

A Definitional Analysis of Moral Individualism

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Abstract

Moral Individualism is often conflated with Methodological Individualism. While both are forms of individualism, methodological individualism is often erroneously defined as the theory that individuals are the only entities to whom moral responsibility can be attributed. As a result of this, methodological individualism is often conceptualised as the polar opposite to moral collectivism, the theory that collectives are appropriate targets of moral assessments. Given that the debate on corporate moral agency revolves around whether corporations are appropriate targets of moral attributions, this article utilizes the conceptual analysis and reconstructive methods to adduce the distinction between methodological and moral individualism, ultimately defining methodological individualism as the explanation of social reality in terms of the component individuals; and moral individualism as the theory that individuals are the sole units of morality, that is, only individuals have moral worth. The paper therefore presents a definitional analysis of moral individualism as the polar opposite to moral collectivism, with the aim of clarifying the focal concepts in the discourse on corporate moral agency.

Keywords: Collectivism, Individualism, Methodological Individualism, Moral Individualism.

Introduction

Methodological individualism is often erroneously defined as the theory that individuals are the only entities to whom moral

responsibility can be attributed. However, this definition is properly attributed to Moral Individualism, as methodological individualism, properly defined, is the theory that the individual is the sole basis of social explanation, a position from which moral individualism takes its start.

This paper therefore presents an analysis of moral individualism. This goal will be achieved in two parts. First, a critical exposition of the concept of Individualism and the two versions of concern to this work namely Methodological and Moral Individualism, in order to identify the basic characteristics of all versions of individualism, as well as make a necessary distinction between Methodological and Moral Individualism. Second, a critique of moral individualism in order to assert that moral individualism, due to its denial of composite entities/beings, cannot be sustained as a preferred alternative to moral collectivism.

Individualism

Individualism, as a concept, can be traced to Ancient Greece, where literature celebrated the achievement of individuals within the Grecian society. It was also used to refer to the perceived negative influence of individual rights on the well-being of the French commonwealth.¹ As a theory, it is defined in various ways, and this has translated into different types of individualism, including Methodological and Moral individualism among others.² While this work will examine these two in greater detail, it is important to identify the basic tenets of individualism which cuts across all types of individualism.

There are two basic defining attributes of individualism namely that:

¹ James W. Neuliep, *Intercultural Communication: A Contextual Approach* (Sage Publications, 2020), <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/afir/intercultural-communication/book258452>. (Accessed August 15, 2020).

² Stephen Grabill and Gregory M. A. Gronbacher, "Individualism," in *Dictionary of Key Terms for a Free and Virtuous Society*, <http://web.archive.org/web/20060217144132/>. (Accessed February 23, 2016).

1. The individual is a distinct entity whose existence does not depend on the existence of the group; and
2. The individual acts primarily on the basis of what s/he will gain from the action, and not on how such actions will affect others. This is because the individual views that s/he has a right to act, as opposed to the duty to act, and it is this belief in personal, individual rights that drives the individual's behavior, and governs his/her interaction with others.³

From these two attributes, individualism can be presented as a theory, which emphasises the individual as the focal unit of existence and explanation. It espouses self-directed behaviour for individuals within group settings, with particular emphasis on personal independence, asserting that the individual is only able to achieve self-fulfillment when s/he is personally autonomous. Emphasis is therefore, placed on individual self-reliance in the development of personal abilities and aptitudes. While the individual is an undisputed member of a social group, s/he is encouraged to think and judge independently, for s/he has the moral right to pursue personal happiness.⁴

Methodological Individualism (MI)

The term methodological individualism (MI) was coined by Joseph Schumpeter in 1908 to refer to the description of economic phenomena by individuals.⁵ For Schumpeter,

³ Harry Triandis and Michele J. Gelfand, "Converging Measurement of Horizontal and Vertical Individualism and Collectivism," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 74, no. 1 (1998): 123. Harry Triandis identifies four defining attributes, but these four can be condensed into the two that have been highlighted.

⁴ Shawn E. Klein, "Community and American individualism", *The Atlas Society* (October 14, 2010), <http://atlassociety.org/commentary/commentary-blog/4166-community-and-american-individualism>. (Accessed February 29, 2016).

