freedom at all. As one could ignore the law, one could ignore the moral requirements of the optimizing principle, but then we are not discussing the issues of being a complier to it, which is what I am trying to do here. I am discussing the issues of being a complier to the optimizing principle of beneficence. The optimizing principle reduces options to just one option, that leaves no space for the complier to act freely, and that is bad for the complier. A complier to the optimizing principle has no freedom of choice in that sense.

Torbjörn Tännsjö objects that there is no real loss of freedom of choice in utilitarianism. He
says that you can choose to make helping others your life project, then what utilitarianism demands and what you choose to do, using your freedom of choice, would coincide. I can't agree with this for I don't believe that we have such control over our desires so that we can force what we enjoy in life to coincide with some principle. It is possible to choose to do, but not to choose to want. Choosing what to do does not mean choosing according to one's will. I agree with Brad Hooker saying that "most people are such that were they to pare down their lives to [maximizing the good], life would not be very rewarding for them." Even if we follow the optimizing principle and make helping other people our life projects, there are many other things we want to do in life, and really only a very few number of people would really want to choose that kind of life. The confinement remains as long as all actions but one is right.

In doing all this, you might have to leave your family and friends for work where your work is most needed, physically as well as mentally. As we've this far seen, utilitarianism robs compliers of their family in not only decisions, but in the mere burden of benevolence. So you can't keep your friends or family, you can't keep your wealth or belongings to yourself, you can't follow your dreams, you can't invest in your personal projects, you can't choose freely.

Keep in mind though, that everything bad about the high demands of the optimizing principle of beneficence taken up in this chapter, the material cost and big workload, could only happen to a complier in a world of only partial compliance and great need. That means, that if the need is great, and only some do their best to help, these few benevolent people will carry the weight of all that needs to be done. In other worlds, where there is no great need, the demands of the optimizing principle would not be great. Or in a world of full compliance, everyone helps out, the burden each individual has to carry might not be so heavy. That depends, however, on how much help there is to be needed. Because, if the need was great enough the burden could still be very heavy under full compliance. Confinement, on the other hand, prevails anyhow, heavy demands or not. The confinement is not about the size of demands, but of the reduction of options. So even if there is full compliance, even if the need is low, the action that brings along the most total utility still is only one action, and that means confinement.

The principles of how to achieve greater well-being in the world and of how much we need to do for each other, I will present it later in this essay, will not demand as much of complying agents, that is because of a fair sharing of the burdens of helping needy people, and a guarantee that complying agents not lose access to important areas in life that makes it worthwhile. So the problems of extreme demands, confinement, will not apply, at least not to the same extent.

6 Torbjörn Tännsjö, Grundbok i normativ etik, Stockholm, Thales, 2012, p. 46
Total Equality

An effective way to increase utility is to direct what generates utility to where it can be used most effectively to generate utility. Many of the options that lead to the highest amount of utility do just that because of the law of diminishing marginal utility. It says that the value of one unit of good X diminishes as the supply of X increases. The price of apples decreases the more apples there are. The value of something is more, the less one has of that something. The more money one has, the less valuable is each extra unit of money to that one. The less money one has, the more use that one can have of an amount of money than one with more money would have. For example, if one is hungry and buys a pizza, the first slice will be very enjoyable, the next slice will be slightly less enjoyable. Each next slice will generate less value than the slice before. And when the person eating the pizza is full, more slices will eventually generate negative value. The more food the eater has in her stomach, the less valuable will each extra slice of pizza be. Compare hunger and pizza with poverty and money. Hunger being poverty, eating being earning, pizza being money, and being full being rich. The fuller (richer) you are, the less value will each extra piece of food (money) have to you. But for the one who is hungry (poor), the first pieces of food (money) will make a significant increase in the value of what the food (money) can make, compared to the value it creates for someone who is full (rich). This law of diminishing marginal utility is important in the effectiveness of increasing utility and is what affects where to direct benevolence most in utilitarianism. This is why rich people can’t give away their money to just slightly less rich people but have to give them to the one that need it the most. And that’s why poor people also have to help the even more poor.

So the most effective way to have money make a lot of value is to give it to those who don’t have any money. So what utilitarianism (wanting to maximize utility), and the law of diminishing marginal value (the value of a commodity increases the less one has of it), adds up to, is that everybody who has money should always give money to the one having least money. The one with least money changes as soon as he receives the first donation, and there is always a new person being the poorest. This goes on until the one with the least money has the same amount of money as the one with most money, meaning, everybody has the same amount of money. Exemplified: If Megan has a total wealth of $1000, and Josh does not have any money at all, what would have money generate most utility would be for Megan to give half of her money to Josh so they would have $500 each. If Megan only would give $100 to Josh, she would not have as much use of those $400 dollars missing from the would be average, as Josh could have. If she would give more than $500 dollars, she would herself be able to use every dollar she had left more effectively for
generating value for her than Josh would, but she would have had a better use of the extra money after have given more than half to Josh than he now has. This kind of redistribution of resources will lead to total equality. I will elaborate on the impact of total equality soon. But first I want to mention possible replies against that this would lead to total equality and if the rich giving to the poor really is creating more utility.

