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Evaluating Societies Morally: The Case of Development and 'Developing' Societies

Abstract: Can a society, as a collective, be evaluated morally? In this paper, I attempt to answer this question against the background of the discourse on development. Specifically, I undertake three explorations. I begin with 1) discussion of the ways we attribute responsibility to collectives in relation to some problems associated with globalisation. This is followed by 2) consideration of some of the debates in philosophy regarding the nature and possibility of collective responsibility. Lastly, I examine 3) an attractive but underexplored possibility in the growing literature on Ubuntu. On the basis of Ubuntu moral insights, I will attempt to defend the thesis that the collective responsibility of developing societies in relation development is grounded by the imperative to care about the humanity of other people.

Keywords: Moral evaluation, development, Ubuntu, colonialism, collective responsibility

1 Introduction

The G-20 meeting of 2017 made news headlines for many reasons. Among those responsible for these headlines, two stand out. The first is the group of violent protesters and the second is the President of France, Emmanuel Macron. The anti-G20 protesters made headlines because of their violent protest in Hamburg. Interviews, on the other hand, usually do not attract widespread attention except in cases where there is something spectacular about them. M. Macron's interview managed to attain this feat due to his response to the question posed by an Ivorian journalist. The question the journalist asked was simple: why is there no marshal plan for Africa, Monsieur Macron? He could have answered in many ways. And he chose one of the possible answers. Among other things, his answer made reference to the idea that Africa had civilizational problems. The continent, he said, suffers from problems related to difficult democratic transitions and demographic challenges due to the situation where a woman in Africa still gives birth to 7 to 8

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children.[1] Any interview by a European leader making such claims certainly has the potential to make headlines. So, the fact that there was uproar on social and print media about M. Macron's interview is neither a surprise nor a novelty. It is just in accordance with the logic of media culture.

The interesting question that was not asked in the analysis that ensued due to this interview is this: is a society morally responsible to develop, so that when this does not happen, they can be held morally responsible, or at least morally evaluated, for this failure? By development here, I mean the realisation of the improvements of the conditions of life in a society. Although this question is neglected by people interested in development studies or those who have made a career studying or ameliorating the development deficit of Africa and other parts of the world, the question is important for many reasons. Philosophers have yet to consider the sense of collective responsibility outside the domain of questions relating to global distributive justice, climate change, social justice, transitional justice and historical injustice. Notwithstanding the centrality of development in shaping the way we think about people from different parts of the world, there is hardly any discussion of the moral evaluation of the collective agents implicated in development.

To illustrate how development informs our perception, let us consider some commonplace scenarios. When you arrive in any country and go through immigration controls, you cannot fail to notice the importance of people's passports to their dignity. Depending on the passport you hold, you might be treated kindly or harshly or even as *persona non grata*. When you try to find a job, a partner or do business with people, your country of origin is an important determinant of your success or failure. Upon reflection, one will notice that beneath all these lies the thought that the level of development of one's place of origin is a vital determinant of dignity, respect and (mis)trust. Given this situation, it is important that moral and political philosophers engage in discussion of the moral evaluation of the collectives implicated in development. To be sure, if societies do not have responsibility to develop or build civilization, then, it will be difficult to see why we think of many questions the way we do. For instance, one will be hard pressed to explain the tendency of scholars to consider issues such as brain drain as phenomenon that is reflective of a moral problem (Brock/Blake 2015).

So, the question is this: can we morally evaluate societies vis a vis their failure or otherwise to develop? This question forms the central focus of this paper. I

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1 http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/emmanuel-macron-africa-development-civilisation-problems-women-seven-eight-children-colonialism-a7835586.html (accessed 01. 08. 2017).

will attempt an answer by engaging in three explorations. I begin with 1) discussion of the attribution of responsibility to collectives in the analysis of different questions related to globalisation. In a second step, I will 2) consider some of the positions philosophers have advanced about the attribution of responsibility to collectives. I will discuss the arguments of H. D. Lewis, Virginia Held, D. E. Cooper and Philip Pettit. Next, I will 3) argue that an attractive but underexplored possibility exists in the growing literature on Ubuntu. The importance of contextualisation for the understanding of the moral evaluation of societies ties the three explorations together. Thus, the quest for contextualization explains why I begin the paper with an analysis of the ways globalisation raises questions about collective responsibility. The discussion of philosophical arguments about collective responsibility provides a context for understanding the nature of collective responsibility and the reason we need to explore possibilities, such as Ubuntu, that are not usually considered. Against the background of the growing literature on Ubuntu (Ahiauzu 2006; Metz/Gaie 2010; Metz 2010; Gade 2011; Matolino 2013; Matolino/Kwindingwi 2013; Taylor 2014; West 2014; Mboti 2015; Asher 2017), I argue in this paper that developing societies are responsible for development due to the imperative to care about other human beings.

2 The Moral Responsibility of Collectives

Just like many important topics, globalisation has received a great deal of attention in recent scholarship, and rightly so. Whereas some discussions of this phenomenon focus on questions about trade and finance, others are concerned with security, distributive justice, migration and climate change. The differences notwithstanding, the common denominator of these studies is their global outlook and starting point. When, however, we pay close attention to these families of discourses, we will find that the positions advanced are in some ways confronted by a formidable challenge, namely, the problem of attributing responsibility to collectives.

Many examples can be found in current scholarship dealing with one aspect or another of the challenge of globalisation where responsibility is implicitly or explicitly attributed to collectives. But what does it mean to say that a collective has some form of responsibility, given that they are not individuals that have rational capacity, free will and other properties we attribute to individuals? To understand this question, let us begin with an analysis of some attributions of responsibility to collectives in works dealing with 1) responsibility for past injustices, 2) the operations of multinational companies in the so-called developing countries of

the world, 3) climate change and 4) global distributive justice. Although I will not aim in this section to consider the justification of the responsibility attributed to collectives, I will note the reasons collectives are considered the bearers of responsibility in the different discussions.

