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The limits of consequentialism:
An experimental approach

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The Limits of Consequentialism: an Experimental Approach[*]

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Abstract: In a series of influential papers, Samuel Scheffler argues in favour of an agent-centred prerogative that limits the demands of consequentialism while defending the personal standpoint. More recently, Tim Mulgan has proposed another prerogative as part of a comprehensive consequentialist theory which attempts to deal adequately with some of the problems of Scheffler's hybrid theory. In both cases, prerogatives are held to be grounded in intuitions or considered moral judgements. But is this really so? In this article we perform two economic experiments using a dictator game in which individuals must make a moral decision – to give or not to give an amount of money to poor people in the Third World. A questionnaire in which the subjects are asked about the reasons for their decision shows that, at least in this case, the prerogatives appear to form part of individuals' moral decisions. The dictator game provides a useful tool to deal with the narrow reflective equilibrium model; a model which deserves greater interest than it has thus far been given. Experimental economics can be of great utility in approaching the moral intuitions of people.

Keywords: Agent-centred prerogative, dictator game, hybrid theory, reflective equilibrium

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1. Introduction

Over the last two decades we have witnessed an intense and complex debate regarding the nature and limits of consequentialism. Although there are many ways of understanding consequentialism, the debate has primarily focused on the more general and commonly accepted definition of act-consequentialism. According to this standpoint, an act is morally right if it produces the best overall outcome from an impersonal point of view. From a personal viewpoint, however, these demands can be unreasonable, as they oblige us to reject both the obligations we supposedly have towards those closest to us (*my* children, *my* parents, *my* friends) as well as our life plans and projects. In other words, a consequentialist view of what is morally right seems to exclude the duties and autonomy of individuals, that is, agent-relative values. By demanding the maximization of impersonal values, consequentialism appears to impose unlimited moral sacrifices upon individuals, thus violating their moral integrity.

Samuel Scheffler, whose work is central to the recent debate[1], argues that it is difficult to deal with these problems by rejecting consequentialism in favour of a deontological theory. In Scheffler's opinion, it is much more plausible to explain and defend an agent-centred prerogative that permits individuals to attend to their own interests and personal commitments. Scheffler proposes a *hybrid theory* that seeks an equilibrium between agent-neutral values and agent-relative values. The prerogative would be coherent with the common sense morality[2] that accommodates people's personal plans.

Yet, is it true that a hybrid view accommodates the moral intuitions of individuals better than consequentialism? Does common sense morality embody a sort of agent-centred prerogative or safeguard the personal standpoint in another way? From a methodological viewpoint, defenders and critics of consequentialism alike appeal to the intuitions or considered moral judgements of people to support their respective views. With this aim, they commonly resort to hypothetical examples in their moral arguments to prompt readers to set their own moral intuitions in motion and contrast

them with the theory that the author in question attempts to defend.[3]   In this paper, we will attempt to adopt a different focus. We analyze the results of two *economic experiments* that were carried out in order to ascertain if individuals adopt a clearly consequentialist moral stance or if instead they reach some sort of equilibrium between neutral values and agent-relative values. In other words, we have designed an economic experiment that attempts to put consequentialism to the test of moral intuitions in order to discover whether these intuitions support consequentialism or more closely resemble a hybrid moral theory.

To the best of our knowledge, economic experiments are not commonly used in ethical theory.[4] By using this method we attempt, on the one hand, to follow Darwall, Gibbard and Railton's recommendation that ethical theory be increasingly grounded in sound empirical investigation. On the other hand, we hope to fulfil the need for consequentialism to tell, in Frank Jackson's words, "a story in terms of what is in the agent´s mind at the time of action"[5]; a task that proves impossible in the hypothetical examples commonly used in ethics, but not in economic experiments. The reason for this is that economic experiments permit us to deal with the idea of narrow reflective equilibrium. When using experimental economics to approach an ethical question, we do not attempt to oblige the subject to consider diverse theories and arguments in order to confirm their force – which according to Rawls would lead us to a wide reflective equilibrium – but rather to analyse whether "general convictions, first principles, and particular judgements are in line" with the least number of revisions.[6] By using economic experiments we will attempt to defend the utility of the narrow reflective equilibrium in ethics.

The article is structured as follows. A debate on the need to limit the unreasonable demands of consequentialism by means of distinct agent-centred prerogatives is presented in the next section. This debate, which we will submit to the judgement of moral intuitions, will provide us with guidelines as to how to design our economic experiment. In our opinion, the best way to create a context in which individuals make use of their moral intuitions to confirm if they are in narrow reflective equilibrium with consequentialist principles or with some type of prerogative is to design a version of what is known as the *Dictator Game (DG)*. In the third section, the game is presented and a hypothesis developed regarding dictators' behaviour in the context of what we call a moral DG. The forth section includes the design and results of our moral

experiments with the DG. The article then concludes with a methodological *excursus* on the relationship between the Dictator Game and the reflective equilibrium method.

2. Two agent-centred prerogatives

In his work *The Rejection of Consequentialism*, Samuel Scheffler's express aim is to propose a hybrid moral theory that frees individuals (*liberation strategy*) from the obligation to always maximize the impersonal good in order for his moral action to be considered right. This theory accommodates agent-relative values through a prerogative that permits agents "to devote energy and attention to his projects and commitments out of proportion to their weight in the impersonal calculus".[7] In its most precise version, Scheffler's agent-centred prerogative affirms the following:

"Suppose...that each agent were allowed to give M times more weight to his own interests than to the interests of anyone else. This would mean that an agent was permitted to perform his preferred act (call it P), provided that there was no alternative A open to him, such that (1) A would produce a better overall outcome than P, as judged from an impersonal standpoint which gives equal weight to everyone's interests, and (2) the total net loss to others of his doing P rather than A was more than M times as great as the net loss to him of doing A rather than P."[8]

The prerogative does not give individuals a carte blanche to pursue their non-optimal projects at any time – it is not a defence of egoism. This is not a protected zone in which people can do as they please. According to Scheffler, this is the best way - a way which is compatible with the moral intuitions of individuals - for the moral theory to guarantee the independence of the personal standpoint; an independence that consequentialism undermines. The alternative views do not achieve this objective with the same efficiency. On the one hand, what Scheffler calls the *maximization strategy* pursues that the greatest possible number of people are able to carry out their plans and projects, but this means excluding many others who cannot carry out theirs. On the other hand, given its paradoxical nature, it is more difficult to justify deontological restrictions than the agent-centred prerogative.[9]