Utilitarianism says that an action is right if and only if it is the option of a set of alternatives that leads to the most good. A transaction from a rich guy to a poor guy could be just that right action. What plays part in the calculation of the output of well-being of this transaction is the anger of the rich and the joy of the poor. The anger spurs from a feeling of having earned the hard worked for money and a feeling of entitlement to that money, it makes the transaction feel unfair. If the anger of having to give away my money to you is greater than the benefit you could make out of the money I would not have to give it to you. I believe, though, that that limit, being angrier than how much another one can benefit from it, is hard to reach, considering the extreme poverty existing in the world. Also considering that what makes life good, is in the end not money or not a lot of it. Receiving some money can increase a persons life a great deal, more than how much a rich givers life decreases.

As long as the rich giver is able to keep what makes his life worthwhile, the only grudge the rich one has for giving away his money is the unfairness of having to give it away despite having earned it. Having earned it is relative in the unjust context of the world. Being born in a rich country with rich parents, they pay for school or school being free, not living in a corrupt government, inheriting a lot of money in some cases. How much could one really consider that money "earned" in complete fairness is up for debate, while someone else, being born in a poor country, by poor parents, not affording school, government corrupt, no great chances of making a flourishing living and perhaps worked really hard, maybe or probably harder than the rich guys, for a mere sustainability. Ending up in situations like this, like being born either in a rich or a poor country, is a matter of brute luck. Brute Luck, a concept from Dworkin, concerns inequalities that occur randomly, as opposed to option luck that "is a matter of how deliberate and calculated gambles turn out."\(^8\) Dworkin concludes in his paper that brute luck inequalities should be compensated through means of taxation, which is sort of a principle of beneficence of the likes we are dealing with in this essay. Nevertheless, only utility concerns utilitarianism. It does not give brute luck any concern. It does not concern fairness. But people are concerned with fairness. And since people are concerned with fairness, fairness can affect their levels of utility. So if the rich giver gets so bummed out for

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having to give away his money, thinking that this is unfair, it could lower his level of utility more than the gain in utility coming from the poor receiver, in such a case utilitarianism would not encourage the transaction. But such cases could rarely occur. Transactions from rich to poor will most likely increase total utility. Also, is it fair for people to grow up in completely different circumstances and that brute luck can have such a great impact on people’s lives? I would say no. And maybe, the sense of global fairness from the effects of equalizing wealth differences, carries great value. To know that one lives in an equal world may bring utility in itself. So the argument for it being unfair that one has to give away one’s money is neutralized; the negative utility of the sense of individual unfairness would be outweighed by the positive utility of the sense of global fairness. Also, this is just a transition period. As total equality persists, people will have forgotten what it was like having a lot of money taken away from them. Even though I will promote giving from the rich to the poor, I am not going to defend it to the point of total equality, and it is not because of the rich guys anger about having to give their money away. The consequence of the optimizing principle of beneficence plus the law of diminishing marginal value is total equality, and total equality is bad, I will next try to explain why.

In total equality one can never accumulate more wealth than is the average. It is impossible to acquire something more than the average. Because if you would have more, you would have to give it away. This could lead to yet another sense of confinement. The requirement to give as long as one is above the average is holding individuals back. Individuals who want to achieve a greater standard of living can’t do that. To be able to keep for oneself what one earns is a motivation to become better at something which it is possible to make money from. Total equality is a cap for how far someone can go. How much one can have of a certain something, it could be anything physical (one cannot give away friendship or talent), for example money, collectable stamps, cattle, cars, or anything that people, or certain groups of people, generally wants to have a share of, is capped by the number of how much of that product exists divided by the number of people wanting to have it. Total equality does not only affect ambitions to have a lot of something, it could also affect development of skills. It is not only the fun in growing a talent in areas in which one has great potential that drives one to develop that talent, being paid to be talented in something also motivates one to become talented in that area. Even if one does not have any talents naturally, if being talented in an area is a way of acquiring wealth, that could be reason to try become talented anyway. The cap of total equality means an absence of one of the motivations to develop talents. More talented people are good for the world. Lazy people are not. If there is a limit which beyond people can’t acquire more wealth, then people will not work more when they have reached that limit. That is bad for society. And I believe that society, perhaps not the way it is constructed today but at least the
idea of it, the cooperation and order, is a good thing for upholding well-being. In the long run, the limit of total equality could cause the collapse of society. As motivation for work sinks, so does the total amount of work being conducted, thereby does the average wealth also drop. As the average wealth drops, so does the limit of total equality and that lowers motivation and amount of work even more. Eventually no one is working and society collapses.

What initially looked like a good way to maximize utility turned out to not be good at all. The world I ended up with is anything but what a utilitarian wishes for. The universal utilitarian answer is that the world with the most utility is the best world, and the quickest way there is the best way, and apparently what I have accounted for here is not the way, even if I used principles with intention of increasing utility. We have learned from this chapter that the law of marginal utility is effective in increasing utility but not if it goes on unhindered, because then total equality happens and that is not a good thing for utility. I want it to be possible for everyone to reach what they strive for if they work hard enough. Total equality makes that harder, if not impossible. On this background, I believe that it is a good thing to leave room for differences in wealth. Principles I will present next in this essay will avoid ending up in total equality because of a fair sharing of the burden of helping needy people or because of a limit to demands.

**Murphy and Cullity**

The standing assumption I have been trying to promote is that prima facie, the optimizing principle of beneficence is not a tolerable theory on what moral demands helpers should attend to. I will now present two of the most prominent other theories on moral demands in contemporary literature. They are Murphy, who suggests a fair distribution of responsibility, and Cullity, who sets a limit to how much can be asked of helping agents. I will try to explain how they work and how they are not quite worthy of the status of complete principles of beneficence. They are in some ways better if they are combined.

