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Routledge  
2020

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Tuomela , R & Mäkelä , P 2020 , A We-mode Account of Group Action and Group Responsibility . in S Bazargan-Forward & D Tollefsen (eds) , The Routledge Handbook of Collective Responsibility . Routledge Handbooks in Philosophy , Routledge , New York , pp. 65-78 .

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# **We-mode Account of Group Action and Group Responsibility**

Raimo Tuomela and Pekka Mäkelä

## **Introduction**

We commonly attribute actions to social collectives and especially to proper social groups. Social collectives can be practically any kind of groups, organized or not and their members need not be psychologically connected. Proper social groups on the other hand require that the group members share goals and beliefs and possibly other propositional attitudes, etc.

Thus, we use locutions like “Apple produces smartphones”, “Russia attacked Ukraine”, “the board dismissed Smith”, “the soccer team scored”, and so on. Not only do we attribute actions to groups but we ascribe responsibility to social groups for (their) actions as well. Locutions like the following are quite common. “The Exxon Corporation was responsible for the worst oil spill in American history when the Exxon Valdez ran aground in Alaska”, or “Germany was responsible for the Second World War.”, or “The club as a whole is to blame for being relegated.” On the basis of examples like these it seems reasonable to accept this common-sense view at least in part and to think that true statements of the above kind can be made.

We will do so here and investigate some central philosophical and conceptual problems related to actions performed by groups and responsibility for such actions. Our main interest is in the (retrospective) moral responsibility for actions performed by groups. Roughly, when we hold a group retrospectively morally responsible for some action we take the members of the group, qua members of the group, to be praiseworthy or blameworthy for what the group has done in light of some normative standard. Thus, in our view, the “truthmaker” of a collective attribution of moral responsibility is the moral responsibility borne by the individual members, qua members, of the group. Moral standard is of course the paradigm but an action can also be appraised from other

evaluative perspectives, e.g. from the point of view of legal norms, etiquette, or rational long term interests. In this paper we only consider cases of moral blameworthiness. To begin with, a group is blameworthy for performing X only if there is an acceptable normative standard which prohibits X. Due to the fact that praiseworthiness and blameworthiness are not completely symmetrical our analyzes may need some tinkering when praiseworthiness is at stake.

It is fair to hold an individual agent responsible for some action only if the agent has certain capacities (e.g. rationality, capability of intentional action) and the agent freely exercised these capacities in acting. Thus, there are both internal and external factors to be taken into account here when deciding whether the action was “up to the agent” in the right way.

In this paper we will look for precise criteria for group action and, especially, for the group’s moral responsibility of such action. We will focus on the following questions. a) When is an action attributable to a group as its action? b) Under what conditions do the actions by the members of the group generate action attributable to the group? c) What does it mean that a group bears responsibility for its action? d) Under what conditions is it justified to hold the group responsible for the actions performed by the members of the group? Questions a) and b) will be answered in terms of the account given in *Social Ontology* (Tuomela 2013: Ch. 3), and our discussion will mainly summarize that account. As to c) and d), we will have new things to say, and in part our answer to a) and b) will be used to generate answers to the latter two questions.

We claim that the strongest case for group responsibility is the responsibility in the following case concerned with a voluntary group. The responsibility concerns an internally and externally free group action, or the outcome of such action, as evaluated on the basis of a “relevant” normative standard (viz. evaluative perspective) that the group was aware of and accepted as its standard or at least in some sense ought to have accepted as its standard. The group action we are speaking about here is action that the group performed as an agent and that therefore binds the group members.

When this group action is viewed from the perspective of the group members' action which constituted it we can require that the latter action be we-mode action. By "we-mode" we, roughly, mean thinking and acting as a group member which consists in we-thinking and we-acting with a collective commitment (see Tuomela 2007, Tuomela 2013). To we-act means acting together as group members, indeed as a group. To we-think means to think in terms of "we": the group members believe something or intend to act together (viz. as a group), on the basis of their we-attitudes, according to their group plan (viz. the ethos of the group), etc. We-mode thinking and acting are based on the fulfillment of the three criteria of a group reason, of a collectivity principle, and collective commitment (for discussion see e.g. Tuomela 2013: Ch 2).