Scheffler's hybrid theory has been widely analysed and criticised. As regards the question that is of interest to us here, that is, if people's moral intuitions support the prerogatives, we will focus on two of these objections. The first, Kagan's allowing/doing objection, is widely known and has been largely debated. It can be summed up as follows: common sense morality distinguishes between allowing harm or doing harm, while Scheffler's prerogative weakens this distinction. Thus it cannot form part of common sense morality. According to Kagan, we can deduce from Scheffler's theory that is permissible for a person to allow someone else to suffer an n-sized harm if it means saving a q-sized cost. Hence, *ceteris paribus*, it will be permissible for that person to cause harm directly to another if by doing so cost q is avoided. The agent-centred prerogative not only says nothing about the type of personal projects that people can pursue – there are no deontological restrictions that limit them – but does not differentiate between the diverse forms – morally legitimate or not – of pursuing those projects.[10]

Secondly, the fact that Scheffler's prerogative is proportional – the cost exacted to a person is proportional to the amount of good that his action produces – poses two problems. First, the prerogative continues to be almost as demanding as consequentialism (Mulgan's Demandingness Objection)[11] given that the agents would have to bear high personal costs if the impersonal good that their maximizing A action produces is so great that it far exceeds the personal benefits of the preferred action P. Thus, the personal standpoint is in peril once again; precisely that which Scheffler attempts to safeguard at all costs. Furthermore, when choosing between A and P, the agent's moral obligation will vary in a decisive manner depending on irrelevant empirical information (Mulgan's Wrong Facts Objection). The following hypothetical example given by Tim Mulgan serves to clarify this point and will be of great use to us later.[12] Let us suppose that Affluent, a wealthy person in the developed world, wants to donate part of her money to Oxfam instead of donating it to a local theatre company but she does not know if the organization will be capable of using the money efficiently. Affluent only knows that the three following cases can occur: i) Oxfam's efficiency, that is, the productivity achieved from every dollar invested to reduce hunger has decline to 10 per cent with respect to its normal level so that now each dollar spent produces only one-tenth of what it previously produced; ii) Oxfam's efficiency has remained the same; iii) Oxfam's efficiency has improved tenfold. According to Scheffler's hybrid view, Affluent would have to donate ten times more to the super-

efficient Oxfam than to the normal Oxfam, and ten times less to the inefficient Oxfam. If Oxfam is inefficient, Scheffler's prerogative permits Affluent to make less sacrifices, meaning that she will be able to pursue a greater number of non-optimal projects (for example, she could spend more money on travelling) than if Oxfam were efficient. As Mulgan rightly points out, moral obligation cannot vary so radically according to empirical facts.[13]   To avoid the Wrong Facts Objection, Mulgan proposes a non-proportional agent-centred prerogative based on an M variable – where M is the weight that the agent can assign to her non-optimal interests as compared to the impersonal value. This M will be "indexed to both the goal the agent was pursuing and her level of well-being".[14] Mulgan divides a person's well-being into needs and goals. In the Realm of Necessity, act-consequentialism would be the appropriate moral criterion since needs "are not optional, discretionary, or community dependent, unlike goal-based claims".[15] In the Realm of Reciprocity - the realm in which interaction between individuals who pursue different goals is governed – rule-consequentialism would be the right moral conception. In this realm a series of rules are needed (non-interference, autonomy, moderate demands…), "to facilitate the pursuit of goals" and the agents "must be provided with some range of pursuable goals, but no particular set of goals is required".[16] To balance these two realms an agent-centred prerogative must be subjected to three types of constraints: not all goals are permitted (range constraint), the ways agents pursue their goals are restricted (method constraint) and the weight they can attach to their interests with regard to the overall good is limited (weight constraint).[17] Mulgan´s non-proportional agent-centred prerogative balances impersonal reasons to promote the impersonal good (value-based reasons) and the costs exacted to the agent (cost-based reasons):

"**The non-proportional ACP [Agent-centred prerogative]**. An act x is permissible if and only if for any other act available to the agent (call it y) the weight cost the agent would have borne if she had performed y instead of x is GREATER than the agent´s value-based reason to do y rather than x"[18]

Regardless of the problems that this may pose, it is clear that this prerogative, which is indexed to the individual's level of well-being and the goals she pursues, does not demand unnecessary sacrifices from the agents (unlike Scheffler's) based on irrelevant empirical information. Mulgan's Combined Consequentialism – act and rule-consequentialism and prerogative- seems therefore to safeguard the personal point of

view without lapsing into the Demandingness Objection.[19] Now, is Mulgan´s non-proportional ACP closer to the agent´s moral intuitions than Scheffler´s agent-centred prerogative?

3. **Moral distance and the dictator game**

Tim Mulgan's moral intuitions, his considered moral judgements, are expressed clearly in his book *The Demands of Consequentialism* in a serious attempt to seek a wide reflective equilibrium between consequentialist moral principles, moral intuitions and background theories. But what are Affluent's moral intuitions? What crosses Affluent's mind when she makes the decision? Rawls refers to the moral theorist as an observer "who seeks to set out the structure of other people´s moral conceptions and attitudes", including himself in the observation.[20] But that structure is difficult to construe in a direct way. The role of the hypothetical example of Affluent serves precisely to clarify *our* intuitions.[21] The scope of this "our", however, is very limited as it only refers to the readers of Mulgan's book in this case. Could we not instead try to approach Affluent's moral intuitions – that is, the people that surround us – in a direct way? If this were possible, we would be able to confirm if common sense morality accommodates agent-centred prerogatives in some manner, be they proportional or not. And we could confirm if those prerogatives are constrained by the level of well-being and personal goals. In other words, we could confirm if Scheffler's or Mulgan's proposal to limit the demands of consequentialism by means of a prerogative are, *at least*, in narrow reflective equilibrium with people's moral intuitions. In case they are not in narrow equilibrium, we must determine what this disequilibrium implies.

