

Group Duties: Their Possibility and Their Implications for Individuals

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In philosophical writing and ordinary life, we often see duties attributed to groups: the United Kingdom has a duty to defend human rights; environmentalists have a duty to push for global systemic reform; humanity has a duty to curb carbon emissions. Are such attributions philosophically defensible, or are they mere political rhetoric? To answer this, we need a defensible model of group duties. Such a model would be able to take in the empirical details about any group that's been attributed a duty, and produce conclusions about (i) whether that group is the kind of entity that can bear a duty and (ii) what this implies about the duties of the group's members. Once combined with a substantive normative moral and political theory, such a model could tell us exactly which real-life groups hold exactly which duties—and exactly which duties their members have on that basis. No one has yet attempted to develop and defend such a model. *Group Duties* does just that.

More specifically, the book will introduce and defend the 'Tripartite Model' of group duties—so-called because the model divides groups into three fundamental categories: combinations, coalitions, and collectives. Members of combinations—'humanity,' 'the affluent,' 'the bystanders'—lack common goals and shared decision-producing procedures. Members of coalitions have goals in common and are disposed to respond to one another with a view to achieving those goals, but lack a clear procedure for producing shared decisions. Here we can think of 'the alt-right' or 'environmentalists.' Members of collectives may or may not have common goals; the crucial thing is that they are united under a shared decision-making procedure that is different from the procedure any one of the members uses when deciding for herself. Examples include businesses, charitable organisations, and states. This tripartite division is exhaustive and its categories are mutually exclusive—each group falls into exactly one of these categories. So, a model centred on this division will give a verdict on any possible group duty attribution.

Other philosophers have mentioned similar distinctions, but have not discussed their implications for duties in particular. For example, Tracy Isaacs (2011) distinguishes various types of groups (2011, 24–27), but focuses on blameworthiness for groups analogous to

coalitions and collectives. Blameworthiness is a backward-looking, while duty is forward-looking; what's more, some duties are justified via their bearer's blameworthiness, but not all are. Christopher Kutz (2000) likewise discusses only blameworthiness—and he focuses mainly on groups analogous to coalitions and collectives. List and Pettit (2011, Part III) do discuss duties, but only for groups analogous to collectives. To have a complete understanding of the morality of groups, we need a model that is *comprehensive*—that is, a model that deals with all three group-types—and that gives verdicts on those groups' *duties* in particular.

