

**Conference ‘The Buck Stops Where? Responsibility in the Global Economy’
21st May 2014
UCL, School of Public Policy**

Conference Pack

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1. Full Day Programme

Day Programme

9.30-10.00	Welcome and Registration	Common Room, SPP, 29 Tavistock Sq, London, WC1H 9QU
10.00-11.00	Keynote Speech <i>Elizabeth Ashford</i>	Council Room, SPP, 29 Tavistock Sq, London, WC1H 9QU
11.00-11.15	Coffee Break	Common Room, SPP
11.15-12.45	Session 1 <i>Responsibility within Structures</i>	Council Room, SPP
12.45-13.45	Lunch	Common Room, SPP
13.45-15.15	Session 2 <i>Consumer Responsibility</i>	Council Room, SPP
15.15-15.30	Coffee Break	Common Room, SPP
15.30-17.00	Session 3 <i>Collective Responsibility</i>	Council Room, SPP
17.00-17.30	Break	

Evening Programme

17.30-19.00	Roundtable discussion <i>Responsible Conduct in the Global Economy: What is it? And how do we get there?</i>	Archaeology Lecture Theatre G6 (31-34 Gordon Square)
19.00-20.00	Drink Reception	Committee Room, SPP, 29-30 Tavistock Sq., London, WC1H 9QU
20.15	Conference Dinner	Carluccio's, Brunswick Centre

2. Conference Programme

The Buck Stops Where? Responsibility in the Global Economy

- 9.30 *Welcome and Registration*
- 10.00 Keynote Speech
 – Professor Elizabeth Ashford (St Andrews)
- 11.00 *Tea and Coffee*
- 11.15 Session 1: Responsibility within Structures
 Chair: Avia Pasternak (UCL)
- Janelle Poetzsch (PhD Student in Philosophy, Ruhr-Universität Bochum), “Sweatshop Labour, Structural Injustice and the Role of Corporations”
 - Melanie Brazzell (Graduate Student in Gender Studies, Humboldt University) “Positioning Ourselves: Iris Marion Young on Oppression, Shared Responsibility and Sweatshops”
 - Kristian Hoyer Toft (Assistant Professor in Philosophy, Aalborg University), “Liberal CSR and New Marxist Challenges”
- 12.45 *Lunch*
- 13.45 Session 2: Consumer Responsibility
 Chair: Saladin Meckled-Garcia (UCL)
- Sabine Hohl (Research Associate at Centre for Ethics, Zurich University), “Contribution-Based Consumer Responsibility”
 - Jan Willem Wieland (Postdoctoral Researcher in Philosophy, VU University Amsterdam), “Do You Care Enough?”
 - Nina Van Heeswijk (PhD Student in Philosophy, University of Gothenburg), “Global Justice, Special Relations and the Global Economy”
- 15.15 *Tea and Coffee*
- 15.30 Session 3: Collective Responsibility
 Chair: Emily McTernan (UCL)
- Sara Chant (Associate Professor of Philosophy, University of Missouri), “Collective Moral Responsibility and Collective Free Action”
 - James Dempsey (Research Fellow in Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick), “Moral Responsibility and Business Culture”
 - Dimitrios Efthymiou (Teaching Fellow in Political Theory, University of Southampton), “State Responsibility in the EU: A Normative Account”
- 17.00 *Conference Ends*

3. Abstracts

Session 1: Responsibility within Structures

Sweatshop labour, structural injustice, and the role of corporations

Janelle Poetzsch (Ruhr-Universität Bochum)

In my paper, I will focus on labour exploitation in sweatshops and on what grounds corporations can be demanded to address this issue. Specifically, I aim to refute the theses of philosopher Matt Zwolinski. He claims that corporations who outsource their production to sweatshops in developing countries actually do something laudable: They provide employment opportunities and hence act beneficially. Therefore, we shouldn't reproach these companies for acting exploitatively. Rather, we ought to applaud their actions because they make a mutually advantageous exploitation possible (Zwolinski 2007). Zwolinski's position is based on his refutation of the interaction principle. I will demonstrate that such a view is untenable and give reasons for sustaining the interaction principle.

In his latest paper, Zwolinski concedes that sweatshops are based on structural injustice. Nevertheless, he argues that this injustice is upheld by governments to attract foreign investors. Thus, sweatshop workers are allegedly not being harmed by the actions of transnational corporations, but by the decisions of their political leaders. It would therefore be supererogatory to ask corporations to remedy the situation of sweatshop workers. Zwolinski claims that corporations simply benefit from this injustice without contributing to it, and hence do not act morally wrong (Zwolinski 2012).

