

Workshop “Collective Retrospective Responsibility”

11 November 2024

Via Roma, 56, 53 100 Siena

Sezione di Fisica (aka. Palazzina di Fisica), sala di riunione, [Google maps link](#).



Deepwater Horizon oil drilling platform (21/4 2010), source: US Coast Guard/Encyclopædia Britannica

Programme

I. GENERAL THEORY OF COLLECTIVE RETROSPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

1. (10.00-11.10) *Ludger Jansen*: Responsibility in/of/for Institutions
(11-10-11.30) Coffee break
2. (11.30-12.40) *Seumas Miller*: Retrospective Collective Responsibility and Joint Moral Responsibility
(12.40-14.10) Lunch: Antica Trattoria Papei, Piazza Mercato, 6, 53 100 Siena
3. (14.10-15.20) *Christoph Lumer*: An Instrumentalist Theory of Collective Retrospective Responsibility

II. PROBLEMS OF COLLECTIVE RETROSPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

4. (15.30-16.40) *Olof Leffler*: Group Responsibility and the Enactor Role
(16.40-17.00) Coffee break

III. Special Actors of Collective Retrospective Responsibility

5. (17.00-18.10) *Miguel Garcia-Godinez*: Retrospective and Prospective Responsibility in Proxy Action
6. (18.20-19.30) *Federico Faroldi*: Intention and Responsibility in AI Agents
Dinner (20.00): Ristorante Spadaforte, Il Campo, 13, 53100 Siena

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Signing

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Speakers, titles, and abstracts

(In order of appearance)

Ludger Jansen:

Title: Responsibility in/of/for Institutions

Abstract: We create institutions for certain purposes. By this, they are prospectively responsible for certain things. But what if they fail to fulfil their functions? Margaret Gilbert has suggested that joint commitments can account for the retrospective responsibility of small informal groups, which she calls plural subjects. In this presentation, I probe to extend this account to formally established institutions. I will discuss three aspects of retrospective responsibility, namely accountability, liability and punishment, and four aspects of institutions that calls for responsibility could address, namely the institution itself, the various roles within the institution, the role bearers, and the rules governing the institutions.

Seumas Miller:

Title: Retrospective Collective Responsibility and Joint Moral Responsibility

Abstract: We can distinguish between retrospective and prospective responsibility, and between individual and collective responsibility; the analytical focus of this presentation is on retrospective collective responsibility. There are three general approaches to the analysis of collective responsibility, namely, aggregate individualism (i.e. collective responsibility consists of a summation of individual responsibility), anti-reductive collectivism (i.e. collective responsibility as responsibility that attaches to collective entities per se) and collective responsibility as joint responsibility (Seumas Miller “Collective Responsibility as Joint Responsibility” in the *Routledge Handbook of Collective Responsibility* 2020). In this presentation I apply the notion of joint responsibility, specifically joint moral responsibility, to that of retrospective collective responsibility. According to the view of collective responsibility as joint responsibility, collective responsibility for certain actions and omissions attaches to individual human persons but does so jointly. Here we should distinguish between behavioural actions, e.g., rescuing someone drowning or shooting dead an innocent person, from epistemic actions, e.g., making an evidence-based judgment that the earth is round (true judgement) or that the 2020 US Presidential election was rigged and Trump in fact won (false judgement) (Seumas Miller “Joint Epistemic Action and Collective Moral Responsibility” *Social Epistemology* 2015). - The resulting joint responsibility-based analysis of retrospective collective responsibility is an extension of prior taxonomic work in Seumas Miller “Collective Responsibility: Types and Modes of Application” in (eds.) Bill Wringe and S Hormio *Collective Responsibility: Perspectives from Political Philosophy and Social Ontology* (Springer, 2024).

Christoph Lumer:

Title: An Instrumentalist Theory of Collective Retrospective Responsibility

Abstract: The current discussion on collective retrospective responsibility is strongly influenced by a certain intuitionism: What are the traditional conditions for retrospective responsibility? Do certain collectives in certain situations also fulfil these conditions? This approach is problematic because it does not ask about the reasons for individual or collective responsibility and therefore cannot say whether the individual conditions are sufficient and necessary and whether they should also be applied to collective responsibility. The talk develops an alternative approach based on an instrumentalist welfare ethics, according to which retrospective responsibility is part of a set of instruments for social control. It then addresses the following questions: What is the function of attributing retrospective responsibility in general? (E.g. special and general prevention, liability and compensation.) What (relevant) types of collectives are there? (e.g. minimally coordinated quantities, coordinated groups, associations, self-governing organisations, service organisations, corporations.) What types of collective responsibility are there? (e.g. traditional, allocating, distributive, irreducible, joint.) With regard to the function of retrospective responsibility: for which types of collectives is it morally reasonable to institute which type of collective responsibility, i.e. morally good and better than the institution of individual responsibility? The aim of the article is to answer the last question by creating a corresponding list. One result, for example, is that irreducible collective responsibility does not presuppose the possibility that the collective has acted or could have acted intentionally.

Olof Leffler:

Title: Group Responsibility and the Enactor Role

ABSTRACT: Many philosophers have recently been attracted to the view that group agents are morally responsible in much the same way as individual agents. Groups, it is thought, have intentional states, and when acting based on these, they act in ways that make them paradigmatically morally responsible. One familiar condition which is necessary for making moral responsibility judgements apt is, however, that agents must control their actions appropriately: in other words, they must satisfy the freedom-relevant condition for moral responsibility. In this paper, I argue that the freedom-relevant condition is not satisfied by corporate agents on several widely endorsed interpretations of it, both compatibilist and libertarian. This is because when we consider the actions of individual group member agents in their roles of implementing or enacting the aims of the corporation, we see that whatever control corporate agents would have is manipulated by being filtered through the enactor agents. This manipulation undermines the way in which corporate agents may be thought to satisfy the condition. Moreover, this filter also hinders corporations from acting authentically.

Miguel Garcia-Godinez:

Title: Retrospective and Prospective Responsibility in Proxy Action

Abstract: While proxy actions are very common social phenomena (think, e.g., of a landlord selling his property through an estate agent, or a company communicating a message through a spokesperson, or a company filing for bankruptcy through a law firm, etc), the conditions for attributing both retrospective and prospective responsibility to the active participants in such collective actions remain underexplored in contemporary social philosophy. As an attempt to make progress in this direction, I will introduce first a general account of proxy agency (explaining the mechanism that is in place in the performance of proxy actions), and then I will explore the normative foundations for making the principal and its proxy blame-responsible and task-responsible for the damaging consequences of their proxy action. Building on this, I will propose a general framework for proxy responsibility, focusing on both the *constitutive agency relationship* between the principal and the proxy that implicates them in the wrongful action, and the *authorship condition* that grounds compensatory duties on each party. This approach will also help with clarifying the main differences between proxy responsibility and vicarious responsibility (which does not require agency and is based only on ownership), thus offering a more nuanced perspective than the one available in current legal scholarship (which treats proxy agency simply as another form of vicarious agency).

Federico Faroldi:

Title: Intention and Responsibility in AI Agents

Abstract: This talk deals with the topic of intentions and responsibility of and in AI agents. After clarifying some definitions (of AI agents, of intention for AI agents), I will distinguish between a descriptive question (can AI agents have intentions?) and a prescriptive question (should AI agents have intentions?). Within the descriptive question I discuss some older and newer proposals in the literature. Within the prescriptive question I explore two aims of a positive answer: a retrospective aim (e.g. to ascribe backward-looking responsibility) and a prospective aim (e.g. as an alignment strategy).