



## Approaches To Youth Social Responsibility in Western Philosophy

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to study the methods of approach to social responsibility of youth in Western philosophy. Formation of social responsibility of young people is important within the framework of Western philosophy, and several main approaches have been developed in this regard. Deontological, utilitarian and existentialist approaches are analyzed in the research. The deontological approach encourages young people to assume social responsibility based on moral obligations and tasks. In this approach, it is emphasized the importance of young people to be formed as responsible individuals, following the moral rules and norms of society. Utilitarianism is based on directing social responsibility to the common welfare. In this approach, young people are encouraged to conduct their activities in a way that is designed for the benefit of others. It is noted that the decisions made by young people can affect the lives of many people, and therefore the need for actions to serve the interests of society is emphasized. The existentialist approach calls on young people to exercise social responsibility, focusing on issues of personal freedom and responsibility.

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### Introduction

Aristotle, in his "Nicomachean Ethics," provides an in-depth description of the concept of responsibility in the context of moral virtues, human freedom, and conscious choices. According to his ethical views, responsibility is linked to a person possessing moral virtues, consciously applying them in practice, and being accountable for the consequences of their actions. Aristotle believes that any responsible action must be based on a free decision. For a person to be responsible for their actions, their choice must be made consciously. Responsibility is associated with a person's ability to act through their freedom, and these decisions can be morally virtuous or harmful. If a person makes their choice voluntarily, they accept accountability for the outcomes of their actions[1].

Aristotle places moral virtues at the core of his work. In his view, a responsible individual should be morally virtuous. In Aristotle's philosophy, virtues are interpreted as the "mean" path. For example, courage is the mean between cowardice and recklessness, while generosity is the mean between stinginess and extravagance. When a person develops their virtues and chooses the mean path, they act morally right and thus become responsible. In Aristotle's ethical views, justice is considered the highest virtue and is seen as an essential factor for correctly understanding responsibility. Justice means ensuring equality in a person's relations with others and respecting each individual's rights. A person must be just in fulfilling their responsibilities toward

others, which means considering the interests of others. Thus, responsibility is realized by showing proper and just treatment towards others[2].

### **Literature Review and Methodology**

Aristotle views a virtuous life as the highest goal, emphasizing that an individual should fulfill their responsibility by embodying virtue. Living a virtuous life, in this sense, requires thoughtful consideration of the consequences of one's actions and a clear understanding of each action's purpose. Responsibility, in this context, is connected to contributing to both personal and societal well-being by leading a life of virtue. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle interweaves the concept of responsibility with moral virtues, free choice, and justice. According to him, a responsible person cultivates moral virtues, makes free and conscious decisions, and is accountable for their actions. Aristotle considers responsibility an integral part of a virtuous life, ensuring that individuals fulfill their duties justly and wisely.

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), an English philosopher, centered his political and ethical views on themes such as responsibility, freedom, law, and state structure. In *Leviathan* (1651), Hobbes examines the origins of the state, the theory of the social contract, and human nature, where the concept of responsibility holds a crucial position. He argues that humans, by nature, are self-interested beings, and responsibility is determined through a mutually agreed-upon contract between individuals. [3].

According to Hobbes, responsibility is understood as a moral and political obligation essential for ensuring peace and stability in society. Hobbes shapes his concept of responsibility through an analysis of human nature, asserting that people are inherently self-interested and driven to preserve their own lives. Due to this self-serving nature, individuals in a state of nature live in constant threat from one another, as each person is willing to use force against others to secure their own safety. Hobbes describes the state of nature as a "war of all against all," where no moral or legal norms exist, and responsibility is therefore subordinate to personal interests. In this natural state, the concept of responsibility is limited and primarily focused on individual survival, with people compelled to use any means necessary to protect their lives. Responsibility here is defined not by social agreements or moral principles but by force and violence.

Hobbes argues that in such circumstances, individuals must reach mutual agreements for the sake of their interests and safety, as the state of nature would otherwise force them to live in perpetual fear and disorder. One of Hobbes's primary theories is the social contract, whereby people leave the state of nature and form a society. Based on mutual agreements, individuals relinquish certain natural rights in exchange for the protection and order provided by a governing state. In this contract, each individual feels a sense of responsibility towards their actions, as the state provides security and ensures peace. In Hobbes's social contract theory, the central element of responsibility is adherence to mutually agreed-upon contracts[4].

He argues that responsibility is linked to the social contract, and any breach of this agreement results in punishment by the state. Responsibility here includes not only protecting one's own interests but also accountability for preventing harm to others.

1. **Personal Responsibility:** Every individual is accountable for their actions, responsible for self-preservation, and safeguarding their interests. In the state of nature, this responsibility is solely directed towards securing personal safety; however, in a social contract, the individual is obligated to adapt to societal norms.

2. **Social Responsibility:** In a society formed through a social contract, Hobbes requires each individual to recognize their responsibility towards the state and fellow citizens. This means fulfilling one's duties to the state to maintain peace and order and respecting the rights of others. [5].

In Hobbes's theory, the state—or sovereign (ruler or authority)—is one of the central figures of responsibility. Hobbes believes that the primary responsibility of the state, formed through the social contract, is to ensure peace and security. The sovereign state must protect the natural rights of its citizens, as individuals have surrendered part of their natural rights to the sovereign for the sake of their safety. The sovereign fulfills its responsibility by resolving conflicts between individuals, ensuring justice, and governing through established laws. The ruler's fundamental duty is to create laws and ensure their enforcement.

