Research Paper

An African Paradigm for Corporate Social Responsibility

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About the author

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Abstract

One of the important aspects of corporate governance or business ethics is corporate social responsibility (CSR). Apart from its concern for intra and inter-corporate moral conducts, business ethics is also occupied with moral regulation of general corporate conduct with respect to their socio-environmental relations. It enlightens business organisations about their responsibility to their communities of operation, in terms of maintaining the society and environment. This is because a community within which an organisation operates its business is an equal stakeholder in the business. There are several theories of CSR. But they are problematic in persuading corporations to undertake the responsibility as an obligation. Each existing theory attracts the sort of objections that dissuade and ultimately truncate genuine understanding and undertaking of the responsibility. And if the responsibility is not undertaken, society and environment would incline to perilous consequences from ever-ambitious capitalist tendencies of businesses. There is the urgent need, therefore, to redefine the morality in some way that would persuade corporations to undertake the responsibility. That is the objective of this essay. It is achieved through an ancient or traditional African existentialist-ontological interpretation of the morality as a sense of duty actuated by human socio economic tendency to engage in commerce with universal hospitality.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility, African business ethics, Universal hospitality.

Introduction

Business ethics or corporate governance is applied science of morality concerned with best ethos - knowing what is right and wrong and electing to do the right - in workplaces with respect to effects of products and services in relation to all stakeholders (McNamara, 2003; Ndubuisi, 2005). It involves a “blend of law, regulation, and appropriate voluntary private-sector practices which enables the corporation to attract financial and human capital, perform efficiently, and thereby perpetuate itself by generating long-term economic value for its shareholders, while respecting the interests of stakeholders and society as a whole” (Millstein, 1998).

An important aspect of the ethics is corporate social responsibility (hereafter referred to as CSR), where the right social conduct of companies towards the environment in which they carry out their business operations becomes more specifically significant in consideration (Unah, 2008). With CSR companies incorporate social and environmental concerns into their businesses for the purpose of sustaining it (the business) and the health of their environment of operation.

CSR builds a lasting and meaningful relationship with customers, employees and the public who are often members of a corporation’s community of operation. It improves the public image of a firm, giving it goodwill, public favour, corporate trust and profit. Accordingly, companies that undertake the responsibility attract and retain more investors and staff than their counterparts that do not do so. They create long-term partnerships with their clients, avoid short term solutions to environmental and social problems and ultimately aid the security of their economic stability. Through CSR governments also get assisted by
corporations in solving social, economic and political problems of states (e.g. in construction and maintenance of roads, provision of healthcare centres, portable water systems, etc).

But, the morality suffers a critical challenge, which negatively affects its persuasiveness. This resides in its definition or what it is taken to mean. Given our findings, there are various interpretations of the responsibility. However, none of them is capable of assimilating other definitions and simultaneously persuading corporations to regard the responsibility as an inevitable obligation. Consequent upon this, it has been difficult or completely impossible for corporations to engage in or actualise the objectives of CSR (as would be expected by stakeholders).

To the best of our knowledge, the problem with existing definitions of the morality is lack of holistic ontological presupposition of the behaviour. Their presuppositions are often too scientific, ontic or objective to supply the necessary component. Although it may appear simple, one complex question which we consider to be capable of leading us to the core of the problem and its solution is: what is the basic assumption of CSR?

This essay aims at answering the question and supplying CSR theory with a holistic presupposition that would redefine its meaning, assimilate other definitions as much as possible and persuade corporations to undertake the responsibility as obligation. We shall achieve that aim by interpreting the responsibility in ancient or traditional African ontological socio-economic view of human existence as “universal hospitality” (Ndubuisi, 2000). To render the essay more intelligible, we commence the task with an interrogation of existing meanings of CSR.

On Existing Meanings of Corporate Social Responsibility

There is no gainsaying the fact that every postulation of CSR typically proceeds from an initial definition of its semantic entailment(s). This is because whatever is taken as a point of departure of the entailment(s) determines, to a great extent, any other extrapolation and mode of practice.

