

Fethullah Gülen and the Concept of Responsibility

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ABSTRACT

Responsibility is a key concept in philosophy and theology, and also in practice, not least in business and the management of the environment. It is a concept at the heart of the writings of Fethullah Gülen, and this paper will explore his meaning and use of responsibility, and how that contributes to the wider debates.

This paper will first involve an analysis of responsibility in terms of imputability, accountability and liability. I will argue that Gülen's view of responsibility is anchored in accountability, and that this is based in his creation- and action-centred theology. His view of imputability, focused in agency and responsiveness, emerges from that, leading to a perspective of universal liability that is significant. I will compare this view on responsibility to other philosophers and theologians of other faiths, including H. Richard Niebuhr, Bonhoeffer, Bauman, Novak, Schweiker and Nasr.

The paper will then examine Gülen's view of responsibility in different contexts, including civic society, education, and business. It will compare these with other approaches, and consider the role of Gülen in contemporary debates in these areas.

The paper includes a critique on Gülen's view of responsibility and considers developments, not least the relationship of responsibility to dialogue. It concludes that Gülen's view of responsibility provides a critical bridge to public discourse and practice in this area.

RESPONSIBILITY

Schweiker (1995) sums up three interconnected modes of responsibility, the first two of which originate in Aristotle's thinking (Alexander 2008):

- *Imputability*. Actions can be attributed to a person. Hence, the person can be seen to have been responsible for those actions and the decisions that led to them.
- *Accountability*. The person is responsible or answerable to someone.
- *Liability*. The person is responsible for something or someone.

IMPUTABILITY

There are strong and weak views of imputability. The weak views (McKenny 2005, 242) simply refer to the causal connection between the person and any action. This shows that the action can be attributed to the person. Such a view does not help in determining just how much the person is actually involved in and therefore fully responsible for the action. A stronger view suggests that responsibility involves a rational decision making process that enables the person to fully own the action that arises from the decision. Taylor (1989) argues that this decision-making constitutes a strong valuation that connects action to deep decision making, and is what constitutes the moral identity of the person. In order to be fully responsible the person would have to be aware of his or her social context, the significant relationships, the mutual effect of those relationships and so on.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The second mode of responsibility is accountability. This is based on contract relationships, formal or informal. The contract sets up a series of mutual expectations. At one level, these are about dis-

cernible targets that form the basis of any project, and without which the competence of the person cannot be assessed. At another level, there will be broader moral expectations of how one should behave in any contract. This would include the importance of openness and transparency in relationships and other such behaviours that provide the basis for trust.

LIABILITY

Liability (as distinguished from legal liability) goes beyond accountability, into the idea of caring for others, of sense of wider liability for certain projects or people. Each person or profession has to work these out in context, without an explicit contract. Working that out demands an awareness of the limitations of the person or organisation, avoiding taking too much responsibility, and a capacity to work together with others and to negotiate and share responsibility. It is in this mode that different areas of responsibility begin to emerge: personal, professional, corporate, civic, environmental and global.

Responsibility thus takes one beyond codes and Niebuhr, the Christian theologian most associated with the concept of responsibility, argues that it goes beyond even teleological and deontological ethics. He argues that these do not sum up all ethical possibilities. The first is built on the root image of the person as maker. Ethics in this is a means to an end, expressed most clearly in utilitarianism. The second has the root image of the person as citizen, one who obeys the law. Both, Niebuhr argues, present an individual anthropology, a view that man exists apart from society. Hence, Niebuhr suggests a third root image, that of the human being as essentially social and thus always responding to the ongoing social interaction which he is a part of. Niebuhr writes:

‘What is implicit in the idea of responsibility is the image of man- the answerer, man engaged in dialogue, man acting in response to action upon him’ (1963, 56).

This is founded in a creation theology, but stresses more the present interconnectedness of humanity and the actions of other which also convey God's action upon us:

‘Responsibility affirms: “God is acting in all actions upon you. So respond to all action upon you as to respond to his action’ (Niebuhr 1963, 126).

In all this, Niebuhr tends to focus in on responsibility as expressed in the civil realm, the person as citizen. Hence, responsibility for him cannot be confined to the boundaries of the church and has a strong existential element. This sense of responsibility tied to the interconnected nature of man is developed much further later by feminist movement, with woman as very much at the centre of those networks. This approach tends to be focused in liability, the immediate response to the other.

