1. There are at least two themes in Paul Ricoeur’s recent essay, ‘The Concept of Responsibility: An Essay in Semantic Analysis’ (Ricoeur 2000). The first of these is in the foreground of the essay. It concerns how the concept of responsibility has evolved in recent times from a delimited juridical notion to a much broader moral concept. The second theme remains in the background of the essay and alludes to theses that Ricoeur has developed in his book, Oneself as Another (Ricoeur 1992). This theme concerns how responsibility relates to personal and moral identity and how it emerges dialectically from social formation and from an eliminable subjectivity. In this paper I will explicate Ricoeur’s first theme and also explore how the second theme might solve the problem of the unassumable scope and range of our responsibilities which the first theme might suggest.

2. Ricoeur begins his essay by explicating a traditional legal or juridical notion of responsibility. This notion answers the question, ‘What is it to be responsible for one’s action when that action has caused harm?’ The answer that is given is that to be responsible in such a context is to be liable to be punished or to be obliged to pay compensation or make reparation for the harm done. This notion of responsibility refers to the past and seeks to connect an agent with an action that has already occurred so as to make that agent answerable for it. Indeed, when Ricoeur explores the etymology of the word ‘responsibility’, he links it to the notions of holding an agent to account for actions that have been performed. But holding an agent to account presupposes the idea that the harmful action can be imputed to that agent. To be held responsible for a harm done presupposes that the action was indeed an intentional action of that agent. As Ricoeur quotes a French dictionary, ‘to impute an action to someone is to attribute it to him as its actual author, to put it, so to speak, on his account and to make him responsible for it.’ (Ricoeur 2000, 14)

3. Dieter Birnbacher expands on these points when he distinguishes retrospective responsibility, or ‘ex post responsibility’, from responsibility for the future, or ‘ex ante responsibility’ (Birnbacher 2001). The first is the kind of responsibility that Aristotle was trying to ground when he discussed voluntary action in his Nicomachean Ethics while the second is illustrated by Hans Jonas’ book The Imperative of Responsibility (Jonas 1984). Our discussion will return us to this second sense of responsibility presently.

4. Birnbacher identifies the following conditions for ex post responsibility. First there must be an identifiable agent who is linked to the faulty action. There must be a clear link between the agent’s action and the harmful outcome. Parents, for example, may not be held responsible for the sins of their children unless a direct causal link can be established between them and the harmful action. Similarly, the responsibility of a collectivity is based on the actions of the individual members of that collectivity and there must be an appropriate link between those actions and the collectivity which has responsibility for them imputed to it. Second, the agent must have contributed to the harm through his or her intentional action or omission. Third, the agent must have had the capacity to do or not do the harmful action. They must not have been acting involuntarily, accidentally, blindly, or under duress. There will be considerable interpretative latitude in this condition and much of the interest in juridical cases will be in whether and how it is fulfilled. Fourth, given the link between ex post responsibility and being blameworthy, the responsible agent must have been under an obligation not to perform the faulty action or to prevent the unfortunate outcome from occurring.

5. Any imputation of an action to an agent in this way presupposes a philosophical theory of agency. Just as Aristotle had argued that we cannot praise or blame anyone unless we understand what it is for them to have acted voluntarily, so Ricoeur discerns the development of the concept of imputation in Kant, for whom the idea presupposes that the agent is the genuine originator of the act. Kant notes that this requires the transcendentality of freedom so as to ground the absolute spontaneity of an action even while it is also rational to understand all events in the world, including actions, as caused by pre-existing conditions. Kant did not fail to notice the apparent contradiction between these two ways of conceiving action. His second critique tackles this antinomy by equating freedom with the subsumption of agency under the moral law. In this way, freedom and imputability can be made to coincide (Ricoeur 2000, 18). However, Ricoeur argues that the metaphysical problems are displaced rather than solved by this strategy and that they have still not been satisfactorily resolved in contemporary philosophy. It is at this point that the second and muted theme of Ricoeur’s essay – that of the nature of subjectivity and the identity of agents – makes itself manifest. I will return to this theme presently.
6. For the moment let us pursue the theme of the juridical concept of responsibility in Ricoeur's essay a little further. Whereas in its traditional form this concept centred on an identifiable agent who is deemed to be at fault, Ricoeur describes a contemporary tendency in which this focus is lost. In many civil cases damages are awarded for harms done without there being any imputation of fault. While some legal actions do result in certain agents being found negligent, many actions are directed simply upon the question of which party's insurance company should pay the compensation. In contemporary society, the management of risk through insurance and processes of indemnification has sometimes replaced that of imputing responsibility and fault to particular agents. The fact that we insure against many events that do not result from blameworthy actions or omissions is part of this tendency. The result has been that a new kind of collective responsibility – which Ricoeur attributes to solidarity – has weakened the imputation of particular fault to particular individuals. Society as a whole accepts responsibility when harm occurs and sets up processes for compensation that do not depend upon sheeting home the responsibility to particular agents. Whether one suffers harm because of a criminal act or whether through an 'act of God', the insurance company will pay.