There are divergent definitions of CSR. And scholars have refused to acquiesce on any of them as a generally accepted one (Carroll, 1991; Jones, 1995; 1999; McWilliams and Siegel, 2001). N. K. Kakabadse, C. Rozuel and L. Lee-Davies (2005) attribute the divergence partly to the fact that people within (and outside) the field, notwithstanding the issue of literary translation, simply delight in employing, promoting and defending different interpretations that have emerged over the past three decades. Given such situation, we find the interpretations ranging from CSR considered as sustainable development, social contract, to corporate accountability and business in society, or from corporate citizenship to corporate governance. The tables of definitions below, quoted from Kakabadse, Rozuel and Lee-Davies, display this. Accordingly, whereas the first table is said to be from academic research of the past 50 years, the second table is from business and society viewpoints.

Now, while the foregoing themes are in themselves interesting and demonstrate the richness of the subject as well as the criticality of research on it, A. B. Carroll (1999) and M. Ougaard and M. E. Nielsen (2002) point out that none of them singularly supplies CSR a sufficiently persuasive meaning. For Donaldson and Preston
Table 1  Definition of CSR from Academic Perspective  
(Source: Kakabadse, Rozuel and Lee-Davies 2005: 5)

| Author | Definition |
|--------|------------|
| Bowen (1953) | [CSR] refers to the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society. |
| Frederick (1960) | Social responsibility in the final analysis implies a public posture toward society’s economic and human resources and a willingness to see that those resources are used for broad social ends and not simply for the narrowly circumscribed interests of private persons and firms. |
| Friedman (1962) | There is one and only one social responsibility of business - to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud. |
| Davis and Blomstrom (1966) | Social responsibility, therefore, refers to a person’s obligation to consider the effects of his decisions and actions on the whole social system. |
| Sethi (1975) | Social responsibility implies bringing corporate behaviour up to a level where it is congruent with the prevailing social norms, values, and expectations of performance. |
| Carroll (1979) | The social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical and discretionary expectations that society has of organisations at a given point in time. |
| Jones (1980) | Corporate social responsibility is the notion that corporations have an obligation to constituent groups in society other than stockholders and beyond that prescribed by law and union contract. |
| Wood (1991) | The basic idea of corporate social responsibility is that business and society are interwoven rather than distinct entities. |
| Baker (2003) | CSR is about how companies manage the business processes to produce an overall positive impact on society. |

(1995), rectifying that problem of persuasive meaningfulness of CSR requires commencing any attempt at its definition with a prior distinction in perspective of the study. Such distinction is to state whether the study is instrumental or normative (prescriptive). While instrumental study explains the subject from different perspectives using empirical data and interpretative aids (e.g. how companies carry out their CSR policies - i.e. the correlation between CSR and economic performance, the executive motivations for CSR, and so forth), normative study discusses its basic moral principles and reasons why firms ought to assume and implement certain responsibilities toward society (Mele, 2006: p.11).

Given the above guide, this essay is concerned with normative CSR. And in line with our objective, the numerous definitions above are reducible to only four perspectives held by Domenec Mele (2006). These
include CSR as fiduciary capitalism, stakeholding, corporate citizenship, and corporate social performance. The reduction serves to simplify and streamline the near-vague presentation of the subject by the numerous definitions, making it (the subject - CSR) concise enough for our task.

Table 2: Definition of CSR from Business and Society Perspective
(Source: Kakabadse, Rozuel and Lee-Davies 2005: 6)

| Organisation | Definition |
|--------------|------------|
| World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) (2003) | Corporate Social Responsibility is business’ commitment to contribute to sustainable economic development working with employees, their families, the local community, and society at large to improve their quality of life. |
| CSR Europe (2003) | Corporate Social Responsibility is the way in which a company manages and improves its social and environmental impact to generate value for both its shareholders and its stakeholders by innovating its strategy, organisation and operations. |
| Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2003) | Corporate Responsibility involves the ‘fit’ businesses develop with the societies in which they operate. […] The function of business in society is to yield adequate returns to owners of capital by identifying and developing promising investment opportunities and, in the process, to provide jobs and to produce goods and services that consumers want to buy. However, corporate responsibility goes beyond this core function. Businesses are expected to obey the various laws which are applicable to them and often have to respond to societal expectations that are not written down as formal law. |
| Amnesty International - Business Group (UK) (2002) | Companies [have] to recognise that their ability to continue to provide goods and services and to create financial wealth will depend on their acceptability to an international society which increasingly regards protection of human rights as a condition of the corporate licence to operate. The Corporate Responsibility Coalition (CORE) (2003) As an ‘organ of society’, companies have a responsibility to safeguard human rights within their direct sphere of operations as well as within their wider spheres of influence. |
Table 2: (Continued)