Bonhoeffer (1955) moves responsibility into a more Christological perspective. For him responsibility is essentially an attitude of service that is centred in the person of Christ. Christ sums up the attitude of responsibility as the ‘man for others’, dedicated to the service of the other. This involves an obedience to Christ and through him a response to the realities faced in everyday relationships. The response of service is enabled through that relationship with Christ. This involves an acceptance both of the freedom to respond and of the guilt shared by all in one shape or form. This then is no easy view of responsibility demanding both an inclusive responsibility for the other and a responsibility for one's own values and practice, including the moral failures and limitations. At the core of much of this the acceptance of personal responsibility, but also a sense of immediate accountability to God, with little eschatological edge.

GÜLEN

Gülen's view of responsibility is firmly set in accountability and thus in turn is based in his creation theology. God created the world

and appointed humanity to be the vicegerent (Qu'ran 2.30). Humankind is thus responsible for the management of all that creation. The relationship with God the creator also means that humanity is responsible on behalf of God. Humankind in this sense stands in for God, as deputy, but also stands before him. Hence, humanity is both responsible with God and responsible to God for the world in its fullness. This responsibility connects action to this world and the next. What we do now will have an effect on both realms and thus on our appreciation of both realms.

In order to fulfil this responsibility God has made available all possible resources.

'If humanity is the vicegerent of God on Earth, the favourite of all His creation, the essence and substance of existence in its entirety and the brightest mirror of the Creator- and there is no doubt that this is so- then the Divine Being that has sent humanity to this realm will have given us the right, permission, and ability to discover the mysteries imbedded in the soul of the universe, to uncover the hidden power, might and potential, to use everything to its purpose, and to be the representatives of characteristics that belong to Him, such as knowledge will and might' (Gülen 2004, 122)

The responsibility is not a simple one. Niebhur, for instance, at points simply looks to the responsibility to respond to the needs of the community and the larger world. For Gülen, this responsibility is teleological. All the resources are to be used to fulfil the divine purpose. Hence, any sense of response has to be seen in terms of overall sovereignty of God and his desire to see humanity fulfilling his plans. This level of accountability is, however, developed in significant ways. The task of the vicegerent is no simply to believe in God or to worship but also to understand 'the mysteries within things and the cause of natural phenomena, and therefore to be able to interfere in nature' (Gülen 2004, 122).

He takes those who do this to be 'genuine human beings' and argues that they exercise their free will 'in a constructive manner, working with and developing the world, protecting the harmony

between existence and humanity, reaping the bounties of the Earth and Heavens for the benefit of humanity, trying to raise the hue, from and flavour of life to a more humane level within the framework of the Creator's orders and rules. This is the true nature of a vicegerent and at the same time this is where the meaning of what it is to be a servant and lover of God can be found' (Gülen 2004, 124).

The breadth of this soon becomes apparent. First, we are bidden to take science seriously. This is not something that is seen to be autonomous or to be against religion. Rather does science reveal to us the laws of nature and, by implication, helps us to see the telos of creation. This clearly shows why Gülen, despite being firmly a creationist, is concerned for science as a key part of his educational work. Secondly, the free will that is key to any sense of responsibility should be used in service, and this should be used to sustain the balance between the environment and humanity, making the most of the resources given in creation, all for the benefit of humanity as a whole and all with a purpose of raising the level civilization for all. He is clear in all this that the natural world has to be manipulated for positive ends. These are quite distinctive teloi that could involve difference and conflict. Hence, from the beginning the vicegerent has to take responsibility for working through these broad teloi, within the framework of values provided by the Creator.

Nasr (Schweiker, Johnson and Jung 2006, 300) suggests slight further development of responsibility that gives further point to the Gülen view. He analyses vers 7;172 in the Qur'an, where before creation God asks of human beings 'Am I not your Lord? They said : Yea verily. We testify'.

He argues that the verb in the case of the human response is plural. Hence, the positive response is not of an individual person, anymore than it is a particular gender, but of all human beings. As Nasr puts it '... to be human is to have said yes, and we hear the mark of this affirmation deep within our beings' (ibid.). Responsibility then is shared, is a social response. This points up the enormous responsibility that is placed upon humankind, one that Nasr notes is

all the more profound precisely because humankind, unlike the rest of nature is free to respond. The freedom, however, is not simply to respond. It is a freedom in *how* we respond within the framework of God's values. It is this freedom that places humankind as genuinely accountable, answerable, to God. Such a freedom demands that responsibility is always taken for working through the meaning of God's values in practice, none of which can be formulaic. This, inevitably, bring us to imputability.

