

Joint Epistemic Action and Collective Moral Responsibility: Reply to Andras Szigeti
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In his thoughtful reply¹ (Reply) to my paper, “Joint Epistemic Action and Collective Moral Responsibility”² (JEA) Andras Szigeti makes a number of points by way of testing and strengthening my general account. I am grateful for the opportunity to further clarify and elaborate my account.

Varieties of Responsibility

In section 2 of JEA, I provide a brief analysis of collective moral responsibility as joint moral responsibility developed in more detail elsewhere.³ I suggest that this notion of collective moral responsibility is, at least in principle, applicable to all forms of joint action, including complex forms of organisational action. The implication of this is clear and contrary to the work of the many contemporary theorists who would seek to ascribe responsibility to collective entities per se: individuals engaged in such complex forms of joint action are, at least in principle, able to be held individually and jointly moral responsible for those actions and their adverse outcomes.

Szigeti is sympathetic to this general conception but presses me on my distinctions between full, partial and diminished responsibility, on the one hand and, on the other hand, actions which causally contribute to their outcomes but which are neither necessary nor sufficient for those outcomes. Here Szigeti focuses on my claim that each participating agent in a joint action can be *fully* morally responsible for the morally significant outcome of that joint action notwithstanding that his or her contributory action was neither necessary nor sufficient for the outcome in question (Reply, 15).

I agree with Szigeti that (other things being equal) actions which are causally necessary or sufficient for their outcomes are importantly different from actions which merely make a causal contribution to their outcome. However, this point should not be overstated. Moral responsibility is not simply a matter of causality; it is also typically a matter of intention and of performing actions as means to one’s ends. And in the cases in question each of the agents has the outcome as an end (or ought to have had it as an end). Moreover, I do not hold that *all* cases in which participating agents make a non-necessary and non-sufficient causal contribution—and have the required ends and intentions—are cases in which each is fully morally responsible for the outcome. In particular, it may well be that each has *partial* responsibility for the outcome; that is, the quantum of responsibility is divided up and distributed (so to speak). (I return to the notion of partial responsibility below.) Nevertheless, there are evidently cases in which each is fully morally responsible for some outcome notwithstanding that each only made a non-

¹ Andraas Szigeti “Seumas Miller: Joint Epistemic Action and Collective Moral Responsibility—A Reply” *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 2015 vol. 4 no. 5, 14-19 <http://wp.me/p1Bfg0-23R>. Hereafter “Reply”.

² Seumas Miller “Joint Epistemic Action and Collective Moral Responsibility” *Social Epistemology* 19 Feb. 2015. Hereafter “JEA”.

³ Seumas Miller “Collective Moral Responsibility: An Individualist Account” in (ed.) Peter A. French *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* vol. XXX 2006, 176-193.

necessary and non-sufficient causal contribution. My stabbing example is a case in point (JEA,12).

Suppose that each of five men inflicts a single stab wound on a sixth man, John Smith, intending to kill him. Assume the stabbings are simultaneous. Smith dies from his wounds, however three stab wounds would have been causally sufficient to kill him. That is, three stab wounds are individually causally necessary, and jointly causally sufficient, to kill Smith. Therefore, no single stab wound (of the five) is either causally necessary or sufficient for Smith's death. So while each of the men performed an action, i.e., a stabbing, that was causally necessary and sufficient for *wounding* Smith, not one of the five men performed an action that was either causally necessary, or causally sufficient, for Smith's *death*. So each of the men is individually morally responsible for *wounding* Smith, but what about the moral responsibility for *killing* him? It might be thought that if a person has not performed an action that was either causally necessary or sufficient for a person's death, then that person cannot be held responsible for the person's death. So none of the five men is responsible for Smith's death. But if none of the five is responsible then presumably no one is responsible. For the cause of Smith's death was the stab wounds, and these were made by the five men.