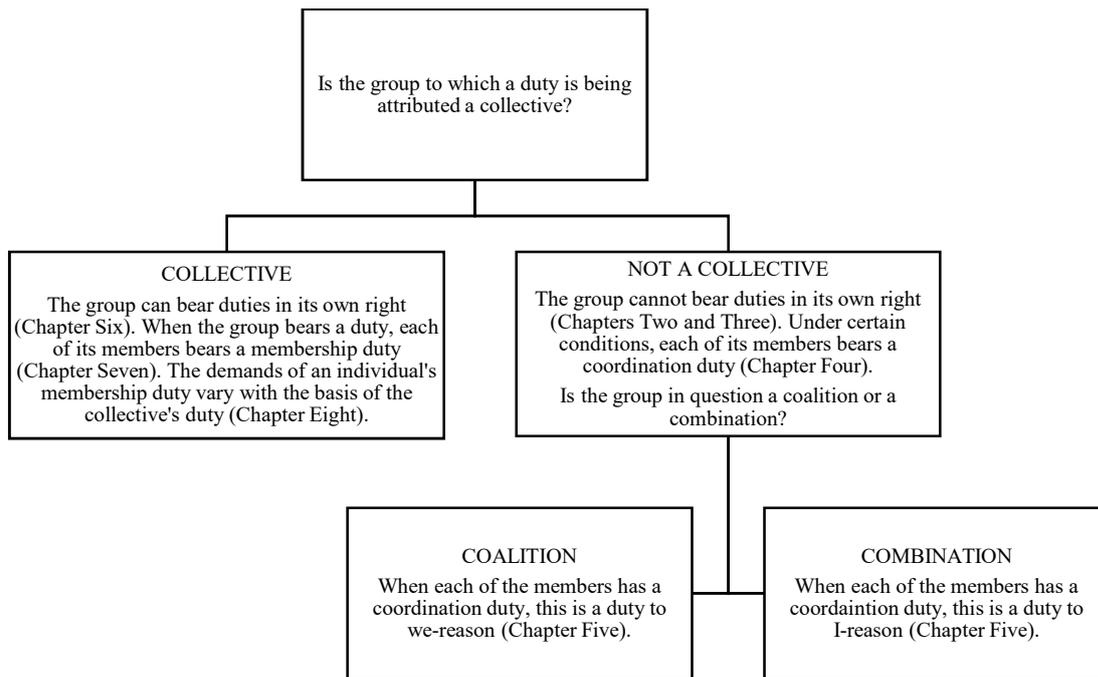
Group Duties argues that each of the three group-types receives different results regarding (i) whether a group of that type can bear a duty and (ii) what this implies about the duties of the group's members. After Chapter One has introduced the tripartite division, Chapters Two and Three address combinations and coalitions, arguing that groups of these types cannot bear duties (in any sense that is not mere shorthand for a conjunction of individual duties). Chapter Two refutes five arguments that purport to show that combinations and coalitions can bear duties, or something approximating duties. Chapter Three turns towards the more positive task of providing arguments in favour of the idea that they *cannot* bear duties, or anything approximating duties. Specifically, I argue that duties are inputs into practical deliberation, and that combinations and coalitions lack the ability to engage in practical deliberation.

But if combinations and coalitions (like 'the affluent,' 'humanity,' or 'liberal states') cannot bear duties, then what are we to say about global poverty, climate change, or humanitarian intervention? Are there no duties over such catastrophes? Of course there are duties over them. Chapters Four and Five address this, by asking: what does the impossibility of combinations' and coalitions' duties imply about the duties of these groups' members? Chapter Four argues that we must reconceptualise claims about the duties of combinations and coalitions: we should understand these claims as stating that the members of the relevant group have individually-held duties take steps towards making, or keeping, their group a coalition, or towards making it a collective. These are individually-held 'coordination duties.' Chapter Five argues that coordination duties operate quite differently in coalitions, as compared with combinations. Specifically: when coordination duties are held by each member of a *coalition*, then coordination duties are duties for those members to '*we-reason*' and act on this basis. By contrast, when coordination duties are held by each member of a *combination*, then coordination duties are duties for those members to '*I-reason*' and act on that basis. When an agent 'we-reasons,' he figures out the optimal pattern of actions across all members of the group, then does his part in that pattern. When an agent 'I-reasons,' he figures out the optimal

pattern for his own individual actions (making no assumptions about what others will do), then enacts that pattern. I explain how these two modes of reasoning lead to substantively different actions in many cases. Thus, group duties (the lack thereof) have different implications for members of coalitions, as compared with members of combinations.

Chapters Six to Eight tackle collectives. Chapter Six argues for my account of the conditions under which a group is a collective. This account is far more permissive than leading existing accounts, giving the result that many real-life groups are collectives. I then argue that—under my permissive conception of collectives—collectives can bear duties in their own right. Thus, when a collective bears a duty, its members' duties are not best understood as coordination duties. Instead, when a collective bears a duty, this implies that each of its member has (what I call) a 'membership duty.' These are duties to put inputs into the collective's goal-producing procedure with a view to the procedure's distributing roles to members such that: if enough members used their roles with a view to seeing to it that the duty is fulfilled, then that would be sufficient for the duty being fulfilled in a high proportion of likely futures. Once these roles are distributed, each member has a duty to use their role accordingly. In Chapter Seven, I explain why membership duties with this structure follow from collectives' duties, and why the failure of a collective to do its duty implies the failure of at least one member to do their membership duty. Finally, Chapter Eight turns to the more practical question of how to fairly distribute the costs of membership duties. Which members of a collective have the most demanding membership duties, and why? I argue that the answer to this question depends on the moral justification of the collective's duty. For example, if a collective's duty is justified by its having done wrong in the past, then the demands of a member's membership duty are determined by her level of involvement in that wrong. By contrast, if a collective's duty is justified by its having the capacity to bring about some good, then the demands of a member's membership duty are determined by her capacity to contribute to the collective's production of that good.