IMPUTABILITY

Imputability in Gülen emerges from the framework of accountability. Personal autonomy and agency is a gift from God that enables the person to fulfil the role of *khalifa*. This agency gives the person freedom to transform society, so long as the source of that freedom and agency is acknowledged. God 'alone determines, apportions, creates, and spreads all out provisions before us' (Gülen 1999, 94). This then is a mediated agency, a limited form of subjectivity that is, in Vahdat's words, 'projected onto the attributes of monotheistic deity- attributes such as omnipotence, omniscience, and volition- and then partially reappropriated by humans. In this scheme, human subjectivity is contingent on God's subjectivity. Thus, although human subjectivity is not denied, it is never independent of God's subjectivity, and in this sense, it is mediated' (Vahdat 2002, 134).

At the heart of much of this is a great stress on action. Responsibility makes action critical. Gülen contrasts passive submission with active service. At the core of this is the concept of *hizmet* that is about the embodying of the inner awareness of God in practice. Hence, there is no question of pietism,

'Those who always feel themselves in the presence of God do not need to seclude themselves from people' (Gülen 1995, 87)

Agency is then based in a holistic and dynamic anthropology, that brings together emotion, spirit, rationality and action,

‘God did not create people only to have them become passive recluses, activist without reason and spirit, or rationalists without spiritual reflection and activism’ (Gülen 1999, 46).

For Gülen *hizmet* is a key principle and is the ceaseless responsibility of putting values into practice. Any sense of free will then is very much in the context of the *hizmet*, focused on the example of the Prophet as a man of action, who ‘stressed learning trading, agriculture, action and thought. Moreover, he encouraged his people to do perfectly what he did, and condemned inaction and begging’ (Gülen 1995, 105).

Inevitably, there is the question of whether this points to conditional responsibility, i.e. whether salvation depends on response. Gülen is quite clear that there can be no promise of salvation, suggesting rather that there should be a balance of hope and fear in response to God and that hope can rest on good deeds (Gülen 1995, 40). The focus for the believer, however, is not salvation but rather to please God, ‘thinking only of his approval in everyday speech, behaviour and thought’ (Gülen 2004b, 6). This means that the person is engaged without ceasing in particular activity, always asking ‘Oh my Lord, what else can I do?’ Gülen inevitably stresses then the importance of good time management and well-planned activity. This is all part of what it means to be responsible. The more that such responsibility is practiced in all contexts, and the more that this leads to increased responsibility- ‘more blessings mean more responsibility’ (Gülen 2000, 133).

Imputability in all this is relational, part and parcel of continued interaction, and humankind cannot stand out side that. This echoes strongly Niebuhr’s view of the existential response to the interconnected web of human and natural life. Gülen also points up the need to assert responsibility within that relational framework, precisely to avoid a lose of agency. Gülen writes,

‘By undertaking particular responsibilities through continuous acting and thinking, by facing an bearing particular difficulties, almost in a sense by sentencing ourselves to these, even though it

may be at the expense of many things, we always have to act, to strive. If we do not act as we are, we are dragged into the waves caused by the thrusts and actions of others, and into the whirlpools of the plans and thoughts of others, and then we are forced to act on behalf of others. Remaining aloof from action, not interfering in the things happening around us, not being a part of the events around us and staying indifferent to them is like letting ourselves melt away, like ice turning to water' (Gülen 2005, 96).

Gülen does not analyse the dynamics of responsibility here. However, in not responding, not acting, it could be argued that we deny or disclaim responsibility for action and give that responsibility to others. In this sense responsibility, similar to Tawney's (1930) view of power, is social, and will be taken up in some form or other by others if we do not claim it. This resonates mightily with post-Holocaust thinkers noted below.

DEVELOPING RESPONSIBILITY

This view of responsibility focused in action centred agency naturally finds a central place in Gülen's view of education. Gülen sees the seat of power and with that agency, in the terms of R.H. Tawney (1930), as 'in the soul'. The soul for Gülen involves three faculties. 'the rational, the irascible and the concupiscent' (Mohamed 2007, 556). Handling these faculties requires the four cardinal virtues of courage, wisdom, temperance and justice. These virtues moderate lust and anger, leading to a degree of rational self-control. This does not obliterate the emotions but rather moderates them. Hence, moral character is the core to Gülen's view of agency and responsibility. This enables the establishment of personal responsibility and from that any approach to social or civic responsibility (Toguslu 2007, 450). Any responsibility is based in universal values such as 'devotion, simplicity, trust, loyalty, fidelity, humility modesty and connectedness' (ibid. 455). This leads to education that is based in the development of character and which focuses on continual self-criti-

cism and self-renewal. Such self-examination 'enables the believer to make amends for past mistakes and be absolved in the sight of God, for it provides a constant realization of the self renewal in one's inner world' (Gülen 1999). The basis of Gulen's approach to education is that it should precisely be involved in character development. It is in effect enabling the development of responsibility for ones own thinking and underlying values and how these are embodied in practice. The development of that means that teachers have to be embodying the same virtues in their practice and that the educational community as a whole embodies these virtues. The stress in education about the excellence to be attained in schooling is not per se about competing but rather about how the person can truly begin to develop all the attitudes that are at the base of this approach.

