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Corporate Agents of Responsibility as Way of Social and Economic Welfare

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Abstract

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The scientific issue of the paper deals with the formation theory of corporate agents of responsibility. As social and economic corporate agents of responsibility must be describing and it is important to recognize the mechanisms attributing and bearing responsibility such agents. Simultaneously, searching different corporate agents of responsibility has sufficient bases today in order to rethink boundaries of the individual responsibility, which is restricted in the new conditions of global society. Corporate agents of responsibility need in complex analyses which are fragmented in social studies. The gap between theory and real practice is the main courses for studying «new» responsible agents.

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1. Introduction

Social challenges and formation global economic need us rethink boundaries of traditional perception of responsible agent. Considerations about corporate social responsibility are quite important for ethical discourse today. First of all, the discussed issue among researchers does not give the whole situation about the notion what the corporate moral agent is and what the point of using indefinite notion if we have classical autonomous agent such as personality. Even though we use the notion of corporate agent we do not know the mechanism of bearing, attributing, and distributing responsibility. How corporate agent can moral responsible be? Can corporation agents have intentions? Focusing on the notion of collective responsibility is able to discover us how such agents can be

morally responsible? And another difficulty is about bearing responsibilities inside collectives. In other words, speaking about of the mechanism how to divide into moral responsibility between individuals if it is thought that moral responsibility is the holistic phenomenon.

The causes of using the notion of corporate responsible agents in the ethical and philosophical discourse are deeply rooted in the new social changes. The modern society is characterized unprecedented specializations in different areas of human activity and simultaneously, increased human possibilities to impact upon different aspects of life. Today societies have social, economic and political changes where one of the main source of such accelerating changes, is scientific and technological practice. Technological impact of human being and consequences collective practice have long term effects create new challenges for ethical discourse today. First of all, it is worth discussing about corporate agents of responsibility on a number with individual responsible agent.

Talking about an agent of responsibility we mean personality, who is the subject of classical moral discourse. As a fact, any human activity today as if economic and political or technological is particularized form of practice, where to define a local action is rather difficult.

Collective activity, in other words, centralized organizations and decentralized mass interactions are conditions, where the agent of responsibility could disappear. For instance, the process of creating new technologies supposes participation of a lot of people such as engineers, scientists, economists, philologists, ecologists and other experts. Finally, negative harm could be generated by long series of individual decisions and nobody initially had intentions to cause harm.

In this article, the main goal is presenting the notion of corporate agents of responsibility in moral sense in order to prof that its can be real agent of responsibility.

2. Problem statement

We consider we have a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, real practice needs analyses and paradigm of responsibility which is included as well corporate activity, but the other hand, the tendency in theoretical point is based on previous principles which is not effective to attitude for groups actions.

It means losing the sense of responsibility and this tendency are expressed as a desire to avoid assuming responsible actions. For instance, to put responsibility on information systems, which take decisions more and more often today. As the result, we have the situation when individual responsibility makes extensive zones of irresponsibility in sphere of collective actions. Simultaneously, activities of corporate agents are escaping from moral estimations because classical ethics did not use to analyse actions of collective agents.

Today the notion of corporate agents of responsibility has the goal to integrate different levels and aspects of moral senses in social life and this idea must be studied in order to formulate real estimations for collective practice. Using this notion has some difficulties so as theoretical as practical order. On the one hand, real practice has conflicts where moral responsibility attributes for collectives or groups, but another hand, the notion of corporate responsibility has many controversies. For instance, Max Weber formulates the principle of methodological individualism and he thinks that any complex actions can reduce to individual action. The another point is the principle of personality and autonomy

which moral responsibility has. If we are using the idea corporate responsibility, we take a risks to lose personal responsibility. Corporate agents are such as nation, social institutes, human being need moral state because their action have extensive impact and more over the consequences of their actions have long term effects.

3. Purpose

1. To analyse the idea of collective moral responsibility and to distinguish the main controversies, which this idea has.
2. To reconstruct the main features distinctive for individual responsibility.
3. To prove that individual responsibility should to remain a prior form of moral consciousness today. Keeping individual base of morality is the way to get over of controversies between corporate and individual responsibilities.
4. To estimate different approaches in proving status of corporate responsibility agents.

4. Methods

In order to solve these tasks, it is necessary to reconstruct the idea of moral responsibility in whole because philosophical discourse is fragmented, so using historical and philosophical methods let us to see different reflections of responsibility and understand peculiarities of individual responsibility. Using hermeneutic method in this research lets us to analyse negative points which corporate responsibility has.

Ethical method is using in order to recognize how to transform moral responsibility in modern society and also it is important to know how to correlate theoretical constrictions with real practice.

