From Responsibility to Responsibilities: Towards a Theory of Co-responsible Leadership

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Abstract

Responsibility has for a long time being given a default spot in the leadership canon meaning it is assumed rather than theoretically or empirically examined. Indeed it would be unlikely to read much about leadership without meeting some reference or association about responsibility but rare to find a sustained exploration of it in its own right. Responsible leadership theory then provides a much needed spotlight onto the concept. This chapter attempts to assess and critique the nature of the responsibly that responsible leadership theory constitutes. I argue that while the theory does broaden ways of understanding 'to whom is leadership responsible' and 'for what is leadership responsible for', it largely fails to answer the question 'who is responsible' beyond a fairly traditional focus on the individual in a designated leader position. Given the contemporary concern in contexts of complexity, uncertainty, and ambiguity and in associated relational, shared, and distributed leadership configurations then this chapter turns to alternative philosophical and sociological thinking to understand responsibility in contexts where it is more useful to understand leadership as the property of collectives rather than single individuals. Consequently this chapter advocates thinking in responsibilities rather than responsibility.

Introduction

EU should shoulder responsibility in Syrian refugee crisis says commissioner.
[Daily News, May 10, 2015]

Ed Miliband says election bloodbath is 'my responsibility alone' as he looks set to resign.
[Mirror, May 8 2015]

Exclusive: JK here to stay
"Being a successful team doesn't happen straight away. It's not about individuals. It is about creating an environment where there is collective responsibility and we think that is the right way to go."
[New Zealand Herald, May 9 2015]

Above you find three media headlines for stories that featured strongly while this article was being written. These in fact were only a tiny selection of the stories and reports about issues and events which evoked a call, claim, or denial of leadership responsibility. It is in fact difficult not to encounter a constant barrage of what we could call responsibility discourses linked to leadership. This chapter will use these three headlines and stories to ask some critical questions about responsibility—What it is? Is it singular or plural? What or who it is for? Most of all, who might be responsible in the name of leadership?

If we spend even a cursory amount of time thinking about the three contexts underneath our chosen headlines then we can see how complex responsibility really is.

The refugee story is arguably one of the biggest and most internationally complex challenges facing our world today. Europe has become the frontline of much of this challenge but the sources of refugee flight belong with multiple sites of conflict where past legacies and current realities have created conditions where sustainable, healthy, and peaceful lives are all but impossible. This phenomenon sits therefore in a complex intersection of global, cultural, economic, and political forces well beyond the province of single individuals or even collectives - such as the EU - to be responsible for.

The 2015 UK election would on the surface of it be an easier event to apportion responsibility. Certainly it isn't uncommon for leaders of losing parties to claim responsibility and fall on their sword voluntarily or be ousted soon after the event in a mass clamour for the visible manifestation of responsibility. Yet the 2015 UK election is quite an extraordinary event. No less than 3 leaders have resigned due to unexpectedly dire results while a new political force (the Scottish Independence Party) rises from seemingly nowhere to potentially herald a reconfiguration of the British Union. What has happened appears to be an upheaval in the political landscape which has seen a rise and fall of political parties at the expense of each other. Such interdependence of outcomes and contextual uncertainty raise yet another set of issues to do with responsibility.

Finally we turn to our third context in New Zealand. A country where rugby is often likened to a national religion. The 'Blues' rugby team based in New Zealand's largest city, Auckland, in the third year of its rebuild under iconic coach Sir John Kirwan and suffering not only a consistent string of defeats but also visible player and team inadequacies. Fans were staying away in droves and even the most passionate die-hard supporter could but wince at the poor strategy and performance frequently on display. Media were building up to what was seemingly becoming the inevitable climax of this sorry saga and Sir JK (as he is known)'s resignation. That in fact has now happened but the lure of this thing called collective responsibility was hard for many to give up delaying both a decision and action for months.

With the help of these three examples, we intend to put responsible leadership theory to the test. First of all we explore and critique responsible leadership theory applying it to these three examples to assess the contribution it makes to our understanding of responsibility. Then we turn to philosophy and sociology especially to find alternative ways of thinking about responsibility that go beyond individual and positional ways of thinking about leadership and also apply those to these three examples. Of particular interest here are alternatives to individual notions of responsibility and particularly co or collective responsibility. What we are seeking to address here is a mis-match between complex, ambiguous multi-stakeholder challenges and traditional leader-centric notions of responsibility which rely on an individual. The hypothesis of this chapter is that responsibility in such challenges would need to be move amongst a series of connected individuals and groups throughout the network of stakeholders. That would seem more like thinking in terms of responsibilities than responsibility. For this to happen complex interpersonal, relational, and system dynamics need to be understood in the pursuit of such leadership and such capacity needs to shape the call and development of responsible leadership theory.