I will show that Zwolinski's argument ignores the reciprocal interaction between individual behaviour and structural injustice. Moreover, I will argue that to benefit from structural injustice suffices to become remedially responsible for it. This is because an individual who benefits from structural injustice both reinforces and contributes to it. Correspondingly, a corporation which continues to outsource its production to countries with highly problematic political structures encourages the political leaders of these countries to uphold structural injustices to attract investors. It hence becomes complicit in maintaining an unjust situation it has formerly only benefited from. Concluding, I will demonstrate that the social connection model by philosopher Iris Marion Young (2006) is an adequate response to the moral challenges of our global economy.

Positioning Ourselves: Iris Marion Young on Oppression, Shared Responsibility, and Sweatshops

Melanie Brazzell (Humboldt University)

In her final work, *Responsibility for Justice*, Iris Marion Young argues convincingly that the traditional liability model of responsibility designed for individuals is unsuitable for cases of structural harm, including economic harms. Whereas theorists of collective responsibility have often sought to stretch the liability model to include groups, thus leading to all kinds of debate about the nature of groups and their capacity to fulfill the conditions of liability, Young offers us another account of responsibility entirely. The grounds of Young's political or shared responsibility lie not in group membership nor in cosmopolitan-utilitarian duty, but rather in active participation in structures which produce injustice via one's position or role. This responsibility is shared by each non-distributively; it is an individual responsibility not a collective one, but can be discharged only through collective action due to its shared nature. One's power, privilege, interest, and collective ability determine the degree and kind of responsibility an individual carries. This offers us practical guidelines for understanding the specific roles of

victims, participants in civil society, consumers, political and state actors, and employees within collective action to address economic injustices like sweatshops, a principal example in Young's account.

What Young's compelling work is missing, however, is an account of justice that would systematize the examples of injustice she employs. I argue that we can look back through her oeuvre to understand her definition of justice in terms of oppression, understood as structurally produced vulnerability to harm for some and unearned benefit for others. Using Young's and Ann E. Cudd's accounts of oppression, I will argue that we can best understand chronic economic harms as generated and structured by oppression, including histories of colonialism and slavery and the ongoing exclusion of female- socialized, queer, racialized, trans, young, old, and/or disabled bodies from economic opportunities. Shared responsibility calls into question "precisely the background conditions that ascriptions of blame or fault assume to be normal" (107), thus allowing us to recognize economic harms in our own everyday lives rather than exclusively in the exotic, Otherized space of the third-world sweatshop.

Throughout her career, Young's definition of oppression and injustice has evolved, gradually shifting from an analysis of groups towards one of structural positioning. I argue that explaining both oppression and shared responsibility in terms of positionality more accurately captures the dynamics of interdependent injustices that cross national borders and traverse various institutions. In reframing the debate, Young breaks through many of the philosophical impasses of theories of collective responsibility and offers us sharper tools for conceptualizing and enacting our accountability for global economic harms.

Liberal CSR and New Marxist Challenges

Kristian Hoyer Toft (Aalborg University)

The term 'corporate social responsibility' (CSR) is considered by the new Marxist left to be a self-defeating oxymoron (Hanlon 2008, Banerjee 2008, Žižek 2008, Cederström & Marinetto 2013, Fleming & Jones 2013). In this paper, the new Marxist challenge to CSR as a meaningful, coherent concept and practice is discussed. In the wake of the financial crisis the critique from the Marxist-inspired left tends to replace the scepticism of the libertarian right (Friedman 1970). The legitimacy of business in society is at stake, and the critical left is well placed to debunk the integrity of business's claim to social responsibility.

To provide an overview of current Marxist inspired CSR thinking, this paper introduces the Hegelian inspired critique of a New Spirit of Capitalism (Chiapello 2013) as well as the critique of ideology targeted at the neo-liberal project of corporate responsibility (Žižek 2008, Fleming & Jones 2013).

Subsequently, two possible liberal 'revisions' to the Marxist inspired scepticism of CSR are presented and discussed: first, the theory of a social connection model (Young 2006), and then the theory of deliberative democracy and political CSR (Scherer & Palazzo 2011).

Finally, the paper concludes with a plea to reconsider the classical Marxist concept of exploitation.