The Tripartite Model is summarised in the following diagram. The diagram also indicates which chapter argues for which aspect of the model.



The upshot will be that some attributions of group duties—those to combinations and coalitions—are indeed mere rhetoric, if taken literally. If these attributions are reinterpreted as attributions of *coordination duties* to singular agents, then they are conceptually defensible. Other attributions of group duties—those to collectives—are conceptually defensible, and have implications for the *membership duties* of those groups' members. Conceptually defensible duties will become morally defensible once the Tripartite Model is combined with a defensible normative moral and political theory. To maximise the Tripartite Model's appeal and usefulness, *Group Duties* remains neutral between substantive normative moral and political theories.

If that's got your appetite whetted, you might be interested in the below detailed chapter-by-chapter outline of the current draft.

Chapter-by-Chapter Summary

Chapter One: The Tripartite Model of Group Duties (8,300 words)

1.1 Introducing the Tripartite Model (2,000 words)

1.2 Nearby Issues (1,300 words)

1.3 The Tripartite Distinction (4,200 words)

Collectives

Coalitions

Combinations

1.4 The Scope of the Model (800 words)

The introductory chapter starts in Section 1.1 by motivating the need for a model of group duties. It considers three examples of group duty attributions ‘in the wild,’ where these three examples attribute duties to a collective, a coalition, and a combination, respectively. Section 1.1 explains that these three examples are not readily comprehensible as attributing the relevant duties to the individual members of the groups. Section 1.1 also gives a broad overview of the Tripartite Model, in the same level of detail as that provided above.

Section 1.2 explains how the book’s topic relates to, while differing from, debates about (i) individualism and holism in social science (a debate that is primarily concerned with causation and explanation, not with moral imperatives); (ii) group responsibility (understood in a backward-looking moral sense, where duties are instead forward-looking moral imperatives); and (iii) joint or shared agency (where this is concerned with analysing certain social phenomena in a descriptive sense, not a moral sense).

Section 1.3 moves onto characterising collectives, coalitions, and combinations in some detail. I work through each of the three categories, giving examples of the limit case of each and explaining how the three organising categories of the Tripartite Model differ from one another.

Section 1.4 sets up the scope of the book’s inquiry. It explains that the Tripartite Model tells us which groups are *candidates* for duties—that is, which groups are the kinds of entities that can bear duties—and what this implies about the *basic structure* of the duties of those groups’ members. The model needs to be combined with a substantive normative moral and political theory before it can yield verdicts on which actual groups have which actual duties. *Group Duties* remains neutral between such theories, to maximise its usefulness and appeal.

Chapter Two: Arguments for Combinations' and Coalitions' Duties (9,500 words)

2.1 Introduction (600 words)

2.2 Four Arguments for Combinations' and Coalitions' Duties (3,800 words)

Explanatory Power

Conviction

Human Rights

Demandingness

2.3 Can Combinations or Coalitions be Agents? (5,000 words)

Combinations as Agents

Coalitions as Agents

2.4 Conclusion (300 words)

Section 2.1 gives numerous examples of highly prominent philosophers attributing duties to combinations and coalitions. It explains that the purpose of the chapter is to refute five arguments that could be given—or have been given—in favour of the claim that combinations and coalitions can bear duties.

