

A Review of Hindriks' "Duty to Join Forces"

A Reducible or Irreducible Collective Responsibility?

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Introduction

In a recent paper, Hindriks (2019) claims that random groups of individuals can bear irreducible group responsibilities. To clarify the conceptual issue at stake, consider this example from Björnsson (2020):

Offshore wind: Like most summer days, a large group of children are enjoying the beach, playing on their air mattresses close to land. This particular day, there are fifteen of them; three came with a parent, the other twelve live nearby. Without warning, the weak onshore wind quickly turns strongly offshore, and the children begin drifting out, beyond the range of their swimming capabilities. They need to be rescued. In response, each of the three adults can swim out and catch one child before the wind has carried them too far, provided that they start swimming now. But there is also a lifeboat that could be dragged a few yards to the sea if at least two adults joined forces; with it, two of them could row out and pick up all the children. Each of the adults quickly realizes all this.

Offshore wind is similar to the famous drowning child example from Singer (1972). If an individual walking by a shallow pond notices a child drowning in it, she is morally obliged to save the child. In offshore wind, none of the three adults could save the children alone. However, if the adults coordinate their actions, the entire group of children could be saved with a similar ease and serious harm could be prevented. Thus, it seems reasonable to assess that in offshore wind a moral obligation to save the children weighs on the adults (Hindriks 2019, 208; Björnsson 2020, 3)⁹.

In the literature, there is an ongoing discussion to discern whether we should ascribe the obligation to the group of adults or to each adult part of the group. In technical terms, the issue is specified as follows: on the one hand, we could have a reducible group obligation. The group is indeed obliged to save the children, but this obligation that weighs on the group is nothing else than the sum of the obligations that each individual bears. On the other hand, we could have an irreducible group obligation. We consider the group obligation as weighing on the group itself, thus being unequal to the individual obligation that weighs on the individual members.

The pivotal point of the discussion is the agency thesis (AT): generally, it is argued that only moral agents can bear moral obligations (Björnsson 2020; Hindriks 2019).¹⁰ Attempts to argue that it is the group as such that bears the moral obligation have to deal with AT. It is possible to either claim that AT is false, thus claiming that also non-agential groups can bear obligations, or that groups can be taken to be moral agents distinct from the summa of individuals' agencies.

⁹ Note that it is possible to disagree on the existence of the obligation. Williams (1981) argues that it would be 'one thought too many' for the adults to reflect whether to save the entire group or only one child considering that she is their own. I leave this discussion out since it is not fundamental to the aims of my paper. I assume Björnsson's thesis that there is a moral obligation to save the entire group of children. I thank an anonymous editor for making me aware of this point.

¹⁰ A moral agent is an agent that is able to distinguish between good and bad and that can act on those considerations. Consider the case of a newborn: it is not possible to argue that she is a moral agent insofar as she cannot distinguish between good and bad and you would not consider her morally responsible for her actions or for bearing any sort of moral obligations.

With a famous contribution, List and Pettit (2011) have argued that some structured groups (e.g., corporations, states) can qualify as moral agents thus respecting the validity of AT while ascribing to structured groups the possibility to be morally responsible. The argument that List and Pettit (2011) bring out does not apply to offshore wind. In the example, we have a random group of individuals (RGI) (Held 1970). In the literature, RGIs are often taken to fail in meeting the agency requirements (Hindriks 2019; Björnsson 2020; Smiley 2017, 24-25).¹¹ Thus, ascribing to these groups moral responsibility would represent a violation of AT.

Despite this difficulty, different scholars have looked for strategies to claim that RGIs can bear irreducible responsibilities (Björnsson 2014; Hindriks 2019; Wringer 2010). In this paper, I will focus on one solution based upon the refusal of AT. Hindriks (2019) argues that non-agential groups can bear irreducible group responsibility, thus claiming that AT is false. This is possible in virtue of what he calls 'The Duty to Join Forces.'

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: in section 1, I present Hindriks' (2019) argument. In section 2, I move to a first criticism of his position. I argue that, irrespective of Hindriks' argument, it seems to be the case that the collective action of the group is not accountable, and that accountability still lies on the individual level. In section 3, I move to present a second criticism to Hindriks' argument: his irreducibility seems to lose reliability, thus, questioning his argument.

