

Collective Responsibility

Saba Bazargan

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The purpose of this course is to investigate two dovetailing issues in collective morality: the agency of collectives, and the distribution of responsibility in collectives.

The metaphysical and moral problems of collective action are typically construed as consisting in a tension between the individual and the collective. Some accounts ontologically privilege the collective by attributing to it irreducibility of a kind that is supposed to provide a basis for our intuitions and practices that invoke collectives 'tout court'. Other accounts deny such irreducibility, and instead emphasize the ontological parsimony of conceptualizing collectives as sets of individuals bearing special attitudes. We will begin by investigating both types of accounts. Specifically, we will investigate whether collectives qua collectives are the proper bearers of morally relevant non-moral properties such as intentions, as well as moral properties, such as culpability and liability.

In the second half of the course, we will investigate whether and to what degree individual members of a collective can be morally responsible for harms caused by the collective. This will involve exploring the justifying bases for the various possible distribution arrangements of collective responsibility to individual members. We will analyze these distribution arrangements with an eye to dissolving collectivist dilemmas – specifically, the supposed game-theoretic rationality of contributing to (or failing to contribute to the prevention of) collective harms. We will also investigate whether individuals can bear responsibility for collectively committed wrongs to which those individuals did not contribute at all. We will end by considering the responsibility that an unorganized collective bears for wrongs that its members are in a position to prevent.

The grading for this course will be based on a single term paper which will be due during finals week. All of the readings are available online at sites.google.com/site/bazarganthings

I. The Metaphysics of Collectives and Collective Action

Jan. 7 – Taxonomy of Views in the Metaphysics and Ethics of Collectives

- David Copp: "What Collectives Are: Agency, Individualism and Legal Theory" 1984

Jan. 14 – The Structure of Cooperative Collective Action

- Michael Bratman: "Shared Cooperative Activity" 1992
- Margaret Gilbert: "Rationality in Collective Action" 2006

Jan. 21 – The Morality of Cooperative Collective Action

- Peter French: "The Corporation as a Moral Person" 1978
- Manuel Velasquez: "Debunking Corporate Moral Responsibility" 2003

Jan. 28 – Irreducible Collective Agency and the Discursive Dilemma

- Philip Pettit: "Groups with Minds of Their Own" 2003

- Philip Pettit & David Schweikard: “Joint Actions and Group Agents” 2006

Feb. 4 – Collective Agency, Post-Pettit

- Pekka Mäkelä: “Collective Agents and Moral Responsibility” 2007
- David Sosa: “What is It Like to Be a Group?” 2009

II. Individual Responsibility for Collectively Committed Wrongs

Feb. 11 – Individual Accountability and the Structure of Cooperative Collective Action

- Christopher Kutz: *Complicity* (Ch. 2 & 3) 2000

Feb. 18 – Individual Accountability in Cooperative Collective Action

- Joel Feinberg: “Collective Responsibility” 1970
- Christopher Kutz: *Complicity* (Ch. 4 & 5) 2000

Feb. 25 – Non-Contributory Collective Accountability (part 1)

- Linda Radzik, “Collective Responsibility and Duties to Respond” 2001
- Christopher Kutz: *Complicity* (Ch. 6) 2000

Mar. 4 – Non-Contributory Collective Accountability (part 2)

- Margaret Gilbert: “Group Wrongs and Guilt Feelings” 1995
- Deborah Tollefsen: “The Rationality of Collective Guilt” 2006
- Juha Räikkä: “On Disassociating Oneself from Collective Responsibility” 1997

Mar. 11 – The Accountability of Random Aggregates

- Virginia Held: “Can a Random Collective Be Morally Responsible?” 1970
- Larry May: “Collective Inaction and Shared Responsibility” 1990