According to Hobbes, if the sovereign ruler fails to fulfill these responsibilities or to protect citizens, the social contract is broken, potentially leading society back to the state of nature. However, Hobbes does not advocate for the people's control over the sovereign, believing that the ruler's unrestricted authority is essential for

maintaining peace. In analyzing responsibility through Hobbes's views on sovereignty, several key aspects emerge:

1. **Political Responsibility:** The sovereign state bears political responsibility toward citizens by upholding the social contract, maintaining order, and protecting the populace.

2. **Moral Responsibility:** The ruler's role should not be limited to exerting force or creating laws alone; rather, the sovereign must also recognize a moral responsibility to preserve justice and stability within society. [6].

For Hobbes, the concept of responsibility is closely tied to law and legal obligations. He argues that in the state of nature, individuals manage their responsibilities based solely on personal interests. However, once the state is formed, laws establish and define individuals' responsibilities. These laws are essential for preserving peace, protecting rights, and preventing conflicts in society. In Hobbes's legal philosophy, responsibility is expressed through several aspects:

**Civil Responsibility:** Every citizen is obligated to follow the laws, as they are based on the social contract. To protect their rights, citizens must adhere to the legal norms set by the state. According to Hobbes, those who break the laws are subject to punishment, as their actions violate the social contract. Here, punishment is necessary to restore both civil and moral responsibility when it is breached.

**Moral Perspective on Responsibility:** Hobbes views responsibility not only from a political and legal standpoint but also from a moral perspective. The laws, for Hobbes, are not merely tools for enforcing authority but are also designed to guide individuals in a way that aligns with societal peace and stability.

Hobbes's emphasis on law highlights that responsibility within a state encompasses both adherence to legal obligations and the ethical commitment to act in ways that support collective harmony. [7].

## **DISCUSSION AND RESULTS**

In Hegel's philosophy, the concept of responsibility is closely linked with ethics, freedom, and the formation of the state. Hegel considers responsibility not only from an individual perspective but also within social and historical contexts. His philosophical views, particularly his dialectical method, provide a deep analysis of the development of responsibility and its relationship between the individual, society, and the state. Hegel's philosophy is grounded in dialectics, a process of progression and transformation through movement and change. Every concept, including responsibility, does not emerge independently; instead, it develops through contradictions and their resolution.

Responsibility, in this process, emerges as a force for moral consciousness and societal advancement. Dialectics evolves in three main stages: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. A thesis presents an idea, the antithesis introduces an opposing notion, and, ultimately, their resolution through synthesis leads to a new phase. Responsibility is understood within this dialectical evolution: it arises and develops as individuals balance personal interests with social demands. When analyzing responsibility from an ethical standpoint, Hegel begins with subjective morality. Subjective morality reflects the individual's inner world and responsibility toward their own actions. According to Hegel, responsibility forms within one's consciousness through personal decisions and actions. Subjective moral responsibility refers to an individual's accountability for their intentions, goals, and actions, as well as the ability to foresee and evaluate consequences. However, Hegel argues that subjective morality and intentions alone do not fully capture responsibility, as individuals operate within a social context. Therefore, understanding subjective moral responsibility requires examining it within objective morality and a broader social framework.

In Hegel's philosophy, objective morality develops from subjective morality and aligns with societal norms. Objective morality is reflected in social life and state structures, expanding the individual's responsibility within this context. Through objective morality, Hegel explores an individual's social and political responsibility, asserting that a person must act not only for personal gain but in accordance with social order and laws. Therefore, within the framework of objective morality, responsibility includes obligations toward others, society, and the state. Here, the central concept is the interrelation between freedom and responsibility. Hegel links responsibility closely with freedom. He contends that true freedom is only achievable within social structures by adhering to laws and ethical norms. This illustrates the dialectical nature of freedom: while

individuals are free to act according to their desires, their actions must not infringe on others' freedom. Freedom and responsibility are complementary: the more freedom one has, the more responsibility one assumes. According to Hegel, responsibility is realized through free choice and conscious decision-making. When individuals exercise their freedom, they must do so within rational and ethical limits. Thus, freedom and responsibility are dialectically intertwined: to be free is also to accept responsibility for the consequences of one's actions. The primary principle here is that one's actions must consider not only personal desires but also social norms and the rights of others. According to Hegel, genuine freedom manifests through recognizing one's obligations and responsibility toward others.

## CONCLUSION

In Western philosophy, approaches to youth social responsibility are complex and multifaceted, offering a deep understanding of the role of youth in personal and social life. Among these approaches, the deontological, utilitarian, and existentialist methods hold particular significance. The deontological approach encourages youth to take on social responsibility based on moral obligations, ensuring that their actions align with societal norms and standards. Utilitarianism, on the other hand, motivates youth to engage in activities that promote social welfare, emphasizing the impact of their actions on society. The existentialist approach focuses on personal freedom and accountability, urging youth to search for meaning and purpose in their lives. Each of these approaches plays a unique role in fostering a sense of social responsibility among youth. Given that youth in Western societies face contemporary issues such as information technology, globalization, and social change, these approaches offer valuable resources for enhancing their sense of social responsibility. Modern research and programs aimed at developing youth social responsibility are often based on the practical application of these Western philosophical approaches. Additionally, by incorporating these approaches into their personal and social lives, youth can contribute to social stability and prosperity. Studying these approaches to youth social responsibility in Western philosophy is crucial for educating future generations and ensuring their moral development.

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