

*Journal of*

## Global Responsibility

### **Special issue on Exploring the meaning of responsibility**

Over the last two decades there has been much talk about responsibility of one form or another. This may be through corporate social responsibility, global responsibility and perhaps more recently through sustainability and the UK Government's emphasis on the "Big Society". Much has been written about the beginning of a new age of responsibility; of the irresponsibility and unethical practices of many, including the finance industry.

What has been missing so far in this debate, however, is a sustained discussion about what is meant by responsibility. In one sense this is not surprising – like most interesting ideas, responsibility is often hard to pin down. The concept of responsibility, however, can be particularly problematic, with any debate often disguising very different dynamics. In politics, for instance, different interest groups struggle to establish their view of responsibility. Wider debates reflect very different world views. In academia the different disciplines sometimes add to the confusion, failing to establish clear links between the concept of responsibility and cognate ideas such as ethics and sustainability.

The purpose of this special issue is to explore the meaning of responsibility. Proposals are invited from colleagues worldwide, to contribute to critical discussion and to present current scholarship and research findings, and suggestions for future developments. The sections below contain guidance on the focus, themes and submissions process, plus contact details for the Guest Editors.

#### **Focus and purpose**

This special issue is not about abstract philosophy. On the contrary, clarification of the concept of responsibility is directly related to practice in business, education and the professions. This issue is also not about entering into the debates about these practices or approaches that are proposed, it is about looking behind such debates and asking "What is the nature of this responsibility that we are talking about?" In finding space for that reflection we hope that this will lead to moving the whole area forward and helping to establish connections between responsibility and such things as: ethical theory and practice,

sustainability, leadership, spirituality, education, healthcare and business.

#### **Thematic issues**

This special issue will encompass a wide range of thematic issues and welcomes proposals for articles from all methodological and disciplinary perspectives, and from a broad range of cultural and cross-cultural settings. Priority themes for the collection include (but are not restricted to):

- The relationship of responsibility to sustainability. There is an increasing assumption about how the two are connected, or that they are even the same.
- The relationship of the concept of responsibility to other cognate concepts, such as ethics and business ethics.
- The relationship of responsibility to virtues and skills. At one level this raises the question of how responsibility relates to employability. There has been little systematic attempt to clarify this. At another level it raises the question of responsibility possibly relating to virtue ethics. Responsibility as the centre of the curriculum.
- An ethics of responsibility. Various attempts have been made to build a theory of ethics on responsibility. How might these relate to business and the professions?
- Responsibility and its relationship to autonomy, independence, agency, disinterestedness and freedom.
- Different cultural views of responsibility. A great deal of the debate about responsibility is focused on western views of autonomy. Do other cultural and religious perspectives offer genuine alternatives? In particular we would encourage contribution from Islamic scholars.
- The origins of responsibility, including underlying anthropologies and worldviews.
- The meaning of global responsibility. Does the term global reflect a form of universal responsibility or is it focused on handling plurality,



across cultures and context. If it is universal, how can this be sustained? If it is focused on plurality, what frameworks can be developed to handle this?

- Responsibility, roles, relationships and plural identity. How do wider views of responsibility relate to particular responsibilities? How do individual, professional, civic and wider responsibilities relate to one another? How do these relate to the ideas of “competing interests”? Does responsibility in this context involve mutuality?
- The limits of responsibility. How are these limits determined? Is there a role for negotiation in this, and how far might such negotiation be core to the development of ethical meaning?
- Responsibility, power and leadership.
- What is the relationship between individual and organisational responsibility?
- The dark side of responsibility. Writers such as Milgram, Zimbardo and Bauman explore the avoidance and denial of responsibility. Does this simply point to levels of immaturity that must be taken into account by business and the professions? Or is there something more radical at play, such as a desire to avoid responsibility (Tawney)?
- Descriptive theories of ethics and the development of responsibility. How does responsibility relate to theories of moral development, and to underlying views of community?
- The place of responsibility in education and teaching. In what sense might responsibility be part of the curriculum? Is it possible, for instance, to relate specific learning outcomes to responsibility?
- Moral and legal responsibility.
- Justice? Centre of business and holism.
- Responsibility, holism and spirituality. How does responsibility relate to a more generic view of spirituality?

## Editorial arrangements

This special issue has been commissioned by the *Journal of Global Responsibility* with Guest Editors: Professor Simon Robinson, School of Applied Global Ethics, Leeds Metropolitan University, UK; and Dr Jonathan Smith, Ashcroft International Business School, Anglia Ruskin University, UK.

Leeds Metropolitan University and the Ashcroft International Business School are both members of the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative (GRLI – see [www.grli.org](http://www.grli.org)).

Contributors are invited to submit abstracts for review by the appointed Guest Editors. Following the initial selection process, invited contributors will be asked to submit full papers for external peer review.

## Submission of abstracts

The editors of the *Journal of Global Responsibility* invite potential contributors to submit abstracts to the Guest Editors. Abstracts should be no longer than 250 words and should be accompanied by a brief biographical note that includes full name, title/affiliation, e-mail address and contact details.

Please e-mail word document abstracts to Jonathan Smith by **Friday, 29 April 2011**  
E-mail: [jonathan.smith@anglia.ac.uk](mailto:jonathan.smith@anglia.ac.uk)

Final submissions should be made via ScholarOne Manuscripts <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jgr>

Submissions should follow the journal's author guidelines [www.emeraldinsight.com/products/journals/author\\_guidelines.htm?id=jgr](http://www.emeraldinsight.com/products/journals/author_guidelines.htm?id=jgr)

Submissions should be between 5,000-7,000 words in length.

## Contact details

Should you wish to contact either of the Guest Editors to discuss possible contributions or to make further inquiries, please use the following e-mail addresses:

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## Proposed timeline

Potential contributors are advised that the special issue will be prepared within a fixed schedule to meet publication requirements with the Journal. The anticipated timeline is:

Abstract submissions: **Friday, 29 April 2011** at the latest

Selection announced: **Monday, 9 May 2011**

Paper submissions: **Friday, 8 July 2011** at the latest

Reviews completed: **Friday, 23 September 2011** at the latest

Amendments submitted: **Friday, 21 October 2011** at the latest

Final publication: **April/May 2012**