Responsible Leadership Theory

Encountering responsible leadership theory involves a number of caveats right from the start. So many leadership ‘theories’ enter with an adjective in front of them as if that makes them theoretically distinct in itself. To its credit responsible leadership theory resists such an approach. It makes it clear that it builds off transformational, authentic, servant, and ethical leadership theories (Waldman & Galvin, 2008, p. 327) but provides a correction to these in bringing responsibility into the foreground. Accordingly Pless and Maak (2011, p. 4) characterise responsible leadership as “a multilevel response to deficiencies in existing leadership frameworks and theories”. While uncharacteristically modest in its claims, it does seek to create a focus and contribution in terms of responsibility that hasn’t been there before.

Responsible leadership theory is defined by two key theorisations: its “amalgamation” (Waldman, 2011, p. 75) of social responsibility with leadership and its broadening of a leader’s attention beyond followers, organisational members, and shareholders to stakeholders. At the core of it we could argue is both a desire to move *away* from a sense of corporate and executive leaders having or exercising less than robust ethics and move *towards* the host of major global, social, environmental, and cultural issues that beset the contemporary world. It appears then to invite a more expansive mindset beyond what can seem narrow financial, productivity, and performance concerns. Equally it seems to address a broadening of gaze in leadership with an orientation

to both internal and external constituencies. On a surface level it would seem to widen, enlarge, and refocus leadership in ways that many have been calling for.

Underneath such a surface, responsible leadership theory appears often a far less a radical shift than one might hope. I note particularly that much of it remains a leader-centric theory with an assumption that responsibility lies in "the inner theatre" (Pless, 2007, p. 437) or "good character" (Waldman, 2011, p. 75) of an individual usually with formal positional authority in an organization. Additionally responsibility is frequently talked about as "a balancing act" (Waldman & Galvin, 2008, p. 330) amongst the various stakeholder concerns indicating that a too simple harmony and consensus might be underlying drivers of this theory.

Responsible leadership theory also lacks some vital theoretical dimensions. For instance it generally lacks a definition of responsible and appears to assume that what it means to be responsible is singular and self-evident. Commonly it speaks of responsible in terms of other related "synonyms" such as accountable or ethical or moral, thus we lack a theoretical exploration of what it might mean to be responsible as opposed to ethical and accountable and what different definitions might rule in and rule out. Indeed responsibility is often represented as something one either has or hasn't and very few clues are given in terms of how it actually works.

An exception to such theoretical under-development are the few articles not taking a mainstream, individualistic perspective such as Pless and Maak (2011) and Voegtlin, Patzer, and Scherer (2012). Pless and Maak (2011) take a relational view of responsible leadership theory and argue that if "relationships are the centre of leadership" (p. 4) then responsible leading involves being a "weaver in and among a network of relationships" (p. 11). Put succinctly responsible leadership happens "in social processes of interaction' (Maak & Pless, 2006, p. 103) where stakeholders connected in a challenge construct a "values-based and thorough ethical principles-driven relationship". Even more specifically Voegtlin et al. (2012, p. 4) take a discursive approach to responsible leadership theory where it is "discursive conflict resolution" that offers a process to mediate between diverse and presumably often conflicting interests. Even in these however stakeholders seem largely shadowy, background figures in a landscape still dominated by a few designated leaders.

This chapter asks if responsible leadership theory really does answer what it sets out to in terms of "to whom or what should leaders be responsible and how will responsibility be demonstrated" (Waldman & Galvin, 2008, p. 328) by going back to our three headlines and stories at the beginning of this chapter and interpreting them through the lens of responsible leadership theory.