7. There will be some variations upon this tendency in various legal jurisdictions. (Rather than contest his claim let us assume that Ricoeur is referring primarily to the French legal system). For example, the criminal law will seek to identify responsible agents for the sake of punishment and also, sometimes, in order to secure compensation for the victims. Again, in medical cases, the law scrutinises the specific practices of doctors even though insurance companies pay the compensation. And litigation in cases of a company's neglecting safety standards in its production or its products creates some pressure on the individual responsibility of directors and managers even if the law allows them to escape personal liability. These caveats aside, we may accept Ricoeur's claim in broad terms. What happens to the juridical notion of responsibility in the context of modern law is that it becomes collectivised. The object of imputation becomes the community. This upholds the values of solidarity and security and leads to actions coming to be seen as fated rather than as the responsibility of identifiable agents.

8. This solidarity supports the feeling that in all cases of bad luck or misfortune claims for reparation can and ought to be made by the victims. People come to feel themselves entitled to such compensation. Within the exigencies of legal processes this, in turn, increases the need to find someone to pay that compensation. Given the continuing hold of the concept of ex post responsibility, this again leads the system to seek agents to hold responsible and be at fault. According to Ricoeur, the ironic consequence is that, from a position of solidarity, one looks further for culpability and undermines fiduciary and contractual relationships of trust. The conceptual problem that this raises is that, if the traditional juridical notion of responsibility depended upon imputing responsibility to an agent, and if no agent is being singled out in these contemporary developments, then there is no specific object of imputation and the notion of responsibility begins to float free of its traditional associations. The term has begun to change its meaning. It becomes generalised so that we all collectively become holders of responsibility.

9. Parallel to this evolution of the juridical concept of responsibility Ricoeur also describes an evolution in what he calls the 'moral concept'. The moral concept of responsibility points to the things or people for whom we should accept responsibility. Whereas the traditional version of this concept echoed that of the juridical concept in that it urged us to accept responsibility for the harm that we might have done by submitting to punishment or accepting our duty to pay compensation, the more modern notion suggests that we are responsible, not just for our past actions, but also for future actions and for actions that will have an impact in the future. This is the concept that Birnbacher calls 'ex ante responsibility'. Birnbacher notes several distinctive features of such responsibility. First, it does not specify exactly what action one is responsible to perform and so generates positive but underdetermined duties. Second, it has a teleological structure in that it aims at some good or avoidance of harm in the future. The conditions that must be met for ex ante responsibility to be imputed to an agent or group of agents include once again that the necessary conditions of voluntary action must be met. Further, the relevant agents must have the capacity to do what is called for. They must have the intelligence to understand the future consequences of their actions and have the requisite information.

10. The expansion of the predictive powers of science enhances this capacity. Additionally, the expansion of the technological powers of science increases the need for this kind of responsibility. The increasing numbers of 'acts of God' that can be controlled or avoided by technological means become risks that must be managed by the social collective in solidarity. Precisely who in the collective holds that responsibility will be unclear, and will be the object of political contestation. Also open to political contestation will be the question of the scope of this moral responsibility. Given the undetermined nature of the duty, how far into the future does ex ante responsibility extend? To privilege the present or the proximate future would seem to evince partiality. This is another point to which I will return.