The first type of discourse I mentioned above that could help us to make sense of the question concerning what we mean when we say that a collective is the bearer of responsibility consists of discussions of responsibility for past injustices. For many years, scholars have argued about the nature and extent of collective responsibility for past atrocities. Relatedly, there is also the consideration of the collective responsibility of the international community to prevent future occurrence of crimes against humanity, as we can see in the case of the 'responsibility to protect'. In the main, discussions of collective responsibility for past injustices revolve around the question whether or not the people in the society where these injustices occurred are collectively responsible.

In some cases, the exploration of this question is necessitated by the fact that there isn't an individual or clearly definable group of individuals that can be held accountable for these injustices in a way that does adequate justice to the scale of oppression and suffering perpetrated. Notable examples in this regard are discussions of violent and unjust systems such as apartheid and particularly destructive conflicts, such as the Hutu—Tutsi conflict. In other cases, the inquiry is undertaken even where there are clearly definable individuals that are liable for the crimes or injustices perpetrated. An example here could be the hypothetical case of a white supremacist group that is constantly molesting and intimidating black people. In this case, questions could be asked regarding the responsibility of the leader or members of the white supremacist group. However, it could also be asked if white people are collectively culpable for the oppression of black people in a society where white supremacist groups are ubiquitous and tolerated. This would then mean that two separate questions could be raised about the same situation, one about the responsibility of the leader and members of a hate group and another about the collective responsibility of the group of people whose identity is supposedly represented by the hate group.

Another context where responsibility is attributed to groups is the operation of multinational companies in developing countries. According to a New York Times report of December 20 2008, the multinational giant, Siemens, was compelled as a result of its bribery scandal to pay "more than $2.6 billion to clear its name: $1.6 billion in fines and fees in Germany and the United States and

more than $1 billion for internal investigations and reforms."[2] To secure lucrative contracts or pave the way for sale of their equipment in mostly developing countries, the company offered bribes to politicians in these countries. One of the main people involved in this scandal, Reinhard Siekaczek said "that from 2002 to 2006 he oversaw an annual bribery budget of about $40 million to $50 million at Siemens." (Ibid.) According to the report, "more than $800 million of the $1.4 billion in illegal payments that Siemens made from 2001 to 2007" was paid by just one unit, namely, the one led by Reinhard Siekaczek. He was quoted as arguing that these bribes were necessary to maintain the competitiveness of the company abroad and also to not jeopardise "thousands of jobs overnight". Thus, according to this logic, it was not altogether a sinister affair that bribes were paid to people in different countries, such as Nigeria and Bangladesh, because it served a good purpose.

What is of interest in this case for the discussion in this paper should be noted. One of the major actors in this case, Reinhard Siekaczek, was fined individually. However, this did not prevent the fines levied on the company as a whole. It seems then that collective as well as individual responsibilities were implicated in this case, given that the allocation of liability did not stop with the individual agent identified. Siemens as a collective as well as Reinhard Siekaczek were held responsible for the bribery scandal. We find more cases of this kind all the time in relation to multinational companies. For instance, multinational pharmaceutical companies regularly carry out drug trials in developing countries. When they commit crimes of omission or commission, there is generally a convention of ascribing responsibility to them as a collective. Multinational companies, such as Shell, Chevron, Agip, Total and Elf are often in the news for human rights abuses in developing countries. Although the managers in charge of these companies could be held accountable and forced to resign or even tried and sent to prison, the companies they lead are also held responsibility, notwithstanding that they are not real persons.

Peter Singer expressed succinctly the case of collective responsibility in relation to climate change when he remarked that "there can be no clearer illustration of the need for human beings to act globally than the issues raised by the impact of human activity on our atmosphere" (Singer 2002, 14). Singer is pointing here to the dangerous climate change requiring human responsibility and action. As Singer and many others have noted, there is clear evidence that there is a link between human action and the threat posed by climate change (Vitousek et al. 1997).

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2 http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/21/business/worldbusiness/21siemens.html (accessed 10. 07. 2017).

This is the reason the ethics of climate change involves discerning what counts as proper and fair allocation of responsibility and the justification of the moral duty imposed on collectives. If it is accepted that human beings have acted in a way that produced a dangerous threat, what is the correct understanding of responsibility in this context? In other words, how do we arrive at a fair distribution of the burden associated with this challenge so that there is adequate response?

Singer presents two perspectives deployed in political philosophy to make sense of the question regarding equitable distribution of responsibility. He says that, harking back to Robert Nozick, political philosophers often appeal to the historical and time-slice principles in making judgement about what is fair. The former principle suggests that "we can't decide merely by looking at the present situation, whether a given distribution of goods is just or unjust. We must also ask how the situation came about; we must know its history" (Singer 2002, 27). The latter principle "looks at the existing distribution at a particular moment and asks if that distribution satisfies some principles of fairness, irrespective of any preceding sequence of events" (27). Regardless of whichever of these two principles we deploy, and notwithstanding how we deploy them, we cannot avoid in this context the issue of collective responsibility. Prima facie, it could be said that it is reasonable to place greater burden of addressing climate change on the greatest contributors of carbon emission, namely, the so-called affluent, industrialised countries of the world. Collective responsibility here is taken to be right not squarely because every member of this group contributed equally to the situation. In fact, the case made for collective responsibility here does not rest on the thought that all of them contributed. The point is rather that as group, the affluent, industrialised countries of the world produced more emissions, and so should bear more responsibility for mitigating the impact of climate change. Thus, we are presented once more another case of the attribution of responsibility to a group or collective.