The freedom and sense of agency that is at the heart of this is very different from the liberal view of negative freedom (Berlin 1969), freedom to do what one wants, and thus freedom from any coercion. Gulen, however, seems to have little time for the positive freedom that Berlin suggests is found through approaches to equalising opportunities and therefore freedoms. Gulen is much closer to writers such as Novak in his focus on moral freedom (1990). Novak's idea of moral freedom, is based in the work of Aquinas, with a stress on gaining self-mastery and ordering the passions. This is about the individual developing autonomy and agency through reflective deliberative decision-making. Agency is precisely gained through the development of the virtues that underlie these activities (1990, 16). Novak in all of this is primarily concerned about the individual taking responsibility for their decisions. It is precisely such freedom that lies at the 'root of human autonomy, responsibility and dignity' (ibid. 18) all of which enable the individual to act in God's image. Like Gülen, Novak see the exercise of personal responsibility as then leading to broader social responsibility. The exercise of this responsibility will lead to a better distribution of resources and to more cooperation for social ends. A good

example of this is the way that business and education work together in developing the Gülen schools (Mohamed 2007).

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

Gülen also sees responsibility as being worked out in relation to business and the professions. Corporate responsibility has tended to divide into the liberal approach of Friedman (1983) or Sternberg (2000), and the more interactive views based in stakeholder analysis (Robinson 2008). Gülen's views are very distinct from Friedman and Sternberg. They base responsibility simply in a framework of accountability. Accountability is tied directly to the relationship between executive and owner. Hence, the purpose of business is narrowly defined as increasing profits for the owner, within a legal framework. Gülen's view of responsibility forms a massive challenge to this view. First, accountability to God means that any narrow view of defining or ascribing responsibility is left behind. Responsibility precisely transcends any interests. Secondly, the Friedman view tries to restrict a definition of responsibility purely to accountability and as a result has little sense of the agency or freedom of the executive. Thirdly, by extension, Friedman and Sternberg have no sense of the liability of business. For Gülen liability for creation goes hand in hand with accountability to God. Hence, for Gülen corporate responsibility may involve aspects of charity but is actually about working out responsibility creatively, and in partnership.

The stakeholder theories approach to corporate responsibility is based more on an interactive and interdependent view of the social and physical environment (Heath and Norman 2004), and thus shares something of Gülen's perspective. However, Gülen's view pays more attention to the underlying values and spirituality. Because of that there is more of an impetus to develop responsibility in the other than to simply respond to the needs or interests of the stakeholder. Hence, like Sternberg he is in a position to challenge any of the stakeholders theories that rest purely on the fulfilment of need.

The business basis of Gülen is more in terms of the approach of sacralizing the economy and science. In terms of science, this points to the sense of the technologist as creator, exploiting natural resources (Gülen 1995, 17). This raises major questions about how responsibility is seen in terms of liability for how the natural resources are exploited and what the theology of ecology is from Gülen. In this light there does not appear to be a view of ecology that is distinct from creation theology.

In terms of business, there is an acceptance of the free market framework. This looks similar to Michael Novak's view of the Catholic Work Ethic, where he sees wealth creation per se as acceptable, and the market place as a positive force for good and even the creation of community (1990). Novak does not see this as unfettered capitalism and argues for the development of a different kind of freedom at the base of this capitalism, a framework of shared moral values (1990). For Gülen there is also a moral framework. This has to place the activity of wealth creation into a wider social context. Even basic transactions must be submitted to God's law,

'By doing so, Muslims submit to God's decree in that particular matter and so transcend their own worldly preferences. For example, Muslim merchants must inform their customers of any defect in the merchandise. While this may lower or even cancel the resulting profit. [they] will have the satisfaction of obeying God and not serving their own desires' (Gülen 2000, 29).

Contemporary views of corporate responsibility tend to be as much about the responsibility for the management of internal relations of the firm as much as about external relations (Robinson 2008). This has two elements to it. Firstly, it looks to the development of community that respects human rights, well being at work and some attention to the democratic voice of the workforce. The second element looks to the encouragement of personal responsibility in the workforce. At one level this about the practical wisdom of encouraging employees to raise any concerns they have about the practice of the business, even to the extent of whistleblowing. This

requires enabling the corporation as a whole to be reflective and self-critical, with individual employees as a part of that reflective culture. At another level, Bauman notes that the very structures of the organisation have a major effect on whether individuals in the corporation do take personal responsibility seriously. Tied to his stress on the dangers of the denial of responsibility (see below), this means structures and processes need to enable responsibility of the employees to be engaged, and to connect this responsibility to the corporate responsibility. Hence, attention needs to be paid structures that fragment functional responsibility, as this can also disperse personal responsibility (Bauman 1989, See also Robinson 1992, and Megone and Robinson 2002).