Let us suppose that Affluent decides all alone in her bedroom how much she should give Oxfam, but does not know whether or not Oxfam is efficient. Let us also assume that no one knows- not even the Oxfam administrators – that it is she who has made the donation. Affluent donates the money anonymously so that her decision is purely moral and not influenced by extra-moral factors (i.e. to make a good impression on her friends, the community, etc.) In this case the decision that Affluent must make and the passive situation of the recipient (Oxfam) permits us to establish structural similarities between Mulgan's hypothetical example – and other similar examples in the literature

on consequentialism – and what is known in the field of experimental economics as the Dictator Game (DG).[22]

In standard DG experiments, dictators are given an envelope containing 10 one-dollar bills and read a series of instructions in which they are told that the amount of money has been assigned to their partner (the recipient) and to them, but that they are the only ones who can divide the money as they see fit (hence the name "dictator"). In this situation there exist at least three sources or different types of information which are relevant to the decision: i) information provided by the dictator himself, that is, the possibility that his decision be observed by others or not; ii) information the dictator receives about the recipient and iii) information gained from the specific language used in the instructions and the decision frame. It has been demonstrated that depending on the type of information provided, the outcome of the DG can vary enormously. Thus, in the first case, when the dictator can act under conditions of absolute privacy and anonymity, in other words, when no one knows whether the dictator has given money or not, hardly anyone donates anything – voluntary contributions tend to be low, around 10% of the pie on average. Indeed, Hoffman, McCabe and Smith have shown that as anonymity diminishes, the offers or donations increase. In their view, this is due to the fact that anonymity produces "social distance"; a concept they define as "the degree of reciprocity that subjects believe exists within a social interaction".[23] Social isolation that results in anonymity and the lack of a sense of community give rise to self-interested behaviour.

However, when the dictator receives reliable information regarding the recipient, even when anonymity is maintained, donations also increase. When the dictator receives no information about the recipient, he may have doubts as to the recipient's existence, and therefore have no reason to give the money. In contrast, if dictators are shown pictures of the recipients, 25% give as much as half of the total amount, although 58% still keep all the money. If the dictators are told that their donation will go to the Red Cross, 31% give part of the money (17% give half the amount) and 10% give the full amount. Offers also increase when dictators are told the recipient's surname, if the dictator is given proof that the recipient really exists or if they are told that the recipient is a fellow classmate. If the dictator reveals his conduct, that is, if the conditions of anonymity are relaxed, or if he has information about the recipients, donations will be

higher, although the full amount will never be donated – except in the case of the Red Cross.[24] The results of our experiments are shown in Table 1 below.[25]

TABLE 1: DONATIONS MADE IN VARIOUS EXPERIMENTS WITH AND WITHOUT INFORMATION ABOUT THE RECIPIENT

| | DATA KNOWN ABOUT RECIPIENT | MONEY | DONATION | | |
			NOTHING	≥50%	TOTAL AMOUNT
HMS-96	----	10*1$	63,8%	8,0%	0,0%
EG-96	RED CROSS	10*1$	27,0%	31,2%	10,0%
CG-01	SURNAME	100 PT.*	26,0%	43,0%	0%
FOM1-01	CLASSMATE	10*1$	35,2%	41,1%	5%
FOM2-01	EXISTENCE KNOWN	10*1$	47,3%	26,3%	0%
B-03	PHOTO	10*1$	58,3%	25,5%	0%

 * PT. = points.

It is true that unlike the hypothetical examples used in ethics, the DG experiments are not designed to detect the moral intuitions behind the decision to donate all or part of the amount or not to donate. Even the most widely-cited experiments in economic literature are not intended to confirm if intuitions and morals theories are in narrow reflective equilibrium. However, the structure of the DG (which is similar to that of Mulgan's hypothetical example) and the fact that when the dictator has information about the recipients donations increase, facilitates the use of this type of experimental game in ethics. More specifically to the case which interests us here, the DG can serve to confirm if the moral agents limit to some extent the maximization of neutral values by means of an agent-centred prerogative. In other words, the DG is the tool that will allow us to ascertain here if a hybrid theory is, at least, in narrow reflective equilibrium.

With this aim, and before turning to the experiment we have specifically designed, let us propose the following hypothesis. *The smaller the moral distance between the dictator and the recipients, the larger the donations and the greater the number of dictators that will give money.* Drawing on Hoffman, McCabe and Smith's concept of social distance, we define moral distance as the dictator's degree of moral obligation towards the recipient.[26] If we design the experimental situation in such a way as to affirm that donating is the morally right option under any moral conception (consequentialist, deontological or hybrid), the moral distance between the dictator and the recipient will be null and the dictator *ought to* donate all or part of the money, depending, of course, on how the experiment is designed. The moral distance between the dictator and the recipient is null, then, when any moral conception, be it deontological, consequentialist or hybrid, converge in the outcome, that is, it prescribes that the dictator should choose "to donate". In a situation such as this one, the dictator has the actual obligation to donate since it "is an obligation which, in a particular situation, is not superseded by any other obligation."[27]

If the situation is such that donating cannot be said to be the morally right action, moral distance will be maximum. Or to put it more simply: when moral distance is maximum, it does not matter whether the dictator donates or not from an ethical standpoint – the dictator can act legitimately one way or another without being considered egotistical in the ethical sense. Moral distance will depend on the relevant moral information that the dictator has regarding the recipient's situation (knowing his surname would not always be morally relevant; knowing if he is poor or not would be). Nonetheless, anonymity must be guaranteed in order to rule out the possible influence of reputation. Now, the fact that one ought to donate does not mean, of course, that dictators will do so, just as the absence of a moral obligation to donate does not mean that one cannot give money. For this reason, the freedom that the dictator has to give or not give and the greater or lesser moral distance between the dictator and the recipient permits us to attribute moral motivations to the dictators in the following way:

    a. If the moral distance between the dictator and the recipient is null and the donations are also null or very low, the dictator behaves in a morally egotistical manner.

b. If the moral distance between the dictator and the recipient is maximum and the dictator donates nothing at all, the dictator is a reasonable self-interested individual.

c. If the moral distance between the dictator and the recipient is maximum and the dictator gives part of her money, she performs an act of generosity.

d. If the moral distance between the dictator and the recipient is null and the dictator gives part or all of her money, her behaviour is ethical.

The following table shows DG moral motivations according to the moral distance between the dictator and the recipient.

TABLE 2: DG MORAL MOTIVATIONS

	DONATE	DO NOT DONATE
Maximum Moral Distance	Generosity	Reasonable self-interest
Null Moral Distance	Ethical behaviour	Selfishness

What our hypothesis maintains, then, is that the smaller the moral distance between the dictator and the recipient, the larger the donations and the greater the number of donors. Now, the mere decision to give when moral distance is null does not tell us if the dictator justifies her choice in consequentialist terms of if she has established some sort of prerogative. It only tells us that her moral intuitions *may* be in equilibrium with *some* moral view. In order to know which one, we must expressly ask the "dictators" about the reasons for their decision – about what goes through their minds at the time of action. By asking them directly we will know if they justify their donations in consequentialist terms or in other terms. It is then that we will see if there is some type of prerogative in play.