In our view group responsibility for an action performed by the group can be accounted for in terms of responsibility ascribed jointly to (individual) members of the group acting qua members of the group, that is, the group members are together and interdependently responsible for the action. Group responsibility understood along these lines is a central notion of collective responsibility if not *the* notion of collective responsibility.

"Internally free" group action depends on such action performed by the members of the group  $g$  that none of the members of  $g$  was forced or coerced by other members of the group to agree with the group decision, or to act in accordance with it. A group action was "externally free" if there was no external pressure on the members of the group to adopt the goal, to make the plan and to perform the action. By external pressure we mean pressure exerted on the group by other groups or agents outside the group. If the action performed by the group was both internally and externally free we can say, in somewhat metaphorical terms, that the group acted out of its own free "group-will".

In our account the central criteria for a legitimate ascription of group responsibility to a member qua a member of the group are collective commitment and collective acceptance of the action (belief,

intention or what have you) in question. Individual members of a group, in the case of a we-mode action, bear moral responsibility together and interdependently, the moral responsibility satisfies the collectivity principle, in part due to collective commitment and acceptance, that if one member is responsible, then every member is. That is what group responsibility in our view means. Collective commitment and collective acceptance are entailed by the proper we-mode. Our notion of we-mode action captures the core of group agency, or at least so we claim. More precisely the we-mode is primarily meant to concern attitudes and derivatively actions ensuing from attitudes held in the we-mode.

Social groups will here be assumed to be collectives capable of action possessing an authoritative decision-making mechanism (see Tuomela 2013: Ch. 3). Group membership here need not involve more than that an agent regards himself as a member of the group and that the other members of the group tend to regard him as a member of the group. Thus, legitimate ascription of group responsibility is not based on or justified by mere formal membership.

In our view group responsibility, qua joint responsibility as explained above, is, or can be, legitimately ascribed to both *operative* and *non-operative* members of the group. Operative members are the actively acting members in virtue of whose action the group's action comes about (cf. Tuomela 2013: Ch. 3). Here we take it for granted that the notion of group responsibility admits degrees pretty much the same way as the notion of moral responsibility does. A non-operative member who learned only afterwards of the action performed by his group and accepted it retrospectively may bear less joint responsibility than an agent who acted as an operative member. The strength of the group responsibility borne by non-operative members depends on their awareness of what the group is doing, their possibility to control or influence the group's action, and so on.

Our primary focus will be on voluntary and internally authorized groups. By voluntary groups we mean groups the membership of which is up to the members, that is, in the paradigm case both entry and exit are voluntary. We presuppose that the agents have had a choice whether to become a member of the group in question or not, as opposed to nations for instance where citizenship typically is not a result of the agent's choice. Non-voluntary groups are obviously more problematic from the point of view of the collective responsibility of the non-operative members. Internally authorized groups as opposed to externally authorized groups are groups in which operative agents, either operative members or representatives, get their authority to act on behalf of the group from the members of the group in question. (For more on authorization see Tuomela 2013: Ch 3.)

## **1 Group action**

In this section we will give an account of the conceptual nature of actions performed by social groups and do it primarily by investigating under which conditions attributions of actions to social groups can correctly be made.

One of the central theses below will be that the actions performed by social groups are "made up" of, or "constituted" by, joint actions of persons. This thesis will be discussed and made precise below. Here is a simplified formulation of this thesis: If a group (with the agents  $A_1, \dots, A_n$  as its members) does something  $X$  then at least some of its members, say  $A_1, \dots, A_m$  ( $m \leq n$ ) must, in the right circumstances, do something  $X_1, \dots, X_m$ , as their parts of a joint action  $X$  (or of a joint action generating  $X$ ); and in normal circumstances these parts serve to generate or "make up"  $X$ . Here,  $X_1, \dots, X_m$  will be parts of a joint action of  $A_1, \dots, A_m$  which need not be of the type  $X$  but which still generates or brings about a token of  $X$ . In the case of intentional group action, intentional joint action and therefore shared "we-intentions" by the agents will be involved (see Tuomela 2013: Ch 3). Roughly, we-intentions are intentions of an individual with the collective content "we intend to

do X” accompanied with the true belief that there are other agents similarly intending to contribute to the joint action, and thus the success conditions of the joint action are satisfied. From the we-intention the individual infers to his or her part action; we-intend to do X thus I will do  $X_i$ . A we-intention is a collective intention with “we” as its agent. A single group member can have a we-intention as one of the members of a collection or group of we-intenders. Consider: “We intend to do X together”. I as a member of “us” we-intend to take part in our action of performing X, and the same for the other participating members (see Tuomela 2013: 79 and 89).