Section 2.2 considers four arguments in favour of the idea that combinations and coalitions can bear duties. These arguments claim that combinations' and coalitions' duties should be posited because (respectively): (1) such duties are the best explanation of some individual duties; (2) such duties are the best way to vindicate philosophers' considered convictions about particular examples; (3) such duties are the best way to allocate the duties correlative to basic human rights; and (4) such duties are the best way to deal with morality's seeming over-demandingness. Each of these has been explicitly or implicitly advocated in the literature. I take each argument in turn, demonstrating its flaws and explaining how the opponent of combinations' and coalitions' duties can just as well explain individual duties, capture considered convictions, fulfil human rights, and avoid over-demandingness.

Section 2.3 considers a fifth—more challenging and more general—argument for combinations' and coalitions' duties. This argument runs as follows: if an entity is a moral agent, then that entity is a candidate for duties; some combinations and/or some coalitions are moral agents; therefore, some combinations and/or some coalitions are candidates for duties. In Section 2.3, I consider and reject the second premise in this argument, that is, the premise that some combinations—or some coalitions—are moral agents. I explain that combinations'

potential to become moral agents is insufficient for their having sufficient moral agency to bear duties or putative duties (contra May 1992; Isaacs 2011; Wringer 2010). Moving from combinations to coalitions, I discuss Michael Bratman's (2014) 'shared agency' and Margaret Gilbert's (1989) 'plural subjects.' Bratman and Gilbert each give analyses of highly structured and tightly-bound coalitions. I explain that Bratman's and Gilbert's groups are not agents; a fortiori, they are not moral agents. Section 2.3 concludes that neither combinations nor coalitions are agents (or putative agents, in any interesting sense). This sets us up for Chapter Three's argument against combinations' and coalitions' duties: Chapter Three will argue that every duty is held by an agent.

At the end of Chapter Two, we are in a stalemate: we have no arguments *for* combinations and coalitions being eligible for duties, but we also have no positive arguments *against* their being eligible for duties. Providing such positive arguments is the goal of Chapter Three.

Chapter Three: Against Combinations' and Coalitions' Duties (12,000 words)

3.1 Introduction (1,000 words)

3.2 The Ability Argument (6,200 words)

Abilities

The Conditional Analysis

The Dispositional Analysis

Combinations and Coalitions Have Abilities

3.3 The Reasoning Argument (4,500 words)

Abilities to Reason

Varieties of Ought

Duties and Moral Deliberative Oughts

The Moral Deliberative Ought in Non-Collective Groups

3.4 Conclusion (400 words)

Section 2.3 argued that combinations and coalitions are not agents. Section 3.1 asks: can we use this fact to provide a positive argument *against* their having duties? It explains that one way to do so is to argue for 'the Agency Principle':

The Agency Principle: Each duty belongs to exactly one agent.

If this principle is true—and if Section 2.3 is correct that combinations and coalitions are not agents—then we have a simple argument against combinations’ and coalitions’ duties:

1. Each duty belongs to exactly one agent. (The Agency Principle)
2. Combinations and coalitions are not agents. (Section 2.3’s conclusion)

Therefore,

- C. No duty belongs to a combination or a coalition.

Chapter Three is devoted to defending the Agency Principle.

Section 3.2 considers the Ability Argument for the Agency Principle. This argument runs roughly as follows: to have a duty, you need an ability; each ability belongs to exactly one agent; therefore, each duty belongs to exactly one agent. Much of the small literature on the duties of non-collective groups focuses on this kind of argument. Philosophers have tried to demonstrate either that non-collective groups have abilities—and, therefore, duties (e.g., Killoren and Williams 2013; Pinkert 2014; Aas 2015; Chant 2015; Dietz 2016); or that non-collective groups lack abilities—and, therefore, lack duties (Lawford-Smith 2015). Despite having alluded to something like the Ability Argument in previous work (Collins 2013), I will argue that the Ability Argument fails. It’s true that to have a duty, you need an ability. But—I shall argue—it’s false that each ability belongs to exactly one agent. In fact, non-collective groups have abilities. I argue for this by, first, discussing abilities in general terms; second, considering and rejecting a conditional analysis of non-collective groups’ abilities; third, advocating a dispositional analysis of non-collective groups’ abilities; and fourth, explaining why we should not remove non-collective groups’ abilities (understood on the dispositional analysis) from our ontology. So, abilities are *not* the place to focus if we want to argue that non-collective groups can’t have duties.