Relatedly, global distributive justice advocates propose that nationality should not limit the scope of justice. Their differences notwithstanding, liberal-egalitarians working on global justice propose that every human being counts morally, regardless of their location in the world. The implication of accepting this proposition is that we would have to endorse collective responsibility for global injustice in some form. This is the case because, the unequal nature of the world, which is at the center of global distributive justice, means that affluent societies could be said to be morally obligated to assist in remedying the injustice of the unequal distribution of resources in the world. In other words, people in affluent countries are taken to be collectively tasked with the responsibility of contributing to the realisation of global justice. The point here is not that there is personal liability on the part of every citizen of the so-called affluent countries of the world, be they descendants of colonial officers who worked in Namibia or labour union ac-

tivists who spent their lifetime marching for the freedom of colonised people. The claim is rather that the collective that is designated by the category 'citizens of affluent countries' is responsible as group for the realisation of the goal of global distributive justice.[3]

Carrying on this convention of ascribing responsibility to collectives, I will attempt in this paper to answer the question regarding the nature of collective responsibility for development in developing societies. By considering this question, the goal is to determine the nature or extent of collective responsibility vis a vis the development deficits afflicting the societies regarded as developing societies. Since there are a number of problems that arise for the world due to the failure of development in majority of the developing societies of the world, it would seem cogent to explore this question. Besides, it seems that this sort of exploration would help us to be clear about the cogency or otherwise of the conventional approaches to vital questions in political philosophy, such as migration and brain drain (Brock/Blake 2015). To be sure, there are other reasons that make this question imperative because the judgement that we cannot validly attribute collective responsibility to developing societies may well mean that there is no reasonable ground to expect such societies to actively work to change the status quo. I will examine in fuller details the nature of the collective responsibility of developing societies in the final part of this paper. In the section below, I will attempt to provide brief overview of the debate about the notion of collective responsibility.

3 The Notion of Collective Responsibility

The examples above of how we attribute responsibility to collectives have merely situated the discussion in this paper by demonstrating that it is indeed the case that in practice, we attribute responsibility to collectives. So, rather than reflect an oddity, the postulation of collective responsibility is a common approach to evaluating societies in relation to their dealings or response to events. However, does the widespread attribution of responsibility to collectives mean that statements, such as that the Greeks killed Socrates, imply that all human individuals who happen to be of Greek origin were liable for the death of Socrates? Does this statement about the Greeks rather mean that the aggregation of the responsibility of each Greek human individual is collectively responsible for the death of

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3 It is important to note that theorists of global justice have different perspectives. Whereas some limit the scope of justice to the nation-state, there are others who adopt a radical cosmopolitan approach. For more, see Brock 2009.

Socrates? If we say that the statement means that every human being who happens to be Greek is responsible for the death of Socrates, and some might argue that this is the case, does this not imply that particular individuals today, who are descendants of these Greeks said to have killed Socrates, are still responsible for the death of Socrates? What I am inviting by raising these questions is the discussion of the nature of collective responsibility. It is not clear if collective responsibility is merely a social form of responsibility or if it is moral responsibility. How should we think about the constitution of collective responsibility? Does the idea of collective responsibility refer to mere aggregation of the individual responsibilities of all the members of a group or is it rather a category of responsibility that does not apply to any particular individual that is part of the group? These are some of the questions philosophers have debated over the years regarding the notion of collective responsibility. To put this debate within a context that allows us to explore the moral evaluation of societies, it is crucial to take a cursory look at the divergence of perspectives that is characteristic of the debate about collective responsibility.

H. D. Lewis offered one of the earliest discussions of the questions related to collective responsibility. For him, what we possibly imply by the designation 'collective responsibility' is 'barbarous' because the true bearer of responsibility is the individual. Period! At the outset of his discussion of this issue, Lewis asserted that if he was asked to "put forward an ethical principle [he] considered to be especially certain, it would be that no one can be responsible, in the properly ethical sense, for the conduct of another. Responsibility belongs essentially to the individual" (Lewis 1948, 3). Unlike group or collective responsibility, Lewis proposed that individual responsibility "is quite fundamental to our ordinary ethical attitudes" (3). He argued that collective responsibility is essentially flawed because it would render impossible "any properly moral distinction to be drawn between one course of action and another. All will be good or evil as the case may be. For we shall be directly implicated in one another's action, and the praise or blame for them must fall upon us all without discrimination." (3) Lewis argued further that people tend to postulate the notion of collective responsibility as a result of their conflation of "social enactments" with ethics (11). The notion of collective responsibility is in fact reflective of "primitive ethical attitude" for Lewis because "primitive people pay little heed to the individual; the unit is for them the tribe or family" (15). This is why he proposed that a very good way to discredit collective responsibility is to reflect "upon the affinity between the doctrine of collective responsibility and the undiscriminating 'ethic of the tribe'" (15).

I think Lewis does not succeed in his attempt to make a case for the rejection of the notion of collective responsibility. The arguments he presented revolve on the idea that the affirmation of collective responsibility would lead to absurd conse-

quences. In the main, he opines that collective responsibility would occasion the denial of individual responsibility since people, rather than take responsibility for their own actions, can blame their group as a collective. Thus, from his counterclaims aimed at deposing the assertion of collective responsibility, one evident strategy of argumentation Lewis employs is to appeal to the absurd consequences of affirming collective responsibility. I appreciate that there have been discussions of the cogency of attempting to refute the notion of collective responsibility by invoking the issue of the separateness of individual responsibility which might get lost when collective responsibility is affirmed. Nonetheless, I think there is a crucial point that has not received attention in the discussion of Lewis' position, namely, that Lewis considers the consequence of affirming the notion of collective responsibility the grounds for its rejection.