Consider an example, say, a hockey team's scoring. Some player, or perhaps players, did the scoring. We may say that it was the operative members of the team who did it and define that the operative members in the group relative to an action, X, are those in virtue of whose acting the performance of action X can be attributed to the group in this situation. We can also say in our example case that the team's scoring was constituted by these operative members' actions. When a hockey team scores we are dealing with the whole team of players being the group agent jointly causing the goal to be achieved. Although only one player ultimately caused the puck to move to the goal for scoring, the whole team of players was involved. They jointly intended, or so we suppose, to score. Joint intention means here the players intending together (jointly) to score. This kind of joint intending involves that the individual players are supposed to we-intend to contribute to scoring. So joint intending involves shared we-intention, where the sharing is of the strong kind involved in the members' joint action with the same main goal, viz. to score and ultimately to win the match (see Tuomela 2013: 88) .

More generally, it is a common situation in the case of groups with normatively specified positions that some of those positions and their holders are related to action in the analogous way and that the position holders thus designated as operative members are indeed operative members for a large range of actions, perhaps all the actions that the group in question is capable of undertaking. In such cases we need not always speak of specific actions in the context of group

action, but may speak of operative members for all the activities or for some broad subclass such as decision making (or plan formation) and for carrying out decisions and plans.

As actions by groups will, in the core case, be analyzed in terms of joint actions, some (additional) comments on them may start our discussion. An intentionally performed joint action must come about because of a joint intention (jointly had we-intentions). Joint actions in our sense will include joint task-performances, task performance is satisfying an obligation, e.g. the obligation to (try to) score, based on (at least believed) explicit or implicit agreement or joint plan. Thus typically these qualify: carrying a table jointly, playing tennis, satisfying a (many-person) contract, and sometimes, questioning-answering and conversing.

Actions by groups are connected closely (and in a precise sense) to joint actions by the members of the group performed qua members of the group (see section 2). The basic content of our general thesis on the nature of actions by groups is this: a group's intentional action requires (ultimately on conceptual grounds) that at least some of its members suitably act and that as a consequence the group will have acted. Indeed, a joint action appropriately performed in the we-mode in the right social and normative circumstances by the operative members of the collective will be redescrivable as a group action. Accordingly, if a group can be taken to be responsible for its actions, by way of this analysis we can speak of the members of the group being jointly responsible for such group actions.

This thesis analyzes *intentional* actions performed by social groups. Such actions are obviously as central in the case of groups as they are in the case of single individuals. Thus, for instance, a group can be regarded as legally and morally responsible for its intentional action.

The concept of joint action that our thesis on group action relies on requires some further remarks. First, as an important special case we technically allow actions performed by one individual, in order to have unified terminology (cf. the President representing the country).



Furthermore, we accept the following liberal usage: in the present context we need not be able to say that the operative agents jointly do X (even in the above wide technical sense) but only that they jointly (in the indicated technical sense) do something which will bring about X and is believed by them to bring about it. What they thus perform could be a joint action Y, non-identical with X. To see the reason for this consider a case of a state's entering a treaty where the operative agents jointly ratified the treaty and did whatever was needed; but of course they did not jointly enter the pact even if they jointly brought about that the state entered the pact.

Our view of group action implicitly contains the idea that the non-operative members minimally tacitly accept or at least ought to accept the fact that the operative members perform X. Tacit acceptance here means not only acceptance as true but - what is central here - acceptance in the sense of not very seriously disagreeing with what the operative members do.

The present requirement applies to all cases with internal authorization, that is, authorization via the members' commitment to the group-internal decision-making procedure, thus also to e.g. societies, which are collectives with involuntary group membership. On the other hand, in the case of teams, for instance, we need to require more for in them either all the members are operative members or the non-operative members stand "in reserve" in the strong sense that they may be called in at any moment and could equally well in principle have been selected as operative ones. In this kind of strong cases we must require, it seems, that all group members accept or at least ought to accept the we-intentions and group beliefs needed for group action.