11. Ricoeur argues that it is inherent in the grammar of the contemporary moral concept of responsibility that one is not just responsible for one's actions, whether past or future, but also for other people or for things of value. 'The displacement then becomes a reversal: one becomes responsible for harm because, first of all, one is responsible for others.' (Ricoeur 2000, 29) Levinas has built an entire ethical theory on the idea that the depth and vulnerability of the other elicits my responsibility for them. In this way whatever and whoever is fragile elicits our responsibility. Ricoeur himself has argued for such a thesis when he says in an essay entitled, 'Fragility and Responsibility', that 'responsibility has the fragile as
its specific vis-à-vis, that is to say, both what is perishable through natural weakness and what is threatened under the blows of historical violence’. (Ricoeur 1995, 15)

12. But this evolution and broadening of the moral concept of responsibility raises a number of problems. The first of these problems is that the imputation of responsibility becomes less clear. The future is the product of innumerable micro-decisions on the part of agents in many parts of the world. To whom can responsibility be imputed for specific outcomes? Anyone has the potential to do harm, whether knowingly or unknowingly, in the future. Second, one might ask about the scope of our responsibility for others. Are we responsible for kin and others immediately related to us, or are we responsible for all others upon whom our actions might have a conceivable effect? Third, as already noted, how far into the future does responsibility extend? Are we responsible for the next generation, the next two generations, or the limitless number who are yet to come? Last, if we should seek to apply the notion of reparation or compensation for harms that emerge in the future, who will be held liable for making such reparations, and in what way can present agents be called to account for effects that emerge only later, perhaps beyond their lifetime? Ricoeur approves of Hans Jonas’ injunction that we should always act so as to ensure the future existence of human beings (Jonas 1984), but suggests that it raises just the sort of difficulties which have just been enumerated.

13. What is emerging here is a confluence of a generalised juridical notion of responsibility in which the community as a whole holds and accepts responsibility without imputing fault to individuals, and a generalised moral notion of responsibility in which individuals hold an apparently unlimited range of responsibilities for the future. It is as if the very being of a social agent involves being inserted into a web of responsibility. Ricoeur argues that the relatively delimited, traditional, juridical concept of responsibility, centred as it was on imputing liability for punishment or for making reparation to individuals for past actions, has been expanded both within the law and in the wider society at the same time as the emergence of a moral concept of almost limitless scope and range. This creates a spectrum of possibilities: at one end, singular imputation; at the other, shared risk. While the juridical notion has come to highlight shared risk, morality’s focus on our responsibility for vulnerable and fragile others stresses singular imputation. As Ricoeur puts it, ‘To the extent that one is rendered responsible for the moral injunction coming from others, the arrow of such an injunction is directed at a subject capable of designating himself as the author of his acts.’ (Ricoeur 2000, 34) But should this enlarged moral concept, extending as it does to innumerable others and a limitless future, be circumscribed in such a way as to be an imputable responsibility which accords with our capabilities and with the scope and range of our reasonable and prudent judgements?

14. Ricoeur reminds us that human agency is finite. While the causal consequences of our actions may flow into a limitless future and while the collective effects of our separate actions may generate unthought of effects, the scope of our intentions are circumscribed by what we can know, foresee, or envisage. If we are not to be forced to the conclusion that our responsibility is unlimited, it must be possible to strike a balance in some way between responsibility for foreseeable and intended effects and for more remote consequences. As Ricoeur puts it, ‘Simply neglecting the side effects of an action would render it dishonest, but an unlimited responsibility would make action impossible.’ (Ricoeur 2000, 31) What is needed is a judgement of practical wisdom based on recognition of our finitude. It must be possible to make judgements about our situation which accord us a responsibility that is reasonable in scope and range so that it can be meaningfully imputed to particular agents.

15. Although it may be appropriate for the juridical concept of responsibility to become detached from individual imputation by tending towards a concept of collective liability without individual fault, the moral concept is in danger of becoming meaningless if there can be no singular imputation to a specifiable particular agent or group of agents. While we may indeed hold a collective responsibility for the future in solidarity with others, there is still the need to discern what particular individuals are enjoined to do by being bearers of this responsibility. Even to prevent large and global harms to unspecified future peoples, all individuals must accept responsibility for the contributions that their commissions or omission might conceivably make to such possible harms. Exercising such a responsibility will require not just sensitive judgement, but also a reasonable degree of knowledge about such relevant scientific matters as the effects of our actions on the environment. We must know what the risks for the future are in the actions we undertake. Once again, forms of prudence will be called upon in order for individuals to act responsibly. It might also be noted here that by calling for prudent judgement in the sense of Aristotle’s phronésis, Ricoeur is effectively suggesting that there can be no a priori general principles which would delineate the range or scope of anyone’s responsibility.