Over and above the contents of his claims, the general methodological point he makes is to claim that assessing the consequences of an assertion suffices to determine the cogency of the assertion. This does not seem to me to follow, for we may well think that the consequences of an assertion is problematic without in the same vein supposing that that very point about problematic consequence is a sufficient ground to dismiss the merit of the assertion. Ada may very well upset Chichi by asserting that it will rain. As an experienced meteorologist, Ada might be making a very plausible claim but then she upsets her friend, Chichi, who dreads rain. In this case, Ada's assertion has produced a terrible consequence but that does not mean that it is wrong. This is of course an imperfect analogy but the point I want to convey is that Lewis does not offer sufficient argument to demonstrate that we should dismiss an assertion because of its consequence. Offering more argument than just pointing to the consequence will enable us to see if indeed what is required is not to attempt to reduce the absurdity of the supposed consequences, rather than rejecting tout court the assertion. Relatedly, contra Lewis, it might well be the case, as Virginia Held has argued, that more is lost when the idea of collective responsibility is banished from human vocabulary of moral discourse. It seems to me that without this notion, we will not have any handle to make sense of some experiences related to globalisation.

In addition to the foregoing, I am convinced that Lewis is labouring under a very generous but highly inaccurate empirical generalisation. He proposes, for instance, that collective responsibility is barbarous and reflective of "primitive ethical attitude" because "primitive people pay little heed to the individual; the unit is for them the tribe or family". If one does not assume that the so-called primitive people are wrong in their moral outlook merely because they are considered primitive, it will be hard to see the cogency of Lewis' assertion here. This supposed phenomenon that Lewis says is apt to reveal the futility of collective responsibility is based neither on coherent body of correct evidence nor on any decipherable

a priori proof. All the claim seems to offer as a foundation is the general implicit bias which proposes that 'primitive ethical attitude' is immature, and hence, not suitable for the modern 'man' addressed by the sophisticated ethics Lewis fancies himself to be advancing. But this is not an argument but merely a supposition that proves nothing interesting or useful regarding the notion of collective responsibility.

Two decades after the publication of Lewis' paper, D. E. Cooper argued that 'collective responsibility statements' are neither 'misstatements' nor 'merely rhetorical' because there is a sense of the ascription of this form of responsibility that is not reducible to individual responsibility. He proposed that even we cannot validly argue that "collective responsibility is reducible to individual responsibility" even if we assume "that it is possible to deduce statements ascribing collective responsibility from statements about individuals" (Cooper 1968, 262). This is the case in his view because there are cases where the idea of collective responsibility is indivisible, that is, where the 'predicate' cannot be attributed to every single member of a collective (262). However, the acceptance of the notion of collective responsibility should not lead to the erroneous conclusion that its postulation implies the existence of two senses of responsibility, one individual and the other collective. Cooper opines that there is no reason to make this claim, for "the fact that a stew's being delicious is not the same as each of its ingredients being delicious, does not tempt us to postulate two senses of being 'delicious'" (264). In response to the critique of his position by R. S. Dowie, Cooper restated his views in another work on collective responsibility by clarifying that Dowie's critique is misplaced. Cooper pointed out that, rather than aim to show that there exists *sui generis* collective moral responsibility, he specifically aimed to "show that there exists responsibility on the part of collectives, such that the attitudes of blame, praise, indignation etc., are adopted towards the collective, and to no particular individuals" (1969, 154).

The debates about the proper understanding of collective responsibility have continued unabated since these initial positions where put forward. There have been disagreements regarding not just the plausibility of postulating collective responsibility but also about the sort of responsibility implied—essentially, whether or not collective responsibility is or can be moral responsibility. Two discussions that bring to the fore some of the salient issues involved in the evaluation of societies through postulation of collective responsibility are the perspectives of Virginia Held and Philip Pettit.

Held began her discussion with an affirmation of collective responsibility in the context of the concrete experience of ethnic conflict. First, she noted that those who reject the notion of collective are often led to this conclusion on the basis of their thoughts about "metaphysical individualism or positions taken in philoso-

phy of language" (Held 2001, 158).[4] She argued that the debate about collective responsibility "should not be settled on the basis of positions taken in philosophy of language or metaphysics" because this would amount to toeing the line of a wrong ideology in philosophy according which we should consider positions taken in metaphysics and philosophy of language to have priority over moral philosophy. Held averred that she does not concede the priority of these fields and proposed that "the debate should be conducted on the basis of whether there are good moral reasons to consider groups morally responsible, or whether the reasons to refuse to do so outweigh the reasons to do so" (159).

From her consideration of some of the key objections to collective responsibility, such as that it is dangerous and could serve as legitimation of future aggression or that it enables people to deflect personal responsibility, Held argued that these concerns arise due to "misuses of the concept". Furthermore, she believes, like others who affirm collective responsibility, that "the dangers of rejecting collective responsibility are greater still", hence the necessity of retaining the notion. In her view, "questions about how the responsibility of a group does or does not distribute over its individual members are different from questions about the responsibility of the group itself" (162–163). Keeping in mind these distinctions makes clear the nature of the questions one is posing and how to respond to them adequately. Discarding the notion of collective responsibility harbours greater danger on this view because doing so will "hamper our ability to hold both individual person and social entities of various kinds responsible, and to encourage members to take responsibility for the actions of the group" (163). This is the case because discarding the notion of collective responsibility will undermine social and political efforts to deal with vital problems or even engage with "progressive developments" (163).