The refugee crisis is a tough challenge for responsible leadership theory right from the start. The EU is a confederation/ federation of multiple stakeholders (28 separate countries), it has a complex and confusing structure (7 institutions), and who 'leads' is an impossibly complex answer (Brussels or Berlin is the popular riddle). While it certainly does attempt to operate as a collective, member nations with their separate leaders are never far from their own individual interests and agendas. One would imagine that every challenge and issue it looks at would be issues of social, cultural, and economic responsibility with a vast and interdependent array of stakeholders. This refugee issue is particularly complex given that a few countries are bearing the brunt of refugee arrivals (Greece and Italy) but their flow through to the rest of Europe is uneven to stay the least. It is hard to characterize what responsibility actually is for in this case: preventing tragedy? equitable spread of implications of decisions? protecting the EU? humanitarian rights? criminal liability of people traffickers? However we might answer, it seems impossible to reduce responsibility down to an individual character or even a range of individuals. Nor does balancing stakeholder interests seem desirable or relevant.

The defeat of the British Labour Party and Ed Miliband's subsequent resignation seems a textbook conventional treatment of responsibility that on the surface doesn't require a reading through responsible

leadership theory at all. While all dimensions of the defeat presumably can't be laid at the feet of Ed Miliband, responsibility can. His resignation is both sacrificial and symbolic: in one swoop the failure of the campaign is focused on one person and the party is allowed to fight another day. Responsibility in this case is synonymous with blame. Not surprisingly since the defeat, narratives of blame have been constructed around Ed Miliband in terms of his focus on the poor of the UK (as opposed to the middle), his fairly benign personal presence, and his inability to attract broad-based support. These retrospectively build the required "Ed Miliband is responsible for this defeat" narrative. Yet different and equally compelling narratives perhaps point to a more complex picture of responsibility. The dramatic, and seemingly unforseen, resurgence of the Scottish Nationalist Party, the equally unforeseen demise of the Liberal Democrats, and the relatively "high vote-few seats" predicament of the Anti-Immigration United Kingdom Independence Party together appear to have created a whole new voter terrain. Whoever takes responsibility for the British Labour Party will have a complex conversation with future stakeholders to build a platform that will identify, articulate, and act on the social, cultural, environmental, and political issues of the age. It is not clear whether responsible leadership theory can offer much insight prospectively for this set of challenges.

Our Blues story seems to offer a set of circumstances that further tests responsible leadership theory in an interesting and contemporary way. The Blues Board is itself a combination of stakeholders with half the board representing business/ commercial interests and half representing rugby. While one would imagine that performance and success on the field is in everyone's interest, other aspirations such as region/ franchise identity, profile, profitability, sponsorship, development, and relationship to the community are also understood as important. Media reports that the business/ commercial half of the Board understand Sir John Kirwan as having come through strongly on identity, profile, and community relationships whilst the rugby half is most concerned with the striking lack of results. Add to this the quest for what they are calling collective responsibility that has put in more complexities with a concerted desire to grow a different relationship between Board, coaching staff, players, local clubs, and community that will take sustained culture change and time. The simple blame of a sacrificial and symbolic 'responsible' individual seems to miss the wider intricacies in terms of responsibility that weave in and out of this scenario.

All three of our contemporary stories affirm the importance of responsibility and its centrality to leadership at the same time as making visible its limits and constraints. Responsible leadership theory seems correct in broadening the leadership sphere to embed stakeholders and refocusing leadership on broader social, cultural, and political issues, but in staying predominantly with well-established leader, influence, and balance assumptions it doesn't seem to provide the theoretical or practice sophistication to enable its own theorization. This chapter will attempt to extend responsible leadership theory in three ways: 1) the nature of responsibility 2); co or shared responsibility; and 3) practices that enact responsibilities (a more multi-dimensional understanding of what it means to be responsible).

Defining Responsibility

If we accept that responsibility is most commonly "a fashionable slogan, as it is commonly used, but rarely conceptualized and analysed thoroughly" (Snell, 2009, p. 17) and "a vague and polyvalent term" (McCarthy & Kelty, 2010, p. 406) then we need to pause and do some work on what we mean by responsibility. Looking up the dictionary will not supply much of a start here given most of the definitions of responsibility take one straight to the state of being responsible and in turn the definitions of responsible take one straight back to having responsibility. The few definitions that escape the responsible-responsibility circle go immediately to synonyms such as accountable, answerable, and reliable. It seems important then to canvas the meaning around the word and its meaning particularly when associated with leadership. In terms of leadership let's also pay attention to McCarthy and Kelty's (2010) directive that "responsibility "must be constructed and understood as something novel, interesting not bureaucratic" if it is to bring something fundamentally different to our understandings of leadership.