Given the above, there will be a shared we-intention to perform X (in our schematic case), and that involves the idea that the members of the group are collectively committed to bringing about X (see Tuomela 2016: Ch. 3). But in the general case this does not require that all the members strongly "participate" in the satisfaction of the group will in question. Thus, in the case of non-operative members this involves not a commitment to doing one's part of X but the commitment to supporting

passively -- or at least not overtly opposing -- what the operative members are doing when carrying out their commitments, given, of course, that the non-operative members are adequately informed about what the operative members are doing. Those non-operative members who also endorse "We will do X" are, however, committed to contributing, actually or potentially, to X.

We can now spell out our preliminary thesis in a more precise, although stylized form and arrive at the following formulation, assuming that - on conceptual grounds - acting for the group is a task rather than only a right of the operative members (we draw on Tuomela 2013: 163):

(IGA) A group  $g$  brought about an action or a state  $X$  intentionally (or alternatively, saw to it that  $X$  was the case) as a group in the social and normative circumstances  $C$  if and only if in  $C$  there were specific (internally or externally) authorized operative agents  $A_1, \dots, A_m$  for action in  $g$  such that

1)  $A_1, \dots, A_m$ , when acting qua group members intentionally together brought about  $X$  (i.e., there was an action  $Y$  such that these operative agents intentionally together brought about  $Y$  and this performance of  $Y$  generated  $X$ , and was correctly believed and purported by the operative members to generate  $X$ ), or, respectively these operative agents saw to it that  $X$  ;

2) because of (1), the (full-fledged and adequately informed) nonoperative members of  $g$ , as members of  $g$ , tacitly accepted the operative agents' intentional bringing about (or seeing to it that)  $X$  - or at least ought to have accepted it;

3) there was a mutual belief in  $g$  to the effect that there was at least a chance that (1) prior to action and to the effect that (2).

Accordingly, given the right  $C$ , we claim that (IGA) is acceptable as an account of intentional group action. It also analyzes the sense in which individuals can bring about a group action and also the sense in which group actions can be said to be constituted by the we-mode actions (essentially:

proper actions qua a group member) by their members and authorized representatives (for a longer discussion, see Tuomela 2013: Ch 3).

What we have been analyzing above in (*IGA*) is group action in a sense involving the group as a whole. The exercise of the decision making system was claimed to involve the whole group. Especially, in (*IGA*) the non-operative members are assumed to have the obligation to (tacitly) accept what the operative ones did. In our view, proper group action requires at least implicit agreement or plan about relevant goals and views.

## **2 We-mode and acting qua group member**

As already mentioned, in our account of group responsibility we avail ourselves of the closely related notions of we-mode and acting qua group member.

For the purposes of the present paper it suffices to say that the group members act in the we-mode only if they act as group members and are collectively committed to the group action in question. In the more general case we can speak of the group's constitutive goals, norms, and standards instead of group action. Those constitutive goals etc. can be called the "ethos" of the group.

Given this it remains to be said what acting qua group member amounts to. For our present purposes we can say the following. We assume that the group in consideration is concerned with certain specific topics in its activities. Let us speak of the group's realm of concern. Obviously the topics its ethos is about must at least belong to this realm, if not exhaust it.

Considering the general case is that of a structured group, we can classify the types of actions within the group's realm of concern as follows: 1) positional actions related to a group position, which include i) actions (tasks) that the position holder in question *ought to* perform in certain circumstances and ii) actions that he *may* perform in some circumstances; 2) actions which the ethos of the group requires or allows; 3) actions which are based on agreement making which have not been codified by

the group but which still are consistent with actions in (1) and (2); 4) freely chosen activities which include actions and activities not within classes (1)-(3) but which, although not incompatible with them, still are actions within the realm of concern of g and rationally (understood broadly to amount to *reasonably*) collectively accepted by, or acceptable to, the members of g as such actions.