Notwithstanding the above claimed lack of individual moral responsibility, it might be held that the five men were *collectively* morally responsible for Smith's death. But this appears to be false, since only the actions of three of the men were necessary for Smith's death. So at best we are entitled to conclude that (an unspecified and perhaps unspecifiable) three of the five men were collectively responsible for Smith's death, but no individual was responsible. This conclusion is very unpalatable indeed. For one thing, it sets up an unbridgeable gap between collective responsibility and individual responsibility; a collective can be morally responsible for an outcome, even though none of its members are. For another, it licenses the commission of immoral acts, so long as they are collective actions involving over-determination; individual perpetrators are not morally responsible for heinous crimes, so long as they commit those crimes collectively, and their actions over-determine the outcome.

We first need an analysis of the kind of collective actions at issue. We have one at hand—my relational individualist account of joint actions in terms of collective ends. Joint actions are actions involving a number of agents performing interdependent actions in order to realise some common goal.⁴ Examples of joint action are: two people dancing together, a number of tradesmen building a house and a team of researchers conducting an attitudinal survey. Collective ends are to be understood as shared, interdependent, individual ends. Thus in the stabbing example each has Smith's death as an individual end but does so interdependently with the others; each would not have Smith's death as an end if the others did not. So the five men have Smith's death as an end and each stabs as part of the means to the realisation of this end.

⁴ Seumas Miller "Joint Action" *Philosophical Papers* vol. xxi, no. 3, 1992, 275-299. For a defence of this individualist account against collectivist criticisms see Seumas Miller "Joint Action: The Individual Strikes Back" in (ed.) S. L. Tsohatzidis *Intentional Acts and Institutional Facts: Essays on John Searle's Social Ontology* (Dordrecht: Springer Press, 2007): 73-92.

Moreover, the individual contributory *actions* of the five agents are *interdependent*. That is, each performs his contributory action, if he believes the others will perform theirs, and each does so, only if he believes this. Why are the actions interdependent? They are interdependent by virtue of the existence of the collective end possessed by the five agents, and toward the realisation of which each of the individual acts is directed.

So there is interdependence of individual ends but there is also interdependence of action. That is, each stabbed only on condition the others stabbed. So the full set of five acts of stabbing can be regarded as *the means* by which the collective end was realised; and each act of stabbing was a *part of* that means. Moreover, in virtue of this interdependence, each act of stabbing is an integral part of the means to the collective end. Since killing someone is morally significant, I conclude that all five agents are *jointly*—and therefore collectively—*morally* responsible for killing Smith. For each performed an act of stabbing in the service of that (collective) end, i.e., Smith's death; and each of these acts of stabbing was an integral part of the means to that end.

The first point to be stressed here is that being an instance of joint responsibility the morally responsibility of the five agents for the death of Smith does not attach to the group per se; but nor is it a mere aggregate of individual responsibilities. The second point is that each agent can be held *fully* morally responsible for Smith's death; the moral responsibility of each is not diminished by the fact that each of the others is also morally responsible.

Let me now return to the notion of partial responsibility. A preliminary point here is that partial responsibility is to be distinguished from diminished responsibility. An agent has partial responsibility for an outcome only relative to other agents' responsibility for that outcome. So if agent A has partial responsibility for some outcome then there must be at least one other agent, B, who has some responsibility for that outcome, i.e. B also has partial responsibility. Thus, a large number of persons (taken in aggregate) might be morally responsible for harmful climate change by virtue of their (luxury) carbon emissions. However, each might only be only partially—and, therefore, not fully—responsible. By contrast, an agent has diminished responsibility relative to *that agent's* full responsibility. The factors that might diminish—possibly, but not necessarily, to the point of extinguishment—an agent's (full) responsibility are such things as ignorance or coercion. So whether an agent has diminished responsibility does not necessarily depend on the degree of responsibility of other agents for the outcome in question (although in some cases, such as that of a subordinate following the order of his superior officer to do wrong, it might do so).

Szigeti suggests that if we can ascribe full responsibility to each participating agent for a harmful outcome of their joint action—notwithstanding that each only makes a causally non-necessary, non-sufficient contribution—then it is unclear why there is a need for the concept of joint moral responsibility and, hence, my notion of collective moral responsibility (Reply, 15). I take it that my above stabbing example and the analysis thereof in terms of joint responsibility is sufficient to remove this unclarity. However, Szigeti invokes my example of harmful climate change to make his point (Reply, 15).