16. But does Ricoeur espouse a possibly complacent view of moral and ex ante responsibility? To what extent is our responsibility limited by prudence and finitude? How might we ensure that this position is not just a self-seeking retreat from a larger responsibility? It is in order to answer these questions that the second, more implicit, theme of Ricoeur’s paper needs to be explored. Ricoeur had recognised that the more concrete and delimited juridical notion of responsibility raises difficulties for understanding the human agent. It assumes human freedom, and such freedom is by no means clearly theorised within philosophy. Even the more recent philosophical efforts to comprehend agency in a way that does justice to the Kantian antimony, like those of Peter Strawson and Donald Davidson which Ricoeur discusses, fail to do justice to the central truth about human agency: namely, that in acting, an agent intervenes in the world by taking an initiative which is a new irruption into the causal flow of events not captureable by a purely descriptive philosophical method any more than by the physical or human sciences. It is this...
ineliminable subjectivity as the absolute spontaneity of an action which any account of what it is to impute responsibility for action must preserve.

17. In this connection, Ricoeur cites with approval Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the ‘I can’ which is at the heart of any phenomenological understanding of human agency and which is not reducible to any physical causal process. Strawson’s theory of ‘ascription’ and Davidson’s attempt to theorise a new kind of causality under the name of ‘agent causality’ both fail to meet this test. Not only are they, according to Ricoeur, purely descriptive accounts without phenomenological insight, but they also lose sight of the moral meaning that imputation carries with it: that of rendering an agent responsible both morally and legally. Ricoeur quotes Kant approvingly when the latter says, ‘A person is the subject whose imputation can be imputed to him. . . . A thing is that to which nothing can be imputed.’ (Ricoeur 2000, 16, italics in original) It would appear then that our understanding of what it is to impute an action or a responsibility to a person or agent is tied to our conception of what it is to be a person or an agent.

18. It is at this point that some of the theses of Ricoeur’s recent book, Oneself and Another, become relevant. This book includes two striking approaches to personal identity. First, it distinguishes what Ricoeur calls ‘sameness’ from what he calls ‘ipseity’. Sameness is the identity that is given to us by our socio-historical context. Minimally it is our identity as it appears on our passports, but more fully it is the sum of all the social formative influences upon us, from upbringing through to education and the accumulation of all those of my experiences in relation to which I am passive. It is who we are seen to be by others if they see us accurately, but, it is who we are seen to be by ourselves if we accept the self-image which our social formation bequeaths to us. But such a self-image is seldom the product only of that social formation. It arises out of a dialectic in which social construction is but one term. The other term in this dialectic is the ineliminable subjectivity which was described above as the creative initiative and intervention in the world which is inherent in action. This is the term which the existential tradition since Nietzsche has focused upon as the being-for-itself, as subjectivity, or as pure becoming. In order to avoid the subjectivism and voluntarism inherent in this one-sided account of personal identity, Ricoeur combines it dialectically with social formation in order to theorise our personal identity as an instance of ‘ipseity’. Ipseity is my spontaneous being as shaped over time in response to my historicity.

19. In the second of his approaches to subjectivity, Ricoeur finds a way to mediate between philosophical theories of subjectivity which stress a third person approach of description and ascription as exemplified by Strawson and Davidson – philosophers who stand in a long tradition stemming from Hume who would explain human action, for example, as being caused by beliefs and desires conceived as mental events – and a philosophical approach which stresses the first person approach of reflection – a tradition that arguably begins with Descartes but of which the most recent articulation is found in existential phenomenology. As against these, Ricoeur stresses the second person point of view of mutual address in dialogical contexts. The central notion of identity as ipseity is that of the one who speaks to others and is addressed by them as a ‘you’. In this approach, the questions are not, ‘What are the criteria for ascribing personhood?’ or, ‘What does singular reflection disclose of my authentic being?’ but, ‘Who is it who speaks and who is it that can be addressed by others?’ The first part of this last question is centred round the notion of attestation, while the second part of it focuses on the notion of imputation. When one speaks to another or addresses the world in a purposeful way, one is attesting to who one is. One is declaring where one stands, what one is committed to, and what one cares about. This is one’s attestation to one’s identity. When one answers another’s address or responds to their call, one acknowledges and declares who one is in response to an imputation of identity to one on the part of others. Indeed, one makes oneself be that which the other calls upon one to be. These questions together – ‘Who speaks?’ ‘Who acts?’ ‘Who recounts his life?’ ‘Who designates herself as the morally responsible author of her acts?’ (Ricoeur 2000, 23) and, I would add, ‘Who is it that can be addressed by others?’ – constitute who one is.