1. The Duty to Join Forces

Hindriks (2019) claims that we can make the case for irreducible responsibilities for RGIs analyzing what he calls 'The Duty to Join Forces' (DJF). Hindriks describes a process based on two phases: firstly, there is a stage in which individuals approach each other and make each other aware of their willingness to prevent harm. Secondly, the collective brings about a joint action to prevent it.

In offshore wind, first stage, we would have something like this:

Good people in Offshorewind (1/2): One of the three adults asks the other two to collaborate. Suddenly, one of the two answers that she will join helping with the lifeboat and the other one stays aside willing to help if needed.

Since there is a moral obligation to save the entire group of children, Hindriks (p. 210) claims that the three adults have a lateral responsibility to join forces: to coordinate their actions and prevent the harm, the three individuals have a responsibility to group up. In practice, one would have to approach the other(s) and ask for their help to save the drowning children. In this case, the other individual(s) would have an individual moral obligation to agree to help in case their contribution is needed to prevent the harm.

This moral obligation to group up is conditional on the actual possibility for the group to be able to save the children: if, for example, four adults were needed to prevent the harm but only three were present on the beach, the group of adults would be excused to only save their own children. To see it in concrete, consider a variation of Scarcity from Björnsson (2020):

Scarcity: We are in offshore wind, besides that, the boat is bigger and now, to prevent the death of the children, three adults (a-b-c) should coordinate. Adult a starts running to save her child careless of the other children. Adult b asks Adult c if she wants to try to use the boat to save the entire group. Adult c refuses and starts running to save her child.

¹¹ Some structured groups are usually considered to meet the agency requirements because they have a structure and a decision process (List and Pettit 2011). It is more difficult to ascribe agency to RGIs because they lack both these requirements.

According to Hindriks (2019, p. 206-209), adult c would not be blameworthy. Assuming that it is evident that two adults cannot handle the bigger boat, adult c is justified to refuse to help and save her child. The moral obligation to answer affirmatively when asked to collaborate depends upon the possibility of success of the action. According to Hindriks, the individual is morally obliged to help insofar as the action is likely to succeed.

So far, the three salient aspects of the DJF are the following: a) the three adults have a moral obligation to save the entire group of children. b) The three adults cannot do it on their own. c) Individuals have a lateral responsibility to join forces in order to prevent the harm; this obligation in the first stage relies on the individual level and they are individually accountable for it.

After agreeing on acting together to prevent the collective harm, in the second stage of the DJF, the group performs the joint action and saves the group of children. In offshore wind, we would have something like this:

Good people in Offshorewind (2/2): We are in good people in offshorewind(1/2). The two adults that agreed on acting take the boat and go save the children. They pick-up the entire group of them and they all get back to the beach safely.

If the first and the second stage of the DJF are respected, Hindriks argues that the adults would comply with their moral obligation to save the children. It is not clear yet whether we can consider this obligation reducible to the individual obligations of each member or whether it is an irreducible obligation distinct from them. In the next subsection, I present Hindriks' argument for the irreducibility of the DJF.

1.1 The irreducibility of the Duty to Join Forces

Before presenting Hindriks' argument, it might be useful to spend a few words on reducibility. Hindriks (2019) is not explicit in what kind of reducibility he is referring to. In another paper on the same topic, Tamminga & Hindriks (2019) argue that we can distinguish between logical reduction and ontological reduction. The latter implies that collectives are just sets of individuals, while the former implies that statements about collectives are logically equivalent to statements or conjunctions of statements about individuals. Tamminga & Hindriks (2019) argue for what they call 'logical irreducibility' of RGIs. Hence, I will assume throughout the paper that Hindriks (2019) argues as well for logical reducibility.

Hindriks (2019) provides two arguments for which we should understand the DJF as an irreducible obligation: firstly, the group bears an irreducible collective obligation because only the group can avoid the harm from occurring. Secondly, the individual lateral obligation of stage one has an irreducible collective content.

Concerning the first argument, first of all, consider the scenario by Feinberg (1968):

People lolling on the beach: a thousand people are lolling on a beach while one swimmer is drowning and shouts for help in a voice audible to the entire group of the lolling-people. Nobody intervenes and the swimmer is left to drown.