Basically, acting as a group member is to intentionally act within the group's realm of concern. It can be either successful action or an unsuccessful action. What is required is that the group member in question will intentionally attempt to act in a way related to what he takes to be the group's realm of concern such that he does not violate what he takes to be the group's ethos. Thus full success will not be required. There may thus be failures due to false beliefs about the group's norms and standards, due to lack of skill, or due to environmental obstacles. Thus *acting as a group member* in the positional case, viz. in a structured group, is equivalent to acting intentionally in one of the senses (1) – (4) or attempting so to act. Below this notion will be meant when we speak of acting or functioning *qua* group member. Note especially that one can act within the realm of the group's concern but intentionally fail to obey the norms and standards of the group. Then, due to the group members' collective commitment (entailing commitment to each other) to the ethos, the group is responsible for this group member's action, as it should have seen to it that its members do not violate the ethos.

Considering the group's E, which here means the ethos of the group, roughly its basic constitutive goals, beliefs, practices and other similar features, we assume that the group members have collectively accepted it and are collectively committed to it. We can say that E is internal to the group as it depends on the group members' collective acceptance and commitment. Note that E can be in contradiction with the normative standard, N, in light of which the praiseworthiness or blameworthiness of the group's action is to be judged. N is assumed to be external to the group in the sense that it is not, at least not solely, dependent on the collective acceptance and commitment of the members of the group, the action of which is to be appraised. N offers an external yardstick against

which the group's action is measured. We may say that E should, and of course could, be compatible with N but is not necessarily so. (E.g. criminal groups can be proper groups.)

Actions in (1) are of course typical positional actions that accordingly qualify as acting *qua* member of g in one's position. Subclass (ii) of (1) thus consists of actions that the holder of a position may choose from. However, classes (2)-(4) also can occur at least in the positional case. Note that in the case of unstructured groups, class 1) is empty.

### **3 Group Responsibility**

In this section we will discuss responsibility for group action. To recapitulate, we claim that the strongest case for group responsibility is the responsibility of a voluntary group for an internally and externally free group action, or the outcome of such action, performed in the we-mode, given that the action, or the outcome, is relevant with respect to some normative standard. In our view group responsibility is to be understood in the sense of responsibility ascribed jointly to members of the group *qua* members of the group for an action performed by the group, that is by at least some of the members of the group intentionally acting *qua* members of the group in the we-mode.

A we-mode group is a group that can act and does act as a group on the basis of its members' group-based we-thinking and we-reasoning, or, briefly put, we-mode thinking (see Tuomela 2007 and Tuomela 2013: 27, for the notions). A we-mode group makes the members strongly interconnected – the group is supposed to function as a whole that consists of the individual members' performing their parts of the group's action.

A we-mode group is based on the group members' we-mode we-thinking and we-reasoning with the result that all their we-mode attitudes and actions must (at least ideally) satisfy the three criterial elements of the we-mode *viz.* the *group reason*, *collectivity*, and *collective commitment*

conditions (for these see Tuomela 2007: Ch. 2 and Tuomela 2013: Ch. 2). The group reason element concerns the reasons “given” by the group to the members for their participation in its activities. The collectivity condition here refers to a kind of “being in the same boat” condition concerning the members, and collective commitment ties them to the group, especially its ethos, and the mutual commitment to the fellow members concerning the promotion of the group’s ethos (involving its constitutive goals) and other goals.

A we-mode group, as treated in Tuomela (2007 and 2013), is generally viewed as an autonomous egalitarian group where the only normative structural group connections, if any, between the members are based on group-internally constructed operative-nonoperative member-level normative connections. (For non-autonomous we-mode groups involving external power, see Tuomela 2013: Appendix 1 of Ch. 2.)

When a paradigmatic we-mode group acts, there are operative members acting for the group as ethos-respecting group members (in some cases all the members might be operatives). The operatives are in standard cases identified and collectively accepted by the group members for specific tasks. To put the matter in terms of joint action, the basic idea is that the members share a (we-mode) we-intention expressible by “We will do Y together” and, when the intention is satisfied, the joint action expression “We did Y together” applies. The intentional agent of the intention is “we” (namely, the group members forming a non-distributive “we”), and its content is the members’ jointly intentionally performed joint action.

Group responsibility is often taken to rely on the members’ attitudes and actions as group members. In the case of a we-mode group the group members are extrinsically involved in the group’s responsibility through the actions they perform qua group members. Extrinsic versus intrinsic means here roughly the following. A mental state of a person is intrinsic if it is an ingrained property, e.g. genetically determined property, of that person. It is extrinsic if it is externally attributed to him by others (see Tuomela 2013). Yet it may be emphasized that if the members of a

group act together or jointly in a strong sense so that we can speak of them acting *as a group* and as their being responsible as a group, it thus seems plausible to regard their group as being fit for responsibility.