| Organisation                        | Definition                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Corporate Responsibility Coalition (CORE) (2003) | As an ‘organ of society’, companies have a responsibility to safeguard human rights within their direct sphere of operations as well as within their wider spheres of influence. |
| Novethic (2003)                      | Linked to the application by corporations of the sustainable development principle, the concept of CSR integrates three dimensions: an economic dimension (efficiency, profitability), a social dimension (social responsibility) and an environmental dimension (environmental responsibility). To respect these principles, corporations must pay more attention to all the stakeholders [...] which inform on the expectations of civil society and the business environment. |
| Unilever (2003)                      | We define social responsibility as the impact or interaction we have with society in three distinct areas: (i) voluntary contributions, (ii) impact of (business’s direct) operations, and (iii) impact through the value chain. |
| Novo Nordisk (2003)                  | Social responsibility for Novo Nordisk is about caring for people. This applies to our employees and the people whose healthcare needs we serve. It also considers the impact of our business on the global society and the local community. As such, social responsibility is more than a virtue - it is a business imperative. |

Accordingly, by fiduciary capitalism “the only social responsibility of businesses is to make profit and, in its supreme goal is to increase the company’s economic value for its shareholders” (pp.3-4). Any other extraneous social goals that companies engage are permissible only if they contributed to the maximization of shareholder’s share value (Ibid.). This constitutes the conventional neoclassical economic theory of CSR underpinned by shareholder utility maximization, defended by notable scholars like M. Friedman (1962), S. Ross (1973), and M. C. Jensen and W. Meckling (1976), and so forth.

By stakeholder theory “corporations have obligations to constitutuents groups in society other than stockholders and beyond that prescribed by law or union” (Jones, 1980: 59-60) According to this theory, CSR takes into account individuals or groups with a ‘stake’ in, or claim on, the company, including shareholders, employees, customers, suppliers and local community (Mele, Op. Cit.). Proponents of the theory include T. M. Jones (1980), R. E. Freeman (1984), T. Donaldson and L. E. Preston (1995), and so forth.
By corporate citizenship corporations engage in a nuanced practice of stakeholding, where they assume citizenship of their communities of operation, just as individuals. Accordingly, they are obligated to communal service beyond provisions of law. K. Davis (1973) writes that as far as corporate citizenship is the concern of CSR, “social responsibility begins where the law ends. A firm is not socially responsible if it merely complies with the minimum required of the law, because this is what a good citizen would do” (p. 313); it involves itself in “good neighborliness” (Elbert and Parket, 1973). Good neighbourliness entails, first, “not doing things that spoil the neighborhood” and, second, “the commitment of business, or Business, in general, to an active role in the solution of board social problems, such as racial discrimination, pollution, transportation, or urban decay.” (p. 7). Apart from the scholars already cited, other proponents of the theory include J. W. McGuire (1963), J. M. Logsdon and D. J. Wood (2002), J. I. Unah (2008) and so forth.

By corporate social performance CSR roots from Howard Bowen’s thinking that “it refers to the obligation of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society” (1953, p. 6). Ratifying this definition, US Committee for Economic Development (1971) presents a more detailed and pragmatic view of CSR as morality related to (i) products, jobs and economic grown, (ii) societal expectations, (iii) activities aimed at improving the social environment of the firm (Mele, Op. Cit). But, it was not until Carroll (1979) that the concept acquired the title as its is: “corporate social performance” (CSP); introduced as a synthesis of basic principle of social responsibility, concrete issues for which social responsibility exists and the specific philosophy of response to social issues (cf. Mele, Op. Cit.). Wartick and Cochran (1985) further extended Carroll’s approach to depict that corporate social involvement rests on the principles of social responsibility, the process of social responsiveness and the policy of issues management (Ibid). Then, a new development emerged with Wood (1991), who gave the basic model of CSP as currently applied, including, (i) principles of corporate social responsibility, expressed on three levels: institutional, organizational and individual; (ii) processes of corporate social responsiveness, and (iii) outcomes of corporate behaviour (Ibid).