While similar in some respects to my stabbing example the harmful climate change scenario is also importantly different.⁵

Here we need to invoke the distinctions between causal and moral responsibility and between responsibility for one's contributory action and responsibility for the outcome of many individual actions. In both the stabbing example and the harmful climate change example each agent is fully and exclusively, causally and morally responsible for his or her own individual action, e.g. a single stab wound, a small amount of (luxury) carbon emissions. Moreover, in both the climate change and the stabbing example each makes a causal contribution that is neither causally necessary nor causally sufficient for the harmful outcome (environmental damage and the death of Smith, respectively). Moreover, in both examples the harm done does not simply consist in the aggregate of the individual contributory actions. So in the climate change example the harm done is caused by, but does not simply consist in, the totality of the emissions produced by the world's human emitters; and, similarly, in the stabbing example the harm done (Smith's death) is caused by, but does not simply consist in, the totality of stab wounds.

Accordingly, in each scenario if each contributor is partially morally responsible for the harm done then they are partially morally responsible for something greater than the individual contribution that each makes and for which each is fully and exclusively responsible. However, in the climate change scenario, unlike the stabbing scenario, the causal contribution of each is so minute as not to constitute any harm at all. So whereas a single stab wound considered on its own is harmful (albeit not lethal), the carbon emissions of a single individual person considered on their own is not even harmful.

Yet there is an important further difference. Consider the harmful outcome of the stabbing example: Smith's death. This death is *aimed at* by each agent; it is the collective end of their actions. Moreover, as we saw above, each agent is fully morally responsible for Smith's death. So full moral responsibility does not necessarily imply *exclusive* moral responsibility and full moral responsibility does not necessarily imply full (or exclusive) *causal* responsibility. Importantly, again as we saw above, each agent's moral responsibility *for the outcome* is held jointly with the others; so at the level of the collective end of the joint action (Smith's death) there is *joint* moral responsibility and, therefore, by my lights collective moral responsibility.

Now consider the harmful outcome in the climate change example. The harm is not aimed at by anyone, albeit post 1990 (say) the harm is a foreseeable outcome of an aggregate of individual actions. Since there is no aim or end a fortiori there is no collective end. Accordingly, *to this extent* there is no collective moral responsibility in my sense of joint responsibility for harmful climate change. Indeed, a question now arises as to whether *all* scenarios involving foreseeable harm arising from aggregate individual actions are actually genuine cases of collective moral responsibility and, if so, in what sense.

⁵ See Seumas Miller "Collective Responsibility, Epistemic Action and Climate Change" in (eds.) N Vincent, I van de Poel and J. van den Hoven *Moral Responsibility: Beyond Free Will and Determinism* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2011): 219-246

To recapitulate: The climate change scenario does not show that my notion of collective responsibility as joint responsibility is not correct; nor that it is not required for *genuine* examples of collective responsibility for harmful outcomes. After all, the stabbing example shows that it is required for at least some such central cases and others, such as the climate change scenario, are open to doubt pending further analysis.

Szigeti suggests that the climate change example is open to analysis in terms of an aggregate of individual moral responsibilities for very small harms (or, at least, very small contributing factors to harm) which do not necessarily add up to moral responsibility for the massive harm done. Certainly, each person is *not fully* morally responsible for the massive harm done. This is consistent with my own account; an account which does *not require* full moral responsibility (whether in cases of joint action or in cases involving an harmful outcome arising from an aggregate of individual actions). Moreover—again, consistent with my account—each person might be partially individually morally responsible for some very minor fraction of the overall harm done, notwithstanding that the emissions of each considered on their own were not harmful.

In short, these individualist claims of Szigeti are consistent with my conception of collective moral responsibility as joint responsibility. For my conception is itself at bottom an individualist conception according to which *some* scenarios involving foreseeable harm caused by an aggregate of individual actions are not cases of joint moral responsibility and, therefore, not genuine cases of collective moral responsibility, but rather simply cases involving a sum of individual responsibilities.