Session 2: Consumer Responsibility

Contribution-based Consumer Responsibility

Sabine Hohl (Centre for Ethics, Zurich University),

Individual consumers are often seen as too far removed from harms that occur due to economic activity to be morally responsible for them. Blaming consumers for such collectively caused harms at first sight seems to simply overstretch the limits of individual responsibility, in particular because individual consumers often cannot prevent the occurrence of the harms in question, which in turn makes it difficult to argue that they should adapt (or should have adapted) their

behaviour. In this paper, I argue that holding consumers morally responsible on the basis of their contribution to economic harms is nevertheless possible, and that a shift to political responsibility, as suggested among others by Iris Young, risks missing an important dimension of moral responsibility. Rather than avoiding “blame shifting”, holding individual consumers responsible on the basis of their personal consumption choices becomes entirely impossible on an exclusively political account. Rather than pitting individual moral responsibility and political responsibility against each other, these two concepts of responsibility should be seen as complementary.

A contribution-based account of moral responsibility may not seem promising because of the small (if not practically inexistent) effect individual consumers have on collectively caused economic harms. In Christopher Kutz’ terminology, we are confronted with an “I-We-Problem”-the harm that is caused collectively may be great, and yet most individuals that are involved in bringing it about seem to escape personal responsibility. Holding consumers responsible for their contribution to economic harms requires a theory of individual moral responsibility for collectively caused harms that is not tied to the idea of “making a difference” in the sense of being able to unilaterally prevent or reduce a harm. This is due to the fact that it is in many cases implausible that an individual consumer can prevent or reduce economic harms. At the same time, such a theory of individual responsibility still needs to retain a link between the actions of individual consumers and collectively caused harms or it will fail to provide grounds for adapting one’s behaviour. I argue that the relevant link lies in the causal influence consumers exert on economic harms (which is to be distinguished from “making a difference in the outcome”). In the paper, I sketch the outlines of a contribution-based theory of moral responsibility for economic harms.

Do You Care Enough?

Jan Willem Wieland (VU University Amsterdam)

We are largely unaware that many products we consume (clothes, coffee, smartphones, etc.) are produced in slavery-like circumstances. Given that more and more information is available about these things, one is tempted to think that we should know better. Yet, the question is whether this is right. Are we to be blamed?

According to recent proposals, blameworthiness is a function of the agent’s indifference (cf. Arpaly 2003, Smith 2005, FitzPatrick 2008, Sher 2009, Björnsson 2011, Harman 2011, Talbert 2013). Basically, the idea is that one is to be blamed for a certain outcome when one does not care enough.

On this account, consumers are to be blamed for their slavery footprint when they do not care enough about the working conditions abroad or about fair trade alternatives. The question is: what does it take to care enough?

Standardly, this is determined on the basis of the agent’s desires and values. However, such an account is problematic insofar as it is problematic to identify the agent’s desires and values on the basis of outcomes (cf. King 2009, Levy 2011). In this paper, I propose and defend an alternative account which measures the agent’s concern on the basis of her circumstances (rather than her desires and values).

Basically, the proposal is that an agent S does not care enough about a certain outcome O of one of her actions or omissions when: (i) S is not ignorant about O, and S could have avoided O, or (ii) S is ignorant about O, but could have removed (helped removing) her ignorance (modulo certain circumstances), or (iii) S could not have avoided O, but could have created (helped creating) an opportunity to avoid O (modulo certain circumstances).

In the paper, I will argue for two main claims. First, the proposed criterion can be independently motivated, as it follows from general considerations about the so-called excusing conditions of moral responsibility. Second, on the basis of this criterion, I will argue that consumers bear more responsibility than is usually assumed.

Nina Van Heeswijk (University of Gothenburg)

Globalization and free trade have opened up a worldwide market. This has increased consumer freedom, but at the same time has reduced possibilities for governments to safeguard production and consumption through legislation and regulatory policy. In the absence of such regulations, consumers can buy products produced far away with little respect for the human rights of the farmers and factory workers involved. In this context the question emerges what is morally required of consumers regarding the situation of those producing their goods. It can be asked whether there are any consumer duties, and, if so, why they arise (their basis), to whom they are owed (their scope), and which requirements for action they involve (their content). In this paper I will investigate the basis of consumer duties, that is, how such duties, if there are any, are grounded.

Moral duties regarding global poverty and human rights are usually thought of either in terms of ‘duties of justice’ or of ‘duties of humanity’. While the latter are considered universal, duties of justice are often thought to exist only towards those with whom we stand in some special kind of relation, e.g. the political relation between citizens of national states. While recently authors like Pogge, Cohen and Sabel and James have argued that in our globalized world the relevant kind of political relations exist globally, they nevertheless adopt the focus on political relations as generating duties of justice. However, given the above-sketched developments one may wonder whether the economic relations within our global economy may (also) generate specific duties beyond humanitarianism. This question is hardly discussed within the context of global justice. This paper aims to address this lacuna. It will be investigated to what extent economic relations indeed engender moral duties beyond humanitarianism, and if so, what their ground is.