One starting place is to agree with Caruana and Crane (2008, p. 1495) that researchers fall too readily into seeing responsibility as "an objectively identifiable trait" that speaks to an assumed universal reality and new possibilities could emerge from approaching responsibility "as an essentially contested discourse" (Caruana & Crane, 2008, p. 1495) where different interpretations and meanings of responsibility are in circulation in our world today. The intent of this section is to test out different discourses in terms of what they might bring to responsible leadership theory. There are two discursive "contests" that seem particularly important to defining responsibility:

1. Causal, legal, and moral responsibility
2. Backward and forward looking responsibility

If I take on responsibility for something I directly did then I am causally responsible. Few of us would argue with this I suspect or want that connection between doing something and feeling responsible ever lessened. However this is usually not the form of responsibility that leadership takes although those in leadership are certainly not exempt from being responsible for what they do. That would need to be a given. In none of our three stories is there a straightforward and linear connection between what anyone in leadership actually does and responsibility. Alternatively, legal responsibility is more about obligation and duty under the law. This is the same as saying we are required to do certain pre-defined things. Given these requirements are legal then they are set down, and while they can be argued in any context, are comparatively clear cut (compared to other forms of responsibility). It would be safe to assume that anyone in leadership in our three stories had legal and contractual responsibilities but that these didn't constitute the struggles or challenges around responsibility in any of the three stories.

This leaves moral responsibility. Moral responsibility isn't direct like causal responsibility or pre-defined like legal responsibility. Isaacs (2011, p. 13) defines moral responsibility as "blameworthiness and praiseworthiness" and argues that moral responsibility differs from the others in terms of the range of things one can be responsible for and in its enforceability. It's moral responsibility (in the widest sense of moral) that seems to be the type of responsibility most at stake in responsible leadership theory. So let's assume that leaders, like everyone else, can expect to be responsible for what they do and as leaders or part of leadership collectives are liable legally for certain responsibilities or duties which they take on knowingly with any leadership role. That leaves moral responsibility as the big challenge. In our stories the EU, the Labour Party, and the Blues franchise all have moral responsibilities that seem to require a different way of thinking about responsibility than if it was as simple as being responsible for what they directly do or are required to do legally.

However both blame and praise are backward looking forms of responsibility. By definition they can only be assessed or attributed retrospectively. Snell (2009, p. 26) defines backward-looking responsibility as "being liable for a deed that has happened". She contrasts this with forward-looking responsibility defined as "being accountable for the future consequences of one's actions" (p. 26). She sees both as inevitable given the "dual but entangled meaning" (2009, p. 25) of responsibility in both assumptions of causing something and being liable for it. We are well used to notions of backward-looking responsibility and leaders receiving blame or praise after an event. Indeed this would be the most dominant discourse of responsibility and one which two of our stories—the resignation of Ed Milbank and the struggles over Sir John Kirwan's re-appointment—speak directly to. However our EU story clearly invites a forward-looking responsibility and the capacity to think into and own future consequences. Interestingly the Blues story seemed to be fighting for the right to view responsibility as forward not backward looking at this juncture. I would argue that the ability to view moral responsibility going forward would appear to offer something crucial to responsible leadership theory.

To reflect here then, definitional exploration of responsibility poses real challenges and possibilities for responsible leadership theory. At the very least it needs to stop talking about responsibility as if it is a self-evident and non-problematic term. This chapter argues there is no responsibility but *responsibilities* (causal, legal, and moral) that come into play with social, cultural, and political issues and disentangling or tracking these should help us gain more precision and power in our explorations. This section has zeroed in on moral responsibility as offering particular potential to stretch us to grappling with complex problems distributed across multiple stakeholders. Wrestling with moral responsibility means wrestling with whether we can or should in fact attribute blame or praise to any single or grouping of individuals in what are essentially networks of leadership. In fact, we should be questioning whether *leaders* in fact are the unit of analysis for responsible leadership at all. One further issue we have encountered in this section is the difficulty of being able to recognise responsibility in the present or going forwards as to date we have relied as a scholarly field and society on attributing responsibility retrospectively.

I would like to build on these propositions- responsibility as having a moral dimension, responsibility as forward-looking and responsibility as shared- in the next section. This section offers the concept of co-responsibility as a way of stepping out of a too individualistic paradigm and engaging with responsibilities as sitting between people in both routine and exceptional interactions and hence able to be relationally and socially developed and understood.