In Section 3.3, I defend the Reasoning Argument for the Agency Principle. This argument goes as follows: to have a duty, you need the ability to reason; only each agent has the ability to reason; therefore, each duty belongs to exactly one agent. I defend this argument in four steps: first, I provide a thought experiment concerning individuals’ duties, which motivates the intuition that an entity’s having a duty implies that entity’s having the ability to reason; second, I consider three different ‘oughts’ that might be behind the ‘duty’ in that intuition (specifically, the ‘evaluative,’ ‘prescriptive,’ and ‘deliberative’ oughts, here following Southwood’s (2016) typology); third, I argue that we should understand ‘duty’ as evoking the ‘deliberative’ ought;

fourth, I demonstrate that the deliberative ought cannot attach itself to combinations or coalitions. We are then in a position to conclude that neither combination nor coalitions can have duties.

Chapter Four: Coordination Duties (9,700 words)

4.1 Introduction (500 words)

4.2 Responsiveness (3,000 words)

4.3 Collectivisation (2,200 words)

4.4 The Coordination Principle (3,600 words)

4.5 Conclusion (300 words)

Section 4.1 opens by stating that there are numerous morally imperative problems that can be solved only via the members of combinations and coalitions—including international peacekeeping, dire poverty, global warming, refugee crises, and so on. But I have argued that such groups cannot have duties to remedy these problems. This raises the question of what kinds of duties we can attribute in such cases. Chapter Four will argue that the *agents* (whether individual or, pending Chapter Six’s argument, collective) in such non-collective groups each have individually-held duties to perform various actions with a view to remedying such ills.

Section 4.2 considers cases where three conditions hold: (i) each member of the relevant combination or coalition is able to ‘take individual responsive steps with a view to making a contribution to, or increasing the likelihood of, remedying the situation’; (ii) if each individual takes these individual responsive steps, then the situation will (be likely to) be remedied; (iii) in the ‘evaluative’ sense of ‘ought,’ the situation ought to be remedied. I argue that (i), (ii), and (iii) are sufficient to ground a series of individual duties—each held by exactly one member of the combination or coalition—to *act responsively to the other members with a view to the good outcome*. These are individually-held *responsiveness duties*. We need not posit a group-level duty to explain or specify them (contra Isaacs 2011; Wringer 2014; and others).

Section 4.3 considers cases where it’s *false* that: (i) each member of the relevant combination or coalition is able to ‘take individual responsive steps with a view to making a contribution to, or increasing the likelihood of, the remedying the situation’ and (ii) if each individual takes these individual responsive steps, then the situation will (be likely to) be remedied; while it’s

nonetheless *true* that (iii) in the ‘evaluative’ sense of ‘ought,’ the situation ought to be remedied. In such cases, rather than taking individual steps with a view to halting the tragedy, what we need is that each individual takes individual responsive steps *with a view to the existence of a collective that can bear an obligation to halt the tragedy*. I argue that these facts ground individually-held *collectivization duties*. Section 4.3 draws closely on Collins (2013).

Section 4.4 forwards a moral principle that provides a set of sufficient conditions for the existence of each of *responsiveness duties* and *collectivisation duties*. I argue that responsiveness duties and collectivisation duties as two species of the genus *coordination duties*. Therefore, I label my principle for these duties the ‘Coordination Principle.’ I respond to objections to this principle.