3. Two Moral Experiments with a Dictator Game: Design and results

To confirm to what degree both the donations and the number of donors increase when the moral distance between the dictator and the recipient is null, it is necessary to design a DG situation in which the moral structure of the problem is clear. Thus the aim is to design a situation in which not donating is the morally wrong action from any moral standpoint.[28] In other words, in order to take advantage of the DG so as to

analyze if a consequentialist-type ethic limited by an agent-centred prerogative is in narrow reflective equilibrium with the moral intuitions of individuals, we must design a DG that structurally resembles the problem faced by Affluent when deciding whether or not to give money to Oxfam. On the one hand, this means, that we must see if the decision made by the individuals corresponds to the maximization of the impersonal value and if this is so, if the individuals consider that they would limit that maximization, in some case, by means of some type of prerogative. In order to do so it is essential to allow individuals to make their decision under conditions of complete anonymity and privacy so as to avoid any bias due to reputation (i.e. to demonstrate before others, albeit without true moral conviction, that one is fulfilling one's moral obligation) or due to imitation (I give because others give and I do not give if they do not give). The objective, then, is that the decision reveal their moral intuitions, and not something else. Furthermore, this requires that the dictators have morally pertinent information about the recipients, in other words, that they are able to identify the moral nature of their decision. Finally, the instructions must prevent dictators from thinking that they are merely playing a game and that their recipients do not actually exist.

4.1 Design and results of the experiments[29]

The first experiment was carried out with 77 students from the University of Córdoba (Spain) in November 2002. Subjects were asked to collaborate in a research study on the problems that arise when trying to distribute non-divisible and finite goods. We avoided using the term "experiment" in order to dispel the possible negative effects of the word. Once the study was explained, the subjects received a large envelope containing the following items: a small envelope, three 5€ bills,[30] a questionnaire, instructions and a sheet with 341 numerical codes; three of which were marked with a circle. In the instructions the students were informed that the 341 codes referred to centres that receive medicines in Asia, Africa and South America, that they had been assigned three of these centres and that for every 5€ they donated, *a box* of medicines would be sent to *one* of "their" three centres. All of the subjects in the experiment had to write the three codes on their small envelope and circle those centres – a maximum of three – to which they allotted the 5€ in medicines. However, the subjects were also told that they had the right to keep 5€ for participating in the research study on the distribution of goods. Logically, if they kept 5€ for themselves, one of the centres

would not receive any medicines (in this case they were told not to mark one of the three centres that had been assigned to them). The procedure was performed under conditions of complete anonymity by means of a double-blind mechanism similar to that described by Hoffman, McCabe and Smith.[31] The questionnaire included questions regarding sex, age, the weekly allowance their parents gave them[32] (none of the experimental subjects – all of whom were university students- had a paying job) and the reasons for their decision.

Using the same instructions and under identical conditions of anonymity a new experiment was performed in March 2003 with 98 students from the University of Jaen (Spain). The subjects were placed in four groups. This experiment was hypothetical as the subjects were not given real money and had to decide how to divide the amount hypothetically by responding to a series of questions. Furthermore, the decision was made under three distinct scenarios which were presented to them in a random manner:

a. In one of the treatments the dictators had no information about the recipient.

b. In another treatment the dictators knew that the three recipients were poor people from the Third World who would receive the money that they decided to give.

c. In the third treatment the subjects knew that the money would be used to buy medicines for poor people in the Third World.

The results of the experiments are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3: TWO MORAL DICTATOR GAME EXPERIMENTS

	HYPOTHETICAL EXPERIMENT			REAL EXPERIMENT
€	No info	Poverty	Poverty +Medicines	Poverty+Medi-cines
15	0	40.8%	68.3%	74.6%
10	0	25.5%	18.3%	12%
5	28.6%	11.2%	5.1%	10.7%
0	71.4%	22.4%	8.1%	2.7%

N	98	98	98	73

4.2 Dictators' arguments to justify their decision

The data from these two experiments speak for themselves. It appears that when the moral nature of the decision problem is clear and moral distance is null, the donations greatly increase in DG contexts. With the exception of the case in which subjects lack information, the aim of the experiment was not to give money to people who do not need it, but to very needy people. Moreover, the needier the people – these are people who are poor and need medicines – the greater the number of subjects who donate the full amount.[33] As revealed in the decision made by the majority of subjects, there appears to be an evident moral obligation to donate. The fact that the subjects do not believe that they are merely playing a game (as attested to in the questionnaires) or think that they are performing an experiment or that the recipient of the money or medicines does not exist, gives force to this conclusion.[34] In such circumstances – when there is clear moral information and credible non-moral information – the morally right action, from any standpoint, is to donate the full amount given that both experiments use a group of Affluents whose well-being is not affected by the donation; a donation which will serve to alleviate the poverty or illness of poor individuals in the Third World.

That this is in fact the case, or in other words, the fact that dictators actually *measure* moral distances, is even more evident when we observe the reasons given by subjects to explain why they gave nothing when lacking information about the recipient and moral distance was therefore greatest. They explained their decision with statements such as "I don't know who is going to get it, they might have more than me", "I might need it for something more important than the recipients", "if I don't have any information about who the money is going to or what it is going to be used for, I won't donate it" or "it could be someone who is richer than me"; statements which were repeated time and again to justify their action. When information about the recipient is lacking, it is perfectly legitimate to give priority to oneself: if the money goes to someone who needs it less than I do, I would be doing an injustice to myself. In short, there is no moral obligation to give anything. Of course this does not exclude generosity, which, as we have seen, was one of the possible reasons for the DG

decision. In our hypothetical experiment, no less than 28.6% of the subjects donated one-third of the money – 5€ – in spite of having no information about the recipient.

All of the DG motivations are present in these two experiments. These include the reasonable self-interest of those who lack information about the recipient and give nothing or the generosity of those who lack information and give part of the money; the ethical conduct of those who give the full amount to others who need it, or the egotistical behaviour of those who keep all or part of the money even when they believe that they can save lives with a very small donation, which in principle does not affect their own well-being.

Yet is the donation perceived as a maximization of the neutral or impersonal value? In other words, is it viewed in strictly consequentialist terms? Or do the subjects compare this maximization to the personal cost incurred to them in the decision or the personal cost that *may have been incurred* under different circumstances? Do they establish some sort of prerogative based on this comparison?