Co-responsibility

A shift to moral and consequence inevitably brings others into the picture. In fact Isaacs (2011) argues that morality only really make sense in the context of interaction where intents and actions of an individual are changed by the intents and actions of others. Out of such interaction comes moral (or not) outcomes. That would make a collective frame for responsibility essential, and in fact Issacs argues that "denial of collective prevents us, as individuals, from seeing our own moral effectiveness " (2011, p. 9). This would be supported by Strydom (1999, p. 66), who heralds a sociological shift from understanding responsibility in individual terms to grappling with "the macro-dimension of humankind's fragile existence on the finite earth". Likewise McCarthy and Kelty (2010, p. 409) argue that "responsibility cannot be approached through the decisions of individual actors even if it is not clear where else to look" and that "the creation of new forms of responsibility" are becoming vital. Other scholars do not agree. In an oft quoted comment French (1972, p. 143) stated that "where all are responsible no one is responsible", which speaks to the biggest fear around co-responsibility: that responsibility becomes diluted and benign as soon as individuals aren't the focus of it. This section will explore the construct of co-responsibility and ask whether it can pull responsible leadership theory beyond its leader-centric assumptions yet still remain potent and meaningful.

Co-responsibility is one of three forms of responsibility in Strydom's (1999) three-fold typology alongside traditional or individual responsibility and post-traditional responsibility (a form of responsibility where responsibility is attached to knowledge and expertise more than roles as with traditional responsibility). Strydom draws predominantly on the sociologist Apel in his construction of co-responsibility. Apel (1993, p. 9) saw a need for a concept of responsibility that was neither traditional nor post-traditional that "neither can be reduced to individual accountability nor allows for the individuals unburdening themselves from personal responsibility by shifting it into institutions or social systems". Like other contemporary theorists (Jonas, 1984; McCarthy & Kelty, 2010; Strydom, 1999), Apel (1993, p. 10) saw a strong link between risk and responsibility given the complexity of designs, technologies, and processes that rely on disparate experts, managers, and frontline workers in "interconnected socio-cultural processes", meaning decision-makers rely on others in ways that stretch way beyond what traditional or individual forms of responsibility tend to take into account. This appears to speak straight to the contexts, where "old problems have reached a novel moral quality and […] classical solutions are no longer morally satisfactory" (Apel, 1993, p. 9), which surely are also significant drivers of responsible leadership theory.

For Apel, co-responsibility marks an imperative for humanity to take responsibility for collective actions. Co-responsibility rests on a discourse ethics where individuals accept they are integral to different communication communities or what he sometimes calls "argumentation communities" (1993, p. 24). That means taking up the responsibility to be active in the issues that present to these communities requiring collective reflection, exploration, debate, and choices/ decisions. The preference is for those affected directly to construct solutions but within the meta-conversation of the broader communication communities. This is not a picture of some kind of giant United Nations kind of forum but a "network of formal or informal dialogues and conferences, commissions and boards on all levels" (Apel, 1993, p. 24).

Strydom (1999, p. 69) calls this "a mobilizable form of responsibility" in the sense that those in leadership and indeed stakeholders in any issue can seize the responsibility to communicate to their communities in ways that invite people to have a voice or stake in the discussion and argumentation that will be required. In linking co-responsibility to framing, Strydom is bringing co-responsibility right into a leadership space where "intense framing contests" (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996, p. 17) are indicative of the political and strategic efforts of collectives, institutions, and nations to shape the meaning and understanding of an issue. Popke (2003, p. 300) terms such framing contests as "an ethics of encounter without a commitment to resolution or closure". In discourse ethics then leadership is about creating and holding the discursive spaces where groups and institutions wrestle with the framing and meaning they bring to issues. One could charge a utopian quality to co-responsibility but Issacs in particular sees it as offering meaningful power and hope to individuals who want to accept their part in solving issues and challenges that go beyond the responsibility of any one individual or grouping to own. To this effect she claims (Isaacs, 2011, p. 20) "when we reorient ourselves in relation to others and take the broader perspective of collective action, new moral possibilities present themselves, and our contributions, small though they may be, gain greater significance from the collective contexts in which they take place".

Let's see how co-responsibility might work in our three stories.