Chapter Five: Coordination Duties in Combinations versus Coalitions (10,300 words)

5.1 Introduction (400 words)

5.2 The Hi-Lo Example (1,500 words)

5.3 I and We: Frames and Reasoning (3,500 words)

5.4 Different Duties in Coalitions and Combinations (4,400 words)

 Moral Coalitions

 Non-Moral Coalitions

 Combinations

5.5 Conclusion (300 words)

Section 5.1 explains that Chapter Five is concerned with fleshing out coordination duties. The focus will be on explaining how coordination duties require different things from members of coalitions, as compared with members of combinations.

Section 5.2 gives an example where (i) it is unclear what coordination duties require and where (ii) different things would be required from members of combinations as compared with coalitions. This is a moralised version of the ‘Hi-Lo’ example, famous from experimental economics (Hodgson 1967; Sugden 2003; Bacharach 2006; Tuomela 2013). In the moralised Hi-Lo example, there are two individuals facing the same moral catastrophe. Each individual has two options: first, discharge your coordination duty via method A; second, discharge your coordination duty via method B. The most valuable outcome is the one in which both

individuals pursue method A; the second most valuable outcome is the one in which both pursue method B; anything else will not resolve the moral catastrophe.

In this case, it seems obvious that the coordination duty of each is to pursue method A. But this is puzzling if one insists—as I do—that in this scenario, there are just individual agents deliberating about what they each ought to do. It would seem each should reason as follows: ‘if the other will pursue method A, then so should I. But if the other will pursue method B, then so should I. So, what I should do depends upon what the other will do. What will the other do? Well, let’s assume the other is rational just like me. Then, they will reason that they should pursue method A if I do, and that they should pursue method B if I do. So I cannot be sure what the other will do. So I cannot be sure what I should do.’ Moralised Hi-Lo examples occur regularly in the real world. I use the example of piecemeal individual charitable donations, as compared with responsive steps towards global ‘systemic change,’ as an example of a moralised Hi-Lo situation currently faced by those of the world’s rich who are concerned about global inequality.

Section 5.3 outlines some concepts from experimental economics that have been intended to explain how individuals (do and ought) pursue method A in Hi-Lo examples. These are the concepts of I-reasoning and I-framing, on the one hand, and we-reasoning and we-framing, on the other (Bacharach 2006; Gold and Sugden 2007; Tuomela 2013). The basic idea is that if the individuals each we-frame and we-reason, then they will each pursue method A; whereas, if they each I-frame and I-reason, then they will remain paralysed by the indecision described above. I develop a new conception of we-reasoning, which I call *coalition-reasoning*, that I argue is the minimal kind of reasoning required to resolve the Hi-Lo problem.

Section 5.4 argues that coalition-reasoning is required from members of a coalition when they are fulfilling their coordination duties, while I-reasoning is required from members of a combination when they are fulfilling their coordination duties. This is because the former are assured that their fellow actors will do their part in a certain pattern of actions, while the latter are not. The strong intuition that agents ought to pursue method A in Hi-Lo scenarios is, I suggest, a result of the fact that we assume the individuals in the examples constitute a coalition with the goal of ‘producing the most morally valuable outcome.’ We therefore assume that they each have a duty to coalition-reason. But there’s no theoretical basis for this assumption, whereas there is such a basis in coalitions. Thus, members of combinations and members of

coalitions will often have duties to perform different actions, when faced with coordination duties.

Chapter Six: Collectives' Duties (11,700 words)

6.1 Introduction (700 words)

6.2 A Permissive Account of Collectives (3,700 words)

6.3 Collectives' Moral Agency (3,600 words)

6.4 Realism about Collectives' Duties (3,500 words)

6.5 Conclusion (200 words)

Section 6.1 begins by re-iterating Chapter 1's account of collectives and explaining how they are different from combinations and coalitions. I give several examples of real-world collectives that seem to have duties—and that are given duties by law (including international customary law)—including states, business corporations, charities, and intergovernmental organisations.