A we-mode group that is not dominated by another group and that can itself determine its ethos is not literally an agent, but it can yet be regarded as a group agent on the basis of its capacity to act as a group (as a unit). As it is not a full-blown agent with a biological constitution it is not an intrinsically intentional agent (i.e. does not have mental states and phenomenal features comparable to what their individual members on biological and psychological grounds have). As a group it can only have extrinsically intentional attitudes and mental states, viz. states that have been attributed to it, typically by its members, while its members qua private persons normally are capable of intrinsic intentionality. Analogously, we argue that a group qua group cannot, so to speak, be “intrinsically” responsible (in the sense individuals are when acting as private persons) for its activities. The group members are capable of having intrinsically intentional mental states, but when functioning as group members they, strictly speaking, only operate on the basis of their extrinsic mental states deriving from the group’s “mental” states that are comparable with role states in a theater play. However, the group’s mental states are efficacious only via the intrinsic intentionality of the individual members. Note that the extrinsic mental states are attributed to the group by the members – via those of their proposals that are collectively accepted by the members as the group’s states. The members can have intentional *joint* mental states (e.g. intentions) but those states often involve compromises and the like. The compromises concern a group attitude based on the (partly) inconsistent proposals by the members. Those proposals concern the group attitudes, typically extrinsically intentional ones, on which the members’ functioning in their roles in the group are to be based. These “role attitudes” are typically extrinsically intentional – and not intrinsically created by their bearers. This situation arises because we are here dealing with the members’ proposals for group attitudes. Note that putting together the members’ attitude proposals may create consistency

problems in addition to those that compromises involve. The collective acceptance of such proposals for the purpose of creating unique group attitudes does not always go smoothly (cf. List and Pettit 2011: Ch. 2).

Assuming that the above is about right, suppose now that the group members have collectively accepted and thus created the group's extrinsic "mental" states and have also themselves "internalized" them. Given this, we can see an analogy between the present kind of group and the case involving intrinsic attitudes and regard an autonomous we-mode group (and other similar groups appropriately organized for action) as morally responsible for its intentional actions in an approximately intrinsic sense. As is the case with a group's mental states and actions, also the group's actually taking responsibility for its actions is analyzed through its members' mental states and activities, their acting jointly as a group.

If a we-mode group with external and internal autonomy is normatively responsible for an action or outcome X, then in general no one of its members is *solely* normatively responsible for X as a group member. This claim is about *moral responsibility as a group member* but bypasses the question of his purely *personal* (or "private") *moral responsibility*. To take an example of an internally non-autonomous hierarchical group with a dictator, for example, an army unit closely simulates this case. The members cannot voluntarily leave the group (or can only do it on pain of heavy sanctions). The dictator's power can be enforced by means of strong punishment, in special cases even death, if the order is disobeyed. In such a group, to speak of an idealized case, the dictator will normally alone be fully responsible for X as a group member, as the other members do not act freely and as they obey the dictator's orders being coerced to do what they do as group members.

In a we-mode group the holistic idea of the members' being to an extent morally responsible for the others' undertakings qua group members holds true. All the group members acting appropriately as group members are, or at least ought to be, collectively committed to the group's



action, and they accordingly collectively bear moral responsibility for what the group did, and this includes mistaken actions and dissidents' actions. In all, in a we-mode group (with or without an internally agreed operative-nonoperative division) the members are responsible for the group's action both as group members and to an extent as private persons – the first because of the holistic, interconnected nature of the we-mode group and the second centrally because intentional group action requires the participation of group members as group members – when they function as sentient and morally sensitive human beings.

Note, however, that a member of an autonomous we-mode group (one capable of forming its ethos and, in principle, of acting freely) can at least partly escape attribution of responsibility to her qua group member in a case where the group is responsible for a blameworthy action X if she was not involved directly in the actual causal production of X and if in addition she publicly disassociates herself from the production of X (e.g., by explicitly publicly speaking against the production of X before its occurrence and perhaps even by disclaiming her membership in the group).