Essentially the EU is a communication/ argumentation community. It relies on co-responsibility and the capacity of member nations to claim and exercise a voice. This doesn't make it an ideal communication community by any means but indicates a set of assumptions that those affected by shared issues and possibilities need to wrestle with, questioning and understanding them in order to arrive at action. Those in the EU are also part of other communication communities such as NATO and the United Nations and in this way take part in a series of overlapping conversations attempting to engage with an issue. Co-responsibility theory reminds us however that EU doesn't own the refugee problem and that the nations from where the refugees are coming constitute the most affected and need a central voice in the resolution of the issue. Oddly enough it is however another group of stakeholders who are very influential here and that is the population of those across Europe and beyond who live in the countries who have the bulk of the resources to help in one way or another. Those in leadership—meaning multiple people and groups across multiple contexts—have the task of listening, reflecting, framing, and reframing this issue so that more and more people become a voice in the discourse of refugees and migration/ resettling. In becoming a voice those people influence what this issue means and meaning ultimately will influence action. The EU then, outside of its routine management activities, needs to understand itself in leadership terms as a framing and boundary- testing body with the power to set and frame problems and challenges in a way that invites others to work with it. Its task is to mobilize the kind of engagement and responsibility that will create some kind of movement for those stuck in entrenched understandings and approaches.

The Labour Party and its new leadership have a similar task in gathering and sifting through the different understandings of what it has meant to be Labour and what it will mean to be Labour in the future. Leadership after all is about meaning work. A co-responsible frame would assume that the failure of the Labour Party in

this election is the result of many stakeholder groups failing in their responsibilities to each other. Such responsibilities are likely to include the lack of voice, dialogue, robust conversation with contested topics and forging of new understandings and action between the myriad of sub-groups and institutions that have formed the Labour tradition. Some of those conversations must be with those who don't choose to call themselves Labour at the moment including the new Scottish Independence Party. "Stakeholder" in this context has a complex meaning as who the stakeholders are in political movements and organisations is a moving, fluid, and ambiguous endeavour at best. To be honest who is or isn't a stakeholder is not as clear-cut and static as responsible leadership theory seems to assume. It is precisely this kind of discourse process that is most difficult for political parties to work through and sustain. In all probability if it can't then the Labour party will seek another individual to take responsibility: one who might have the face, presentation and words that will either win (or lose) a new generation of "Labour". Why though would the future of a party or movement be seen as the responsibility of an individual?

Our third story of the Blues rugby team proves itself to be a story of co-responsibility in action. Undoubtedly it shows the messiness and divisiveness of trying to create meaningful responsibility between stakeholders. On reading that story many will feel individual responsibility has a much more clear-cut and straightforward appeal. In a sense that would be correct. However the prize for the Blues and rugby in general lies long beyond the results of one team over this particular season. Is it actually possible for the players to share responsibility and leadership of their aspirations and performance with coaching staff and Board? Is a different professional sports culture based on co-responsibility, shared community, and conversations even possible? Is it possible and desirable to transform the identity of coach, player, and Board member so that they become a different conversation community? Sir John Kirwan may be correct in asserting that the middle of such a paradigm change is no place to make a definitive call. The lure of defaulting back to far more traditional and individual notions of leadership is far too great where Sir John Kirwan would really only have one choice-resign like Ed Milibank—and indeed this is exactly what happened.

Co-responsible Leadership in Discourse, Mindset and Practice

Co-responsible leadership requires a commitment to a new discourse, mindset, and set of practices. This section will detail what those could look like as a step to moving co-responsibility from theory to practice. The first step to doing this is to supply some new concepts and language with which to talk about co-responsibility. Earlier in this chapter we discussed the importance of being moral and forward-thinking to responsible leadership. One of the challenges we can put to co-responsibility is how it might characterize and action moral and forward-thinking. In order to do this we'll turn back to sociology (Isaacs, 2011) and applied ethics (May & Hoffman, 1992).

Both Isaacs (2011) and May and Hoffman (1992) start their discussion with a relational ontology and the understanding of what being in community means. Isaac's (2011, p. 9) starting place is that "we need to start understanding ourselves in relation to others, as members of communities who can act together as moral agents" while May & Hoffman explore community as a constitutive of an individual's identity, role, and action. Being moral if one's starting place is relationship or community takes on a different meaning. Joining a collective and choosing a community are moral acts in themselves. One cannot belong to a collective or community without having to engage with what that community thinks, voices, and acts. For Isaacs (2011, p. 9) this is a positive thing and she advocates "we urgently need to start thinking of ourselves as implicated" in the understanding that "an apathy permeates much of what we do; it is grounded in our inability—or perhaps our refusal—to see our actions in the broad context of the actions of others". May and Hoffman (1992) don't believe such an engagement should be directly heroic in the sense of having the direct responsibility to voice what those in power might not be inclined to hear. However we all have the responsibility of not only being moral people with the capacity to voice what we need to but create moral structures and institutions that will hear and work with counter perspectives. Co-responsibility then is not just directed at acts and other people

but also at the constitution and change of our very systems which means it has a wide and powerful leadership mandate. Put simply co-responsibility actually should have the effect of increasing leadership responsibility.