I will use Sangiovanni’s distinction between non-relational conceptions of justice, on which considerations of distributive justice arise among persons as such, independent of any pre-existing social ties between them, and relational conceptions, on which they arise only between persons standing in some relevant kind of social or institutional relation. The paradigm case is that of the relation among fellow citizens in a national state. Different aspects of this political relation have been stressed as necessary conditions for justice to be at stake, such as the existence of a common sovereign power, a common national identity or reciprocal cooperation to maintain the state’s capacity to provide basic collective goods. In this paper a relational conception of justice will be taken as a starting point. That is, it will be granted that existing institutions or social practices may fundamentally alter the kind of social relations in which people stand, which makes that different distributive principles apply than would have been the case otherwise. In this paper it will be investigated whether economic rather than political relations might give rise to duties of (distributive) justice that have implications for consumer behaviour.

Session 3: Collective Responsibility

Collective Moral responsibility and Collective Free Action

Sara Chant (University of Missouri),

I have argued that the most compelling examples of real collective responsibility are situations in which the individual group members are not fully morally responsible for their contributions to the collective action. These are cases in which every member of the group is constrained by the strategic dynamics of the group itself. Moreover, just as coercion diminishes moral responsibility in cases of individual action, group dynamics can diminish individual responsibility in cases of collective action. Importantly, if these dynamics do not also diminish the collective responsibility of the group as a whole, then the group’s responsibility cannot be entirely distributed to its individual members. The key task is to demonstrate how group dynamics can sometimes undermine the freedom of the individual members without also undermining the freedom of the

group.

Consider a case I call the “Mexican Standoff.” Five men awake to find themselves in a dire predicament. Each is holding a gun to the head of another such that everyone in the group has a gun pointed to his head. They all recognize each other as violent and untrustworthy men, so none is willing to put down his gun unilaterally. Moreover, everyone knows that the first person to shoot will himself be immediately shot. Thus, they find themselves in a stalemate from which no individual can extricate himself.

The three men are not individually responsible for their participation in the impasse. For if having a gun pointed at one’s head diminishes one’s moral responsibility in ordinary two-person cases of coercion, then it has the same effect in this case. Nevertheless, despite the fact that no individual is free to disengage, there are conditions in which a group as such is free to end the stalemate. In essence, all they would need to do is put down their guns. If the men are free to do this together, then it is plausible to ascribe responsibility for the continued impasse, and perhaps the harms it may cause, to the group as a whole.

If collective action is free only if the group could have intended to do otherwise, then the task is to clarify the nature of collective intention. On the equilibrium account of collective intentions I consider, collective intention is identified with an epistemic equilibrium among the individuals in the group. To reach an epistemic equilibrium, the cost associated with more information about the relevant mental states of the other agents in the group must exceed the cost of failures of coordination. Since the cost of such failures can be very high, there must be something about the group’s structure or environment that facilitates the appropriate information transmission. In corporations, governments, teams, marriages, and the like, there will typically be features of the group that facilitate the equilibrium even when the stakes are extremely high. If so, the collective action may be free in the manner required by real collective moral responsibility.

Moral Responsibility and Business Culture

James Dempsey (University of Warwick)

The idea that business organisations have cultures, and are susceptible to moral criticism on the basis of these cultures, is quite commonplace – as the recent experience of corporations such as Enron, BP, and Barclays demonstrates. Exactly what these criticisms amount to is less clear. The aims of this paper are (1) to explain what the substance of such criticisms is; (2) to determine when, if at all, they may be justified; and (3) to explore the implications for our moral judgments of individual members of business organisations when they are justified.

I start by developing a conception of ‘culture’ that is subtly different from those typically employed in the sociological and philosophical literature, one that invokes the goal-oriented values that organisation members share. Such sharing may be conceived in different ways, corresponding to different ways in which culture may be manifested. In the strongest form of value sharing organisation members together commit themselves to those values, providing each other with reasons to act in their pursuit. This, I argue, is how values are most commonly shared, and culture created, in business organisations.