⁵ Joseph Schumpeter, "On the Concept of Social Value," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 23 no. 2 (1909): 213-4, accessed February 23, 2016, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/economics/schumpeter/value.htm>

methodological individualism is the theory that one starts from the individual in order to describe certain economic relationships.⁶ Defined in simpler terms, it is a dissatisfaction with any explanation of social phenomena which does not ultimately lead to the human being;⁷ “the doctrine that all social phenomena, (their structure and their change), are in principle explicable only in terms of individuals – their properties, goals, and beliefs.”;⁸ and a principle which states that social processes and events should be explained by deductions from (a) principles governing the behaviour of individuals, and (b) descriptions of their situations.⁹

This method of describing economic phenomena was utilised by theoretical economists of Schumpeter’s time, where the individual was the starting point of all economic analyses.¹⁰ While Max Weber is credited with the modern day conception of this term,¹¹ Weber was indebted to Schumpeter for the use of the term ‘methodological individualism’; for this term had appeared in Schumpeter’s work in 1908, while Weber’s first use of the term was in his 1913 article, “Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology”, which was later incorporated into his 1922 book, *Economy and Society*.¹²

In explaining methodological individualism, Weber affirms that sociology should be interpretive in nature, that is, sociology

⁶ Schumpeter, “On the Concept of Social Value.” 215-216.

⁷ Ludwig M. Lachmann, “Methodological Individualism and the Market Economy,” in *Roads to Freedom: Essays in Honour of Friedrich A. Von Hayek*, edited by Erich W. Streissler, 89-103 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 94.

⁸ Jon Elster, “Marxism, Functionalism and Game Theory,” *Theory and Society* 11, no. 4 (1982), 453.

⁹ John W. N. Watkins, “Historical Explanation in the Social Sciences,” *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 8, no. 2 (1957), 105-6, 115, 117.

¹⁰ Joseph A. Schumpeter, *The Economics and Sociology of Capitalism*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 90-91.

¹¹ Joseph Heath, “Methodological Individualism,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/methodological-individualism>. (Accessed February 23, 2016).

¹² Lars V. Udehn, *Methodological Individualism: Background, History and Meaning* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 214.

should investigate the individual as a basic unit, an indivisible entity, rather than as a part of a whole, which is determined by the whole. Weber therefore advocates for an interpretative sociology which would be atomistic; treating the individual as an elementary unit, and treating the collective as a concept which can be reduced, without any loss of meaning, to individual actions; since collectives are nothing more than concepts utilized in comprehending structured individual actions.¹³

While collectives can be referred to in individual terms, that is, anthropomorphically, Weber argues that they can only be analysed on the basis of their nature as "...the resultants and modes of organization of the particular acts of individual persons, since these alone can be treated as agents in a course of subjectively understandable action."¹⁴ Thus, for Weber, while collectives and other social phenomena can be identified as singular wholes, they are by nature plural agents, that is, collections of individual agents whose collective actions seem to be the actions of singular entities, but upon further analysis, such actions are revealed as the actions of many persons and not that of a singular whole entity.

Weber's version of methodological individualism does not only argue that collective entities can, and should be explained in terms of their individual members, it also argues against the existence of abstract collective concepts. Such concepts are characteristically identified as properties of collective entities, and are sometimes used to justify the existence of such collective entities over and above their component human members. For Weber, such concepts, group will as an example, are theoretical concepts of the mind, and are best explained as the results of the cultural values and beliefs of individual

¹³ Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1922), 13.

¹⁴ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 13.

agents.¹⁵ Collective concepts should therefore be used with caution, subject to the knowledge that they connote nothing more than the complexity of individual human actions.

Weber's idea of methodological individualism can be summarised in two basic tenets: firstly, all social phenomena can be understood in terms of individual actions and the motives behind such actions, and secondly, that all complex social phenomena are best described in terms of the social relationships entered into by the individual members of these phenomena. Social reality is simply the subjective meaning that individuals attach to their own actions. This seems to imply that for Weber, MI is a rejection of collective concepts. Collective concepts cannot be used in explaining social phenomena; neither can they be utilized in analysing social reality.