Section 6.2 elaborates further on my account of collectives, by explaining how it differs from others' prominent accounts. Specifically, I compare my account with those of: French (1984), whose 'corporations' have unchanging policies; Rovane (1998), whose 'group persons' must have a unifying project; and List and Pettit (2011), whose 'group agents' must have an aggregation function with a high level of complexity (which excludes, e.g., dictatorial group agents). I demonstrate that my account is more permissive than these other accounts. I justify having such a permissive account of collectives, by reflecting upon the minimal conditions a group must meet if it is to be capable of irreducibly group-level deliberation, and arguing that my collectives meet these minimal conditions.

Section 6.3 argues that collectives (in my permissive sense of that term) have agency, and furthermore that many of them have *moral* agency. I argue for this by building from a functionalist 'belief-desire' account of moral agency, and using that as the bar at which to hold Section 6.2's reflections about collectives' capacities to deliberate. This yields an account of what it takes for an individual to be a *member* of a collective.

Section 6.4 argues in favour of realism about collectives' duties—that is, it argues that collectives' duties are not eliminable from our ontology to be replaced by a collection of duties held by individuals. This is because collectives can do something that is 'more than the sum' of what their members can do. This something is *the reliable production of multilateralism amongst members*. I argue for anti-reductionism about this, using List and Spiekermann's (2013) typology of four types of social scientific reductionism. (List and Spiekermann in turn build upon List and Menzies' (2009) and Stoljar's (2009) work on the reducibility of the mental to the physical.) I argue that while we should be *supervenience reductionists* about collectives' duties, we should not be *token reductionists*, *type reductionists*, or *causal-explanatory reductionists* about collectives' duties. Throughout this section, I contrast the present arguments regarding collectives' duties with Chapter Two's arguments regarding combinations' and coalitions' duties—reiterating that we should be anti-reductionist realists about collectives' duties, but reductionist anti-realists about combinations' and coalitions' duties.

Chapter Seven: Membership Duties (8,900 words)

7.1 Introduction (500 words)

7.2 Do Collectives' Duties Imply Individuals' Duties? (3,000 words)

Discursive Dilemma Cases

Intra-Collective Mistrust Cases

7.3 Existing Accounts of Membership Duties (2,400 words)

7.4 The Structure of Membership Duties (2,500 words)

7.5 Conclusion (400 words)

Section 7.1 asks whether collectives' duties imply that the collective's members have duties. On the one hand, if we are anti-reductionist realists about collectives' duties, you might think collectives' duties imply nothing in particular about the duties of collectives' members. On the other hand, when we look out into the world, it seems obvious that collectives' duties cannot be fulfilled except by members. This empirical fact suggests that collectives' duties do, indeed, have implications for members' duties.

Section 7.2 argues that collectives' duties do imply *membership duties*. Membership duties are duties held by individuals in virtue of the fact that a collective of which they are a member has

a collective duty. I argue for membership duties by arguing that, whenever a collective fails to discharge a duty, a member has also failed to discharge some individually-held duty. These individually-held duties are, I suggest, membership duties. To demonstrate that collective failure implies failure of membership duties, I consider two prominent cases in the literature that purport to show otherwise, and demonstrate that those cases fail to show otherwise. The first case is the ‘discursive dilemma,’ which Pettit (2007) uses to argue that a collective can fail in its duty without any member failing; the second case is Jackson’s (1987) example of speed-driving, which Smith (2009) uses likewise.

Having demonstrated that membership duties follow from collectives’ duties, Section 7.3 turns to consider the structure of membership duties. Specifically, this section focuses on posing problems for existing accounts of membership duties (Lawford-Smith 2012, 457–63; Isaacs 2011, 132–3; Wringer 2014, 177–8; Copp 2012, 84; Aas 2015, 7). These accounts respectively suffer various problems: they allow members to positively fulfil their duties by luckily having false beliefs; or are insufficiently relevant to a particular collective duty; or are too vague; or generate too many membership duties; or are insufficiently related to a member’s role in the group.