In both experiments the majority of those who give all the money (81%) *always* justify their decision in consequentialist terms; albeit with two distinct types of consequentialism: almost half of those who give all the money (49%) justify their decision in terms of decision-theoretic consequentialism and one-third (32%) justify the reasons for their choice in terms of a neutral or impersonal consequentialism restricted to impersonal values.[35] Neutral consequentialism is clearly presented as the maximization of the impersonal value in statements such as "the more people that have medicines the better" or "the money is going to a good cause". Decision-theoretic consequentialism is demonstrated in the choice of an action that produces the best outcome, including one which will benefit the agent. The experimental subjects manifested this in statements such as "*I'm* not losing anything", "the money isn't *mine*, I didn't earn it", "they need it more than *me*", "it's of more use to them than to *me*", "it's not going to do *me* any good", "it benefits them more than *me*", or "*I* didn't have the money when I came and I still don't". In both cases the majority of the subjects therefore acknowledge that the moral distance with poor individuals who need medicines is null and that they ought to donate the fifteen euros. However, for the decision-theoretic consequentialists this is the case because when ranking the possible outcomes from best to worst (including themselves), they consider that keeping all or part of the money does not benefit them in any way whatsoever.

This decision-theoretic consequentialism, on which half of the subjects who give all the money base their moral intuitions, is not affected by the Demandingness Objection. This is due to the fact that when subjects include themselves in the maximizing exercise, they will always seek the equilibrium between their agent-relative and agent-neutral values when the cost of promoting their neutral values is too high. On the other hand, this consequentialism, which is in narrow reflective equilibrium with the moral intuitions of a large part of the subjects, seems to be sensitive to the allowing/doing distinction. It is true that the subjects will not donate medicines to poor strangers when the cost of giving them affects their own interests. Yet what is understood by interests? These are not just any interests. At no time in either experiment do those who defend decision-theoretic consequentialism - in which agent-relative values and neutral values enter into a single maximizing process- justify their choice in purely egotistical or capricious terms. In light of the answers given on the questionnaires, for those subjects – or dictators- who justify their decision to donate the fifteen euros in terms of a decision-theoretic consequentialism, the maximization of the agent-relative values with respect to the neutral values would only be justified according to their own *basic needs*, *personal merit* and *personal goals.* It is for this reason that they donate the 15 euros here: their "needs are covered", "I didn't earn the money" and "it's not going to do me any good". If one's basic needs are not covered, it would be logical to assume that the maximization of the outcome would mean satisfying those needs. But even when those needs are satisfied, subjects stated on the questionnaires that if they had earned the money legitimately, that is, by their own means, and it had not been given to them freely by strangers, perhaps they would not have donated the full amount since *they were not responsible for the poverty*.

Finally, when the students stated that the money was "not going to do me any good", what they meant was that since the donation was so small, had they chosen to keep it, they would not have been able to pursue their personal projects. In the questionnaires and during the discussion with the students following the experiment (when they were told what the experiment was really all about), many of them assured us that if the amount had been larger – for example, 1500 euros instead of just 15- they would have kept some of it for themselves. If the amount of money in the hands of the dictators were larger, there is a chance (which is implicit in the form of

consequentialism that they defend) that they would devote part of it for their own personal use.

Thus Affluent's moral intuitions - or the moral intuitions of our experimental subjects – seem to be on the most part *consequentially motivated*.[36] However, most subjects that donate the full amount try to optimize the good while taking into account their own needs, the needs of others and their personal goals and establish criteria to determine when they can fulfil these personal goals beyond the impersonal good. This can be understood as a sort of non-proportional prerogative indexed to one's own level of well-being, merits and personal projects. Thus, for a great many of our subjects, common sense morality dictates that their obligation is "a function of the relative weights of both the neutral and the relative values at stake *in a particular choice situation*".[37] Following upon this viewpoint, we can contend, then, that the agent-centred prerogatives are clearly in consonance with common sense morality in our experiments, as Scheffler maintains. However, they are closer to a non-proportional prerogative. In other words, they are closer to Mulgan's combined consequentialism than to Scheffler's hybrid theory. But in any case we can assert that some form of agent-centred prerogative is, *at least*, in narrow reflective equilibrium with peoples' moral intuitions.[38]

4. Methodological excursus: Dictator Game, moral intuitions and reflective equilibrium

Like other economic experiments, the DG can be a useful tool for understanding peoples' moral intuitions. In ethics and moral philosophy it is common to use hypothetical examples and counter-examples to test theories against readers' intuitions or judgements. While hypothetical examples often have the defect that they are forced or removed from peoples' moral reality, they also have the virtue of permitting us to set up very extreme situations; situations which sometimes occur in real life and which put our moral intuitions and the capacity of the theories to respond to these intuitions to the test. Experiments with Dictator Games – or other economic experiments- have the virtue of dealing with real people in decision contexts controlled by experimenters and the defect that some situations are impossible to transfer to the laboratory setting. It would appear, then, that the virtues and defects of hypothetical examples and

experiments complement one another and it is more effective to use them whenever possible. In this section, however, we are not going to compare hypothetical examples to economic experiments as a complementary or alternative, privileged or unprivileged way to access people's moral intuitions. Instead we will focus on something more specifically related to the present article, that is, the value of the DG to approach people's intuitions or considered moral judgements and their possible relationship, as mentioned above, to the reflective equilibrium method.

The Dictator Game was not designed as a way to find out people's moral intuitions, but to test the hypothesis regarding the motivational egoism of economic agents. If we assume that individuals are rational (in the economic sense of the term) and egotistical, game theory predicts that the dictator will never give anything. However, when this game – and not only this one – is brought to the laboratory setting "a surprisingly large amount of other-regarding behaviour is the common finding".[39] Because of this the observation reports which economists use to test their hypotheses - the decisions made by individuals together with objective data such as age, sex, level of income or other similar information- can serve to show if the preferences that dictators reveal in the laboratory are ethical or not, that is, if they converge with the normative prescriptions of one or all moral conceptions. This convergence is still very vague, as we do not know if these preferences converge for moral or other reasons. But that does not impede the DG, even at this superficial level, from providing two types of filters: in a moral context the DG filters both preferences and theories. It filters revealed preferences of dictators who choose not to donate when moral distance is null and it filters theories that recommend that the dictator never donate anything. Game theory, for example, which recommends that the dictator always keep all the money (not donating is a subgame perfect equilibrium in a DG) can be a useful tool in ethical theory, but cannot itself be an ethical theory. In contrast, Scheffler's hybrid theory or Mulgan's Combined Consequentialism would indeed pass that first filter; a filter which is hardly subtle and has nothing to do with reflective equilibrium, but nonetheless continues to be important. Let us not be misled by the lack of subtlety of the filters in a DG with morally relevant information about the partner. Imagine what would happen if no one ever gave anything in the DG experiments. In a game-theoretic world, for example, ethical theories would be useless artefacts. Fortunately, the world isn't like that. In our world, "dictators" measure moral distances, assess their resources and

plans, and they give money. Now, when we have no information other than the preferences revealed in the laboratory it is impossible to know if these preferences, which we have termed ethical in the DG context, respond to moral or non-moral motives (chance, religious motives, whims, tradition, culture, etc.). Thus it is necessary to examine the reasons behind the action.