Philip Pettit also defends the correctness of attributing responsibility to collectives. He provides three 'necessary conditions' that should help determine the reasonability of holding collectives, such as corporations, responsible. To forefend any ambiguity regarding the understanding of the notion of responsibility, Pettit suggests that we should not take the concept to "mean just assigning causal responsibility for what was done" (Pettit 2007, 173). Also, responsibility should not be seen to denote "holding an agent accountable—identifying that person as the one who carries the can, the one who sits at the desk where the buck stops" (173). In addition, "holding someone responsible is distinct from just

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4 Held points here to the example of John Ladd who argued that "corporate language game is such that social and corporate decisions are not and cannot be governed by moral principles". See Held 2001, 158.

thinking the person responsible" because "we think someone responsible when we think that the person satisfies conditions sufficient for being a candidate for blame or approval; we hold them responsible when we go one further step and actually blame or approve" (173). With these clarifications in mind, Pettit explored the grounds that make it reasonable to hold an agent responsible. According to him, three criteria can be supplied. These criteria, he says, should provide the clarity we need regarding when an agent 'deserves' or is 'fit' to be held responsible. In his view, an agent deserves or is fit to be held responsible if the following conditions obtain:

> "Value relevance.—He or she is an autonomous agent and faces a value relevant choice involving the possibility of doing something good or bad or right or wrong.
>
> Value judgement.—The agent has the understanding and access to evidence required for being able to make judgements about the relative value of such options.
>
> Value sensitivity.—The person has the control necessary for being able to choose between options on the basis of judgements about their value." (175)

These conditions are "jointly sufficient for fitness to be held responsible, as well as individually necessary" because "intuitively, any who satisfied them would be a perfectly good candidate for being thought and held responsible" (175).

4 Ubuntu and the Collective Responsibility of 'Developing' Societies

In this section, I will consider an attractive but underexplored understanding of collective responsibility in the growing literature on Ubuntu.[5] Before providing an Ubuntu based account of the collective responsibility of developing countries, let me first make some points about the discussion of the question posed in this article by clarifying some of the ways the responsibility for development has been framed and discussed. I will clarify four approaches, namely, 1) the colonial argument 2) the neo-colonial argument, 3) the cultural norms and internal practices

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5 The notion of collective responsibility I employ in this paper is very broad in the sense that it covers different sorts of meaning we can attribute to the concept. The notion of Ubuntu which is central to the exploration in this section designates the varieties of humanism that is commonplace in African societies. Essentially, it is the idea that human beings owe certain moral duties to others because of their shared humanity.

argument and 4) the political condition argument. One can surely identify more positions but I limit myself to these four because my aim is merely to open up the discussion here in a way that will make evident the distinctiveness of my proposal. This is to say that I am not aiming to provide a view of the approaches to the understanding of the responsibility for development that is all-encompassing. Rather, my goal is to point out some positions that have attempted to evaluate the situation in developing countries by stipulating the bearer of responsibility.

The crux of the first argument is the contention that the culprit responsible for the development issues afflicting developing countries is colonization. This perspective could be understood when we consider Peter Ekeh's suggestion that "colonialism is to Africa what feudalism is to Europe. They form the historical background from which Africa and Europe advance to modernity. As such, they have determined the peculiar characteristics of modernity in each of these areas." (Ekeh 1972, 93, cited in Ekeh 1975, 93). Olufemi Taiwo puts the point across quite succinctly by noting that "many problems that afflict various African countries at the present time with differing degrees of intensity are frequently traced to the lingering effects of colonialism" (Taiwo 2010, 3). Regardless of the different approaches they take in their arguments, scholars proposing the colonial argument are connected by their understanding that colonialism, in the final analysis, accounts in one way or another for the development problems of developing societies.

Closely related to the colonial argument is the neo-colonial argument. Kwame Nkrumah put the neo-colonial argument across by noting that "Africa is a paradox which illustrates and highlights neo-colonialism. Her earth is rich, yet the products that come from above and beneath her soil continue to enrich, not Africans predominantly, but groups and individuals who operate to Africa's impoverishment." (Nkrumah 1965, 1) Nkrumah went further to propose that "the essence of neo-colonialism is that the state which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality, its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside." (Nkrumah 1965, ix) To be sure, this external control generally comes from the colonial powers that were formerly in charge of the currently independent countries in Africa. Through his writings on neo-colonialism from an economic point of view, Samir Amin (1973) set the tone for most of the works that would later attempt to explain the faltering project of development in Africa. The crux of these works was the postulation of dependency theory with regard to the main cause of underdevelopment. By inference, therefore, it could be said that the neo-colonial argument proposes that neo-colonialists are collectively responsible for the situation of underdevelopment in many African countries. In this context, the concept neo-

colonialist refers to Western countries and their comprador elites from the former colonies.

The cultural norms and internal practices argument looks inward for the understanding of the responsibility for the situation in developing countries. Although there are more nuanced presentations of the cultural argument, I will limit my discussion here to the one that is mainly focused on Africa (Landes 1998). Claiming that it makes sense to generalize about Africa as a whole, Daniel Etoungu-Manguelle proposed that "there is a foundation of shared values, attitudes and institutions that bind together the nations south of the Sahara, and in many respects, those to the north as well" (Etoungu-Manguelle 2000, 67). According to Etoungu-Manguelle, internal factors are responsible for the development deficits in many African countries. Thus, we can understand why this is the case by taking into account the dispositions characteristic of African societies. He claims that "Africa, except for the southern tip of the continent, appears to belong entirely to the category of societies with weak controls over uncertainty". And this is mainly the case due to excessive reliance on religion for succour (68). In addition, "the African sees space and time as a single entity", hence their inability to prepare for the future (69). The African is also said to "not accept changes in social standing. Dominant and dominated remain eternally in the places allocated to them, which is why changes in social classifications is often condemned." (70) In Africa, we are told, "the community dominates the individual" and this means that the individual is not considered "an autonomous and responsible being" (71). The African rejects open conflicts, preferring instead to "feast". In effect, this means that "African societies are structured around pleasure" and also that the African is in fact a bad *homo economicus* for whom economics and finance means little (72). Furthermore, there are development deficits in African societies due to the "the high costs of irrationalism", namely, the irrational dependence on sorcery which is complicated even further by the cannibalistic and totalitarian nature of African societies (74). What we see here is the cultural norms and internal practices argument. The outlook of this approach is to single out some values or practices among Africans and use it as a foil to blame African culture or values for the development problems of the continent. In effect, this argument proposes that internal factors in African societies, be it the values or customs, are responsible for underdevelopment.