Now, from the above reworked definitions of CSR according to Mele, it would be observed that despite the compression the subject still goes by differing definitions. This re-echoes the point that there can be no singularly persuasive definition of the subject. A keener study of the subject at this juncture reveals further that the problem lies in each of them implicitly presupposing one notion or another of human moral being in relation to corporations and society (Mele, Op. Cit.). For lucidity, it becomes vital for us to discuss these presuppositions (even if briefly), to disclose the theoretical infelicity in existing definitions of CSR and, upon that ground, establish the viability of our own view.

**Theoretical Presuppositions of Existing Meanings of CSR and their Inadequacy**

With Mele’s four theories, fiduciary capitalist CSR proceeds from human ethical egoism. By this human tendency to be economically self-centered predominates business activities. What constitutes “the good”
for corporations is selfish knack for profit. With Shareholder theory, there is a correspondence with human ethical altruism - i.e. the tendency for man to be people-concerned in behaviour. What constitute “the good” for corporations are people’s happiness and fulfillment and not knack for profit as such. But this sort of altruism (corporate) is a regulated one (as is evident in the definition). This is because, as far as profit remains the essence of business or commerce, individuals or corporations cannot afford to be wholesomely people-centered in their purposes, even for CSR. Such moral gesture would amount to rendering business as charity. The regulation (of the altruism), according to Jim Unah (2008, 3), entails having corporations act out of “advanced ethical egoism.” And that means acting from enlightened self-interest. John Hospers (1972) elucidates that enlightened selfishness enables a moral agent to recognise the beauty of acting unselfishly - e.g. earning the communal respect and recognition - while also being mindful of the evil involved in the action not impacting favourably on him (Cf. Unah, Op. Cit.). Business is not charity. A business concern is expected to pursue profit tenaciously, and only do philanthropy as CSR so as to encourage consumers to patronize its products and services and earn itself even larger proceeds eventually (Ibid).

Corporate citizenship corresponds with Kantian moral “categorical imperative” (Kant, 1785). It sees CSR as duty for duty sake and not for profit or any other fiduciary prospect. In Hospers’ view, this theory follows the description of ethics from “moral point of view” or “disinterested position. Unah, while referring to “corporate citizenship,” as “obligatory CSR,” contends that it (i.e. CSR as obligation) “arises from the fact, ‚that moral law is a self-imposed law‘...a call to duty” (Unah, Op. Cit.). He goes on to establish the theoretical presupposition of the view in ancient Confucian ethics, which teaches “righteousness” as the principle that obliges individuals to “rectify their names” in all endeavours. This means that if for instance, one is a father then he is expected to live out the responsibility attached to that status - fatherhood. If she is a mother, she is expected to live and act out the conduct associated with motherhood, and so forth. It is only in this way that one can be righteous as far as his or her title, status or station is concerned. It is the only commendable way for individuals to serve their community or society tenaciously. Hence, an adaptation of such view of morality in corporate governance is CSR as obligation.

Finally, although corporate social performance can be considered to be a nuanced form of corporate citizenship, it is not so much about the morality as obligation (as corporate citizenship is) but the morality as a means of helping society achieve aggregate happiness. Ethical utilitarianism, therefore, is the appropriate theoretical presupposition that can be identified with this sense of CSR. Accordingly, maximum utility derivable by society from business operations in a community ought to be the focus of CSR. As part of their policies (in view of corporate social performance as CSR), businesses ought not to be concerned with only profit but also the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people in their communities of operation. Given all the foregoing theoretical presuppositions of existing CSR theories, we observe that their divergence and lack of a univocally persuasive definition of the morality is due to ontological paradigmatic deficit. This is because the theories are conceptualised more from and as strict independent perceptions of morality than a general or wholesome human way of living.