**Murphy**

To begin building Murphy's concept of what we ought to do morally we need to start with a definition of the demandingness objection. The demandingness objections "asserts that there is a limit to how great a sacrifice morality, or at least a principle of beneficence, can legitimately
demand of agents." It is an objection directed foremost against consequentialist theories, even if many other theories, like deontology and virtue ethics, and basically any theory that encourages beneficence or requires agents to save lives in emergencies, also can be accused of being too demanding. Murphy begins his reasoning to his conclusion with a statement that it is not actually the demands themselves that the optimizing principle of beneficence makes on us that is what makes us feel that it must be something wrong with it, it is in fact, he asserts, that agents that meet the demands take on so much more burden, than those who don't meet the demands, when no one else complies. The absurdness of the demands lies in the unfairness that complying agents have to take on the extra slack left out by non-compliers not doing what they should. He has three arguments backing this statement up, first, he uses an example of a world where the need is great and those who can help are few. Imagine a single rich country in a world of extreme poverty, or a rich class of people within an otherwise very poor country. It does not seem as strange to demand of one agent to face extreme demands in helping the very poor if everybody else in the rich country also did this, as it feels strange to demand of one agent to face extreme demands when no one else does. "My contention is that while it would seem absurd, under partial compliance, to expect any given member of the lucky class to act as required by the optimizing principle of beneficence, it is not absurd to expect all of them to do so under full compliance. If I am right, this supports the claim that the problem with the optimizing principle of beneficence is that it imposes demands unfairly under partial compliance".

To contribute to the point that it is the unfairness of the allocation of demands under partial compliance that makes the extreme demands of the optimizing principle of beneficence seem absurd, Murphy explains that beneficence should be seen as a collective undertaking. This is because the aim of beneficence is to raise well-being, especially among those who have less of it. First, "Beneficence could ... be understood either as an aim people have as individuals, and just happen to share with all other individuals, or as an aim people have together with others in the stronger sense that each person views his beneficent activities as part of a collective undertaking". Everybody has the same goal. But secondly, and more importantly, what one does in the project of beneficence affects what others need to do in this project. If you help others, my reason to help diminishes in the same rate as the well-being of others increases. All of our actions in the project of beneficence are intertwined. If beneficence is seen as a collective undertaking it is even more

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10 You can read more about how many moral theories can end up being extremely demanding in the introduction chapter by Timothy Chappell in his anthology book *The Problem of Moral Demandingness*
12 Ibid. p. 96
absurd to expect one agent to carry the slack of those who don't do their part.

Lastly, to support this claim, Murphy urges the reader not to forget that people are conscious moral agents that are able to carry responsibility. If people are responsible agents, and especially if beneficence is a collective undertaking, the unfairness of having a single complier take on all the burdens left out by other agents becomes more vivid. A complying agents burden should not increase even if other agents don't take on their responsibility, means Murphy. "That I know that you will not do what you are supposed to do does not alter the fact that you are responsible for what you are responsible for, and I am responsible for what I am responsible for", he says.\(^{13}\)

On this three-part background Murphy creates a compliance condition that moral theories ought to meet to become acceptable. The compliance condition is that no agent should have to do more than she would do under full compliance. The theory of how much we should do morally that Murphy creates, the collective principle of beneficence, say that agents ought to do as much as they would do under full compliance. How much is that? Murphy is not explicit on how to exactly know how much one ought to do, but he does say that the effect of sacrifices in acting with an agent-neutral principle should be fairly distributed. A fair distribution is "equal unless there are good grounds for departing from equality", he says.\(^{14}\) I can only guess that differences in wealth are taken as a good ground for departing from equality, so the rich should then do more than the less rich. Murphy also says: "The collective principle of beneficence holds that an agent should assess rightness of action in terms of the expected benefits she could produce in the actual circumstances she is in".\(^{15}\) This quote further supports my guess, assuming that having more resources enables one to produce more benefits. A fair share of burdens of helping could then mean to be a proportional sacrifice to one's wealth, which to me sounds fair.

Now, how are followers of the collective principle to make decisions. According to Murphy’s collective principle of beneficence, agents "need never sacrifice so much that he would end up less well-off than he would be under full compliance ... but within that constraint he must do as much good as possible", and are "required to perform one of the actions that ... is optimal in respect of expected aggregate weighted well-being".\(^{16}\) I interpret these quotes to mean that agents have to be impartial until they have done their fair share. Depending on how much needs to be done, which dictates how large one's fair share is, impartiality in making decisions will impair important aspects of life, for example autonomy and friendship, as long as one's fair share is not done. It also dictates the burden of demand, which further can confine the complying agent.