There is little consideration given by Gülen to this level of work organisation, and there are two interconnected reasons for this. Firstly, in the corporate context responsibility remains primarily God-centred, rather than focused on organisational psychology and deployment. Secondly, the corporate context in which he operates is largely small and medium business where there is less chance of the division of labour affecting any sense of shared responsibility.

However, even in smaller businesses there is about Gülen's view an importance in enabling others to develop responsibility, and this raises would suggest that business has an educational role with it employees in this area.

Concern for well-being at work, however, is not something that Gülen necessarily would avoid. He accepts the importance of the Muslim as an active citizen. Any citizen has to respect the human rights espoused by the social and political context in which he or she operates, including legislation about well being at work. This brings us to the issue of civic responsibility.

CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

Gülen in all this does see the importance of a civil society, and of the responsibility of the Muslim to contribute toward that civil

society, not simply to focus on the Muslim community. This involves several elements. Firstly, Gulen accepts a view of the common good that all can own (Vicini 2007). Secondly, it is a short step from a view of the common good to one of human rights. As Keles (2007) argues, Gülen provides a basis for human rights in the Qur'an. Thirdly, this is reinforced in Gülen's educational philosophy as developing universal values and virtues. In this, education becomes a critical means to the development of citizens. Education has to be founded on science, language skills and educational excellence if it is to enable the development of people who can take leadership roles in business and society. In all this, it becomes possible for Islam to take its place in a post-modern age as key for the development of society. As Ünal and Williams (2000, 308) put it,

‘Education through learning and a commendable way of life is a sublime duty that manifests the Divine Name *Rabb* (Upbringer and Sustainer). By fulfilling it, we attain the rank of true humanity and becomes a beneficial element to society’.

Vicini (2007, 441) notes the through the stress on action, and therefore the public nature of the Islamic responsiveness, Gülen sees Muslims as also citizens, able to share responsibility for and debate about practice and underlying world views. This stresses further in the concern for universal values and shared responsibility for society. Hence, Gulen can focus on the *dar al-bizmet*, with the Muslim as part of a creative dialogue about society (Yilmaz 2002). The Muslim's sense of responsibility for society extends to concern for peace and even for democracy itself. In an interview quoted in Keles (2007, 701) Gülen notes

‘Again we support a renaissance that allows the questioning of dictatorship and the end of dictators, and working towards a democratic society’.

In other words the Muslim as citizen is not to simply accept the legal framework in which he finds himself but must work towards democracy as an ideal of civil society.

However, this level of inclusive responsibility is not worked through in terms equality or of a view of state distribution of wealth, or of a questioning of the market as a means of distribution. On the contrary, Gülen accepts socioeconomic differences and social stratification, which he sees as part of God's creation, sustaining the diversity of occupations necessary for 'good mutual relations'. This is very close to the view of Michael Novak in his stress on the Roman Catholic work ethic, and the free market as a critical means of developing community, through the development of mutual contract, and the of the capacities of the individual. It would be easy to characterise both as neoconservative. However, it is significant that both see themselves not as individualists per se but as bridge builders. Hence, Gülen sets the idea of society into one of mutual responsibility and the division of labour, and thus of responsibilities: 'God Almighty created people with different dispositions and potentials so that human social life would be maintained through mutual help and division of labour' (1996, 239).

In all this, Gülen is clear that there is need for the development of the virtues that will enable the person to develop and make good. Gülen sees idleness as a vice, comparable to Calvin's theology. Above all idleness opens one up to the temptations of Satan. Hence, the Gulen follower Hikmet Isik argues that there is need to block 'Satan by undertaking some duty, responsibility or service for God to acquire some intellectual or spiritual enlightenment' (2000, 47).

LIABILITY AND UNIVERSAL RESPONSIBILITY

As Carroll (2007) has observed, at the base of Gulen's view of responsibility is liability that extends to universal responsibility. Liability for others or for projects can often be focused in particular roles, which make the liability both specific and broad. Engineers, for instance can be deemed responsible for future generations, who use their bridges or are affected by their nuclear power stations. They may well share that sense of moral liability with others, not

least corporations and the state. At the heart of Gulen's view is a sense of universal responsibility for everything.