Ontology is the study of existence from the most general perspective where reality is rendered sensible in interconnections and interpenetrations of experience (Unah, 2002). By ontology, CSR ought to be rendered
as a comprehensive way of living in the structure of people’s existence. All its complexities, contradictoriness, porousness and precariousness (which are evident in the disparity of definitions) ought to be assessed and articulated in such a way that gives the responsibility a holistic meaning (Unah, 2002).

Hence, given the ontological inadequacy impressions of disconnective demarcations and boundaries, depicting the definitions, understandings, theories, or thoughts about the morality as being incapable of holistic inter-relations in meaning are given. In Heidegger’s view (1962), such perception of reality (in this case, the morality) renders phenomena (i.e. the responsibility) too scientific and objective - from “particular instances of being” - to be existential. It creates tension in existential thought and associations. It is the psychological tension, therefore, that creates the semblance of divergence in meaning of the morality and dissuasion of corporations from undertaking the responsibility.

Now, having established ontological lacuna in traditional conceptions of CSR as the reason for lack of a singularly persuasive definition of the responsibility, we move to surmount the problem and proffer a sufficiently persuasive view of the morality. We accomplish that task by exploring and exploiting ancient African socio-economic and political view of existence as universal hospitality. Let us turn now to discuss this new worldview in CSR.

**Ancient African Ontological Rendition of CSR**

Prior to discussing ancient African perception of CSR, we deem it important to first describe who such Africans were, especially in terms of how they used to live and make sense of the world. This, in our view, would present a vital background for elucidating how they understood and practiced the morality.

Accordingly, we clarify first that, sociologically, an African was and still is one who originates from the continent of Africa. The continent is a wide expanse of land located at the south of Europe, the east of Asia and Australia and the west of South America. To the north of Africa, the Mediterranean Sea separates it from Europe while the Atlantic Ocean surrounds it in the south. To its west, the same Atlantic Ocean separates it from South America and at the north-east the Red Sea separates it from Asia and the Indian Ocean separates it from Australia.

Broadly, Africa comprises the core northern white Arabic peoples of the continent, the white immigrant indigens of southern Africa, and all other black nations, including the Bushmen, Pygmies, Nilotics, Bantu berbers, Yoruba, Igbo, Ibibio, Ila, et cetera (Ruch, Omi and Anyanwu, 1981: 180). However, in a narrow sense or a strict interpretation where a worldview that makes a peoples’ life meaningful is to be conceived as purely African, it is only the black peoples of Africa i.e. the Negro, that are more appositely accorded the description ‘African’.

For emphasis, the Negro referred to in this essay is the ancient or traditional type of individuals, whose character could be viewed as being purely native or unadulterated by foreign cultures and traditions that infiltrated into the continent since the advent of colonialism. These sort of individuals oppose the modern, contemporary and urban Africans whose character are too eclectic (and, thereby, adulterated - by colonialism, elitism and globalisation) to be purely African (in the sense of our thinking in this essay). Except for their
black complexions, modern, contemporary and urban Negro Africans are admixtures of several cultural modes of life - African, Judeo-Christian, Caucasian traditions, et cetera, which eventually diminish the Africanness in them.

Philosophically or, better put, metaphysically, the ancient Negro African used to be and still is a spiritual individual whose personhood is attained through participation in communality (Menkiti, 1984; Ruzicki, 2010). He or she holds the basic assumption of spirituality where force - vital force or life-force - is the basic constitutive element of reality. Everything, to him or her, is endowed with life-force - plants, animals, stones, mountains, water, time, the dead (living-dead), the yet-to-be-born, et cetera... fused together (Jahn, 1961).

In Africa, forces exist and interact in an inseparable and interpenetrable mix, with human beings at the center. Human beings are the dominant forces among all created visible forces. And they realise themselves in the midst of a hierarchy of forces - some acting above and others below them. Their world is one of extraordinary harmony of forces - of synthetic unity and mutual compatibility among all things.

