

Collective responsibility workshop, University of Helsinki, 17-18 November 2017

Time	Friday 17 November	Saturday 18 November
9.00	tea/coffee	Hans Bernhard Schmid (University of Vienna) <i>Responsibility and Self-Knowledge</i>
9.30	Opening words	
10.00	Raimo Tuomela (University of Helsinki) <i>Group agents and their responsibility</i>	Olle Blomberg (Lund University) <i>Tracing and responsibility gaps</i>
10.30		
11.00	tea/coffee	tea/coffee
11.30	Gunnar Björnsson (Stockholm University) <i>The importance of shared obligations and shared responsibility</i>	Stephanie Collins (The University of Manchester) <i>The Irreducible Blameworthiness of Non-agent Groups</i>
12.00		
12.30	lunch	lunch
13.00		
13.30	Bill Wringe (Bilkent University) – via Skype <i>What Can We Do? Collective Ability, Collective Obligation And Non-Agent Groups</i>	Raul Hakli and Pekka Mäkelä (University of Helsinki) <i>Hybrid agents and responsibility</i>
14.00		
14.30	Säde Hormio (University of Helsinki) <i>Why corporations are agents, but not moral agents</i>	Visa Kurki (University of Helsinki) <i>The Foundations of Corporate Moral Responsibility: A Legal Account</i>
15.00		
15.30	tea/coffee	tea/coffee
16.00	Arto Laitinen (University of Tampere) <i>Solidarity and distribution of forward-looking responsibilities</i>	Frank Hindriks (University of Groningen) <i>The Duty to Join Forces: When Individuals Lack Control</i>
16.30		
17.00		

Venues

Friday 17 November: Forestry House, Unioninkatu 40, room 10

Saturday 18 November: Main Building, Unioninkatu 34, Auditorium IV

The event is part of a workshop series *Responsibility in Society and Technology*, co-funded by NWO and participating Finnish and Dutch universities (Groningen, Delft, Jyväskylä, Helsinki, Tampere).

Abstracts (in alphabetical order)

Gunnar Björnsson - *The importance of shared obligations and shared responsibility*

In previous work, I have argued that shared obligations and shared responsibility can be understood along the very same lines as their individual counterparts. Even if this is correct, however, one might think that everything of moral importance derives from individual obligations and individual responsibility. In this talk, I argue, contrary to this, that attributions of shared responsibility matter for the same reason that attributions of individual responsibility matters, and that thoughts about shared obligations and shared capacities for action play an important role in the thinking of normal rational agents with moral concerns.

Olle Blomberg - *Tracing and responsibility gaps*

We often ascribe moral responsibility to an agent for an outcome even though she didn't choose to bring it about. Such ascriptions, one might think, can nevertheless be traced to some prior voluntary choice of the agent. Now, sometimes, we also ascribe moral responsibility to a group for an outcome even though the group didn't choose to bring this outcome about (perhaps because the group isn't an agent with the capacity to make choices). Such ascriptions, one might think, can nevertheless be traced back to some voluntary choices of group members (so that group responsibility distributes to members). In both the individual and the group cases, however, there are cases where this tracing procedure fails. Furthermore, in response to both kinds of cases, some philosophers have argued that this means that the ascriptions aren't appropriate (the agent/group isn't responsible), while others have argued that moral responsibility isn't essentially tied to the voluntary choice of an agent. That there is some connection between how to respond to the individual and the group cases seems clear (see e.g. the exchange between David Cooper and Robin Downie in *Philosophy* in 1968 and 1969), but what exactly the parallels and connections are is (it seems to me) an interesting question that hasn't (as far as I'm aware) received any attention. In this talk, I will consider this question, hopefully make some interesting observations, and maybe even draw some conclusions.

Stephanie Collins - *The Irreducible Blameworthiness of Non-agent Groups*

I will argue that groups that are not agents cannot have obligations, but that they can be blameworthy. This unlikely pair of conclusions arises because of the different functions that obligations and blameworthiness play in our moral and political practices. Obligations function as inputs into the reasoning of the entity that bears the obligation. By contrast—following Watson’s and Shoemaker’s conceptions of ‘attribution’—blameworthiness functions as a reflection of the esteem or disesteem with which others (should) hold the blameworthy entity. I give conditions under which non-agent groups are irreducibly blameworthy.