In this example, the responsibility to save the drowning swimmer is a reducible collective obligation: every individual able to save the drowning swimmer bears an obligation to do so (Feinberg 1968, 683-684; Hindriks 2019, 210). In cases such as offshore wind, things are different. The single individual cannot be considered as having an individual obligation to save the children, otherwise, we would have to say the same

for Solitary helplessness:

Solitary helplessness: we are in offshore wind. There is only one adult on the beach when the wind turns, and she can save only one child. (Björnsson 2020)

In solitary helplessness, we do not say that the adult has a moral obligation to save the entire group of children nor to contribute to save the group of children. The adult here is not able anyhow to prevent the collective harm or to bring about a relevant contribution to prevent it.¹² Thus, in offshore wind, the persistence of the obligation to save the group of children depends upon the presence of the other agents.

Regarding examples such as offshore wind, we have two options: (1) the individuals are morally obliged to bring about their relevant contribution to save the children and (2) the RGI as such is morally responsible to prevent the children's death. Hindriks (p. 210) argues that we should opt for (2). The point is that individuals have no motivation to bring about their specific contribution of the collective efforts if the others do not – just as in solitary helplessness the agent has no motivation to bring about a contribution to the collective effort if other people are not there to collaborate. The very existence of the obligation is based upon a joint reason that exists only insofar as there are enough individuals that share the same joint reason. Therefore, since the obligation is dependent upon the presence of the group, it is not reducible to individual moral obligations.

To support this latter claim, Hindriks (p. 210-212) offers a second argument. If we examine the content of the individual obligations to group up in phase one, we can see that the content of these individual obligations is irreducibly collective. Firstly, the obligation to ask others to contribute is dependent upon the others having the same obligation. Insofar as there are other agents with the same individual obligations, the individual obligations come into existence. Secondly, the obligation to answer affirmatively is conditional upon the others' willingness to help. One is allowed to refuse to help when the group is not likely to succeed (e.g., three persons would be needed but only two are available). Therefore, Hindriks argues that the collective obligation has to be logically prior to the individual ones: the content of the individual obligations to join forces derive from an irreducible collective obligation.

In this subsection, we saw why, for Hindriks, the DJF is an irreducible collective obligation. Firstly, because the reason to act is joint and it persists only insofar as the collective is present. Secondly, because the individual obligations to group up derive from the collective one that is logically prior to them. I will now conclude the presentation of Hindriks' argument in the next sub-section explaining his rejection of AT and the refusal of the so-called Irreducibility thesis.

1.2 Agency thesis and Irreducibility thesis

The main problem to ascribe irreducible responsibilities to RGIs is AT. To state the problem again, according to AT, only moral agents can bear responsibilities: however, RGIs do not seem to meet the agency requirements (Hindriks 2019; Björnsson 2020; Smiley 2017, 24-25). Therefore, to argue that RGIs can bear moral responsibilities it is either necessary to refuse AT or to argue that RGIs are moral agents. According to Hindriks, cases such as offshore wind question the validity of AT. Since such cases question the so-called 'causal condition' and the 'epistemic condition' forcing us to revise them, we should revise AT accordingly allowing for RGIs to bear irreducible collective responsibilities.

¹² This is justified by 'the causal condition of moral responsibility.' I will come back to this point later.

To consider an agent responsible, we must consider her as able to prevent the harm being brought about. This is the so-called ‘causal condition.’ However, as mentioned before, in offshore wind, no single agent can prevent the outcome from occurring but only the group by suitably combining their efforts. Hindriks proposes to reconsider the causal condition because, as offshore wind shows, there are cases in which multiple agents can prevent an outcome only by suitably combining their efforts (revised causal condition). Moreover, to conceive an agent as morally required to act, she should be conscious of the harm that is happening. In cases such as offshore wind, however, it is not enough that an agent is aware of the harm if the others are not. They must be mutually aware of the impending harm (revised epistemic condition). According to Hindriks, the revision of these two conditions requires the revision of AT. Cases similar to offshore wind require us to revise the causal and the epistemic condition on a collective level. Hence, we should refuse AT and allow for collections of agents to also bear moral responsibilities:

AT revised: the only entities that can bear moral responsibilities are moral agents and collections thereof (Hindriks 2019, 212. *Emphasis added*).

Consequently, if we refuse AT in favor of a revised AT, we can simultaneously argue that 1) RGIs are non-agential groups, and 2) they can bear irreducible collective obligations.

Nonetheless, Hindriks (p. 211-214) specifies that there is an important difference between obligations of agential and non-agential groups. In the RGIs, the collective obligation is grounded in the persistence of the individual ones. More specifically, for RGIs, the irreducibility thesis (hereafter, IT) is false.