Outside hierarchy of forces in Africa the human species has no existence (Tempels, 1959: 21). Life is meaningful in co-existence, collectivism, holism and synthesis (Ndubuisi, 2000). “Negro African Society,” according to Ruch and Anyanwu (p.325), “is collectivist, or, more suitably communal.” This is why J. S. Mbiti (1970) defines an African “person” in the statement: “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am” (p.141). Ifeanyi Menkiti (1984), while buttressing Mbiti’s point, says that “…it is the community that defines a person as a person, not some isolated static quality of rationality, will, or memory” (p.172). In Africa, therefore, “…the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of individual life histories, whatever this may be. It is by rooting himself in an ongoing human community that the individual actualizes himself. And this primacy is meant to apply ontologically, but also in regard to epistemic accessibility” (Menkiti, 171).

Now, in consistence with the foregoing ontologico-communal personhood the African is a socio-economic and political socialist. He or she lives and approaches life in extensions - always conscious of his or her interconnection with some “other,” whose relation to him or her necessarily affects his behaviour (for he or she must palliate his interests for the equal thriving the “other”). Africans maintain closely knit extended family system of relations, which spreads as far as unknown future and lived past. In their social order there is no purely personal morality in a community. That is due to inherent free interaction and interpenetration life-forces.

Primarily, ancient African morality (virtue) involves fulfilling duties that can increase and strengthen the ontological equilibrium of community, as vices - those that can disrupt the communal universe - are viewed as disharmonizing and advised to be eschewed. The caring thought of effect of actions on the dead (representing the past, but which are still living forces in the minds of the living) and the yet-to-be-born (representing the future, but which are also living forces in the minds of the living) collectively influence the behaviour of living people (Mbiti, 32). It saddles them with duty - to constantly nourish the spiritual, physical, social, economic, political orders of the community as well as the environment. Environmental nourishment constitutes the duty to care for all animate and inanimate components of social and physical surroundings. Hence, the African would not cut down a tree, for instance, for an opulent aesthetic reason (as...
done in the West). This is because he takes the life of everything into consideration due to the thinking that things equally have important forces and duties that interact with his. It is on the basis of this worldview that the environment is often found to be safely preserved in traditional Africa.

Now, specifically, with the socio-communal moral attribute of the African, there is an economical-commercial worldview dictated by universal hospitality. Accordingly, every member of the community, while going about his or her trade or career, does so with a view to contributing the wealth obtained from the endeavour to the nourishing of the community and environment (Ndubuisi, 2000). In turn, the community also provides him or her with security, collective care and concern.

Jim Unah (1995) buttresses the very essence of this African universal hospitality where he speaks of ancient African socio-economic life as a culture guided by principles of “reciprocal solidarity” and “mutual aid” (pp.40-47). According to Unah, by reciprocal solidarity, the African is inextricably interwoven with his kinsmen such that corporate activities are cycles of supportive exchanges. Profit oriented businesses are done not for diehard profit motives, but communal solidarity and corporate social responsibility (see Unah, 2008). Every member of the community contributes his quota to the actualization of public utilities, as the community also rallies around an individual in need. It is in this communal reciprocation of solidarity with individuals that, according to Unah, the principle of mutual aid is established. By mutual aid, Unah posits that the African does not live by the maxim of “survival of the fittest,” but by organized labour or community task-force that take rotational turns to execute individual tasks, especially where such task is larger than the individual in question. In this manner, the weaker members of the community easily cope with their economic activities without necessarily lagging behind” (Ibid).

In traditional Africa, there were no capitalists or landed exploiters who took advantage of others and the community for their personal profits (Ndubuisi, 2000). “They had no loiterers or idlers (capitalists) who take all the good things society could boast of but contribute nothing in return” (p.94). Unah reiterates this where he mentions that “the individualist capitalist attitude of “everyone for himself and God for us all” is totally unheard of in the economic life of the African” (Unah, 1995: 45). Indeed, “it was the colonial capitalist system that brought the inordinate ambition to acquire wealth in Africa. This is not a way of saying that there is anything wrong in acquiring wealth. But if wealth is to be acquired through exploitation of others (the society, community or environment), it is wrong” (Ndubuisi, 2000: 94).