There is also the political condition argument. According to this view, underdeveloped societies must look to the constitution of its political existence to properly understand what is responsible for its situation. The major proponent of this argument is Claude Ake who argued that the problem of development in Africa "is not so much that development has failed as that was never really on the agenda in the first place. By all indications, political conditions are the greatest

impediment to development." (Ake 1996, 1) Seen "as an ideology, development served two functions. It represented the interests of African political elites and their patrons. At the same time, it was an ideology of economic transformation. But the latter was secondary." (17) We can decipher from the foregoing that the responsibility for the dismal state of development in Africa is squarely the result of the composition and functioning of politics. Political condition in developing societies makes the project of development impossible; hence, it is the bearer of responsibility as it entails the failure of ideology and politics—the two essential drivers of development. The point of this argument is not that politicians lack the will to pursue development. It is rather that the composition and practice of politics in the developing countries of Africa makes impossible the project of development.

The link between the four approaches to the evaluation of the situation in developing countries is that they take the perspective of aggregation when attempting to account for the phenomenon. By this I mean that these approaches start from the premise that we can properly answer the question of responsibility in the context of developing societies when we make proper inferences about who is to blame for the situation. Thus, the understanding is that through assessment of the causal relations between the different factors implicated, we will be able to determine the bearer of the responsibility for the situation in developing countries.

The major problem with this approach is that, for the purpose of moral evaluation, it is insufficient to merely deduce the locus of responsibility. The moral evaluation of developing societies vis a vis their development deficits requires a step beyond merely stipulating retrospectively what is responsible. To borrow Philipp Pettit's language, it is not enough to merely show who we should 'think' responsible for the development deficits in these societies. We must go further and 'hold them responsible'. However, to hold them responsible, we have to justify the assertion of retrospective blameworthiness and also account for why this obligation continues to hold in the future. This means that an account of the responsibility of developing countries must take notice of both the past and the future. It cannot just be backward-oriented in the sense of examining the actions that have occurred to allocate blameworthiness. So too can it not be solely forward-looking in the sense of claiming that the past does not matter. In addition, the approaches discussed above have merely stipulated the collectives that are responsible but not why these collectives have collective responsibility. But to answer the question of collective responsibility, we must stipulate the collective that is fit to be held responsible and also demonstrate why it is justified to attribute collective responsibility to the group. This is what I aim to proffer in my consideration of this problem below.

Form the considerations so far, one thing that should be clear is that the debates about collective responsibility are protracted. Given this situation, it will be rather presumptuous for one to claim to be able to solve all the problems involved at once. The important thing to do, it seems to me, is to situate these arguments within the context of the phenomenon one is dealing with which in some ways involve the postulation of collective responsibility. Doing this has the potential of illuminating the extent one has to engage with the theoretical debates about collective responsibility in the quest for a solution to the problem considered. So, for the concern addressed in this paper, namely, the question of collective responsibility in relation to the responsibility of developing societies, I would rather aim to demonstrate why it is reasonable to consider the phenomenon of development deficits in these societies from the perspective of collective responsibility. Showing why this is reasonable suffices to provide a chink that allows for even-handed exploration of the question, regardless of the normative conclusion arrived at in attempting to formulate an answer.

Given the disagreements regarding the notion of collective responsibility, why does it make sense to ask if developing societies have a collective responsibility to develop? In other words, why would it be justified to consider this question regarding development from the angle of collective responsibility? It needs to be noted that disagreement about a subject matter does not imply resolution in favour or against any perspective. This means that the disagreement about collective responsibility alone does not imply that there is a conclusive opinion that suggests we should not make productive use of the concept. To answer the question posed by this paper, it is pertinent to ask: what is the nature of developing societies that warrants holding such collectives responsible rather than merely thinking them responsible? At the outset of this paper, I noted that the development is central to the imagination of the (mis)trust, dignity and respect accorded people from different parts of the world. In addition to this, there is also the reality that development impacts fundamentally our sense of meaning in life. For many in developing countries, development deficits translate to early death, misery and all manners of avoidable suffering (Szirmai 2005). Furthermore, development is clearly a factor when it comes to migration. As many studies have shown, lack of development is a major push factor when it comes to the migration of people (Vogler/Rotte 2000). And migration is very expensive due to the psychologically and social costs to the immigrants and their host communities. Having to live in-between nostalgias, that is, between what they leave behind and what they imbibe in their new places of sojourn, there is a certain sense in which we can consider immigrants as unwilling displaced agents responding to the deficits of development in their origin countries.