In reflecting on major Turkish figures, he writes:

“Their responsibility is such that whatever enters an individual comprehension and conscious will power never remains outside of theirs: responsibility for the creation of events, nature and society, the past and the futures, the dead and the living, the young and the old, the literate and the illiterate, administration and security Everybody and everything. Ant of course they feel the pain of all these responsibilities in their heart; they make themselves felt as maddening palpitations, exasperation in the soul, always competing for their attention. The pain and distress that arise from the consciousness of responsibility, if it is not temporary, is a prayer, a supplication which is not rejected, and a powerful source of further alternative projects’ (Gülen 2005, 95).

This powerful statement involves several important elements. First, Gulen shows that much of his theology is what in the West might be viewed as practical or praxis theology. He bases his points on reflection on the particular practice of others, rather than applying generalised concepts. Second, without drawing out the implications he begins to connect responsibility and consciousness. This is very much at the heart of the New Testament gospels (Robinson 2007) where the responsibility for the beggar at the gate is connected to the consciousness of the beggar's presence there; suggesting that consciousness of the other always has an ethical not simply epistemological foundation. Third, the sense of responsibility is universal, everything or everybody, past present or future. It is not global responsibility in the sense of Jonas. Jonas (1984) operates as a philosopher from a Jewish background aiming to provide an ontological rather than theological justification for responsibility for the whole global environment. Nonetheless, as Vogel (2006, 215) notes his ontological grounding of this is an analogue of Jewish creation theology. He argues, firstly, that living nature is good in itself, attested to by matter's capacity to organise itself for life (the analogue of God attesting to the goodness of his creation).

Secondly, he argues that the creation of humankind is an event of the highest importance, establishing a reflective stewardship responsibility for nature (the analogue of man created in God's image). Thirdly, he argues that the imperative to be responsible is answered by the capacity of humankind to feel responsible for the whole (the analogue of God writing in man's heart the consciousness of the good). Responsibility in this is based on an identification with the environment and an acute awareness of man's role in relation to the environment. Gülen's universal responsibility is based rather in the Creator than the created, identifying with God's role as Creator. Jonas tends to see liability as to do with responsibility for the consequences or potential consequences of human actions. Gülen sees liability as very much *for* the project of God's creation. Coming from different world views and justifications both articulate the imperative to be responsible for the whole of creation. Fourthly, there are echoes in Gülen's words of a more mystical approach to responsibility as set out in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. Markel recognises his connection with everything, and says 'everyone is really responsible to all men, for all men and for everything' (1993 41), a view later echoed by Father Zossima. Zossima, however, moves responsibility across from liability for consequences to liability for the sins of humankind,

'as soon as you make yourself sincerely responsible for everything and for all men, you will see at once that it is really so, and that you are to blame everyone and for all things' (1993, 78).

For Gülen this view would have major problems not least because it brings into question agency. If we are to blame for everyone then it is hard to see how personal moral responsibility could be taken seriously. A different take on such a view of liability comes from Arendt. She defines humanity as the view 'that in one form or another men must assume responsibility for all crimes committed by men and that all nations share the onus of evil committed by all others' (1991, 282). Here, Arendt does not necessarily mean strict moral liability for the sins of others, but more the sense that human

kind must take responsibility for learning from those sins. For another post-Holocaust writer, Bauman, this is further refined into the view that human beings tend towards avoiding responsibility. This could be viewed as a secular analogue (though not intended as such) of original sin. In this light sin is seen in terms of avoidance or denial of responsibility. Bauman (1989) cites the research of Milgram (2005, see also Zimbardo 2007) as confirming that a majority of participants chose not to exercise personal responsibility, but rather to pass responsibility to institutional representatives, without challenging values or practice. This suggests that personal responsibility is intimately connected to universal responsibility, taking responsibility beyond the codes of the narrow ethnic group. Bauman notes that one of the key issues raised by the Holocaust was the way in which the Third Reich precisely careful lines around the Aryan race, such that it did not have to be responsible for anything or one outside those limits. Bauman adds to this a strong sense of multiple accountability as guard against such univocality.

Such a view of responsibility, shared by Gülen and the peoples of the Book, has a limitless horizon. This is precisely why Jesus exhorts his followers not restrict forgiveness to a prescribed 7 or even 70 times 7 (Matthew 18:22). The point of this saying is that once you have exhausted the rule, to forgive seven times, you still have to be responsible for the other. In Gülen, the stress seems to be more on limitless responsibility to God, rather than limitless responsibility for the other. Responsibility for the other is clearly there but is tempered by the imperative to take responsibility for its own response to God's call.

Fifthly, Gülen shares with several writers in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and with Bauman, a strong sense of the suffering that goes with an awareness of universal responsibility. For Bauman 'the moral self is always haunted by the suspicion that it is not moral enough' (1989). No response can completely fulfil to the call of the other, and thus the person can never be satisfied (Vicini 438).