\(^{13}\) Liam B Murphy, *Moral Demands in Nonideal Theory*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 115
\(^{14}\) Ibid. p. 107
\(^{15}\) Ibid. p. 86
\(^{16}\) Ibid. p. 86-7
Unfortunately, Murphy does not specify how much needs to be done, there is not either any definition of when a receiver of help stops being objects of beneficence. This is a big missing piece of the puzzle. Murphy does accomplish what he set out to do in his book, which was to examine the demandingness objection, and to construct a philosophical theory on what constitutes a permissibility of stop giving help. He has done this, but I don't think his collective principle of beneficence can be considered complete. There is no answer to a very important question when it comes to principles of beneficence: When are receivers of help no longer entitled to help? When a principle is about giving help, the amount of help is a highly relevant information, and that amount is dictated by this unanswered question. The amount is especially important when the distribution of it is at the core of the principle. How large is the burden of help? And how is one's fair share calculated? I can only speculate: If it is right to stop giving help to a receiver when he is at an equal level of well-being as the giver of help is, this is the same as to help to the point of marginal utility, this would under full compliance create total equality. However, as Murphy himself said, if we have good grounds to depart from equality, we should do so. The badness of total equality must be seen as a good ground for not going to total equality. So to help until those we help is at the same level of well-being, should not be what Murphy means. Murphy’s theory needs some sort of limit to where the receivers of help should be assisted to reach. This limit could represent a base from where individuals are able to live a worthwhile life. More on this later, for now, let's just say that this limit is a threshold of well-being, where people under it are entitled to receive help, and people above it are obliged to give help. I will now add some practical precision to distributions of demands of beneficence of my own conception.

There are three factors that together determine what one's fair share would be, they are: the size of one's wealth, the size of the total wealth of everybody above the limit, and the cost of the needs of those who are under the limit. (What their needs are, and what the limit more exactly consists of, I'll explain later.) If either of these variables change, so does the fair share of each helper. The fair share is not affected by how many people there are under or above the limit, just their accumulated wealth and needs. The formula for the calculation of one's fair share is this: The total cost of the needs of those under the limit (Z) DIVIDED BY the total wealth of everybody above the limit (Y) TIMES one's personal wealth (X). The formula looks like this: (Z/Y)*X. Here is an example:

*My wealth: $500*

*Total wealth of all above the limit: $10 000*

*Cost of the needs of all under the limit: $2000*
(2000/10 000) = 0,2
0,2 * 500 = 100

I should give $100 (20% of my wealth).

If my wealth instead were much higher, say $9000, I'd have to give $1800 (20%). If I had $500, but the needs cost $5000, I'd have to give $250 (50%). If the total wealth above the limit instead was $50 000, I'd have to give $20 (4%). As you can see, both the number of units of a currency and the percentage changes easily. The total wealth among those above the limit and the cost of the needs of those under the limit decides what percentage of one's wealth ought to be donated as the fair share.¹⁷

It is not suggested that one should know all of these numbers. In the real world, perhaps some global union, government, or institution could handle these numbers and annually inform everybody above the limit how much they ought to give. Governments do these kinds of calculations in taxes and pension funds all the time, so it should not be hard for them to do this too.

Cullity

Cullity does not use a fair share distribution of demands in his principle of beneficence, he rather sets a limit consisting of four criteria of when it is ok to stop helping. Cullity concludes in his book that one can justifiably refuse to reduce personal spending when either of the following is true:

- It would deprive me of a non-altruistically-focused life
- It would worsen my life by a requirement-grounding amount
- It would deprive me of a good that is better than the alternatives by a requirement-grounding amount
- It would deprive me of a commitment good¹⁸

A non-altruistically-focused life (NAF-life) is what it sounds like, a life that is not focused on being

¹⁷ If you are wondering what happens if the cost of the needs are higher than the total wealth, answers will be provided in the next chapter. A short answer is that one should not have to give more if it causes losses of important aspects of life.
altruistic. Being altruistic, in this context, basically means complying with the optimizing principle of beneficence, Cullity calls it meeting "the Extreme Demand". Cullity rejects the Extreme Demand with the following reasoning. First, he says that there are good reasons to help people in the fulfillments of a NAF-life. He gives the examples of reuniting a family and helping someone develop a talent. These fulfillments can generate a lot of well-being, and it would be absurd not to be required to help them if it could be done with a relatively small effort. On the other hand, it is not a good reason to help someone get what it is wrong to have. The example for this is, while helping someone repair a gun so he can enjoy the leisure time activity of target practice is okay, helping him repair the gun so he can kill people is not a good reason to help. Since the Extreme Demand requires us to lead altruistically focused lives, and since it is wrong to help someone get something that it is wrong to have, the Extreme Demand implies that it is wrong to help people in the fulfillments of a NAF-life, and that is absurd, so the Extreme Demand should be rejected.

Requirement-grounding is "When it is absurd to deny that your interest in pursuing a good can ground requirements on me to help you". If you would lose your enjoyable surfing career as a cost of helping those in need, that would count as your life being worsened by a requirement-grounding amount, because I could have good reason to help you retain that career with little effort. However, it would not be a requirement-grounding loss if your surfing career was rough and pitiful, because then my effort of helping you retain it would not match the well-being it gave you. But what if I enjoyed very much collecting expensive art, and if you could help me acquire that with small effort? Then, it seems, I would not have to take as much part in the act of helping needy people, because all my wealth would go to buying new art. That would not count as requirement-grounding though, because requirement-grounding is not only about the size of losses, also about moral significance. For choosing a more expensive route in life is not morally excusable when there are cheaper options that are not substantially worse. This is what Cullity believes. Taking away a surfer's surfboard, even though the material cost is low, would render the surfer's life worse by a requirement-grounding amount, if that was what the surfer enjoyed in life, and there were no cheaper options. Having the art-collector give up his art, even though the material cost is high and the art gave much joy, would not be a requirement-grounding loss if there were cheaper options that were not substantially worse that could fulfill this interest. What, then, if it is the only thing that gives him enjoyment? Cullity finds that hard to believe. "Choosing a career as the curator of a public art collection over a life as a private collector would rarely be substantially worse for a person", he says.