May and Hoffman (1992) draw on existentialism to involve the concept of metaphysical guilt as a core assumption of co-responsibility. Metaphysical responsibility arises from the very identity and membership of being implicated in a community. However metaphysical responsibility is radically different from blame (or by association praise) because it is not "based on a narrow construal of what one does, but rather on the wider concept of who one chooses to be" (May & Hoffman, 1992, p. 241). Who we choose to be involves not only what we do but what we don't do, how we feel or don't feel, and how we make sense or don't of what is happening. It means taking responsibility for who we are in a group, situation, or society and our stance to what is happening. Interestingly for leadership scholars and practitioners they evoke a much beloved construct in the leadership lexicon in the notion of authenticity to indicate responsibility for the overall way one approaches self in the world. Likewise Fillion (2004, p. 122) talks about responsibility as "response-ability" to indicate an openness to experience that is forward-looking as opposed to "account-ability which is backwards-looking. "Response-ability" invites each of us to view the nature of our response (or lack of response) as integral to any of the challenges and responsibilities we are part of by virtue of being a member of a group, team, organisation, sector, community or society. Our response or lack of it makes us complicit in the trajectory or an issue. If we feel the power of our own responses moment by moment then we can't lay accountability elsewhere-it lies with our choices. As a rule of thumb to live by "response-ability" invites us into the leadership of what affects us. Imagine if we could live into such leadership?

We have moved a long way away from blame or praise as appropriate responses to metaphysical responsibility but May and Hoffman (1992, p. 251) propose the word 'taint' as a word capable of carrying a sense of our complicity in anything connected to our community. Isaacs (2011, p. 145) further loads the dice by taking us through scenarios where individual bystanders might have a case for "deciding not to act" but collectives of bystanders tend not to have any excuse. "Failure to take action" Isaacs (2011, p. 145) is not excusable when one is tainted by one's choice to identify with a particular collective or community and, with others, doesn't contribute a voice or stance or action. Such an interpretation of taint and its associated co-responsibility would appear to speak directly to distributed and shared leadership where anyone in theory could and should lead by inserting themselves into the conversation and action that they are involved in.

Snell (2009, p. 13) sheds light on such a dynamic when she talks about "responsibility chains" which show how responsibilities are distributed amongst people in connected endeavours. This work is important here because co-responsibility exists alongside traditional and post-traditional forms of responsibility as a set of responsibilities people tend to innately feel and exercise. Her work draws on a qualitative research project involving scientists and characterises four kinds of responsibility they articulated as being involved in:

1) Role-bounded responsibility—a formal and technical form of responsibility related to whatever role they might have;
2) Extended responsibility—responsibilities attributed to things beyond a role such as power, influence, or knowledge;
3) Dispersed responsibility—responsibility for collective as opposed to individual activity;
4) Challenging responsibility—a form of macro attention to the flow, dynamics, and framing of responsibility throughout an organisation or system.

Snell finds that people experience *responsibilities* (as opposed to *responsibility*) that invite them to engage in responsibility from individual, relational, and systems perspectives. There is something intuitively powerful about a multi-faceted experience of responsibility that calls multiple ways of being in leadership amongst a collective or community. This would appeal as a strong and meaningful platform on which to contemplate responsible leadership.

If we return to our three stories for one more time then we can show the impact of a more expansive and nuanced understanding of *responsibilities* that might provide something to look-forward through.