For Bauman, like Levinas (1998) this is partly inevitable, because the incommensurability of the other. Hence, the responsible person is always having to discover the right response in and through the relationship. For Gülen the other is primarily God. This partly involves the impetus to always find what the next project is. However, as Carroll observes (2007, 98) it also echoes more mystical and relational themes of Rumi that see pain as a condition of loving another, and thus being responsible for that other,

‘It is a yearning, a suffering, a palpitation of the heart, and a quivering consciousness that is never avoided as long as one is “in love”’ (ibid., 98).

Inevitably then there is a strong existential aspect to Gülen, and this provides a bridge between him and writers such as Bauman.

FURTHER CRITIQUES AND QUERIES

Gülen’s view of responsibility could be seen as over-driven. If no response is sufficient, and the responsiveness involves pain, how can the person ever rest? Moreover, the universal responsibility ultimately rests in accountability to God, which is finally worked out in the eschaton. Gülen is aware of the dangers of action becoming a justification for salvation, hence his stress on simply aiming to please God. However, even the concept of pleasing God has an element of conditionality. The action is done as a means to that end. Christian theology would stress more justification by faith stressing the grace of God. This raises the issue of God’s responsibility as salvation, with man’s responsibility simply to respond.

Behind such theological tensions are questions about care for others and self-care. Gülen’s ‘man of service’ is an heroic figure, but who will precisely ‘be resolved to cross seas of puss and blood’ (Gülen 2000c). This involves pushing the self to extremes to fulfil service. This seems to fit uneasily with virtues of the mean, and Gülen’s stress on balanced rationality. Christian feminist theologians would further argue that the stress on extreme service holds

the danger of not respecting or caring for the self or the family (see Robinson 2001).

Related to this, the man of service, sometimes come across as rather joyless. Again, many Jewish and Christian theologians would stress the joy in creation, akin to *eros*, as much as the determination to serve. This can be seen as an analogue in the Creator Himself (Robinson 2001). Gülen does not find space to work this out systematically, though at times something of this seem to peek through. Hence he can write of the man of service loving his responsibility such that he would give up paradise for it (2005, 97).

Gülen's stress on the human's achieving all they can in the context of service also raises questions about responsibility and disability and mental health. It is not clear how these areas fit into the perfectability of responsibility. Many disabled or mentally ill do not have the intellectual capacities to fit into the Gülen's holistic vision. In which case, question's are raised about the responsibility of family, community and society in the care of such people. Gülen's does not systematically work through issues such as subsidiarity or responsibility negotiation at this level. Nor is there any reflection on how responsibility might be defined or worked out in cases where there is little rational capacity.

This focus on agency also raises questions as to how real is the autonomy of the vicegerent? Can the vicegerent actually critique theory, value and tradition as well as practice. Autonomy, of course, for Gülen is relational not liberal, and this means that tradition has to be taken seriously precisely because it represents the words and story of the community. However, in affirming the role responsibilities of business, citizens and so on, and in stressing the universality of Islamic values Gülen sets up a permanent tension between tradition and autonomous critique. In contrast, Hauerwas (see Hauerwas and Wells 2004) looks to the religious community as the basis for any ethical response. For him, the Christian community of practice works through the story of Christ to see what the implications are for practice. By definition the community does not learn

from any other perspective. For Gülen the stress on humanity and universal values opens the religious community to the possibility of critique and learning from groups outside the community. In this, responsibility is tied essentially to dialogue. It is impossible to work through responsibility without dialogue across cultures and religions. The tension of the different perspectives is thus essential to maintain, leading to continual mutual learning- *semper reformanda*.

THE DIALOGUE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Gülen, does not work through the relationship between responsibility and dialogue. However, I would suggest that this might include several elements.

First, mutual dialogue enables the development of agency. It demands articulation of value and practice, which clarifies both what we think and do. Articulation, the development of narrative, becomes essential for reflection and learning. It will enable the person or corporation to see just how values and practice relate, leading to learning.

Second, dialogue demands the development of commitment to the self and the other. It is not possible to pursue dialogue without giving space and time for it to develop, and this in turn demands a non-judgemental attitude. Commitment to the self and others is also essential if the potential critique of values and practice is to emerge from articulation and reflection.

Third, dialogue enables listening, and with that, empathy, appreciation and responsiveness. We learn about the other as well as ourselves only if we are open to both.

Fourth, dialogue enables the development of a more realistic and truthful assessment of the data in any situation. Good examples of this are in the corporate world where businesses and NGOs often arrive at very different views of the data. In a case such as Brent Spar this led conflict and ineffective decision making that could have been avoided through more effective dialogue (Entine 2002).