5. Findings

Studding the phenomenon of corporate moral responsibility until the middle XX century was not in center of scientific interests. Today the idea of corporate responsibility is very popular in social and philosophical discourses. The main ague exists between those who supports methodological individualism (J. Ladd, 1984; Sverdlik, 1987) and supporter's collective intentions (French, 2009; Corrllet, 2006). The main questions are about responsibilities organized groups such as nations, corporations and parties. Another direction in the theory of collective responsibility is individual responsibility for negative consequences, which is acted by group.

Different terms can be used to refer this idea such as institutional responsibility, co-responsibility, shared responsibility, corporate responsibility and group responsibility. This type responsibility's polysemous names are an evidence of reflections to collective activities and attempts to find appropriate form of responsibility. The real practice, when the corporate agents are accepted as moral agents has existed since 1960s. For instance, requests against producing napalm by Dow Chemical Company had been appealed to the company on the whole, but not particular people who were in charge of this producing. Company leader's replacement did not change the situation radically. This

case is the evidence of dealing with collective agents, but the theoretical aspect of collective moral responsibility is quite complicated up to now.

The idea of corporate moral responsibility has many controversial points. First of all, in the notion does not have accurate definition and very often researches use close variants, for instance, group's responsibility or institutions and so on. Actually, it means the trial to fix another agent of responsibility and to find adequate variants of responsibility for new practice. Corporate moral responsibility can be presented as a dishonest system of moral obligations. It means that those individuals in a group who do not take decisions must be admitted responsible for others.

The controversies of collective moral responsibility

5.1. The point of personality

The notion of collective moral agent contradicts the idea of moral duty, which is always individual. Simultaneously, the concept of collective responsibility is contrary to the idea of social ethics of liberalism whose fundamental claim is that differences between individuals should be respected.

5.2. The methodological point

Another controversy of collective responsibility which some thinkers emphasize has been based on the idea of methodological individualism. This idea supposes that all social processes can be explained by reference to a set of principles governing individual human behavior. As the result, we are left with a situation in which in every researched case of collective activity we can reduce responsibility and find a guilty agent. Of course, such reduction of responsibility lets some people avoid it and other are forced to assume all responsibility.

The difficulties which corporate responsibility has can be solved if reconstruct the paradigm of an individual responsibility. The paradigm of individual responsibility deal with the sense which a person has. It means, I am able to control a situation and can predict some consequences of my choice. Responsibility is way how abstract moral duty concretizes in an individual act. In other words, responsible person who is able to accept a situation as dependent from a moral choice. Retrospective aspect of individual responsibility means that the action has free and an intentional character and a person knows about all circumstances. It is a basis to have connection between responsibility and capacity to predict consequences. If we do not have a chance to see consequences, we cannot be responsible. The negative sanctions such as shame, conscience and guilt appear after taking decision. In Kant's ethics where outcomes do not have value, so a personality is responsible for only motives. And it is not important where an accent is. In other words, motives or outcomes do not have importance for moral obligation because the boundaries of the actions have strict time – the present.

Summarizing the main definitions of responsibility, it can be defined as particular personal interpretation of moral duty. Through the responsibility abstract moral obligation, which appeals to all human being, becomes individual duty. Relations between responsibility and consequences are based in human ability to predict and control outcomes. One cannot be responsible for results which are unforeseen.

In generally, the main condition of corporate moral responsibility supposes that people in groups agreed to take responsibility for actions which have been acted by others. In other words, a person is responsible for others actions and has absolutely the same sanctions real and negative order as if he or she takes part in actions directly.

The bases for such moral obligation is belongs to social community. It is said that the idea of corporate responsibility is the way to eliminate moral responsibility. It is a big deference between person responsibility and a situation when people are in the group. Groups actions reduce the sense of responsibility.

Summarizing the main definitions of responsibility, it can be defined as particular personal interpretation of moral duty. Through the responsibility abstract moral obligation, which appeals to all human being, becomes individual duty. Relations between responsibility and consequences are based in human ability to predict and control outcomes. One cannot be responsible for results which are unforeseen. Responsibility means the ability of a person to act consciously and take into account the consequences of his or her actions. Being capable to understand the needs of other people is main feature of responsible person. Responsibility has intentional character because it is attitude of personality to society, to another person and to herself or himself. The problem of ascriptions has not been complicated for certain. Talking about consequences of actions in the past they were predictable and ethical theory did not deal with remote outcomes and it was not necessary to have complex scheme for ascriptions. Close interactions among people created briefly mechanism of moral estimations where moral imperatives were as the fundamental principles, but simultaneously they concretized in the particular cases. Retrospective (backward-looking) character of individual responsibility is bases for moral assessment and this mechanism which provided responsibility were shame, blameworthiness. According to this mentioned definitions of responsibility we suppose that the classical ethical theory did not need some corporate moral agents at all because a responsibility agent could be defined in any case.