Consider now the responsibility of groups for their intentional actions. "*Actus reus*" and "*mens rea*" are classical principles and requirements for responsibility as well as blame and punishment. *Actus reus* is the requirement of presence of the responsible agent's own action, and *mens rea* is the requirement that the action was performed intentionally by the agent in question. These two principles have been discussed in the case of the responsibility of individual agents, for which case they seem largely appropriate. Manuel Velasquez puts together the classical *actus reus* and *mens rea* principles as follows (Velasquez 1983: 114): "Moral responsibility is the kind of responsibility that is attributed to an agent only for those actions that *originate* in the agent, in so far as the action [is] derived from the agent's intentions (the *mens rea* requirement) and from the same agent's bodily movements (the *actus reus* requirement)." The requirement of the presence of bodily movements is clearly too strict

in general, in the case of groups, but otherwise the account is acceptable as an ideal. Yet, we argue that it goes against the common view that groups are often responsible for what they do and cause.

In the strict classical account under discussion, moral responsibility of an act or outcome can be attributed only to the agent who originated the act in his own body, in cases of bodily action in the relevant activities of his brain and body parts over which he has direct control. This requirement cannot be literally satisfied in the case of a group or a corporation (a corporate agent), for it does not have a body that it could move. Collectivities like corporations act only through their members' actions, but those actions strictly speaking are not the corporation's actions. A corporation's actions are constituted or brought about by the members' (bodily) actions that are not in its direct control but at best under its indirect control. (But the members have direct control of their participatory actions.) Thus a corporation is not fit for responsibility in the strict classical sense (that relies on *actus reus* and *mens rea*).

Corporations and "tightly connected" groups such as we-mode groups can yet be responsible for their actions in a slightly different sense through their members' participatory actions: Assume that the members on the basis of their joint intention realize their intention and act *jointly as a group* (rather than in a weaker sense of sharedness or of interaction). This can normally be taken to entail that the *group acts intentionally as "one agent"* and is thus (extrinsically) *responsible* for its action.

Of course, the members' joint action does not quite amount to the group's action in full analogy with an individual agent's intentional action, as the biological and psychological unity between the intention and ensuing action in the individual agent's case is clearly different, as seen. But if we can realistically assume that a group's action here is what the members do as a unit or as one agent, we seem to get close to the case of an individual agent's case and other cases satisfying the *actus reus* – *mens rea* unity requirement. Yet full unity cannot be obtained on conceptual and metaphysical grounds: the group members' mental states and actions in general cannot be aggregated or otherwise combined to become, respectively, the mental states and actions of a group agent (cf. Tuomela 2013:

Ch.5). Accordingly, the *actus reus* – *mens-rea* requirement does not in general apply to the group case.

Even if groups (such as we-mode groups and corporations) cannot be responsible in the sense individual agents can be, the present view holding groups fit for responsibility in suitable cases still is intuitive. In contrast, the strict classical idea (that assumes *actus reus* and *mens rea* in unison) fits individual responsibility in the case of standard individual action, but it does not apply to the group agent case. It was not originally created to apply either and, it goes counter to common intuitions concerning group responsibility.

In the present account, then, there are the aforementioned two conceptually involved elements – group members and the group – as central elements of group responsibility, and we can speak of the group level (the group viewed as a group agent), the collective or jointness level (viz. the members viewed collectively or jointly), and the purely individual level (individuals viewed as separate individual group members or as private persons).

Our analysis of group responsibility engages each of these three levels. When the group is responsible as a group, at least some of the members generally, except for some special cases, are collectively responsible for what the group does, and, as a default, every member is to an extent responsible for a we-mode group's actions and indeed for every other group member's participatory actions.

The above idea of the responsibility of a group and also of its members for one and the same outcome has been disputed in the literature. The core of the criticism is that this kind of dual responsibility idea is redundant as only individual members' responsibility really counts in attributions of responsibility: If the individuals are collectively causally responsible for an outcome, the group cannot at the same time be causally responsible for it. The alleged causal group responsibility is taken by the critics to be redundant and hence it suffices to deal with the individual group members' causal responsibility and control.