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20 Ibid. p. 154
destroyed, it would not be "morally defensible for you to structure your life around collecting expensive paintings in the first place, rather than living in an alternative way that is not substantially worse for you and using the money you would otherwise have spent on yourself to help other people". 21

The last item on Cullity's list is also what it sounds like, goods that require commitment. They are "life-enhancing goods that are unavailable to someone who is willing to replace them with cheaper alternatives that are no worse for him. Secondly, they are requirement-grounding: it is absurd to deny that someone who could easily help another person to avoid or restore the loss of such goods can be morally required to do so". 22 Friendship is a commitment good, and may not be traded away, even if cheaper alternatives would be no worse. If people were ready to replace friends like this, those relationships would not contain the kind of commitment that is needed for their health. We spoke of this in the decisions of utilitarianism.

Cullity's theory does not seem to require impartiality at all like the optimizing or the collective principle of beneficence do. Permission to be partial towards oneself is protected by the permissibility of living a NAF-life, and partiality towards friends is protected by the permissibility of preserving commitment goods. Even if Cullity doesn't have an explicit clause on how one should try to maximize the good until the criteria are reached, the implicit implication is that impartiality is encouraged until they are. Calculation would not, though, be allowed to impair an agent's life like it did for the optimizing principle. Cullity's theory sets moderately high demands, but not beyond reason. When the cheaper options have to be prioritized, there is likely a significant amount of money remaining that can be donated to charity. You could still spend money on worthwhile personal projects if they had requirement-grounding value for you. A compliers life is confined to this extent. If there is a risk of total equality, the problems of it – lack of motivation, suppression of personal development and the collapse of society – will not occur, because of the permissibility of having requirement-grounding goods, it will still be reasonable to develop a talent, or set and strive for material goals.

22 Ibid. p. 156
The Limit

I can quickly see two problems with Cullity's principle. First, the principle is not practically translatable; because of the impossibility of interpersonal subjective comparisons it is not possible to fully follow this principle in real life. You can't measure if something is requirement-grounding. The property that Cullity's principle lacks is that it could not work in reality, as it is presently designed. The purpose of Cullity's theory is to present a way in which the world could be made better, and to determine how much personal spending would be morally permissible. Theoretically he does succeed to answer these questions, but I am bothered with the practical issues. Cullity's principle would not in reality fulfill its own purpose. That is because what is requirement-grounding can't be measured. If it can't be measured, who would know what would count as requirement-grounding? If people don't know that, they can't either know how much they are allowed to spend on their own activities or how much they are supposed to donate to charity. It could not be up to themselves, because they would surely value their own activities so highly so that very little or no help at all would be given, and that is not what Cullity intends. If the agents were completely honest, and they could measure from some common objective chart, it might have worked as Cullity had intended. I don't count on people being that honest, however. If Cullity's principle is to determine how much people are allowed to spend on themselves, we need some concrete and/or measurable way to determine what is requirement-grounding.

Principles of beneficence are made up because we should respond to the need of those who suffer, are poor, are starving, and in general have bad conditions for well-being in their lives. If we assume that well-being is an intrinsic good, since it is good in itself, then people having low well-being is itself a reason to help them. If people having low well-being wasn't a problem, then principles of beneficence would not come to exist. Theories on how much the affluent should do for the poor would not be written if not increasing the well-being of the poor was of interest. So I say, that every principle of beneficence's implicit, perhaps unaware of, goal is to raise well-being. I wonder then, when the author of a principle of beneficence stops being interested in increasing well-being, or does not find the urge to increase it as urgent. Cullity does provide an answer to this, but I am not pleased with it. That is my second problem with Cullity's principle. He says that it is okay to stop helping when "there are no longer any lives to be saved", which could make up a limit that when reached people no longer need help, we'll call it a "down-up limit". 23 So according to Cullity, when a receiver of helps life no longer is in danger, he no longer is entitled to help. But to

me, a down-up limit needs a wider definition. My belief is that life itself doesn't carry value, it is what it contains that gives it value, and well-being is top ranked in those things, if not the only important one. One life with well-being is better than two lives without well-being. So just being out of danger of death should not be the sole content of a down-up limit. Further, since principles of beneficence are mainly concerned with well-being, it should not be satisfied only when lives are saved, but rather when a certain level of well-being is reached. A principle of beneficence needs a limit defined in terms of well-being. One could propose a fixed level of well-being that helpers need to raise the helped up to. But it is difficult and impractical to try measuring someone’s well-being, it's hard to know when the limit is reached. So a limit should contain measurable and concrete elements. This is not, though, the main concern with a fixed level of well-being. Having the aim of helping people up to a certain level of well-being does not specifically say that it is more important to solve the problem than to dampen its symptoms. This could mean that a helper perpetually could spend energy raising well-being in others, by dampening the source of the sufferings symptoms, while it could be possible to give them means to control their own well-being, by eradicating the problem. Example: Giving a starving person food, and food again, while nothing is made to stop what is causing the starvation. If helping in this manner was the norm, we could end up with the same lack of motivation we did in total equality: as long as people are entitled to that level of well-being, they can just wait for help to come, wait for someone to give them food. People need to be responsible for their own well-being. What we can do, is to create conditions for this. So the limit should consist of circumstances where individuals have access to what gives well-being in life: fundamental well-being generators, like autonomy and close relationships. And I use the word 'access' because if someone ends up with extremely low level of well-being as a result of option luck, others should not be responsible for it if he could himself have prevented it, but the access, or in other words 'circumstances', to higher levels of well-being should still stand so he can pull himself up again. And, again, if people knew that they would get help if they were under a certain limit of only well-being, they could just wait to get helped up to it. No, all that is given is access to what gives well-being, not well-being itself.