The paradigm of individual responsibility which is presented in this study needs us in order to we answer following questions. First of all, does really corporate responsibility reduce individual responsibility? Secondly, is it possible to keep individual bases of morality within collective activity?

At that moment, different discussions of collective responsibility can be articulated in three projects, where researchers attempt to proof moral status of collective agents. The main assumption which we should admit about collective responsibility that it has intentions so as individuals. Such idea realizes in a project which is called «a Corporate Agents of Responsibility» (Corlett, 2006). In this case, we deal with organized actions where a personality is place into institutional and corporate context. So as to solve the anthropological prejudice of personality P. French reformulates this principle. Using another variant of personality concept, he creates another approach. It means that the concept of personality can be used for different agents, for instance, corporations which have abilities to act intentionally and to bring about changes in his or her environment. This an agent is able to correct its behaviour using the positive and negative experience. This agent can to take interests of other subjects into account. Actually, according to P. French some collectives is satisfy completely the conditions which we use for persons in the moral sense. If we observed some kind of corporations, they are satisfied these clams. As

we have already mentioned, responsibility is intrinsically linked to the intention. If we consider that a feature such as intention can be attributed to certain groups (in which case we would qualify it as a collective intention), we can treat them as agents of moral responsibility.

In this situation to think that such agencies accept moral responsibility so well individuals are not correct because it is another way accepting responsibilities. P. French thinks that the collective intention realizes in «corporate internal decision-making structure». In order to realize effective mechanism taking responsibility, the researcher is speaking about two elements: firstly, «an organizational or responsibility flow chart that delineates stations and levels within the corporate power structure» (French, 2009). Secondly, «corporate decision recognition rule(s) usually embedded in something called corporation policy».

As the result, corporate decisions do not reduce individual decisions, corporations are collectives (or conglomerates) and their internal identity does not have strict connection with constant personal membership. P. French identifies moral individual position with moral position of collectives. Actually it is not correct we cannot to equalize their positions (French, 2009).

Corporations are not moral personality and using the depersonalized structure in collectives does not guarantee that we would deal with real moral agent. Accumulate will all participants in the collective decisions supposes that such agent needs particular structure which provides the democratic features. In other words, the atmosphere of publicity, where accepting different positions and open public discussions. It is thought we have a chance to save individual base of morality in group. Opposite situation when democratic structure is absent in collectives, we do not have a chance to solve the problem of moral responsibility. That is why the French's model of corporate responsibility was supplemented with principals of publicity by A. Corlett (Corlett, 2006) and N. Rescher (Rescher, 1998). In this context the mechanism of bearing responsibility can be realized through a shame. Using the notion of blameworthiness for corporations is not efficient because usually corporations have more pragmatic goal than moral, so the shame can be effective. Public censure is the strongest mechanism of effect for corporate than blameworthiness, because blameworthiness characters' individual behaviour, but for corporate is more important confidants of partners.

Finally, organized collectives cannot be presented as a moral personality, but they are particular agents or «quasi personality», which can be accessed through moral norms. Vicarious Notion of Responsibility is another way to see in collective's responsible agents. Focusing on moral senses such as blame, ashamed, repentance which a personality has for other members of group. It is thought that the claim for this kind of experience becomes a moment of identification of the individual with the group on the basis of national, religious, professional or other interests. Actually, this type of corporate responsibility deals with individual responsibility for activity and the consequences, which have been acted by others. Basically, the corporate responsibility does not eliminate individual dimension of responsibility. when people shared values with other people it creates bases for bearing and attributing responsibility. In this sense, the main condition is our is symbolic sharing preferences with others. The notion of responsibility before have provided for individual's particular social role and guaranteed part of irresponsibility in collective actions. Today decisions of corporate agents are a subject of personal

responsibility and care, because a person through the own preferences, values takes part in different organizations, social groups.

6. Conclusions

1. The idea of corporate responsibility has a heuristic significance for changed human activity today and it makes ethical theory prove unjustified escaping from moral responsibility.
2. Analysing the notion of corporate responsibility let us to use another responsible agent such as corporations, different organized groups.
3. The paradigm of individual responsibility is not satisfied in modern conditions of life, so this type of responsibility should be supplemented corporate types of responsibility.
4. The idea of corporate responsibility does not eliminate individual responsible agent, it is a way to get over the gap between theory and practice.

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