To overcome this limitation, experimental subjects must be asked directly about the reasons for their decision as we have done here, thus transforming the positive DG into a motivational DG. The questionnaire that was handed out to the subjects of our experiments literally asked them the following: "Could you please tell me the reasons for your decision in the problem posed here?". Asking about the reasons or motives for action in a dictator game can pose some problems in an experimental context. They are problems, however, which appear to have a solution. For the experimental economist that attempts to test the methodological supposition of egoism, the verbal reports used here to find out the subjects' reason for their decision could be similar to what is known in game theory as *cheap talk.* If there is no incentive to tell the truth, to express one's motives in a sincere manner, people can say whatever they please because talk is cheap.

However, the verbal reports used here as a departure point to approach experimental subject´s moral judgments have not only been shown to be in line with the DG motivations chart, but also in the case of those who donated the whole amount - in both the real and the hypothetical experiment – the reasons were notably alike. It would seem, then, that the agents were not simply talking for talking's sake and even less so if we consider the conditions of anonymity under which the experiment was carried out. In a context such as this one, the only possible reason for not telling the truth about one's decision would be either self-denial or incredulity with the experiment. In short, the verbal reports - an essential element from the normative standpoint – can be controlled perfectly in the laboratory, at least in a DG.

The verbal reports are not simply a complement to the observation reports. Instead they are a reflective justification of one's own action; justifications that are quasi-theoretical in nature. Individuals that have given all the money justify their action for moral reasons and beliefs about the state of the world. Unlike hypothetical examples such as that of Affluent, the DG permits us to place individuals in an actual moral decision-making context and, through an anonymous questionnaire, make them reflect upon their decision. This decision-making and reflection process is what makes

the DG a useful tool for approaching the reflective equilibrium method as it enables the observer to confirm if general convictions, first principles and particular judgements are in line. Without question, this goes beyond the positive use of the DG in ethics, which is of very limited usefulness. By asking in the laboratory about the reasons for the decision in such a way as to allow the subject to answer under conditions of total anonymity, we not only obtain the revealed preferences but also the reasons on which they are based. These reasons can permit us to know if the decision is made for moral or other motives – religious, cultural, and so on- when relevant moral information is given in order to make the decision. When the reasons are moral, such as those given by the dictators in our experiments who donated the full amount, we can analyze what type they are, that is, if they fit the consequentialist, the deontological or the hybrid mould. This is possible because the subjects' justification is already implicitly theoretical – even though they clearly do not use labels such as "consequentialist" or "deontological" to refer to the principles that inspired their decision. From this viewpoint, we can say that in the case of our experimental subjects, the agent-centred prerogatives are in reflective equilibrium. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the hybrid theories are justified. The reflective equilibrium that is achieved by asking the DG subjects about the reasons for their decisions is, as we have said, narrow not wide. For the equilibrium to be wide, the experimental subjects would have to carefully consider the alternative moral concepts and evaluate the force of their arguments through a deep critical reflection on their intuitions. This brings up two final questions: Does the narrow reflective equilibrium lack in relevance? Can economic experiments, and the DG in particular, be a useful tool for dealing with the wide reflective equilibrium method?

As we have already seen, what we have called the positive use of the DG is not of great value to ethical theory and yet it is not completely lacking in worth. If the ethical theories converge in the solutions that they provide for the moral problem posed to the dictator, we can at least confirm how many subjects do what the theories say they should – or, in the negative language of economists- how many subjects do not do what they should, how many deviate from what the theories *prescribe*. Perhaps this quantification seems a bit trivial at first glance. However, its value lies in what can be perceived, as we have already said, what it would mean to ethical theory if no one ever gave anything in any DG, whatever the situation might be. If, on the contrary, we are

capable of showing that people measure moral distances in a DG and largely make their decisions depending on that distance, we will be on the road to disentangling people's intuitions or moral judgments and how they are in line with different moral theories. In other words, a DG designed in such a way as to make subjects' moral motives evident, provides us with the distribution of the diverse narrow reflective equilibrium in a population. This is not quite the same as discovering the grammar of a language.[40] Most speakers, even when they are competent in the language they speak, do not know why they use the terms they do. In fact, the majority are able to use prepositions correctly without knowing why – often without even knowing what a preposition is. However, when a narrow reflective equilibrium occurs in a motivational DG, it appears that people *do* know why they have given money and you can ask them. It is precisely the answer to this "why" which provides the observing moral theorist with the considered moral judgments in line with one or several ethical theories. On most occasions, these judgments will lead people to make moral decisions and not only those which can be reached after complex, drawn-out reflection. Between the absence of reflection by speakers on their grammar and the deep reflection demanded by the wide reflective equilibrium to justify a theory there lies an intermediate point which is what provides us with the narrow equilibrium and which can be reached through games such as the Dictator Game. It is an intermediate point at which the subjects reflect upon what they think they should do from a moral standpoint when they have to make an ethical decision; decisions which, at times, must be made spontaneously, in an instant. If we are to encounter this intermediate point where people's moral intuitions are found, we must use laboratory techniques to confirm if a theory is in line or not with these intuitions. If they are in fact in line with the theory, then it will be in narrow strict equilibrium. If, in contrast, and experiment after experiment, people's moral intuitions contradict the principles of some concrete moral theory, we must ask ourselves about the reason for this disequilibrium. This procedure is clearly distinct from that of discovering the grammar of a language.

Perhaps narrow reflective equilibrium has not been given the attention it deserves, bearing in mind that it is often the only thing we have when contending – as is often done- that this or that principle is in accordance with our moral intuitions. It certainly does not serve as a method to justify moral theories given that in this first phase of reflection moral subjects do not submit their intuitions to the test of critical

arguments and counterarguments. Is it possible then to simulate in the laboratory the procedure that will lead subjects to reach a wide reflective equilibrium? This would certainly seems like an impossible task. This is a process of deliberation, criticism and self-criticism which is removed from the control of variables sought in experimental economics; a control that the verbal reports of our experiments still preserve.[41] If we expressly ask our experimental subjects if their decision is right or not and request that they give arguments comparing different theories and knowledge, we abandon the sphere of experimental economics. But the fact that experimental economics can make the narrow reflective equilibrium operative is not something that should be disregarded if ethics aims to deal with people's moral intuitions in an empirically grounded manner.