In a nutshell, therefore, it seems to me that there are three basic issues related to development that make cogent the moral evaluation of developing societies from the perspective of collective responsibility. The first is that development is central to our perception of the world, especially the people that live in the different parts of the world. This means that development is a key factor that determines the way we assign important social, non-tangible goods, such as respect, dignity and trust. Secondly, development accounts for some vital aspects of the quest of people for meaning in existence. And thirdly, development impacts in fundamental ways the distribution of resources and cordial human interaction. This last point can be inferred from the framing of increased immigration of people from developing countries in political and social discourses, leading most often to impoverished interpersonal relationships between immigrants and citizens of affluent countries.

Now, the common denominator of these points to my mind is that development is very central to the understanding of social suffering of people from developing countries. To make sense of development therefore contributes to making sense of fundamental aspects of social suffering of a group of people. Now, making sense of the social suffering in this context is imperative because of the nature of social suffering. By social suffering, I mean those negative or harmful experiences that are not reducible to individual capacity or failures but are nonetheless determining for the well-being of individuals. In this sense, development deficits induced social suffering could mean the general situation of not being able to find a good environment to reside in, that is, an environment free from diseases and equipped with basic amenities such as proper sanitation, simply because one's country is not developed. This is the case for majority of the population of people in developing countries that have to contend with the terrible conditions in shanty towns (also regarded as townships, ghettos and informal settlements). It could also mean that one is perpetually subjected to dehumanising treatments or racism due to the cognitive inaccuracies occasioned by the implicit biases founded on negative judgements of the deficits of development. To this end, exploring more closely the development deficits in developing countries from the perspective of collective responsibility is imperative because inadequate response to the challenge of development occasions a litany of social suffering. And we can only come close to understanding this litany of social suffering when we take seriously the collective responsibility of the society to develop.

From the foregoing, a general conclusion can be advanced regarding the nature of developing societies, namely, that such societies are essentially unable to provide the requisite conditions for human flourishing. The reason for the situation is the floundering project of development in the sense of advancement of the changes—political, economic, technological etc.—necessary for the flourishing of

human beings. Now, the crux of collective responsibility here relates to the responsibility for this situation, that is, in what sense the society as a collective can be held responsible for the situation. To this end, a moral vision that can help us answer this question would have to offer an understanding of moral responsibility that goes beyond the tenets of methodological individualism. This is so because a moral vision espousing essentially the tenets of methodological individualism cannot explain the sort of social suffering engendered by the floundering project of development in the societies regarded as developing societies. By its very nature, postulation of methodological individualism affirms only those moral obligations that are clearly attributable to individuals. On this account, the question of responsibility arises only in so far the individual through her actions brought about an outcome or consequence.

Conceived as a strand of humanism that has a pedigree that is staunchly rooted in sub-Saharan moral thought, Ubuntu has been given expression in various forms and shades. It has, for instance, been expressed as Ujamaa by Julius Nyerere, African humanism by Kenneth Kaunda and consciencism by Kwame Nkrumah. Building on the works of African philosophers, most notably, Ifeanyi Menkiti (1979), Kwame Gyekye (1992) and Kwasi Wiredu (2009), current discussions of this moral outlook abound in the literature on African philosophy and comparative African and Western (and most recently, Asian) philosophy. For my purposes here, it suffices to note that Ubuntu is essentially a normative moral thought that proposes that moral responsibility is premised on the notion of human interconnectedness by virtue of which persons can only conceive themselves through affirmation of the humanity of others. The reason for this is that one is basically a human being through other persons (Metz/Gaie 2010; Metz 2010; Gade 2011; Taylor 2014; West 2014; Asher 2017).

Ubuntu discourse offers a moral vision that is not limited by methodological individualism because its core is the interconnectedness of human persons. Taken at face value, the Ubuntu moral outlook may be seen as expressing the obverse of Descartes' maxim. That is, rather than converge at the level of the individual to proclaim 'I think, therefore I am', the moral perspective of Ubuntu disperses to affirm that 'I am because we are'. In other words, it takes as its basic assumption the interconnectedness of human beings and the community by affirming that one's humanity entails recognition of the humanity of others. Thus, the moral life and the principle that is taken to govern it is not derived solely from what the individual is independently but rather what the individual is in consonance with the humanity of others. It is against this background that the moral vision embodied by Ubuntu prescribes a regulative ideal that is normatively relational.

In the context of Ubuntu discourse, moral actions are those actions that are carried out in line with the demands of communalism. This perspective proposes

that moral responsibility arises due to the imperative to care about the humanity of other human beings with whom one is in a web of relationships. Thus, moral responsibility implies the obligation to care about others (Ahiauzu 2006, 35). In the main, I fail in my moral responsibility when I fail to care about my fellow human beings. In contrast, one is fully moral when one cares about the humanity of other human beings. What is implied here is not merely the importance of acknowledging that other people are human beings. The point is rather that there is a positive duty to work towards the realisation of a state of affairs where each and every human being will have the requisite condition to flourish fully. On this account, moral responsibility is both individualistic and collective. The former sense holds because the individual realises her humanity through affirmation and care about the humanity of other human beings. And the latter obtains due to the symbiotic relationship between the community and individuals.

As a corollary, I advance the thesis that developing societies are responsible for development due to the imperative to care about other human beings. This thesis holds for two reasons. The first is that the imperative to care about the humanity of others implies that the society is obligated to ensure that there exist those conditions that will allow the individual to flourish. Without being in a position to flourish, the individual will be incapacitated in a very fundamental sense. By this I mean that the individual will be precluded from realising her humanity fully, given that being able to care about the humanity of others is what enables the realisation of one's humanity. The second reason should be obvious. Given that one's humanity is realised through caring for others in the sense of ensuring that they flourish, developing societies are collectively responsible for bringing about the changes required for human flourishing. Since development is essentially aimed at improving the conditions of life in order to enable human beings to flourish, the society implicated in the pursuance of this improvement, namely, developing societies, ought to take collective responsibility for the process.