20. This is why Ricoeur speaks of oneself as another. One’s ipseity is constituted not just by one’s own existential and originary being in dialectic exchange with one’s social formation, but also by the way one is addressed by others as another and hence by what is imputed to one by others. Indeed it is partly through this address by others that one’s social formation is mediated. There are two points to notice about this. First, one’s identity as ipseity is not just a function of momentary exchanges with others whom I address or who address me. It is the function, rather, of a large number of such exchanges over time. It is this which gives rise to a narrative conception of the self in which one is the author of one’s own narrative even as that narrative is shaped by others and by one’s situations. Second, the two-part question that points to one’s ipseity is articulated by me as, ‘Who is it who speaks and who is it that can be addressed by others?’ rather than, ‘Who is it who speaks and who is it that is addressed by others?’ Ricoeur places great stress on one’s ipseity being a capability as much as a realisation. Once again it is Merleau-Ponty’s ‘I can’ which captures both the dynamic and potential nature of ipseity. In my response to the call of the other, I attest to what I can be as well as to what I am and what I have achieved.

21. These brief observations about his theory of identity would appear to explain and justify the limitations of responsibility that Ricoeur describes in his essay. As he points out in his etymological exploration of the term, my responsibility is a response to the call of the other. While this call need not be limited to the other whom I meet face-to-face, neither does it extend to others who are so remote from me that no means are at hand for hearing their call. While I can and should envisage future generations and their circumstances, there are cognitive limits to the scope and range of such envisaging and these circumscribe my
hearing of the call of future others and thus the capability to which I attest in my response.

22. My finitude limits my responsiveness and thus my responsibility. While the imputation to me of responsibility for a limitless future and innumerable others may be a part of that pressure of social formation to which we are subject in our contemporary era of global economies and borderless environmental impacts, and while I may be called upon by those faceless and innumerable others to attest to that responsibility and be accountable for it, this demand is ameliorated by my finite capabilities. I can only attest to what I am capable of. I can only respond from what I am capable of. I can only address myself to a future I can envisage and influence and to others whom I can imagine and preserve from harm. Just as the imputation to me of responsibility for actions of the past depended upon seeing me as free and thus capable of bearing that responsibility, so the imputation to me of a responsibility for the future depends upon seeing me as capable of doing whatever an informed and prudent stance towards that future might demand.

23. Insofar as moral identity in the sense of ipseity is a dialectical product of social formation and primordial subjectivity and insofar as responsibility is partly constitutive of that ipseity, responsibility is itself the dialectical product of the global call of innumerable others which comes to us from the future, and of our attestation and response to that call—a response which is delimited by our finite capability and our finite knowledge. The terms of this dialectical notion of responsibility are contained in the call that comes to us out of the future from whatever or whoever is precious and vulnerable on the one hand, and the originary responsiveness, delimited by my capability and knowledge, which is expressed in my attestation and action on the other. Responsibility is something that I own or attest to as constitutive of my ipseity. It is, moreover, something that I ought to own or attest to in direct proportion to the urgency, exigency, value, and vulnerability of that for which I am responsible. Like my very identity, my responsibility is not just of my own making. It is given me by the call of the other.

24. But this only partly answers our question about whether RICOEUR’S view is a complacent or possibly self-seeking one. It may still be asked whether a response that is circumscribed by what is reasonable for, and delimited to the capability of, a finite being would be adequate to such a call. If ignorance and the inability to envisage remote consequences defeats responsibility, we need to recall that we can be responsible for our ignorance. Aristotle regarded ignorance as defeating the voluntariness of an action, but also argued that we can be held responsible for our ignorance. In much the same way reasonable ignorance of the consequences of our actions may exonerate us from responsibility for those consequences but not from our responsibility for striving to overcome that ignorance. We may be finite, but a perfectionist conception of human existence would urge us to push back the boundaries of our ignorance and expand the horizons of our capabilities and thus of our moral responsibility. Critical rationality would be central to this moral enterprise.