To enjoy well-being one must be able to live, so the limit also includes enabling of fulfillment of basic needs, such as food and water. If people are starving because they can't grow their own food, giving them food is not a sustainable solution, maybe they need help finding a new place to live, or they need help creating arable soil. Giving food should be the solution only in temporary catastrophes which occur not because of an underlying problem. Because if it was caused by an underlying problem, most, if not all, resources should go to solving that problem. The limit should be, and is at the same time implying that the type of help to be given is to create,
circumstances where people have reasonable influence over their own well-being, where they have access to fundamental well-being generators (like autonomy and friendship) and fulfillment of basic needs. Examples of such circumstances could be stable democratic states, free education, and gender equality. Peter Singer suggests a further condition that could be a feature of the limit—population control. If the problem is that there is an imbalanced ratio between supply of food and people who need food, we should try focusing our efforts to stop population growth. "Another, more serious reason for not giving to famine relief funds is that until there is effective population control, relieving famine merely postpones starvation", Singer says, and I am willing to agree. Population control is also advantageous in that a big population destroys the environment and it would therefore be a good idea not to allow population growth get out of hand. The limit, as we shall see, works both as an up-down limit that sets a limit to how great demands a principle of beneficence make, and a down-up limit to where receivers of help reasonably should be helped.

**The Merged Principle of Beneficence**

Principles of beneficence that set an up-down limit, like Cullity, is called limited principles of beneficence, and Murphy questions the idea of them. If there is a fixed limit to demands, then the demands don't rise or sink when needs do. Murphy means that a principle of beneficence should take in account the amount of good that needs to be done. If there was a limit to demands, and there is a great catastrophe which calls upon the industrial west to donate much of their wealth over an extended period of time to prevent millions from dying, shouldn't this increase the demands of beneficence? Murphy believes so. That's why he propose that helpers share the burden of the good to be done, no matter how much it is. I believe, though, that there is one good reason to set a limit, but not just any limit, it must be the limit I earlier proposed. People need not help more if they risk losing the circumstances in which they have reasonable influence over their own well-being: losing a fundamental well-being generator or fulfillment of basic needs. Being out of such circumstances will likely generate low well-being. Such circumstances could be war, famine or anything else that separates the agent from fundamental well-being generators or the fulfillment of basic needs. Why this is an excuse for an agent not to help anyone else is that it is likely to be a worthless trade of

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24 I have to say 'reasonable' amount of influence because it is impossible to have a complete control over one's well-being. Reasonable, to me in this context, means having options in life and being out of danger.
26 Liam B Murphy, Moral Demands in Nonideal Theory, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 67
well-being. It is no point to give up the well-being of one individual so that another can have it. As a believer of well-being as the most important, if not the only, intrinsic good, saving a life at the cost of the well-being of another is pointless. In fact, this kind of limit could have, backed by this reasoning, increased the plausibility of Murphy’s collective principle. Imagine again the rich country in a world of poverty, if the demands were so high that, even if the burden of helping was fair shared, all complying agents would become miserable. To exempt some lives from being miserable, this limit could kick in. It is not worth falling below the limit to have others increase a bit in well-being, but not enough to come above the limit, because if they still don't have access to fundamental well-being generators or fulfillment of basic needs or have influence over their lives, they can't live happy lives. And several lives without happiness is not as valuable as one life with happiness. If the help eased the poverty a little but didn't bring the receivers of help up to the limit and the effort of helping would be perpetual without making any sustainable difference, then giving no help at all could be excused. As we said in talking about the limit, if circumstances cannot be made for those who need help getting reasonable influence over their own well-being, trying to get there is a waste of time, and the energy spent on helping is better spent on increasing the well-being of those who do have reasonable influence over their own well-being.

Now, I have added to or modified the principles of Cullity and Murphy enough to give us a new principle. The base of the new principle is a merging of the ideas of Murphy and Cullity and shall therefore be called The Merged Principle of Beneficence. The merged principle of beneficence consists of:

- the idea of fair share (derived from Murphy)
- a calculation of what one's fair share is
- a limit to demands (up-down limit, derived from Cullity)
- a definition on when help no longer is needed (down-up limit)

The up-down limit, and the down-up limit, is also merged and becomes only 'the limit'. This is what the merged principle says:

You should help, either as much as you would have done in a world where everybody above the limit helped proportionally distributed after wealth until the whole population of the world was above the limit, or, until you, if you helped any more, would end up below the limit.
For the sake of global total well-being, the law of diminishing marginal value applies here, one needs to give help to what improves the situation of the worst-off. Everyone should be able to fulfill their basic needs and have access to fundamental well-being generators, in other words, for the sake of well-being, everyone should be above the limit. "Help" is donating money or doing other kind of work focused on helping those under the limit to get above it.