Irreducibility Thesis (IT): A collective can be responsible for an outcome without any of its members bearing a correlative responsibility¹³ (Hindriks, p. 211).

Hindriks here argues for a central point: even if the collective obligation is not reducible to the individual ones, the collective obligation subsists only insofar as the individual obligations do. To see this, consider even stronger offshore wind:

Even stronger offshore wind: we are in offshore wind. The individuals passed stage one of the DJF and they are carrying the boat to the sea. While they are doing that, the wind suddenly becomes stronger and makes the two adults fall. Adult A breaks one of her legs and adult B breaks one of her arms.

Hindriks argues that here the collective obligation would be defeated by the individual obligations being given up. If two of the three adults of the group are needed to help the drowning children and two of them cannot help to bring about the action, then, the collective responsibility is defeated. Thus, IT seems to no longer apply with respect to RGIs.¹⁴

¹³ For correlative responsibility here we understand a responsibility that is dependent upon the existence of another one.

¹⁴ Here, it seems that Hindriks (2019) is drawing a similar point that Hindriks and Tamminga (2019) draw. It seems to me that Hindriks (2019) here is drawing a similar point. The collective responsibility is dependent upon the ontological existence of the individual ones. If the individual ones disappear (i.e., if there are less adults or one breaks his leg, etc.), then the collective responsibility also disappears. The kind of irreducibility for which Hindriks (2019) seems to argue throughout his paper is instead logical irreducibility: the statements we ascribe to the group are necessarily collective, thus making the collective obligation irreducible to individual ones.

This is an important clarification because in agential groups things differ. List and Pettit (2011) argue that excuses that apply to individual members of a group do not necessarily apply to the group itself. For a recent example, consider the role of the UK government during the Covid-19 pandemic. Even if for a considerable amount of time the UK prime minister was infected by the virus and he could not respond to his duties, the government was still responsible for the situation in the country. In RGIs, as even stronger offshore wind shows, IT is not valid: the irreducible collective obligation “exists only to the extent its members are in a suitable position to discharge it” (Hindriks 2019, p. 218).

To summarize this section, I showed how Hindriks relates his argument to two important theses concerning group responsibilities, AT and IT. On the one hand, he revises AT because it is not adequate to account for cases such as offshore wind. On the other hand, he refuses IT because the collective obligation of non-agential groups, while being not reducible to them, subsist only insofar as the individual ones do.

2 The Duty to Join Forces and Accountability

In this section, I will move to present a first challenge to Hindriks’ argument. Hindriks argues to have established a group obligation that is irreducible to the individual members. However, he still rejects the irreducibility thesis because the members carry a correlative responsibility to join forces. I will now argue that Hindriks’s argument is not compatible with a second kind of irreducibility either: irreducible accountability. I argue that, even assuming the validity of Hindriks’ (2019) argument, accountability in the DJF fully relies on the individual level. To show why this is the case, I evaluate three possible scenarios for which the group fails to comply with its obligation. I aim to show that we might have reasons to consider one or more individuals accountable, but never the group.

a) The group has no causal power to prevent the harm. In a scenario where the group has not the appropriate capacity to avoid the occurrence of the harm, it is unlikely that we hold the group responsible. For example, consider CPR:

CPR: we are in offshore wind. The difference is that, because of the wind, some high waves formed. The group of adults notices that some of the children are already drowning. They coordinate their action and take all of the children on the boat. However, three of them were already not breathing. They could have been saved if one of the adults had done a first aid course, but none of them had.

Assuming that taking a first aid course is not a moral obligation, we cannot hold the group responsible for the children’s death. Of course, if at least one of them thought about the benefits of such a course, the three children could have been saved. But this does not mean that we would blame or hold the group of adults morally responsible for the three children’s death. Therefore, the lack of a relevant ability to prevent the harm does not seem to be a justification to hold the group accountable for what could happen in the second stage.

b) The group obligation is defeated. As I mentioned before, Hindriks argues that the collective obligation can be defeated by individual ones being given up. As we have seen in even stronger offshore wind, in case of something happening out of the RGI’s control, the group obligation would be defeated. Interestingly, in case the collective obligation is defeated for something for which the individual is blameworthy, we would still not hold the collective responsible but only the individual as second thoughts shows:

Second thoughts: we are in offshore wind. The boat is bigger, and we need the entire group of adults to pick up the boat and save all of the children. After a successful first stage of the DJF, while the three adults are taking the boat, adult c has second thoughts and runs to save her child.