5. Conclusion

In this article we have attempted to the answer the question of whether the moral intuitions of individuals establish some sort of equilibrium between agent-centred values and the maximization of neutral or impersonal values. To do so we presented two theoretical proposals that provide a possible solution to this equilibrium. Scheffler and Mulgan's agent-centred prerogatives propose that individuals are, on occasion, legitimized to pursue their non-optimal projects without regard to impersonal values. In our opinion, the Dictator Game is the most appropriate tool to ascertain to what point agent-centred prerogatives are in narrow reflective equilibrium with moral intuitions. Two experiments using the game have shown us that in this context people justify their ethical decisions in consequentially motivated terms and that the majority of subjects explain that their decision is based on a type of non-proportional prerogative. The DG can therefore be a useful tool to approach the narrow reflective equilibrium and permit the observing moral theorist to speak of peoples' moral intuitions in an empirically informed manner. For this reason these experiments, already a common practice in economics, would be very interesting and useful in the sphere of ethical theory. Experiments with the DG, however, do not allow to deal with the wide reflective equilibrium, and are therefore not valid as a method to justify ethical theories.

Notes

[1] Samuel Scheffler, *The Rejection of Consequentialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); "Prerogatives without restrictions", *Philosophical Perspectives*, 6 (1992): 377-397.

[2] Scheffler, "Prerogatives without restrictions", p. 394.

[3] Onora O´Neil, "The power of example", *Philosophy*, 61 (1986): 5-29.

[4] A notable exception is the work by Norman Frohlich and Joel Oppenheimer, *Choosing Justice: An Experimental Approach to Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

[5] Stephen Darwall, Allan Gibbard, and Peter Railton, "Toward *Fin de siècle* ethics: some trends", *The Phisophical Review,* 101 (1992): 115-189, p. 188; Frank Jackson, "Decision-theoretic consequentialism and the nearest and dearest objection", *Ethics*, 101 (1991): 461-482, p. 468.

[6] John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness. A Restatement* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 30-31.

[7] Samuel Scheffler, *The Rejection of Consequentialism*, p. 14.

[8] Samuel Scheffler, "Prerogatives without restrictions", *Philosophical Perspectives*, p. 378.

[9] Scheffler, *The Rejection*, p. 60 and ff. "How can the minimization of morally objectionable conduct be morally unacceptable?" asks Scheffler to demonstrate the paradoxical nature of deontological restrictions (Scheffler, "Agent-centred restrictions, rationality and the virtues", in Scheffler, ed., *Consequentialism and its Critics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). However, given that common sense morality admits deontological restrictions, Scheffler acknowledges that the hybrid theory can initially appear to be counter-intuitive (Scheffler, "Prerogatives without restrictions", p. 393). The debate surrounding this question has generated a vast amount of literature. See, for example, Christopher McMahon, "The paradox of deontology", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 20 (1991): 350-377 and Paul Hurley, "Agent-centered restrictions: Clearing the air of paradox", *Ethics*, 108 (1997): 120-146. For more on the maximization strategy see *The Rejection*, p. 60.

[10] Shelly Kagan, "Does consequentialism demand too much?", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 13 (1984): 643-654, p. 251. To avoid the allowing/doing objection, Scheffler substitutes the "pure-cost" prerogative for a "no harm version" that we will not analyze here (Scheffler, "Prerogatives without restrictions", p. 387) as it is the original version of his prerogative that has been the most influential and widely debated.

[11] Tim Mulgan, *The Demands of Consequentialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 4 and p. 147.

[12] Mulgan, *The Demands*, pp. 148-152.

[13] Mulgan presents the Wrong Facts Objection as a criticism of the excessive demands for information of consequentialism: to choose the option that maximizes the moral good, agents must accumulate a huge amount of empirical information (except in the case of Slote's satisficing consequentialism). However, the Oxfam example – which will be very useful to us later – can lead to error when used to criticize Scheffler's prerogative: How is not going to be important to know if an humanitarian organization is efficient or not when giving money? That is not the question. As Mulgan points out, "my complaint here is not merely that the Hybrid View makes Affluent´s obligations dependent on specific empirical facts. Rather, the problem is that the differences between our three cases should not affect those obligations in the extreme way they do on Scheffler´s account…[Affluent] knows that any given dollar will do far more good if donated to Oxfam than if spent on her theatre trips. Does she really need to know exactly how much more good it will do before she has any idea at all how much she's required to donate?" (*The Demands*, p. 150).

[14] Mulgan, *The Demands*, p. 263. Thomas Nagel also poses the need to reach an equilibrium between neutral and relative values by means of a prerogative which, unlike Scheffler's, is not proportional. See Thomas Nagel, "Autonomy and deontology", in Samuel Scheffler, ed., C*onsequentialism and its Critics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) p. 155.

[15] Mulgan, *The Demands*, p. 212.

[16] Mulgan, *The Demands*,p. 211.

[17] Mulgan, *The Demands*,p. 261.

[18] Mulgan, *The Demands*, p. 269.

[19] Mulgan, *The Demands*, pp. 261-262. This does not mean, of course, that Mulgan's proposal does not pose problems (see, for example, some of those problems in Timothy Chappell, "Review: *The Demands of Consequentialism*", *Mind*, 111 (2002): 891-897). Our objective here is not to analyze his theory in all its complexity nor to criticize it, but rather to see if people's moral intuitions are in narrow reflective equilibrium with a purely consequentialist moral conception or with a hybrid view.

[20] John Rawls, "The independence of moral theory", in Samuel Freeman, ed., *John Rawls. Collected Papers* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 288.

[21] Mulgan, *The Demands*, p. 19.

[22] The Dictator Game originated from the Ultimatum Game (UG) (W. Güth, R. Schmiberger, and B. Schwarze, "An experimental analysis of ultimatum bargaining", *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 3 [1982]: 367-388). In the original version of the UG (a static game for two players), player number 1 (called the proponent) must divide an amount of money between himself and player 2 (called the recipient) under conditions of total anonymity. Player 2 then accepts or rejects the division. If he accepts, the money is divided up as proposed by player 1; if player 2 rejects the division, both win zero. In experimental Ultimatum Games contributions are usually about half of the pie, although equal divisions are more common in repeated than static- or one-shot – games, especially when playing with acquaintances rather than strangers. The fact, however, that player 2 can veto player 1's decision in the UG leads to believe that fairness is not the only reason behind player 1's generous offer, but that it entails a clearly strategic decision. In order to exclude that component of the game and verify if player 1's generous offer can actually be explained out of reasons of fairness, and not due to interested strategic calculations, player 2 is not allowed to decide.