For instance the refugee crisis while impacting European space now shouldn't be treated as a European crisis. It is a crisis which the EU is at the forefront of and needs to accept responsibility for leading forward on but in itself it can't be solved by either the EU or Europe. EU can and needs to mobilise a greater mass of stakeholders in order to build more possibilities and strategies for resolution. If the only possible responsibility is rejecting or accepting refugees then there is too constrained a leadership space. Other stakeholders need to be mobilised to shut down the people smuggling trade, to provide a safe, unified pathway from flight to resettlement, to speed up the processing of people in refugee camps, to investigate safe zones or terrains within conflicted territories or to create temporary, fluid communities/ societies/ citzenship who can cluster and contribute to societies needing new expertise, energy, and rejuvenation whilst they are unable to remain in their current homes. Such a strange of concurrent responses require all manner of people, institutions, agencies, and societies to recognise and claim multiple responsibilities in this challenge. There is work for individual leaders in this but within a connected network holding the leadership of the whole system or challenge. One could imagine Greece taking responsibility for the people smuggling gangs, the UK developing a speedy processing system regardless of whatever camp a refugee ended up in, and Jordan setting up a collaboration responsible for a safe zone in the conflict terrain.

The British Labour Party has acted on one of Snell's four responsibilities: role-bounded responsibility. Engaging with the other three hold the promise of radically redefining its "responsibility chain". Attention to power, influence, and knowledge will help them understand dynamics of responsibility that aren't visible if one apportions responsibility just to those in positions. Attention to co or dispersed responsibility will reveal a myriad of moments where those not choosing to speak or act narrowed down the possibilities for party action too much. Attention to challenging responsibility holds the hope of building a party structure or system that constitutes a different paradigm of what it means to be Labour and who is heard in that. It is time to stop searching for the right leader and instead search for what it means to be Labour now and in the future in the very grassroots of the political terrain. Youth may do so through virtual discussion boards, party faithful through committees and meetings, "agnostic" voters through media and so on. "A" leader seems a poor option compared to distributed responsibility in multiple constituencies.

Sir John Kirwan and the Blues have the nightmare of intense media scrutiny and what amounts to a public trial of their experiment in collective responsibility. Their challenge perhaps is integrating both forward-looking response-ability and backwards-looking account-ability. Missing from public accounts at any rate is any visibility of the player voice on which movement to co/collective responsibility depends. They need to assess that they have a structure and community which enables that voice. Other voices, particularly development and community voices, seem too quiet as well. Snell (2009) points out that responsibilities get fragmented where there isn't a strong and articulated vision and aspiration which focuses responsibilities. What is their vision of rugby in the future that invites a different kind of responsible leadership? What responsibilities could players take outside of their own performance? Given coaching teams operate around head coaches then what would coaching team responsibilities look like? What are the integration mechanisms that bring together aspirations in terms of identity, culture, finance, performance, development, and community reach? Winning games may be non-negotiable but what needs to come together from increasingly corporate looking enterprises to constitute that winning? Who is the contemporary coach co-responsible with?

Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to take responsible leadership seriously and assess its potential to refine and extend what must be one of the most important constructs in leadership in responsibility. Understanding leadership in

relation to stakeholders and complex societal issues seems bold, audacious, and a real shift in how leadership has been approached and understood. Yet embarking on such a shift with traditional and leader-centric notions intact seems too limiting of the theoretical and experiential complexity associated with responsibility. Consequently this chapter has tried to develop and extend responsible leadership theory through attention to philosophical and sociological definitional debates of responsibility, typologies of responsibilities, particularly co-responsibility, and new discourses, mindsets, and practices that enact responsibility. At the very least the movement from responsibility to responsibilities over the course of this chapter could provide a richer, more textured, and challenging terrain for responsible leadership theory into the future.

In the overall tension weaving through this book between romanticism and realism then this chapter possibly zigs zags between both. It doesn't seem realistic, given both the complex and often ambiguous nature of contemporary challenges and issues and attention to multiple stakeholders, to view leadership predominantly as the province of leaders—particularly leaders designated by position. In bringing in stakeholders one is creating a multi-leader scenario where leadership needs to be understood in more sophisticated relational, network terms. However there is something about communitarian notions of morality, metaphysical guilt, co-responsibility, and being defined by what one doesn't say or do that surely does seems romantic. Perhaps responsible leadership is a rare phenomenon in which realism and romanticism need to be intertwined? Hopefully that is the overall effect of this chapter: firstly a reality check on a theory which needs to be more courageous in rethinking some of the assumptions it has taken through from previous leadership schools; and secondly, dare we say it, more ideals that take seriously the distributed nature of networks and stakeholder interactions and create a language, mindset, and set of assumptions that might enable a different way of leading responsibly for those involved.

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