According to Hindriks, we have a collective irreducible responsibility, and yet, also in this case we would only hold adult c blameworthy for preventing the joint action that would successfully save the group of children. Postulating an irreducible group obligation does not seem to group accountability either here.

c) The collective fails in saving the drowning children. Finally, consider unlucky event:

Unlucky event: we are in offshore wind. After a successful stage one of the DJF, two of the three adults are running with the lifeboat on their shoulders to the sea. However, while doing that adult B slips and the lifeboat is falling. Adult C tried to jump to catch it before it fell, but she could not reach it. Adult A could not sustain the weight of the boat alone and the boat was destroyed. The adults run to save their own children.

In this scenario, the group fails as a group to comply with its obligation. We could therefore hold the group responsible for the harm. However, it is difficult to imagine that this would be the case. In moral philosophy, an important claim is that the will, the reasons, and the conditions under which the agent(s) perform the action are important to ascribe their responsibility (Strawson 1962; Scanlon 2008). In stage one, we already established the good will of the agents. They want to help the children and prevent them from dying. Postulating a group obligation of a group of agents of which we already established their goodwill and willingness to prevent the outcome does not seem to lead to group accountability.

Thus, if the group lacks a relevant ability, if the individuals would not join the collective efforts, or if the group fails while trying to save the children, the group's action seems to be morally irrelevant. Quite differently, imagine a corporation that committed itself to reduce its environmental impact. If the corporation is not able to reach what was stated, it would be likely that the group will be considered accountable for the outcome: (a) it is likely that the group has the relevant abilities to reduce their emissions; (b) it would not be an excuse that one of their members was unable to contribute; (c) the corporation's good intentions would often not be enough. Our attitude changes drastically only for one reason: we tend to consider the corporation as an autonomous agent, and, therefore, we expect it to act on certain considerations of good and bad as a collective.

However, as shown above, things change drastically with RGIs. I argued that in the three scenarios above, we would not hold an RGI responsible because the group's action does not seem to be relevant from a moral point of view. In RGIs what seems to be morally relevant instead lies on the individual level. Individuals are accountable for their decision to accept or not to collaborate to the joint action.

3. Irreducible Responsibilities Without AT

In the previous section, I have argued that Hindriks (2019) fails in postulating irreducible accountability. In this section, I move to a second criticism. I argue that without AT, Hindriks' argument seems to fail in postulating an irreducible obligation.

As we have seen, a crucial condition for an agent a to be responsible for a harm x is that she must be able somehow to prevent it. In offshore wind, there are two other individuals. Agent a is obliged to join forces with them thus preventing the harm. However, on the one hand, consider that the presence of the two individuals might not be enough. For example, if the other two adults are physically impaired, the group

would not be able to prevent the outcome. On the other hand, we should also acknowledge that the presence of two more people is not necessary for agent a to be morally obliged to save the children. She might be individually able to save the children. Thus, what is necessary for agent a, to be morally obliged to take action, is that she has an acceptable way to save the children's life.¹⁵

In offshore wind agent a is morally obliged to take action. She must join forces with the other adults and then maybe row on the lifeboat while another adult does the same. According to Hindriks, this obligation is irreducibly collective. However, consider alternatives:

Alternatives: we are in offshore wind, but there is also a motorboat that only adult a knows how to use. Adult b asks adult a to help her save the children's life. Adult a quickly refuses the offer and uses the motorboat to save the children's life.

According to Hindriks' argument, adult a should be taken to having two distinct moral obligations. On the one hand, she is subject to the DJF of the group of adults. Adult a is morally obliged to agree to help when adult b asks for it. On the other hand, adult a would have an individual moral obligation to save the children's life through the motorboat. Therefore, it seems that (a) in the scenario, adult a is subject to two different moral obligations: an individual and an irreducibly collective one; (b) taking Hindriks' argument strictly, adult a would commit wrongdoing by refusing to help.

About this latter point, I think it would be an unfair criticism of Hindriks' argument. He did not account for examples like alternatives and surely there is room to clarify how the DJF would deal with such a situation. Therefore, we can exclude that adult a commits wrongdoing using the motorboat and refusing to join the joint effort as long as she can save the children. What might be instead worth looking at is (a). For Hindriks' argument, adult a must be subject to two different obligations. If agent a would be subject to two equal statements, the DJF would be reducible to an individual obligation, thus, problematizing Hindriks' argument.