Weber's description of sociology as a tool for describing social reality in terms of the individual, and of methodological individualism as the logical outcome of this description proved highly influential, and was exported to other disciplines through the works of Austrian economists including Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises.¹⁶ The concept was arguably introduced into philosophy by Karl Popper in 1945.¹⁷

For Popper, MI is the view that collective actions and behaviour can, and should be explained in terms of individual actions and behaviour.¹⁸ He asserts that one of the tasks of a philosopher is the analysis of sociological models. This analysis should be descriptive, or in nominalist terms, meaning that social models should be analysed in terms of individuals and

¹⁵ Max Weber, *Roscher and Knies: The Logical Problems of Historical Economics* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), 5.

¹⁶ See Geoffrey F. Hodgson, "Meanings of Methodological Individualism," *Journal of Economic Methodology* 14, no. 2 (2007): 212; and Peter J. Boettke, Christopher J. Coyne "Methodological individualism, Spontaneous Order and the Research Program of the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis," *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 57, (2005), 147.

¹⁷ Hodgson, "Meanings of Methodological Individualism," 212.

¹⁸ Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1945), 91.

this type of analysis is what is known as MI. For him, all “... social phenomena, and especially the functioning of all social institutions, should always be understood as resulting from the decisions, actions, attitudes, etc., of human individuals, and ... we should never be satisfied by an explanation in terms of so-called ‘collectives’.”¹⁹

Popper asserts that the doctrine of MI is an ‘unassailable’ one. It is not only unassailable, it is one that must be understood, for it is only when it is understood that it can be used to explain social phenomena. Social objects are abstractions and theoretical constructs, and only human beings are concrete objects. His version of MI can be seen as a slight modification of Weber’s version of MI. This slight variation is evident in Popper’s claim that collective phenomena can be explained in collective terms, but such explanations are at best unsatisfactory. This is different from the mainstream MI which asserts that explanations of collective phenomena should only be made in terms of individuals.

MI is often confused with other forms of individualism, moral individualism inclusive. This conflation is the result of an inability to understand the distinct nature of the different types of individualism. It is therefore critical at this juncture to make a clear cut distinction between the methodological and moral versions of individualism before an in-depth analysis of moral individualism.

Methodological individualism, from the above analysis, deals with the explanation of phenomena. Methodological statements are therefore statements that prescribe how one should explain phenomena. Not only do methodological statements prescribe how to explain phenomena, they also allow for the possibility of different ways of explaining the same phenomenon. As such, methodological individualism does not necessarily investigate the moral status of existent entities. This investigation falls under the rubric of moral individualism,

¹⁹ Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 91.

which can be seen as an offshoot of methodological individualism, and which will be the focal point in the next section of this work.

Moral Individualism

Moral Individualism is a theory about which kind of beings deserve moral consideration.²⁰ It is the position that the individual is the only moral agent. Individuals are the only subject of moral predicates and values; thus they are also the sole legitimate concern of morality. The individual is of moral worth because of his/her individuality, and not because the individual is a member of any group. The individual's moral worth is rather, a function of the individual's characteristics than his/her membership of a society/collective. Such individual characteristics could be intrinsic, or could be as a result of the treatment accorded to the individual by an 'other'.

Moral individualism is therefore a position that only individuals have moral worth. Where other entities are said to have moral worth, the moral worth of the individual takes primacy over any other. It defines "...the morality of all normative judgments concerning human action in reference to the extent that these actions allow individuals to achieve their interests."²¹ In its more contemporary form, it is the view that morality is a matter of personal choice; and it views the individual as the sole bearer of rights and duties, in opposition to claims that collectives are moral right holders.

Moral individualism is also a rejection of absolute morality. This sense of moral individualism gained prominence after the 14th century when individualism held sway.²² For proponents of

²⁰ Christopher McMahon, "The Ontological and Moral Status of Organizations," *Business Ethics Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (1995), 547.

²¹ Dennis C. Mueller, "Individualism, Contractarianism, and Morality" *Social Justice Research* 3, no. 1 (1989), 1.