Given the foregoing analysis of African socio-economic mode of existence in “universal hospitality,” it should be lucid at this point that traditional Africans lived for society, even while doing their business. In congruence with Mele’s argument above, a corporation or business entity in Africa, insofar as it is cited in a community, also takes up the membership or “citizenship” of the community. It becomes yet another life force to be reckoned with, as it MUST also reckon with the life-force of its community of operation. Accordingly, a corporation is morally obligated to participate in developing its community (i.e. do CSR) as its continual survival and volume of business depends on the continual survival and quality of life of the community. While there CAN be community without corporation as such, there CANNOT be corporation without community.

Without doing CSR a corporation is regarded by community as a scoundrel. And that leads to its lose
of patronage. It is such moral view that underpins the Fanti injunction, which says “seek the good of the community and you seek your own good. Seek your own good and you seek your own destruction” (Oguah, 1977: 209). It also underpins other African proverbs such as “if you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far then go together” and “if you do not allow your neighbor to have nine, you will not even have one”.

The point we are making with this whole analysis is that in traditional African socio-economic worldview, CSR is an obligation predicated on communal (universal) hospitality, reciprocal solidarity and mutual aid. Ordinarily, this seems to acquiesce with Unah’s obligatory theory and Mele’s corporate citizenship. However, a more critical scrutiny would reveal that unlike Unah and Mele, the obligation concerned by our theory is not an ethical standard routing from one instance of human being or another - i.e. kindness and patriotic devotion, respectively. This is because individuals (who are captains of industry and decision vectors of CSR) are too dynamic for their conducts to be interpreted from just one moral instance or form of being. In fact, for every moral tendency, individuals are capable of the opposite. Accordingly, as much as individuals can be kind, they also have the tendency, capability and choice to be unkind, carless, negligent and evasive of the obligation; or as much as they can be patriotic, they can also choose to be unpatriotic and, thus, evade the duty all the same. It is such negative tendencies that inform the fiduciary exploitative view of CSR, for instance.

Our CSR as moral obligation stems from general, collective (communal) recognition, stipulation and following of kindness as universal duty (where all is necessarily for one and, conversely, one is for all). Our theory is more of a collective existential moral rule fixed by everybody on the basis of its general or overall benefit, than a moral thinking left to mere intuitive determination of individuals (like Unah suggests).

Now, by our theory it may seem as though we are suggesting that all citizens (including corporations) would always adhere to or be compelled as such by community to adhere to universal hospitality because it is a general moral rule or that there would be no scoffers and flouters of the rule. No, that is not our position; because such position will be too superficial a claim to characterise human dynamism yet. What we posit, rather, is that since the moral rule is one generally and communally enacted, all citizens are obligated to obey it. This is because, like Jacques Rousseau’s “General Will” (2004, 1762), all citizens contributes to enacting the morality (explicitly or implicitly, even if it is by simply acknowledging its existence, and without challenging for repeal). Hence, obeying it means obeying self and, on the other hand, failure to obey it implies failure to obey self.

Conclusion
This essay discussed the meaning of CSR as a condition for its effective and efficient practice. It highlighted the existence of various definitions of the responsibility, the disparity in their meaning and the practice. It established that the disparity in meaning causes contest in understanding and practice. A crucial aspect of the contest from disparity in meanings is total disrespect for and dissuasion of corporations from undertaking the responsibility (in most cases). At this juncture, we felt compelled to work out a definition that would
dissolve the disparity and persuade corporations to undertake the responsibility as obligation.

Whereas, in our essay we are not totally discrediting the existing meanings of CSR (for that is against ontological rendition of reality), we sought to narrow down the disparity and eradicate the contest among them, which dissuade corporations from respecting and undertaking the responsibility as such. We offered a view of the responsibility - a traditional African perception - that is all encompassing and more persuasive. For us, therefore, all the definitions, in the final analysis, are reducible to universal hospitality. No matter how the meaning of the responsibility is debated, one would always discover that there is an ontological undertone underpinning and establishing the responsibility as universal hospitality or a fusion of reciprocal solidarity and mutual aid. An argument, in other words, may be either a negation or affirmation of the theory. The ontological interconnection in views therefore and experience of African socio-economic existence jointly enthrone universal hospitality as a more persuasive way of making sense of CSR as an inevitable obligation to corporations.

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