Fifth, dialogue itself sets up a continued accountability with those involved. This is partly because it sets up a contract, formal or informal, that establishes expectations that are continually tested by dialogue.

Sixth, dialogue enables the development of shared liability, not simply the recognition of shared interests. This leads to the negotiation of responsibility.

Seventh, dialogue extends the imagination and develops creativity. It shows what is possible, especially where responsibility is shared, and so increases the capacity to respond.

Finally, in doing all of this it enables real partnerships and everyone involved to engage personal as well as group responsibility.

CONCLUSION

The concept of responsibility is an important one in ethics. Some see it as a substantive and foundational principle (Tanner 1993). Others, such as Finch and Mason (1993) argue that the negotiation of responsibility is at the heart of moral decision making. In their research with single parent families they conclude that such negotiation is the more common approach to moral decision making, than, for instance reference to principles. Importantly, they argue that the very act of negotiation develops a shared sense of moral meaning and ethical identity. Others, such as Schweiker (1995) argue that the concept of responsibility is too thin to be a substantive principle. Responsibility always rests on the purpose of that responsibility, which Schweiker takes to be maintenance of the integrity of life and response to God. Responsibility, he argues, is nonetheless still important in terms of the use of the use of individual freedom and because of the increased power available to humankind. Gülen shares some of Schweiker's position, with his stress on the primary accountability to God. It is not then a question of how one controls the power of humanity, how one is responsible for consequences per se, but rather how all power can

be used respond to God and fulfil the role of vicegerent. This provides the basis for a rich conception of responsibility involving:

- universal responsibility. This is the closest that Gulen gets to establishing responsibility as a substantive principle, one that can be identified with the unconditional love of *agape* or *hesed*. It is such a limitless love that precisely sets up responsibility as a constant awareness, attentiveness and responsiveness to God and to others, one that can never be fulfilled in adherence to rules. The existential nature of this responsibility also means that one can never be sure that the response is right or sufficient.
- Responsibility as accountability to God, and liability for His creation. Humankind as vicegerent is given this responsibility by God. This sets up an ethic of endless service, set in the relationship with God, but genuinely for others.
- Responsibility as agency, involving rational reflection and self-criticism. The stress on the development of rationality is partly to do with fulfilling the role of vicegerent. Without a grasp of scientific rationality, for instance, one cannot make a difference to God's creation. The criteria for self-criticism are also moral, not least in attention to virtues such as humility. Once more this places God at the centre of action, not the person. Responsibility in all this demands response and thus action. As such, responsibility is tied to identity, and thus worked out in practice, not least through roles in business, educational or civic arena. At the heart of this is creative and critical dialogue.

These three elements of responsibility set a remarkable bridging dynamic. The first along with writers such as Sacks (2005) contributes to the public discourse on responsibility in public life by setting the bar at its highest. This challenges the limiting philosophies of Friedman and Sternberg, and at the same time can relate to existentialist thinkers. As Carroll (2007) notes there is much overlap even between Gülen and Sartre in the existential apprehension of respon-

sibility. Where Gülen differs from Sartre is both in a wider apprehension, based in the relationship with God, and in the stress on accountability to God. This sets up a moral framework not evident in Sartre.

Responsibility based in accountability to God sets up a further challenge and bridge, not least in the area of business and public life. At one and the same time, there can be dialogue with all parties in public life that is practice-centred, about how responsibility is fulfilled, something that all are concerned about, along with sharing about underlying belief and value systems, something that is conspicuously avoided even in applied ethics (Robinson 2007). This takes responsibility beyond the simplistic existentialist response and into reflection dialogue and planning together.

Gülen maintains a strong view of agency and thus focuses on rationality and dialogue, and in one respect this sets up the most important bridge of all. Practice-centred dialogue sets up shared commitment to learning and action in such a way that all can engage responsibility. It means that power has to be shared and cannot be asserted, relationally or politically. In all this it embodies the twin principles of respect and justice. Respect involves awareness, appreciation and tolerance, and is necessary if there is to be a dialogue that genuinely involves hearing the difference and particularity of the other. Responsibility is tied to identity, and this further demands respect, not least because any learning will involve emotions connected to that identity. Justice affirms the universality of human values, and therefore may challenge tradition that has become self-absorbed or inward looking. The two should always balance each other in the practice of responsibility.

In all this Gülen remains rooted in tradition but offers a view of responsibility that goes beyond simple adherence to codes or ethical principles. The significant principles are universal and therefore need the exercise of agency, accountability, and limitless liability if they are to find meaning in practice. Hence, for Gülen, like

Niebuhr, responsibility finds its base in relationships, primarily with God.

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