In respect of the harmful climate change scenario, and like scenarios, there is an important prior question that needs to be addressed, namely, whether any person or aggregate of persons (or, for that matter, group per se) *is* morally responsible for the massive harm done. Thus far we have simply assumed that this is the case. Yet we need to contemplate the possibility that there is no moral responsibility to be assigned in this and like scenarios. And I note that my account of collective responsibility is consistent with this possibility. But is this in fact the case in the climate change scenario in particular?

Prior to assigning moral responsibility for harmful outcomes we need to determine that the person or persons to be assigned this moral responsibility could reasonably be expected to have avoided the harmful outcome. Crucially, in many collective action scenarios the question is whether or not the individuals in question could reasonably be expected to have designed and implemented cooperative schemes that would have averted the harm (and done so within the time-frame in question). For the action of any single individual considered on its own is not harmful, and cooperative action is required to avert the harm caused by the aggregate of individual actions in question.

In the case of harmful climate change, the answer to this question was for a long time (e.g. for most of the 20th century) quite clearly in the negative due to (non-culpable) ignorance of the phenomenon of harmful human-induced climate change. Of course, in recent times (say, post 1990) knowledge of this phenomenon has become widespread.

However, there has still been the problem of what cooperative schemes to design and implement to deal with the problem. (I am not suggesting that progress in this respect has been adequate). In short, there is a collective, in the sense of joint, moral responsibility to act collectively (jointly) to deal with harmful climate change, e.g. by each agreeing to reduce carbon emissions in accordance with some cooperative scheme or other. So my analysis of collective responsibility as joint responsibility does, I suggest, meet Szigeti's challenge of being required to understand responsibility for harmful climate change, albeit not perhaps in quite the way he envisaged.

In respect of the relationship between the notion of collective responsibility as joint responsibility and individual responsibility (including the notion of a sum of individual responsibilities) Szigeti also considers my computer example. I argued (JEA, 11): "Consider two agents, Agent 1 and Agent 2, jointly lifting a large computer onto a truck. Each is individually (naturally) responsible for lifting his side of the computer, and the two agents are collectively (naturally) responsible for bringing it about that the computer is situated on the truck. Note that if either one of the two agents or both fail to do their parts a question arises as to their collective responsibility for the failure to place the computer on the truck. If either Agent 1 or Agent 2 (or both) do not do their part because one or both does not in fact have as an (interdependent) end that the computer be placed on the truck then they are not collectively responsible for the failure; there is no collective end in play and so no collective responsibility.

If, on the other hand, each has the end interdependently with the other and both try to realise it but, nevertheless, fail due, let us assume, to their lack of sufficient combined strength then they are collectively responsible for failing to achieve their collective end." Szigeti responds that "the reference to collective responsibility is redundant because a straightforwardly individualist analysis is possible here" (Reply, 17). Thus Szigeti suggests that if Agent 1 (say) fails to cooperate then Agent 1 is individually responsible for the computer not being on the truck. This is correct but only because if Agent 1 fails to cooperate Agent 1 does not have as an end that the computer be on the truck in which case there is no collective end, no attempted joint action and, therefore, no joint or collective responsibility. In short, by my lights if the scenario is understood in this manner then there simply is no collective responsibility to be analysed individualistically or otherwise.

Szigeti further suggests that my reference to their lack of sufficient combined strength as a reason for their failure is problematic because it is unclear why lack of strength is something someone could be responsible for (Reply, 17). But one can be responsible for one's lack of strength, e.g. by failing to exercise or to eat sufficient protein. At any rate, the two agents in question can be held responsible for failing to increase their combined strength prior to engaging in lifting heavy objects or for under-estimating the weight of the computer or for overestimating one another's strength or for relying too heavily on strength rather than technique etc. The point is simply that in *my version* of the scenario it was a joint failure since each had in fact the same, interdependent end and each did his part (or tried to and only partially succeeded) interdependently with the other, yet their combined efforts proved to be inadequate. By contrast, in Szigeti's versions of the scenario it is unclear whether there is in fact a collective end in play, e.g. if Agent 1 and

Agent 1 cannot agree on the means to lift the computer. But, to reiterate, if there is no collective end then there is no collective responsibility and hence an analysis in terms only of single individual responsibility may well be appropriate.