Having to skip a meal is not an excuse not to participate in the collective action of help. If there is temporary great need, one would not be excused for not helping their fair share if they would have to skip a meal, if they can eat later. That would not count as losing a fulfillment of a basic need. It would be different if, somehow, a farmer would have to donate his whole field of potatoes immediately, and that field of potatoes was the farmers only source of food. That would excuse the farmer from doing that particular thing, even if the farmer has not done his fair share yet. This also accounts for well-being generators. One ought to help, even though circumstances are such that the helper misses an appointment with a friend, if not missing that appointment would erase all hope of ever having friends again. It would be different if the needs were so great that the helper, in doing his fair share, missed all appointments and starting to become someone his friends could not trust, so he starts losing his friends. This would excuse the helper from stopping in helping, even though he has not done his fair share. If one still can fulfill his basic needs, and still have access to fundamental well-being generators, one ought to help, but is excused in stop helping when he has reached his fair share or the limit.

Like, Cullity and Murphy’s principles, impartiality is also encouraged in the merged principle, but as in Cullity's principle, complying agents are protected from suffering the impairments of impartiality. One does not have to be impartial anymore, if it causes one to end up under the limit, meaning losing a fundamental well-being generator or the ability to fulfill a basic need. The merged principle of beneficence does not have the same problems, neither during full or partial compliance, with impartiality as the optimizing principle did, which during full compliance generated a cold, calculating humanity, and under partial compliance led to individual misery. The merged principle place the least demand on its agent of all of the principles we have worked through. The demands will not give the complier the unreasonable burden as the optimizing principle did, this makes room for the complier to have life prospects. The merged principle will not under full compliance lead to total equality because of the fair share distributes burdens in a fair manner, rather than equal manner, and does not provide unnecessary hinders for people developing talents. The aim of increasing well-being in the world remains while the principle avoids the pitfalls of utilitarianism.
**Well-being and levels of compliance**

A reason why we should act according to principles of beneficence is because well-being matters. And it seems that each principle of beneficence implicit goal is to raise well-being. If well-being is a good thing, it will be good to have as much of it as possible.\(^{27}\) Hence, this gives us reason to evaluate principles of beneficence after how much well-being they generate. How much well-being a principle generates depends on the level of compliance with the principle, we shall now reason our way through different levels of compliance to the correct level to try principles against.

If everybody pitched in and cooperated, then there would be no world problems, or at least, there would be no such problems that principles of beneficence provide a solution to. That's why philosophers working on principles of beneficence take interest in solving the problems of partial compliance. It's not hard to create a wonderful world of one's own rules if everybody in it complied with the rules. "Everybody needs to be kind", ok, all problems solved. If everybody was kind, then there would be no need to create principles of beneficence. There are more and harder moral difficulties during partial compliance, and it's from there that the debate surrounding the principles of beneficence come from, because we wouldn't have a problem of lack of beneficence if the lack of compliance was not disturbing. Even though Murphy does not specify neither an up-down limit or a down-up limit, the world of full compliance with his principle ought to be better than the one we live in now, as long as the limit is not total equality. Cullity's principle will also surely make a much better world under full compliance than now, even though one does not need help anymore if the life is out of danger, and even though this does not specify the best and most sustainable method of help. The only principle that does not hold out during full compliance is the optimizing principle. That is because it demands impartiality, so everyone is more or less detached from their emotional life, the high demands reduces their life prospects, and helping people to the point of marginal utility leads to total equality, which may reduce motivations and cause the collapse of society. The principle that seems to be most stable under full compliance is the merged principle, that is mostly because of the added practicality and the added limit. The merged principle is easiest to carry out – the government makes the calculations, and the limit specify how much, and what kind of help one should give, and how much help one should receive. And the purpose of it is to create a stable world where everyone has reasonable influence over their own well-being, and everybody has

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\(^{27}\) I don't believe that well-being is something you can have too much of, unlike other things we enjoy, like candy, which make us feel ill if we ingest too much of it.
access to fundamental well-being generators and fulfillment of basic needs, which is what would happen in full compliance.

Now, partial compliance, that's another story. Partial compliance is when not everybody is complying with the moral theory in question. It is any level of compliance between just one complier and everyone minus one. In speaking of partial compliance, most philosophers assume that very few will do what it takes to follow the principles of beneficence, that's why issues of high demands and impartiality are given extra attention. But what is the correct level of partial compliance for principles of beneficence? We can't use full compliance in evaluating expected well-being, philosophers did not design their principles with the assumptions that everyone would comply, then everything would have worked out fine, then the principles would have looked different. Full compliance is not either something we reasonably can expect. We should assert a level of partial compliance that all principles reasonably and independently can stand in relation to, neutrally and fair, in a way that does not take part for any of the principles. A level of compliance that all principles can be tried against in a fair manner.

What if we had all principles get ten compliers each? The optimizing principle would be sure to generate most total well-being of our four principles, then maybe Cullity's theory would come as a far behind second place, while third place would be split by the collective and the merged principle, because a down-up limit would never be reached. However, a fixed number of compliers to use as a base for evaluating expected well-being is not realistic. The question at hand is which principle it would be best to spread the word about, best to promote, best to try getting others to follow, for anyone wanting to increase well-being in the real world. What we are now going to do is to evaluate the choice of principle; expectations on how many we'll get on board for each principle, and how much well-being each person on board would generate, are important parts of this evaluation. If we were to choose a principle to promote based on well-being generated by a fixed number of compliers, the actual result of a promotion of that principle would not reflect our hopes. I think that it is clear that we should base our expectations, on how much well-being a principle of beneficence would generate, on the level of compliance that would occur in the real world after an actual promotion, for each principle. Each principle will therefore have their own number of expected compliers, that number will be multiplied by how much good the principle instructs its agents to do.