Section 7.4 proposes a precise structure for membership duties, which succeeds where the Section 7.3’s accounts fail. The proposal is as follows. If a collective has a duty to see to it that X, then (1) each member has a duty to use their role, as appropriate, to put inputs into the group’s decision-making procedure with a view to the procedure’s distributing roles to members in a way that: if enough members used their roles with a view to seeing to it that X, then that would be sufficient for X in a high proportion of likely futures (these are ‘X-sufficient’ roles); and (2) once X-sufficient roles are distributed, then each member has a duty to use their role, as appropriate, with a view to seeing to it that X. I respond to various potential objections to this structure for membership duties. The most prominent objection is that it might seem implausible that a low-level member of a collective has a membership duty, every time her collective has a duty. Chapter Eight will pick up this objection.

Chapter Seven draws closely on (but expands and specifies) the argument in Collins (2017a).

Chapter Eight: Fairness in Membership Duties (11,500 words)

8.1 Introduction (1,100 words)

8.2 Sources of Duties (700 words)

8.3 The Source-Tracking Model of Membership Duties (5,000 words)

The General Idea

Source-Tracking in Complex Cases

8.4 Dealing with Shortfalls (4,500 words)

8.5 Conclusion (300 words)

Section 8.1 picks up an objection considered at the very end of Chapter Seven, namely, that a collectives' duty should not imply demanding membership duties for low-level members. My reply is that low-level members' membership duties will be extremely undemanding. Chapter Eight therefore answers the question of how just demanding different members' membership duties are, relative both to one another and to the demandingness of the collective's duty.

Section 8.2 lays the foundations, outlining a view on which moral agents—individual or collective—acquire duties from numerous and varied 'sources.' These sources include causing harm, having the capacity to bring about some good, benefitting from harm, being in an associative relationship, and so on. (The discussion here draws upon Collins and Lawford-Smith (2016).) Different sources have different levels of importance in different contexts, and often several sources combine to generate a duty to perform a particular act.

Section 8.3 uses this framework to answer the question of how we should distribute the costs of membership duties. It advocates the following: the distribution of membership duties' costs should, insofar as possible, track the source(s) of the collective's duty. As a first step, costs should be divided amongst duty sources, in proportion to those sources' importance in generating the collective's duty. As a second step, the costs assigned to each source should be divided amongst the collective's members in proportion to members' instantiations of that source. This is the 'source-tracking' proposal for fairness in membership duties. In explaining the source-tracking model, I pay particular attention to 'contribution to harm' as a duty source, giving a detailed analysis of what it takes for a member to be connected (in a normatively relevant way) to the harms rendered by her collective—such that, when her collective has a duty based on having done harm, her membership duties are demanding on that basis. (This analysis draws upon Collins (2017b).)

Section 8.4 attends to the 'shortfall' problem, which is rife in long-term, large, and internally diverse collectives, such as states and large business corporations. The problem arises when

the collective's duty derives from sources that aren't instantiated by any member. This is most acute for duties based in historical wrongdoing: perhaps the collective did wrong decades ago, but no current member contributed to it, since none were born at the time. Here, an important duty source—perhaps the *only* duty source—doesn't apply to any member. So membership duties cannot be distributed in a source-tracking way. The result is a shortfall: the collective has a duty, but no members should incur costs in its fulfilment. I address the problem by arguing that shortfalls matter only when sources other than the shortfallen source also generate moral reasons for the collective. My proposal is that some combination of other duty sources—perhaps benefiting, association, or capacity, amongst others—can be used to 'top up' the shortfall, under certain conditions that will be specified.

My explanation and defence of the source-tracking model draws heavily on Collins 2016.

Conclusion (2,000 words)

A brief concluding chapter will provide a quick summary of the conclusions argued for in the book and will point to some avenues for future research.

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