Given that business organisations and their members are under certain moral constraints regarding the kinds of activities they undertake, I argue that organisational culture is justifiably criticised when the values that underpin it encourage actions that breach these moral constraints. Moreover, given that the existence of such a culture is directly connected to the value-sharing activity of organisation members, there is a direct link between those members and the actions and outcomes that a morally bad culture precipitates. Each member participates in establishing reasons for all members to act in morally bad ways, and so each is complicit when those reasons are acted upon.

While this establishes causal responsibility on the part of organisation members for bad corporate actions and outcomes, establishing moral responsibility requires further conditions to be satisfied. Specifically, for an individual organisation member I to bear moral responsibility for action A, to which she contributes through participation in a culture, it must be the case that (i)

action A constitutes wrongdoing; (ii) I knows that she is contributing to A; and (iii) there is no further consideration to which I may appeal to justify or excuse this contribution. I argue that, in fact, all these conditions typically hold in cases in which it is natural to make morally charged criticism of corporate culture. I therefore conclude that in such cases of corporate wrongdoing responsibility should fall on a wide range of organisation members, and not just a few senior executives.

State Responsibility in the EU: A Normative Account

Dimitrios Efthymiou (University of Southampton)

Current debates on the causes behind Europe's political crisis are characterised by the predominance of discussions of state responsibility. As the Danish prime minister emphatically put it: "The Danish taxpayers are not interested in paying for a debt they haven't created themselves." Politicians are not alone in commitment to state responsibility; contemporary political theorists have been keen to provide a robust defence of a maximalist conception of state responsibility (Rawls 1999; Nagel 2005; Miller 2007). That is the idea that differences in economic, political and social structures between different countries can be explained primarily on the basis of causal factors that are domestic to societies in which they occur. Proponents of explanatory statism have largely ignored the bearing of these discussions to the current crisis of the European Union and to discussions on European political integration. The aim of this paper is to show that the European Union provides a difficult and challenging case for maximalist conceptions of state responsibility. I will proceed in three steps in my effort to support this claim.

First, it will be argued that even if one accepts that the reasons behind a country's failure to adopt a sound economy policy are reducible to its relative industriousness and political culture, it does not necessarily follow that the country in question has deliberately chosen these policies. This is because both external and internal factors may have constrained the range of policies available to a particular member state. Hence, the inference drawn by explanatory statism, from observed differences in industriousness and political culture among member states, to support the claim that national policies are responsible for these disparities is not robust. It will then be argued that one can make these judgments more robust by asking three further questions. First, were citizens fully informed and aware of the consequences of the policy pursued?

Second, was the policy reasonable and served the public good? Third, was the policy strongly espoused by all citizens or only by the party in government? I will then argue that these questions allow us to categorise member states into different 'types' according to the degree to which they fulfil the above criteria. Those states that deviate the most from the mean value of their 'type' can be held responsible for their situation and asked to shoulder that additional burden of their choices. It would be wrong, however, to compare states directly across types as this assumes that all members are equally well-ordered and hence that the degree of responsibility is the same in all cases. The alternative proposed provides us with a robust means to assess state responsibility in the EU while paying sufficient attention to the fact that member-states are neither fully nor equally well-ordered.

4. Evening Programme

17.30- 19.00

Panel Discussion

Please note the change of venue: [Archaeology Lecture Theatre G6](#)
(31-34 Gordon Square, Room)

Responsible Conduct in the Global Economy: What is it? And How Do We Get There?

A panel discussion about the ethical demands of economic relations and the role of consumers, firms, governments and labour unions in addressing them.

(Organized with the support of the [Institute of Global Governance, UCL](#))

Chair: Elizabeth Ashford

Philip Booth ([Institute of Economic Affairs](#))

Peter Frankental ([Amnesty International](#))

Ashok Kumar ([International Union League for Brand Responsibility](#))

Alessandra Mezzadri ([SOAS](#))

Michael Solomon ([Profit Through Ethics](#))

19.00 – 20.00

Drinks Reception

[Committee Room, SPP, 29-30 Tavistock Sq., London, WC1H 9QU](#)

5. Useful Information

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How to get to SPP by tube (see also Maps):

- Russell Square - Piccadilly Line;
- King's Cross St Pancras - Northern (Bank Branch), Piccadilly, Victoria, Hammersmith & City, Circle, and Metropolitan Lines;
- Euston - Northern (Charing Cross and Bank Branches), and Victoria Lines.

Conference Organisers Contacts

Email: uclconference@gmail.com

Tel.: +44 (0)7503453435 (Sara Amighetti)

6. Photograph and Video Release Form

[to fill-in and to return upon registration]

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