²² Brian Orchard, "Moral Individualism," *Vision*, Fall 2012, <http://www.vision.org/visionmedia/ethics-and-morality-moral-reasoning/60871.aspx>. (Accessed February 26, 2016).

moral individualism, absolute morality implies the existence of absolute values. However, these absolute values cannot be defined. Accordingly, absolute morality is nothing more than a tool for persons in authority to dictate how others live, a tool of oppression. Morality is not objective or universal; rather, moral choice is based on individualism. It is the individual who creates his/her own values and ethical standards, and it is also the individual who bears responsibility for his/her choices. As H.D. Lewis would have it, “responsibility belongs essentially to the individual.”²³

Morality, according to Lewis, is individualistic.²⁴ If moral responsibility belongs solely to the individual, the idea of a collective as a responsible agent is barbaric. Collective responsibility implies that responsibility is shared, and if responsibility is shared, every member of a collective is equally responsible for the actions of the other members of the collective, and would be praised or blamed for such actions. This seems to be an absurd position, that one is responsible for all and any actions taken by other members of a collective, by virtue of the fact that one is a member of that collective. It is for this reason that Lewis asserts that the idea of collective responsibility is a barbaric one.

Moral responsibility is ascribed to particular individuals as an assessment of the actions of such individuals. This ultimately determines the moral character of individuals, and since no individual can be morally assessed based on the actions of others, then moral responsibility is inherently individualistic.

As championed by Friedrich Hayek, the standard distinction between moral and non-moral agents is based on the concepts of intention, knowledge, and capacity for choice-making.²⁵ These are the necessary and sufficient conditions for moral agency, which cannot be fulfilled by any collective, society

²³ Hywel David Lewis, “Collective Responsibility,” *Philosophy* 24, (1948) 3.

²⁴ Lewis, “Collective Responsibility,” 3.

²⁵ Friedrich A. Hayek, *Individualism and Economic Order* (London: Routledge, 1976), 63.

inclusive. Therefore, collectives are not moral agents, and to regard them as moral agents is to commit an anthropomorphic fallacy, where human attributes, thoughts and emotions are ascribed to non-living things.

The core tenets of moral individualism can be identified as:

1. Only individuals have rights and duties;
2. Individual autonomy is superior to any other form of autonomy, and must be protected against social institutions; and
3. The individual is the only one who is morally worthy as a singular entity.

From these tenets, various ethical theories have sprung up, from Kierkegaard's existentialism, where the individual is held as the basis of morality, to Peter Singer's animal ethics. Existentialism, championed by Kierkegaard, holds the individual to be the determinant of his/her morality. With its rejection of absolute morality, existentialism claims that the individual is a free being who creates his/her own values and ethical standards. It is only when this is done that the individual can lay claim to an authentic existence.

Arguments against Moral Individualism

Moral individualism asserts emphatically that the individual is the only agent of moral worth, and is the sole bearer of moral responsibility.²⁶ It is the position typically adopted by critics of moral collectivism, the theory that holds that collective agents are appropriate targets of praise and blame. Moral Individualism is thus, a denial of collective responsibility for faults occasioned by collective agents. It asserts that collective responsibility is nothing more than a sum of individual responsibility, and while this position seems logical, it is problematic in the light of practical concerns arising from collective harm. It raises the question of who is responsible for

²⁶ Lewis, "Collective Responsibility," 3.

harms occasioned by the existence of collective entities, and not from any culpable wrongdoing; and who is responsible for acts that are caused by the beliefs and desires of particular collectives. If individuals are responsible for collective actions, how can the degree of moral responsibility for each individual contributing act be quantified; through the roles and hierarchy of decision making in a collective, or through the measure of individual actions which occasioned the collective act?

It is as a result of these practical concerns that moral individualism is termed morally deficient.²⁷ It is morally inferior to moral collectivism because it leaves a normative residue in terms of moral responsibility. Accepting moral individualism, implies accepting the fact that no one is responsible for harms occasioned by the existence of collectives such as the government, corporations and other organized collectives.