Moral and Institutional Responsibility

Szigeti also makes a number of points concerning my account of the relationship between moral responsibility and institutional responsibility (Reply: 16). Let me now clarify and elaborate my account of this important (and under-theorised) relationship.

Let us henceforth consider only institutional actions that are morally significant and known to be so by the relevant institutional actor—or, at least, the institutional actor should know the actions in question are morally significant. A question now arises as to whether or not with respect to these actions at least, moral responsibility tracks institutional responsibility. If so, then an institutional actor who performs a (morally significant) institutional action, or fails to perform one, is necessarily morally responsible for the performance of that action or omission, and for its foreseeable and avoidable outcomes. However, this appears not to be case. Consider, for example, a senior government official, such as a cabinet minister, a number of whose subordinates engage in serious and ongoing acts of fraud. Such acts are morally significant and the subordinates are morally responsible for perpetrating them. What of the senior government official? Under some institutional arrangements, the senior official might be held institutionally responsible for failing to ensure that such fraud as this did not take place and, consequently, might be forced to resign. Nevertheless, the senior official might not be morally responsible for failing to prevent this fraud.

Let us assume that the senior official could have prevented these frauds, if he knew about them and he could have known about them if he had spent a good deal of his time focussed on fraud prevention. However, he did not; he had other legitimate and more pressing priorities. Perhaps the senior official took all the steps that might reasonably be expected of him to prevent these frauds but his job is an onerous one, the fraudsters were exceptionally clever, and so on. In short, whereas he is institutionally responsible for failing to prevent these frauds he is, arguably, not morally responsible. So apparently moral responsibility does not necessarily track institutional responsibility. Nor is it obvious that such an institutional arrangement, supposing it exists, is necessarily deficient qua institutional arrangement. I note that Schauer, for example, has argued in detail⁶ that institutional arrangements, including laws, are necessarily blunt instruments and, as such, cannot be sensitive to all the requirements of morality.

A second claim concerning the relationships between moral responsibility and institutional responsibility is that institutional arrangements can sometimes make a difference with respect to whether moral responsibility is full or partial. Here, as elsewhere, we need to keep in mind the distinction between moral responsibility and causal responsibility and acknowledge that they can and do come apart (as demonstrated

⁶ Frederick Schauer *Profiles, Probabilities and Stereotypes*, Harvard University Press, 2003.

above). To be clear: the claim is not that institutional arrangements can sometimes make a difference as to whether *causal* responsibility is full or partial.

I claimed (JEA, 13) that as a consequence of institutional arrangements put in place to deal with some collective action problem, each agent might have full moral responsibility (jointly with others) for some adverse outcome O—notwithstanding the fact that each only made a very small causal contribution to the outcome. Suppose the impoverished members of sailing ships’ crews in the 18th century are informed of a law to the effect that anyone stealing one or more of the (somewhat expensive) screws inserted into their ship’s woodwork to hold its wooden planks together will be flogged and, further, if the ship sinks as a consequence of multiple screws being removed in this manner then anyone who has removed at least one of these screws will be held to be *fully* legally responsible for any deaths resulting from the ship sinking and to be legally liable to the death penalty.

Let us assume that this admittedly harsh criminal law is morally justified in the circumstances, perhaps in part because of the difficulty of identifying which sailors removed screws. At any rate, this apparently harsh law is the only means to prevent these wooden ships frequently sinking and, therefore, the only means to prevent great loss of life. In that case it might be thought to be morally justified for each screw-thief who contributed to causing a ship to sink to be held *fully legally responsible* for the loss of life, notwithstanding that his causal contribution to the sinking might be small. This being so, it might be further argued that each such screw-thief is also *fully morally responsible* for any loss of life. If so, then the establishment of institutional arrangements can evidently transform prior *partial* moral responsibility for an adverse outcome (e.g. prior to the existence of a relevant law) into *full* moral responsibility (post the enactment of the law). Moreover, it can do so notwithstanding that the underlying causal responsibility is unchanged and is only *partial causal* responsibility for the adverse outcome.