How can we work out how many followers a principle of beneficence will have? That question may be best answered by social scientists or psychologists or whatever, but there are two phenomenon that will affect the level of compliance that I think we can agree on from an amateurish standpoint. First, humans are in some sense egoistic and tend to prioritize their own
interests much higher than that of others. This is a well-recognized actuality, and from it, we can presume that higher demands will deter potential compliers to a greater measure than lower demands. Secondly, but not as evident, peer pressure may have an effect. Humans are social beings and being part of a group is important for us. It may be so that it is easier to join a group the larger the group is (which would reflect a higher social acceptance), and oppositely, harder to join smaller, less popular groups. Together these two factors give reason to believe that principles with lower demands will attract more followers on an escalating trajectory – the group with most members will grow further boosted by its own size. We can expect then, that the optimizing principle will have fewest followers since it's the principle with the highest demands, Cullity's will have more followers. It could be a tie between our two fair share views, but since the merged principle has an up-down limit as an insurance for compliers that they will not suffer greater than that, which the collective principle doesn't have, the merged principle will be assumed to attract the most followers. We can, unfortunately, only speculate how many followers each principle would recruit by being preached by someone who wants to increase the well-being in the world, but larger numbers of expected followers a principle gets speak favour for it in the evaluation of the choice of what principle to chose to promote.

Perhaps the principles would generate the same amount of total well-being. The few compliers of the optimizing principles who does a lot of good could match the many compliers of the merged principle who does less good. Then as far as well-being is concerned, they would be as good as each other. There are two further important ways of judging principles of beneficence, moral plausibility, and practicality. What I have said in this essay is that the optimizing principle carries least moral plausibility and practicality of our four principles. The merged principle is most practical and easiest to carry out on a global scale, and will hopefully generate most well-being if promoted in such manner.

**Summary**

We began this project by examining the consequences of the biggest principle of beneficence of them all – utilitarianism, which explicit goal is to maximize well-being. We wanted to see what a principle of beneficence need to think about, how they need to work in certain ways and what problems they need to avoid. Principles of beneficence needs to attend to the issues of high demand (levels of compliance), impartiality, total equality, and practicality (to be applicable to the real
world), and still not lose their focus on that it is well-being that is important and that it is good to raise it as much as possible. The principle of utilitarianism – the optimizing principle of beneficence – would surely raise well-being most of our four principles under a fixed level of partial compliance. But the demands of the optimizing principle renders the complying agents, and their near and dear to some degree, alone and miserable. Important aspects of life, like autonomy and close relationships, are omitted for the compliers. This would in reality attract very few followers and thereby not produce a significant amount of well-being. We are correct to judge principles of beneficence after their ability to produce well-being when applied to the real world, because each principles implicit goal really is to raise well-being. Under full compliance, the optimizing principle of beneficence would end up in total equality, which was not a good thing. The outcome of full compliance with Murphy’s collective principle or Cullity's principle would probably be wonderful, close to flawless, worlds of respect, cooperation, and solidarity. Unfortunately, we are humans, so full compliance is not going to happen. We should continue to evaluate the principles on the effects of their expected level of compliance.

The practical answers of how much one's fair share really is are left out by Murphy, and it is impossible in Cullity's theory to measure what is requirement-grounding, and they both lack a point where entitlement to get help ends, all these missing puzzle pieces are filled by what the merged principle consists of. It does have a calculation on what one's fair share is, it does contain a limit to where entitlement to get help ends, the limit also contains concrete components on when people are able to have well-being in life, and the fair share idea together with an up-down limit attracts more followers which probably will have the merged principle generate more total well-being in reality than its rivals – all this makes the merged principle the best choice in practice.

The reason principles of beneficence exist at all and why we should help other people is because well-being matters. The most effective way to increase well-being is to direct what generates well-being (help in the form of what the limit consists of) to where it can be used most effectively to generate well-being (among those who are under the limit). These are the reasons they who are above the limit should help those who are under the limit. The reason why it should not be required to help more if one ends up under the limit (losing a fundamental well-being generator or the fulfillment of a basic need) is because the limit contains what is necessary for well-being, and trading that position away for someone else is pointless. It's like trading an apple for another equally fine apple. A reason to why a helper only has to do her fair share, and not more, is that it allows for reason and motivation to work, since she always can keep a proportion of her wealth. Setting a cap on how much wealth one can have diminishes reasons to work. But there are also practical reasons for fair share; first, it is measurable, unlike limited principles of beneficence, like Cullity's, who has
no means of determining when and what is enough. Second, a sense of global fairness of a global project in beneficence and a substantial belief of the complier that doing the fair share is the correct level of demand, would attract more followers. Even if the demands are lower, the expected greater number of followers the merged principle attracts, compared to the competing principles, speaks in favour of it in the evaluation of the choice of principles of beneficence, which take into account how much actual well-being we can expect a principle to produce, if in reality promoted.