[23] E. Hoffman, K. McCabe and V. Smith, "Social distance and other-regarding behavior in dictator games", *American Economic Review*, 86 (1996): 653-660.

[24] The content of the instructions can also determine the outcome. For example, the fact that subjects are told that they are taking part in an experiment may make them lose interest in their partner, or may lead subjects to feel that they are playing – that it is a competition and therefore they have to win, that is, keep all or most of the money (N. Frohlich, J. Oppenheimer and A. Kuriki, "Modeling other-regarding preferences and an experimental test", *Public Choice*, 119 [2004]: 91-117). The nature of the payments, the presence or absence of the experimenter, the chance to participate in other experiments – and earn more money – can also affect the results (G. Bolton, E. Katok and R. Zwick, "Dictator game giving: rules of fairness versus acts of kindness", *International Journal of Game Theory*, 27 [1998]:269-299.).

[25] HMS-96, Hoffman, McCabe, Smith, "Social distance and other-regarding behavior in dictator games"; EG-96, C. Eckel, and Ph. Grossman, "Altruism in anonymous dictator games", *Games and Economic Behaviour*, 16 [1996]: 181-191; CG-01, G. Charness, and U. Gneezy, "What's in a name? Anonymity and social distance in dictator and ultimatum games", 2001, <http://repositories.cdlib.org/ucsbecon/dwp/wp11-01>; FOM1-01, FOM2-01, N. Frohlich, J. Oppenheimer and J. B. Moore, "Some doubts about measuring self-interest using dictator experiments: the costs of anonimity", *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 46 [2001]: 271-290; B-03, T. C. Burnham, "Engineering altruism: a theoretical and experimental investigation of anonymity and gift giving". *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 50 [2003]: 133-144.

[26] When the dictator knows nothing about the recipient and furthermore can do nothing about it, it is more appropriate to speak of the dictator's moral obligation to give – or the lack thereof - rather than reciprocity. Reciprocity is a relationship that by definition implies a mutual or cooperative interchange. That relationship does not occur in the DG – except in a concrete experiment in which the money that must be donated was produced by the dictator and the recipient (see Frohlich, Oppenheimer and Kuriki, "Modeling other-regarding preferences and an experimental test", *op. cit.*). In contrast, although there is no mutual or cooperative interchange in a DG, the dictator may have the moral obligation to donate money to the recipient. It is

important to stress the idea of "distance" as it implies that moral obligation bring us "closer" to others in DG contexts.

[27] Berry Crawford, "On the concept of obligation", *Ethics* 79 (1969): 316-319, p. 316.

[28] As we have seen, moral distance generally tends to be greatest in normal DG experiments, from both a consequentialist and a deontological viewpoint: there is no moral obligation to donate. Our aim is to design a situation in which moral distance is null. But what would happen in the context of a DG if the moral distance were null for a consequentialist and maximum from a deontological view or vice versa? We have defined moral distance as the degree of moral obligation- the moral obligation to give- in an DG. The moral distance is null in a DG if both views converge, that is, both consider that they must donate. If they do not converge we cannot speak of a strictly null moral distance, but of a partial one.

[29] For the statistical analysis and instructions of both experiments see Pablo Brañas-Garza, "Poverty in dictator games. Awakening solidarity", *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* (forthcoming).

[30] One euro is approximately equivalent to $1.25.

[31] Hoffman, McCabe and Smith, "Social distance and other-regarding behavior in dictator games". The size of the envelope permitted the subjects to carry out the operations in complete privacy. The money and the questionnaire were placed in the small envelope where the centres were marked. The subjects then stood up and placed the envelope in a box. The subjects' names did not appear anywhere and they kept the large envelope. After they were given instructions they were told the following: "Only you will know what is in the large envelope" (the money that remained). After the money was assigned, the subjects stood up, placed the small, sealed envelope (containing their choice, the money and the questionnaire) in the box and left the room. The subjects were not paid for participating in the experiment. None of the researchers (experimenters) that ran the experiment were professors at the universities where the experiments were performed and had not had any previous contact with the students. To improve the credibility of both studies, the departmental secretaries introduced us at each session and left the room. When the experiment with real money concluded, the money collected (855€) was donated to an NGO.

[32] The average weekly allowance of the students was 24.20 euros.

[33] Nonetheless, as shown in Table 3, when the only information that dictators have about recipients is that they are poor, less than half donate the full amount. In contrast, when the dictators know that the recipients are both poor and need medicines the number of dictators that donate the full amount greatly increases. According to the reasons given in the questionnaire, when money is donated directly to the recipients it is less useful (subjects who only knew that the recipients were poor and gave nothing or only part of the money stated "I don't know what they are going to use it for").

[34] In one case, the subject said that he had some doubts and therefore only donated 5 euros. There was another case of a subject who said that he did not believe anything he was told and so he kept all the money. He explained: "I think that the 15€ is being used to pay me for the time I'm spending to do a statistical study and so I'm going to keep it." Then he added: "This is the School of Economics. Go to a school of philosophy and less people will think like me." Will we have to seek different narrow reflective equilibriums according to schools and degrees? Let's hope not!.

[35] The remaining 19% that donated the full amount either did not answer or did not understand the question. It is interesting to note that the language of "dutifulness" was not used in any of the cases.

[36] Here we use Jackson's expression, "Decision-theoretic consequentialism and the nearest and dearest objection", p. 469.

[37] Michael Smith, "Neutral and relative value after Moore", *Ethics*, 113 (2003): 576-598; p. 577 (emphasis ours).

[38] We allowed ourselves the luxury of using the general term "people" instead of "experimental subjects". Although we know that this is not a statistically representative group, it can be

considered a qualitatively representative one given that it is made up of common, everyday people. Naturally, the experiments would have to be repeated to validate them externally.

[39] I. Bohnet, and B. Frey "Social distance and other-regarding behavior in dictator games: Comment", The American Economic Review, 89 (1999): 335-339, p. 35.

[40] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 48-51; Norman Daniels, "Wide reflective equilibrium and theory acceptance in ethics", *Journal of Philosophy*, 76: 256-282, p. 258, note 4 and "Reflective Equilibrium", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2003 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2003/ entries/reflective-equilibrium/>.

[41] Frohlich and Oppenheimer, *Choosing Justice: An Experimental Approach to Ethics*, p. 112.