Different arguments have been made on the moral deficiency of the theory of moral individualism. These arguments will be highlighted below, and they include arguments on causal over-determination, aggregations of individual judgment, and marginal individual contribution to collective harm.²⁸

Causal Over-Determinism

Causal over-determinism is the theory that an event has been occasioned by too many causes, that is, there are multiple causes for the event, all of which are singularly sufficient to bring about the action. This is subtly captured in Seamus Miller's analogy of the stabbing of Mr. Smith.²⁹ This analogy

²⁷ Andras Szigeti, "Are Individualist Accounts of Collective Responsibility Morally Deficient?" in *Institutions, Emotions and Group Agents: Contributions to Social Ontology*, edited by Anita Konzelmann Ziv and Hans Bernhard Schmid, 329-342 (New York: Springer Science & Business Media, 2014), 329.

²⁸ Szigeti, "Are Individualist Accounts of Collective Responsibility Morally Deficient?" 332.

²⁹ Seamus Miller, "Collective Moral Responsibility: An Individualist Account," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 30, no 1 (2006), 179-180.

presents the case of a six-man collective where five out of the six members stab the sixth member simultaneously with the intent of killing him.³⁰ The sixth man, Mr. Smith, dies from his wound, and during the autopsy conducted on his body, it is discovered that out of the five stab wounds on Mr. Smith's body, three were individually necessary, and jointly sufficient to kill him. This renders the other two stab wounds superfluous.

If it can be assumed that each stab wound was necessarily sufficient to kill Mr. Smith, then the analogy would present a picture perfect case of an event that was occasioned by causal over-determination. If the analogy, as assumed, presents a case of a death, (an event), occurring from stab wounds, (causes), and if each stab wound is sufficient to kill Mr. Smith, then if four of the five killers had not participated, Mr. Smith would still have died. If they all participated in the crime, each of them could still have argued that "I didn't really make a difference; it would have happened without me"³¹, and each man would be secure in the belief that he did not make an essential contribution to the death of Mr. Smith.

If moral individualism, as extrapolated, specifies that an individual is responsible for an action if and only if the individual has made an essential contribution, which resulted in the realization of the actions, either no one would be held responsible for Mr. Smith's death, or all the men would be equally responsible for Mr. Smith's death. Over-determinism can then be seen as a moral appeal used to evade responsibility for harm-effects, and while Miller's concept of joint responsibility and interdependency of action might be taken as a response to this criticism, his response falls short of the mark. This is so because of the proviso Miller includes: individuals are jointly responsible for actions when there is a collective end aimed at,

³⁰ Miller, "Collective Moral Responsibility: An Individualist Account," 180.

³¹ James G. Stewart, "Overdetermined Atrocities," *Journal of International Criminal Justice*, 10, no, 5 (2012), 1190.

and each member of the group is also obliged to contribute his/her own action(s) to actualize the objective.³²

Miller's explanation would be valid if every single instance of collective action is performed with the participating members' awareness of a collective end, which is jointly achievable. Since this is not so, the best response to this objection is that overdetermination is an unfortunate downside to the notion of individual morality and criminal responsibility.

Aggregations of Individual Judgments

Moral collectivists argue that moral individualism is morally deficient because it cannot account for cases of collective decision making, where none of the members of a collective are responsible for the collective decision. A typical example of such case is a university tenure committee's decision on whether to grant tenure to Ms. Borderline.³³

In this case, Ms. Borderline applies for tenure, which is granted. However, the university administrator challenges the result of the tenure committee, which awarded tenure to Ms. Borderline on the grounds that the committee failed to abide by the university regulations concerning granting tenure. The university regulations stipulate that tenure is granted to a candidate who has been adjudged excellent in the three areas of research, teaching and service. As the table below shows, members A, B, and C of the tenure committee individually vote against tenure for Ms. Borderline. However, a majority of the members of the committee vote that Ms. Borderline has

³² Miller, "Collective Moral Responsibility: An Individualist Account," 180-181.

³³ See Luc Bovens, and Wlodek Rabinowicz, "Democratic Answers to Complex Questions—An Epistemic Perspective," *Synthese* 150, no. 1 (2006): 1312; David Copp, "On the Agency of Certain Collective Entities: An Argument from Normative Autonomy," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 30, (2006):211; Christian List, "The Discursive Dilemma and Public Reason," *Ethics* 116, no. 2 (2006): 367; Philip Pettit, "Responsibility Incorporated," *Ethics* 117, no. 2 (2007): 181-2; and Szigeti, "Are Individualist Accounts of Collective Responsibility Morally Deficient?," 333.

achieved the required standard for excellence in all three areas, thus granting her tenure.