Szigeti claims that “the thief who steals a screw will only be partially responsible for sinking the ship while he may be fully responsible for breaking the law” (Reply: 16). But responsibility for breaking the law is not directly at issue; rather what is directly at issue is legal and moral responsibility for lives lost (as a consequence of breaking a particular law against stealing screws). Moreover, if by partial responsibility Szigeti means partial *causal* responsibility then he is correct but his claim is irrelevant. For it is moral, not causal, responsibility that is at issue and the starting point must be that it is an open question whether under certain conditions, including specific institutional arrangements, he might be fully morally responsible for lives lost as a consequence of causally contributing to the sinking of the ship by stealing screws. What is not in doubt is that he could be held fully institutionally (specifically, legally) responsible for this outcome. (This is not merely the claim that he would be held legally and, for that matter, morally responsible for breaking the law against stealing screws.)

The question that now arises is whether or not this legal, indeed, criminal responsibility for the loss of life could not also be a moral responsibility. As argued above, the answer is presumably in the affirmative, assuming the criminal law in question is morally justifiable. For in the case of morally justifiable laws, criminal responsibility and,

specifically, criminal negligence implies moral negligence and, therefore, a degree of moral responsibility for the untoward outcomes in question. Naturally, Szigeti might want to dispute that *in this particular case* criminal negligence implies moral negligence (and, therefore, moral responsibility). But if so, the onus is on him to provide the required arguments.

A final claim concerning the relationships between moral responsibility and institutional responsibility is that institutional arrangements assign moral responsibilities to agents that those agents did not previously have and, indeed, in some cases that no agent previously had.⁷ In the case of the institutional role of police officer, for example, the moral basis appears to be aggregate human security. Perhaps each member of a community has an individual human right to, say, some minimum level of security, if he or she needs it. However, it is only when a certain threshold of aggregate need exists that the establishment of an institution takes place (and ought to take place). For example, a police organisation with its constitutive institutional role occupants—police officers—is not established because a single person’s right to security is not being realized. When such a threshold of aggregate need exists, what is required is collective or joint action on the part of many persons. Accordingly, a cooperative enterprise or institution is established that has as a collective end the provision of security to the needy many by means of the joint activity of the police officer members of the institution.

The (collective) duty to assist may, then, in certain cases, imply the duty to establish and support institutions to achieve the object of the duty. Once such institutions with their specialized role occupants are in place it may be that we generally have no further duty to assist within the area of the institutions’ operations. Indeed, it may be that generally we should not even *try* to assist, given our relative lack of expertise and the likelihood that we will get in the way of the role occupants. Moreover, these specialised role occupants have duties that they did not have before and, indeed, that no-one had before the establishment of the institutional role with its specific duties. For example, police officers may have an institutional and, indeed now, *moral* duty to put themselves in harm’s way in a manner and to an extent (e.g. by arresting armed and dangerous offenders) that is not morally required of ordinary citizens and, indeed, that was never morally required of anyone prior to the establishment of police organisations.

Once institutions and their constitutive roles have been established on some adequate moral basis, such as the duty to aid, then those who undertake these roles necessarily put themselves under obligations of various kinds—obligations that attach to, and are in part constitutive of, those roles. To understand the specific content of institutional role morality, then, we need to examine the purposes—to meet aggregate security needs, in the case of police officers—which the various institutions and their constitutive roles have been formed to serve, and the way in which roles must be constructed in order to achieve those purposes. Of course, one only comes to have an institutional role through voluntary action, but the morality that comes with that role is not itself ultimately

⁷ Seumas Miller *The Moral Foundations of Social Institutions*, Cambridge University Press, 2010. For a contrary view see Bernard Gert *Common Morality*, Oxford University Press, 2007.

grounded in the individual's choice but rather in the larger purposes (collective ends) of the role, or so the argument goes.