Group responsibility typically connects to the members' responsibility by entailing their responsibility qua group members, or, as we may say, it entails that the members qua members are jointly responsible for the item that the group is responsible for. The members' responsibility need not always be responsibility qua group members, but might be their responsibility qua private persons in the case of a group with loosely connected members (e.g. consider an organized tourist trip to Paris by some people, or think of an I-mode group). An I-mode group is a social group consisting of members who typically think and act individualistically. In all cases the members are also privately morally responsible for their own actions.

Our general view of a group's attitudes is that they are irreducible to the members' attitudes (for discussion see Tuomela 2013: Ch. 3 and Ch. 5, and Tuomela 2016), and it can accordingly be suggested that the same also holds for the case of group responsibility.

Basically, the group's (or group agent's) control can be taken to amount to the group's filtering for what is in accordance with the group's ethos (i.e. group's constitutive goals, beliefs etc.) and excludes other possibilities. Here "filtering" can be taken to mean group members' jointly seeing to it that the group acts in accordance with its' ethos, this can take place by way of members assisting, supporting, and monitoring one another.

This kind of filtering approach involves a kind of concrete plan making by the group for what its members should bring about by their actions as group members. Such bringing about a planned and intended outcome by the group in many cases requires additional planning and decision making by the group e.g. concerning what is to be done, when, where, and how, etc. In all, the group members here do what they do based on the background platform that the group, so to speak, here represents when viewed as an (extrinsically) intentional agent. The group not only plans and initiates its action but also monitors and controls that the group members carry it out when the circumstances are feasible. Loosely speaking, at least in simple cases the group is constituted by its members and its main principles (ethos), and the members not only plan and reason but also realize the plans through

their actions with the idea that the group is constituted by “us-together” and its ethos. If the group disintegrates after its intentionally performing, say, a blameworthy action (that perhaps originally was meant to be a praiseworthy action in accordance with the group’s ethos but was not performed with the care it should have been performed) the members are generally collectively responsible for it. Here the blameworthy result occurred because they had not acted properly as group members in accordance with the group’s plan. The fact that the ethos of the group in question is fully shared (or so we presently assume) and mutually known by the group members to be shared can be taken to play the role of filtering the actions and leaving out only the unfeasible ones, and leaving the group perhaps only with a single action normatively required by the ethos or possibly by the group leader and assigned to the group to act on.

The group is typically an occurrent active cause of the outcome in question – through its members’ functioning in the right way as ethos-furthering group members – in some cases based on a leader’s instructions or orders. However, a group can sometimes be a mere dispositional passive cause as well.

Assuming that the members of a (we-mode) group are collectively committed to the group’s ethos (entailing commitment to each other to further the ethos), the group figures in the group members’ minds and actions, at least, at the time when their own actions are called for. The group, through its members’ actions, that are motivated by its ethos, cause its relevant action (the “occurrent” or active case) or the ethos can be a standing cause for it (the “dispositional” or passive case) – such a standing cause may become manifest in appropriate circumstances. As a result the group will be responsible both for its praiseworthy and its blameworthy actions and their outcomes, which take place through the members’ actions. As the group’s actions are constituted by its members’ actions, the group will be responsible also for its members’ participatory actions (and lack of them in other cases). This kind of group responsibility involves that the members of a we-mode group are responsible for their own participatory actions as well as typically to an extent responsible also for

the other members' participatory actions (e.g. in situations in which some of them require help). We suggest that the members may be regarded as responsible for what the group has intentionally done even in cases where the group disintegrates after the action has been performed and where the members had valid excuses for non-participation in a case of a blameworthy group action or group-induced outcome.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper we have discussed group responsibility. According to our account the paradigm of group responsibility is responsibility of a voluntary group for an internally and externally free group action performed in the we-mode, given that the action is relevant to some normative standard, say N. We have defended collective acceptance and collective commitment as the core elements of group agency, or central analytic notions of group agency if you like. According to our view a group can legitimately be held responsible as a group for some action or outcome only if at least some members of the group performed some action in the we-mode.

It follows from our analyses that a we-mode group is responsible for actions performed by its members. As there is collective commitment (entailing commitment to the others) to satisfy and uphold the ethos, the group members are responsible for "correcting" a dissident's behavior. A dissident may primarily bear responsibility for acting against the ethos, but the group must bear some responsibility for what the group did through the dissident's action, as the members should have monitored and corrected the actions of its co-members.

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