Members	Research?	Teaching?	Service?	Tenure?
A	No	Yes	Yes	No
B	Yes	No	Yes	No
C	Yes	Yes	No	No
A & B & C	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Since each member of the committee voted that Ms. Borderline had not met the necessary and sufficient conditions for tenure, who then is responsible for granting tenure to her? Thus, it is possible to have cases of collective responsibility for decisions, even if no member of the collective is responsible for the collective decision.

Marginal Individual Contributions

Marginal individual contribution to collective action is one of the unfortunate downsides to moral individualism. It is a case of individual action, which is neither necessary nor sufficient to achieve a collective result. A typical example is provided in the consequences of the actions of the inhabitants of a river side town.³⁴ This town is divided into two parts, the upstream sector, which is situated at the upper end of the river, and the downstream sector, which is located at the lower side of the river flow. Each inhabitant of the upstream faction utilizes the flowing river in differing ways: to wash plates and clothes, to discard waste in, or to bathe in. Thus, each inhabitant of the upstream section contributes marginally to the pollution of the

³⁴ Szigeti, "Are Individualist Accounts of Collective Responsibility Morally Deficient?," 331-2.

river. The inhabitants of the downstream segment of the town end up with no access to clean water, in essence, suffering from the pollution caused by inhabitants of the upstream section of the town.

If moral individualism were a sufficient theory in explanations of moral responsibility for harms, the above example would showcase the possibility of identifying the particular individual(s) responsible for the pollution. However, moral individualism is deficient because it does not admit of the possibility of ascribing moral responsibility to the group 'inhabitants of the upstream section of the town'. Following from this, moral individualism holds that since no single individual can be held responsible for the pollution of the river, then no one is responsible. This conclusion is unacceptable, after all, the river has been polluted, and someone/some persons are responsible for the pollution. The obvious candidate in this scenario is the collective, the group comprising of the inhabitants of the upstream section of the town.

In response to this criticism, that because individuals cannot be held morally responsible for collective harm to which they contributed marginally and thus, no one is responsible for such collective harm, Christopher Kutz argues that there is a relationship between collective harm and individual guilt.³⁵ This relationship is that of complicity. For Kutz, "individual participation in collective action means individual responsibility for collective harm."³⁶ Any agent who participates in a wrong is accountable for the wrong; thus, an agent is morally responsible for a collective harm to a higher degree than his/her causal contribution to the collective harm. In this way, accountability for collective acts exist, even where an individual participant does not know who else is participating in the collective harm.

³⁵ Christopher Kutz, *Complicity: Ethics and Law for a Collective Age* (USA: Cambridge University Press. 2000), 146.

³⁶ Kutz, *Complicity*, 146.

Conclusion

This paper presented an exposition of the theories of methodological and moral individualism. It highlighted the distinction between these versions of individualism, ultimately defining methodological individualism as the explanation of social reality in terms of the component individuals; and moral individualism as the theory that individuals are the sole units of morality, that is, only individuals have moral worth.

It also presented an analysis of the moral individualist position on the question of corporate moral agency. Proponents of moral individualism have argued that collectives in general are not appropriate subjects of moral responsibility. This is because moral responsibility applies to actions performed by individuals, and cannot be transferred to other individuals. Thus, moral responsibility for collective actions lies with the individual members of the corporation who participated in the collective action.

While this position has been criticized as morally deficient, the proffered alternative, moral collectivism is also not sufficient to explain the issue of individual's moral responsibility in the corporate context. If moral responsibility is ultimately individual, how do we assign moral responsibility in cases involving corporate actors, where, as collectivists argue, moral responsibility is irreducible to individual agents? How can such corporate actors be punished in ways that would ensure that the innocent parties are not negatively impacted? These questions emphasize the necessity of an alternate theory of moral responsibility for faults occasioned by collective actions or existence, which would ensure proper attributions of praise and blame to responsible parties in a manner that would ensure, that justice is seen to be served.