The two obligations in alternatives seem to be equal for at least two factors. Firstly, complying with one of the two obligations would make the other disappear. Saving the children through the motorboat would remove the RGI's obligation to save the children. Secondly, it is not morally relevant whether adult a complies to the obligation as a group member or through the motorboat. The two obligations are equally strong since they refer to preventing the same harm through equally acceptable means. Thus, agent a can freely choose what she thinks is better to save the children's life.

The only difference between the two obligations is that, in one of the two, there is the contribution of other agents. But is this enough to claim that agent a is subject to two unequal statements? Through his argument, Hindriks argues that it is the case. The mere presence of other agents makes the obligation an irreducible collective one. In alternatives, there must be something in the presence of other agents that alters the obligation that is instead missing in the contribution of the motorboat. The causal contribution brought by agent b and by the motorboat can be considered equal to agent a. Hence, the difference must lie somewhere else. Surely, one important difference between the presence of agent b and the motorboat is the fact that agent b is indeed an agent. Thus, this might be the factor that generates an irreducible collective obligation.

15 I do not go into considerations of what counts as an 'acceptable' way to save the children's life. Consider however that she would probably be excused to not save the children if she would have to risk her own life. Considerations alike are possible. See (Hindriks 2019; Björnsson 2020).

In the first stage of the DJF, the fact that agent b is an agent might be important. The two individuals have to agree to help before taking action. Instead, in the case of the motorboat, the agent can autonomously decide whether to save the children or not. However, this difference does not matter for the subsistence of the obligation. Hindriks himself argues that the obligation to save the children – that according to him is collective – is prior to the lateral responsibility to join forces. Hindriks' argument is built upon the idea that the mere presence of the individuals generates an irreducible collective obligation. It does not matter, for the persistence of the obligation, whether the agents are going to agree or not, whether agent a is a master hypnotist and might ask an unwilling agent b to help, etc. Reading through Hindriks' argument, the existence of the collective obligation is only based upon the relevant contribution that agent b might bring, and which will result in essentially combining with agent a's contribution to then prevent the harm. But we have assessed that the motorboat would bring a similar causal contribution and that the difference must lie somewhere else. However, the fact that agent b is an agent does not seem to be relevant for the obligation to occur, and it remains unclear where the difference would lie.

Before concluding, it might be worth noting that a possible way to argue that the two obligations are different would be to claim that in the first stage of the DJF, agent a and agent b would constitute themselves as an autonomous collective agent. We should assume that they would institute for themselves a structure and a decision process and that the group would then meet the agency requirements. If we assume that this is the case, we have reasons to believe that agent a is subject to two unequal claims. On the one hand, she is subject to an individual moral obligation that fully weighs on her agency. On the other hand, she is the indirect subject of a moral obligation since she is a member of an agential group upon which the obligation weighs. Thus, in this case, it seems possible to argue that the two obligations would not be reducible to one another. But this possible path of argument would occur respecting AT, and not refusing it, as Hindriks' argument aims at instead.

Thus, it seems to me that a much more straightforward interpretation of alternatives is that adult a has two ways to prevent the harm and comply with her single obligation to save the children. But if agent a in alternatives is subject only to one obligation, it means that the DJF is reducible to an individual obligation, thus questioning the validity of Hindriks' argument.

Conclusions

In this paper, I presented Hindriks (2019). Hindriks argues that it is possible to have irreducible group responsibility for random groups of individuals. I argued for two points. Firstly, I argued that while the DJF leads to postulate an irreducible group obligation, it would not lead to irreducible accountability. Secondly, I argued that Hindriks' argument at its roots would be problematic. I argued that it is unclear why the mere presence of other agents should alter the obligation.

To make his argument appealing, I believe that Hindriks should answer both my critical points. Firstly, he should make clear the reason for which joining forces with other agents would necessarily make the obligation irreducibly collective, if what is needed for the obligation to occur is only their relevant contribution but not their status as agents. Secondly, accounting to this criticism would still leave open another issue. Hindriks seems to postulate an irreducible group obligation for which the group is not accountable. It is unclear what Hindriks' argument would add if accountability would still lie on the individual level. I believe that accounting for these two challenges can be complex. Trying to ascribe responsibilities without establishing agency might be an unrealistic task.

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