Epistemic Action and Epistemic Responsibility

Szigeti's main concern here is with the relationship between moral and epistemic responsibility. However, in passing he challenges my conception of epistemic action by suggesting that "I may or may not perform certain calculations but once I have performed them the belief regarding the result of those calculations is not something I can choose to have" (Reply, 18). However, this remark does not address my fundamental point that the action of embarking on an epistemic task and that of arriving at a belief are, in the kinds of case in question, mediated by a mental act of judgment, e.g. the all things considered judgment that Sutcliffe is the Yorkshire Ripper or that the answer to the examination question is x. It is judgments—and not beliefs—that are the epistemic acts par excellence. As I said (JEA, 15): "Beliefs are often the terminal point of an act of judgement, and evidence-based acts of judgement are typically freely performed. For example, an examinee comes to believe on the basis of a series of calculations that the answer to a complex mathematical problem is zero; the examinee is not absolutely certain, after all she could have made a mistake, but after checking she is fully confident of her own judgement. As it turns out the examinee gave the right answer based on valid mathematical reasoning. Surely the inference based judgement that terminated in her belief that the answer was zero was freely performed. By this I do not simply mean that she freely chose to try to answer the mathematical problem, although this is also true; rather I mean that in being 'compelled' by logic her act of judgement was, nevertheless, freely performed. In this respect judgements are akin to actions in general; an action that is 'compelled' by reason does not thereby cease to be a freely chosen action."

Regarding moral and epistemic responsibility: I agree with Szigeti that there is a distinction to be made between an epistemic action which is morally significant by virtue of some non-epistemic feature that it has, e.g. some non-epistemic harm or good that it brings about, and one that is morally significant by virtue of some inherently epistemic property, e.g. that it is true rather than false. This is an important issue that I avoided discussing in the paper. Nor can I do it justice here. So I content myself with some general remarks.

It is one thing to claim that certain epistemic properties, e.g. truth, have inherent moral worth. It is another to claim that there is some special kind of epistemic responsibility with a quasi-moral character. I stated (JEA, 9): "Sometimes to say that someone is responsible for an action is to say that the person had a reason, or reasons, to perform some action, then formed an intention to perform that action (or not to perform it), and finally acted (or refrained from acting) on that intention, and did so on the basis of that reason(s) I will dub this sense of being responsible for an action "natural responsibility". Notice that being responsible for an action, whether the action be a behavioural action such as going for a walk or an epistemic action such as looking up a phone number, do not necessarily have any moral implications; natural responsibility does not imply moral responsibility."

Accordingly, I do not hold that there is some special kind of epistemic responsibility. Rather there are epistemic actions for which one can be held naturally responsible in the thin sense that one performed the epistemic actions in question intentionally, for a reason and so on. Further, some of these epistemic actions are morally significant (whether by virtue of inherent epistemic properties or otherwise). Accordingly, in these cases the agents who perform these epistemic actions (individual and joint) can be held morally responsible for so doing (individually or jointly (collectively)). On the other hand, truth, consistency, knowledge, understanding and so on are epistemic *goods*. Moreover, given that human beings are rational, indeed reflective, animals, epistemic goods are central and important human goods.

Other central and important human goods include the satisfaction of basic needs, the realisation of social ends, the contemplation of aesthetic beauty and so on. In short, there are a multiplicity of kinds of human goods and, therefore—other things being equal—human beings *ought to* pursue these goods, including the epistemic goods. What of morality? On one account of morality, it supervenes on these logically prior human goods and does so by reference to the register of importance. The more important the pursuit of one or other of these goods is in some context the more likely the “ought” in play is a moral ought. So the pursuit of truth is morally required when the truth in question is an important one. Moreover, it might be important in purely epistemic terms. So there might be a moral imperative to ascertain whether or not mental states are brain states but not to ascertain the number of sand granules on Bondi Beach.

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