25. Whatever the official and unspoken reasons for the policy, many of the Australian bureaucrats and missionaries who for many years into the nineteen sixties removed aboriginal children whose fathers were white from their mothers in the benighted belief that such removal would be of benefit to them thought of themselves as acting responsibly. But RICOEUR would presumably comment that they failed to exercise critical judgement in relation to those policies. Taking responsibility involves critical evaluation of the values and policies inherent in the situation. Given the generalised objective responsibility that arises from social solidarity and from the fact that our actions inevitably contribute to the future, taking responsibility is a formation of and attestation to our ethical and political identity. As such it requires of us that we exercise rational and critical assessments of our actions.

26. If the delimitation of responsibility is a matter of judgement then it is not just a function of our facticity, situatedness, and our finitude. It is chosen and must be so under some normative standard. As we attest to our identity, so we attest to the scope of our responsibility. My responsibility to the call of the future goes to define the quality of my ethical being. I am able to reject responsibility on the grounds of my finitude, but I must also extend my capability for accepting a larger responsibility by exercising critical and reflexive thought.

27. It may be asked whether finite and partially socially constructed agents have the capability of thinking beyond the frameworks of their formation. I have said that ipseity is a product of a dialectic involving such social formation and one’s ineliminable subjectivity. Whence, then, the critical rationality which is charged with expanding one’s cognitive and concernful capability for responsibility?

28. RICOEUR would reject an abstract, a-historical, and formalist Kantian conception of reason in favour of an Aristotelian conception of contentful rationality as an aspect of our teleological being. RICOEUR interprets the Aristotelian notion of eudaimonia, which is so often translated in individualistic terms as ‘happiness’, as designating the inherent ethical aim and capability of ‘aiming at the “good life” with and for others in a just society’ (RICOEUR 1992, 172). Insofar as our ipseity is directed upon such a telos, insofar as we attest to a goal of improving our selves and our societies, and insofar as our functions and capabilities include those of deliberative practical wisdom or phronésis, critical and rational reflection is a fulfillment of such a telos and is an activity that virtuous persons would engage in.

29. Whatever might be the constraints and horizons placed upon us by social formations for such thinking, we have the capacity and the tendency to break out of such constraints and it is virtuous for us to do so. We have an inherent and inchoate sense of happiness, compassion, and fairness implicit in our tendency toward eudaimonia along with the critical faculties required to evaluate social conditions against this sense. Levinas confirms this.
view in his arguments in favour of an ineliminable subjectivity which includes a capacity for substantive, ethical reason (Levinas 2003). It is on this basis that ethical reform has always been possible from within moral communities. And it is on the basis of this possibility and demand for virtue that we are always called upon by the call of the other to strive to transcend the finitude of our historical ipseity.

30. Let us now recall Birnbacher's conditions for imputing ex post responsibility, particularly his insistence that the agent must have had the capacity to do or not do the harmful action and must not have been acting involuntarily, accidentally, blindly, or under duress. Moreover, his conditions for the ascription of ex ante responsibility include that relevant agents must have the capacity to do what is called for and must have an understanding of the future consequences of their actions. His thinking belongs to what Bernard Williams (Williams 1985) has called 'the morality system', which is a way of thinking about ethics that focuses exclusively upon obligation. One of this system's several principles is that 'ought implies can'. What this means is that a person cannot be blamed for not doing what they were not able to do. Those bureaucrats and missionaries who assisted in stealing half-cast children from their mothers and kept them incarcerated on missions to train them for menial work in the white man's world because that is what their world-view and that of their sector of society thought was best would be blameless in this way of thinking. Given their view of things, it is said, they could not have done otherwise (and their heirs, today, do not have an obligation to apologise to their victims). They could not be held responsible.

31. But on the fuller view of responsibility as a virtue that is suggested by Ricoeur's work we can say that those bureaucrats and missionaries failed in the virtue of sensitive judgement which Aristotle calls phronésis. They failed to heed the call both of the grieving mothers and children and of their own implicit quest for ethical improvement through compassion and fairness. They accepted the prevailing social and cultural norms without heeding any inner stirrings of responsibility that might have been awakened in them by the suffering of those with whom they were dealing. Theirs was a failure of responsibility based upon a too easy acceptance of the socially induced constraints on their own sensitivity. While doing what they thought was right they failed to fulfil their ipseity as virtuous agents. They did not accept responsibility.

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Bibliography


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