Let me attempt to defend the thesis advanced above, namely, that developing societies are responsible for development due to the imperative to care about other human beings. Given that it is not entirely obvious why we should care about the humanity of others or even what is meant by this claim, it is necessary to provide a justification for this claim. Doing this will demonstrate why it is consistent to derive the collective responsibility postulated here from the claim of the thesis advanced. So, why should we care about the humanity of others? To my mind, the reason we can validly make this demand is because we become fully human when we participate fully in the web of interpersonal relationships that define us as human beings. This participation is essentially the fulfilment of the obligation to care because in caring about the humanity of others, we justify the rights that accrue to us as human beings. The sense here is that in the absence of human

beings caring about the humanity of other human beings, there hardly can be any rights due to us as persons. The obligation of other people towards my humanity gives me my rights, just as my obligation to care about their humanity gives them their own rights. The second question about what it means to say that we should care about other human beings is a demand for the content of the thesis advanced. It seems to me that the most basic point of my thesis is that we should aim to do that which promotes the humanity of our fellow human beings, the reason being to ensure that they flourish.

To sum up what I have been attempting to argue, let me concisely restate the thesis I advance regarding the collective responsibility of developing societies in relation to development. The general claim is that developing societies are responsible for development due to the imperative to care about other human beings. This thesis holds for two reasons: 1) developing societies are obligated to ensure that there exist those conditions that will allow the individual to flourish and 2) given that one's humanity is realised through caring for others in the sense of ensuring that they flourish, developing societies are collectively responsible for *taking* responsibility for the changes aiming to contribute to the flourishing of the human person. But why is it consistent to derive the collective responsibility postulated here from the thesis advanced. In other words, how does collective responsibility result from the imperative to care about other human beings?

I pointed out earlier on that the common denominator of the different issues related to being a developing society is the social suffering of the people from those places. To this end, I proposed that making sense of development contributes to making sense of fundamental aspects of the social suffering of a group of people, namely, people in developing countries. This will be impossible, however, if we jettison the notion of collective responsibility. The reason for this is that social suffering does not refer to experiences that are reducible to individual capacity or failures. Thus, the collective responsibility of developing countries results from the imperative to care because this imperative extends beyond the individual. It encompasses the totality of humanity. Since the deficits of development impoverishes the capacity of human beings to be in communion with other human beings because they lack the requisite conditions, the past and future of the process that will bring about the realisation of these conditions becomes a collective responsibility for the society implicated.

One might wonder if by the foregoing I am proposing that developing societies alone are to shoulder the burden of development, notwithstanding their history of having to endure external exploitation and plunder. This is not my point. My argument is rather that besides every other agent that could be held responsible for the development deficits in developing countries, there is still a sense in which collective responsibility is attributable to developing societies. Arguing this point

does not in any way amount to making a case for *quid pro quo* in the evaluation of the moral responsibility for the situation in developing countries. What I mean by this is that the goal of my argument above is not to show that the affirmation of one dimension of collective responsibility implies that any other collective or agent that can be held reasonable is *ipso facto* absolved of its responsibility. Thus, in addition to the collective responsibility of developing countries I have attempted to spell out, other forms of collective or individual responsibility can be asserted vis a vis the situation in developing countries.

A question may be raised regarding the way the collective responsibility I have accounted for here avoids the controversies in the literature regarding the notion of collective responsibility. Although detailed discussion of this issue is desirable, the only response I can offer here is that it is beyond the call of duty to fret about this point. As I already noted, controversy about a concept does not imply that we cannot productively make use of that concept in our normative discourse. Furthermore, it seems to me that the propositions informing the disagreements in Western philosophy regarding the notion of collective responsibility do not apply without qualification to the perspective I have explored, namely, the contribution of Ubuntu discourse to the moral evaluation of societies as a collective. This is the case first of all because Ubuntu discourse is situated in African philosophy; hence, it is not part of the tradition of philosophy where these disagreements have been salient. One could put it crudely by claiming that Ubuntu discourse does not belong to the tradition of philosophy that created the quagmire about the notion of collective responsibility, so it does not necessarily have to proffer solutions for the problem. This, clearly, would amount to dodging the problem raised by the disagreements about the nature and implications of collective responsibility. However, it is an important assertion to make, given that it reinforces the understanding that problems of philosophy are fundamentally defined and shaped by the traditions of thought in which they emerge.

5 Conclusion

The G-20 event I referred to in the introduction brings to the fore the importance of the question I attempted to address in this paper. The reason is that the level of development of one's place of origin is a vital determinant of dignity, respect and (mis)trust. I attempted in this paper to demonstrate how societies can be evaluated morally by focusing on the case of developing countries. The problem of collective responsibility in this context arises due to the development deficits in developing countries. To explain how we can make sense of this issue from the

perspective of collective responsibility, I discussed some attributions of collective responsibility to groups in globalisation discourse. The aim was to show that the attribution of collective responsibility is not an oddity but rather something we do quite often. The next step of I took was to discuss some of the positions taken by philosophers in relation to the notion of collective responsibility. This discussion aimed to show that productive use of the concept of collective responsibility requires clarity about what is meant by this form responsibility. To situate the paper within a context that allows me to propose an understanding of the collective responsibility of developing countries for development, I first summarized and evaluated four positions regarding the responsibility for development. This discussion covered four approaches, namely, 1) the colonial argument 2) the neo-colonial argument, 3) the cultural norms and internal practices argument and 4) the political condition argument. Since these arguments are not capable of explaining the collective responsibility of developing countries for development, I proposed an Ubuntu based understanding of collective responsibility for development. The general claim I advanced and defended is that developing societies are responsible for development due to the imperative to care about other human beings.

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