Raul Hakli and Pekka Mäkelä - *Hybrid agents and responsibility*

We study whether humans and technological artefacts, such as robots, can form hybrid agents that would be fit to be held morally responsible for their actions. Several arguments for this possibility have been presented but we argue that they have not been successful. We identify three argument forms that have been employed to argue for shared responsibility between humans and machines: (1) Argument from gradual properties, (2) Argument from responsibility gaps, and (3) Argument from extended agency. We analyse these arguments and aim to show that they are invalid.

Frank Hindriks - *The Duty to Join Forces: When Individuals Lack Control*

Many proponents of collective responsibility argue that it is possible for a collective to be responsible for something without any of its members bearing a correlative responsibility. This Irreducibility Thesis may well hold for structured collectives. I argue, however, that it does not apply to unstructured collectives. Such collectives are not agents and do as such not have any responsibilities. I go on to argue that individual members of unstructured collectives can have what I call ‘a duty to join forces’. This is the duty of an individual to take steps towards forming a joint intention. Only once those bounded by it successfully form a joint intention do they incur the obligation to act on it – to perform the requisite joint action. This proposal preserves the idea that individuals are responsible only for what they can do. The duty to join forces is, however, a kind of collective responsibility, because its object is irreducibly collective.

Säde Hormio - *Why corporations are agents, but not moral agents*

One of the biggest debates within collective responsibility literature is if organisations can be said to be moral agents, not just collective agents in either some loose or strict sense. I suggest that we could distinguish between what one must possess to be capable of making moral claims (i.e. moral agency conditions), and what it means to have the ability to exhibit such claims through one’s conduct. I further claim that corporations and other organisations could be argued to be able to manifest implicit or explicit moral claims through their

conduct. This is an emergent property of the moral claims that the (key) members of the collective make in their roles, combined with the ethos of the organisation.

Visa Kurki - *The Foundations of Corporate Moral Responsibility: A Legal Account*

The literature on group agency and collective responsibility is replete with discussions of whether corporations are (say) persons in some sense or whether they can be held morally responsible. However, the accounts are often perilously unclear on what they mean with “corporation”. Some instances of corporations are not relevant for questions of collective responsibility – think of one-person corporations or shell corporations. The paper will introduce the concept of “legal platform” to clarify some of these ambiguities.

Raimo Tuomela - *Group agents and their responsibility*

Group agents are able to act but are not literally agents. Some group agents, e.g., we-mode groups and corporations, can, however, be regarded as functional group agents that do not have “intrinsic” mental states and phenomenal features comparable to what their individual members on biological and psychological grounds have. But they can have “extrinsic” mental states, states collectively attributed to them—primarily by their members. In this paper, we discuss the responsibility of such group agents. We defend the view that if the group members have accepted the group agent’s (attributed) attitudes and are committed to them, we can favorably compare the situation with the case of individual human agents and a group agent can be regarded as morally responsible for its intentional activities.

Bill Wringe - *What Can We Do? Collective Ability, Collective Obligation And Non-Agent Groups*

Some, though apparently not all, accept - correctly, in my view - that agential possibility is a pre-condition for moral obligation: that is that, in Kant’s words, ‘ought implies can’. Some also accept – incorrectly in my view - that sentences attributing agential capacities to groups can only be true when the groups in question are themselves agents, and infer that the only groups on which moral obligations can fall are agential groups. In this paper I’ll explain how it can be correct to attribute agential powers to non-agent groups. In doing so I’ll put forward what I regard as an ultra-minimalist account of collective agency. I’ll also argue – following a suggestion put forward in unpublished work by Anne Schwenkenbecher – that some of our intuitions about the capacities of non-agent groups are best accommodated not by raising the bar for a collective to have an agential capacity, but by regarding collective agential capacities as a matter of degree. How does this line of thought bear on the possibility of whether what I have elsewhere called the ‘global collective’ can have obligations? That will depend, I shall suggest, on the kinds of considerations we take to underpin the ‘ought implies can’ principle.